

Are You Managing Architecture or Just Modeling It?

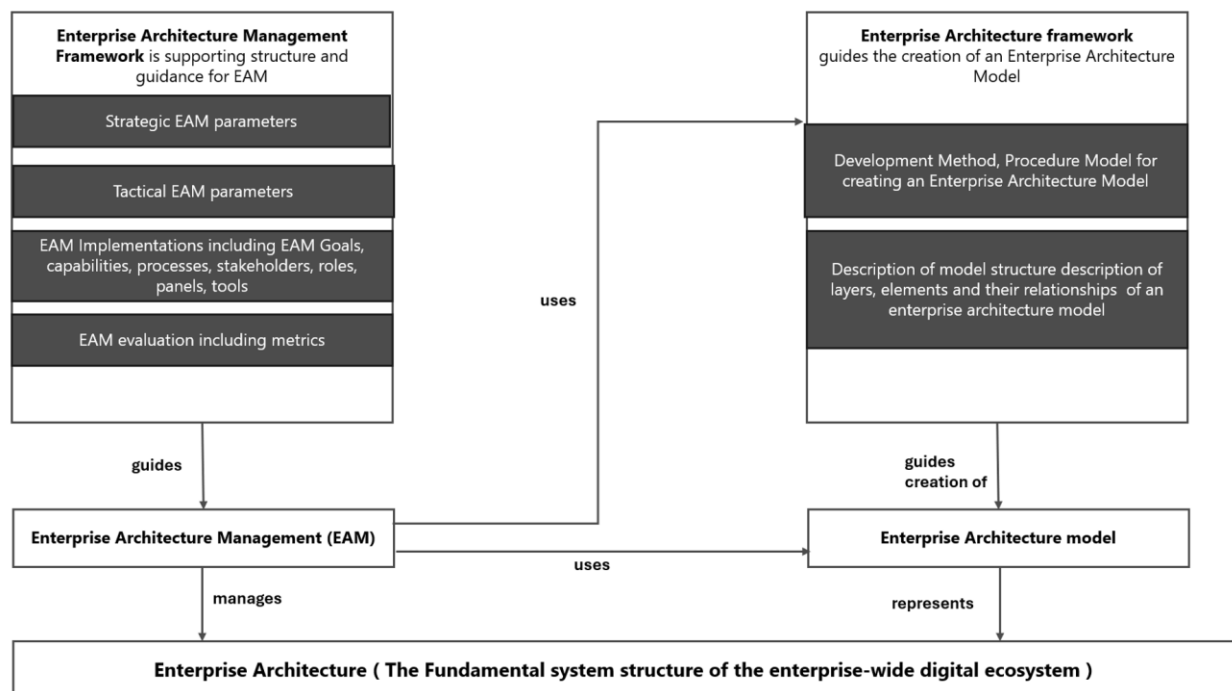
Models Aren't Management

Most enterprises will confidently say, *"Yes, we have Enterprise Architecture."*

What they usually mean is this:

- We have diagrams
- We have layers
- We have an architecture model

And that's not wrong. But it's not the full story.



The picture above captures a distinction that often stays implicit—and that distinction matters more than we admit. It separates architecture as a model from architecture as a managed system.

This is where many architecture efforts stall. Not because the models are poor, but because models alone do not manage anything.

Modeling: Necessary, but Not Sufficient

On the right side of the diagram sits the Enterprise Architecture framework. Its job is clear and bounded:

- It guides the creation of an Enterprise Architecture model
- It defines a development method
- It describes layers, elements, and relationships

In short, it answers the question: *How should the enterprise be represented?*

The result is an Enterprise Architecture model—a structured, intentional description of the enterprise. That model is valuable. It creates shared language, clarity, and consistency.

But notice the arrow at the bottom:

The model represents the Enterprise Architecture.

Representation is not management.

Description is not decision-making.

A model can be accurate and still have no influence.

Where Architecture Actually Becomes Real

Now shift your attention to the left side of the diagram.

Here we see the Enterprise Architecture Management framework. This side feels less glamorous. Fewer diagrams. More words like *parameters, roles, evaluation*. But this is where architecture moves from being documented to being operational.

This framework introduces what modeling alone does not:

- Strategic parameters — why architecture exists and what it is meant to achieve
- Tactical parameters — how architecture is applied in real initiatives
- Implementation mechanisms — goals, capabilities, processes, stakeholders, roles, panels, tools
- Evaluation — metrics that tell us whether architecture is effective or not

This side answers a very different question: *How is architecture guided, applied, and sustained over time?*

The Missing Link Is Management

At the center of the diagram is **Enterprise Architecture Management (EAM)**.

This is not a repository.
It is not a modeling activity.
It is a management function.

Two arrows here are easy to overlook—and easy to underestimate.

- EAM **uses** the Enterprise Architecture model
- EAM **manages** the Enterprise Architecture itself

That single word—**manages**—is doing a lot of work.

Managing architecture means:

- Making trade-offs visible
- Governing change, not just recording it
- Connecting architecture to investment and prioritization
- Measuring whether architectural intent is being realized

Without this, architecture remains informative but optional.

Architecture Is Bigger Than Its Model

At the bottom of the diagram sits a definition that grounds everything:

Enterprise Architecture

The fundamental system structure of the enterprise-wide digital ecosystem

This is not a diagram.

This is the real, living structure of the enterprise—systems, processes, integrations, dependencies, and constraints.

The model **represents** this structure.

Management **governs** it.

Confusing the two leads to a familiar pattern:

- Strong models
- Weak influence
- Architecture that is consulted late—or not at all
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If you want to know whether your organization is managing architecture or just modeling it, try this test:

- Who owns architectural outcomes—not artifacts?
- Where are architectural decisions enforced, not just documented?
- How do we know if our architecture is improving or degrading over time?

If those questions are hard to answer, the issue is rarely the framework on the right side of the diagram. It is usually the absence—or underinvestment—in the left.

This is not a call to abandon modeling. Models matter. They are foundational.

But models do not:

- Set direction
- Resolve tension
- Hold accountability

Management does.

And that brings us back to the question at the heart of this edition:

Are you managing architecture—or just modeling it?

Models represent.

Management governs.

That difference is subtle on paper—and decisive in practice.