



Practical tips when using TOGAF for the first time – Case Study

By Roger Evernden

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Throughout the TOGAF documentation the authors repeat that TOGAF should be adapted to suit your particular needs. But in practical terms, what does that mean for an organization setting out to use TOGAF for the very first time? In this case study I will tell the story of a large financial institution as they adopted and adapted TOGAF. In it I will point out some of the key things that they learnt along the way.

Before I give a bit of background, I want to emphasize that the point of customizing TOGAF is to make sure that it really does fit your organization well – so each adaptation of TOGAF will be slightly different. This case study should not be taken as the approach for everyone! The steps I've described in this case study are summarized in Diagram 1: Getting Ready for TOGAF (below).

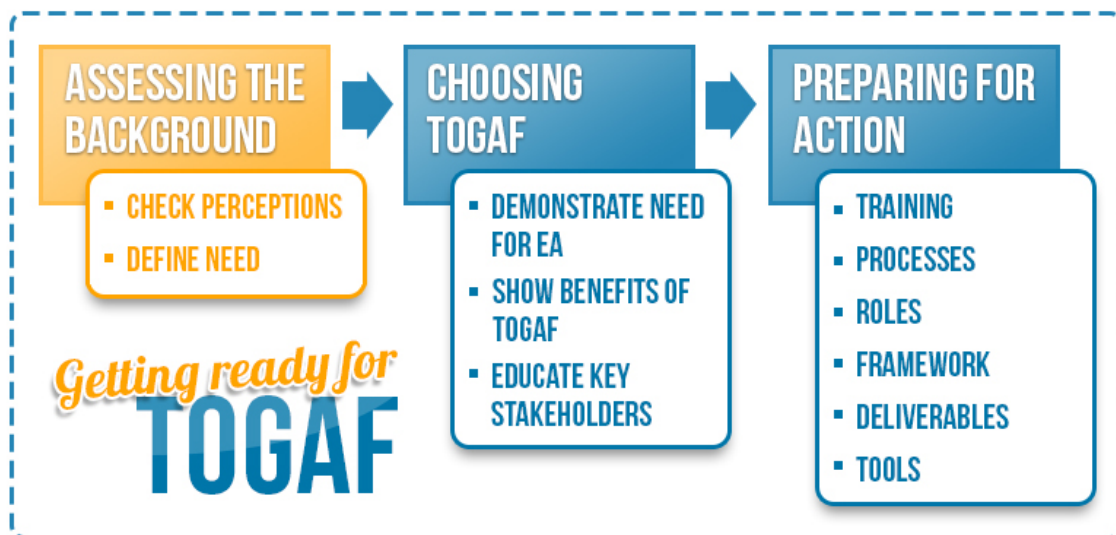


Diagram 1: Getting Ready for TOGAF

Assessing the background

I'll call this bank ABBIE – A Big Bank In Europe. ABBIE had an established enterprise architecture team, and within the organization it was known as the Enterprise Architecture Group (EAG). By EA standards it was a very large team of around 140, but surprisingly there was no one in the team with the title 'Enterprise Architect'. Of the 140 people in the team, over 100 were solution architects, with a scattering of business division architects, and the remainder being specialist infrastructure, security, data or application architects.

Leaders within EAG realised knew that although their name included the words 'Enterprise Architecture', the reality was that they did little to define or direct the future of ABBIE's architecture. Their role was limited to providing architectural advice to projects that had already decided which technologies they were going to implement.

Architects reviewed solution designs as part of the governance process, but this was a reactive task and came too late in the process to make a real difference. Because of this, the team had to accept a large number of waivers or exceptions, as the solution was far from their ideal architectural direction.

Key points: Having an established EA team caused two problems. Firstly, it created the perception that EA was mainly an IT-related discipline. And secondly, as far as senior management were concerned, it felt that ABBIE had tried EA but that it didn't add any real value to the system development process. These were two major misconceptions that the EAG team had to address.

It was actually an IT vendor that encouraged ABBIE to make a change. They provided two consultants to help ABBIE improve its EA practice, but ABBIE soon found that their proprietary EA approach created rather than solved problems. In looking at other options, TOGAF seemed to be a clear leader.

The Open Group is a vendor- and technology-neutral consortium, and its architectural framework has become a de facto standard based on established practice. It was easy to find training courses, hire certified architects, and talk to other companies about their experiences with TOGAF. Furthermore, TOGAF was intended to work with other approaches – so it would be easy to adapt it to fit with existing approaches at ABBIE – and it can be used freely by any organization wishing to develop an enterprise architecture for use within that organization.

ABBIE still had to convince senior executives within the bank that this was a good idea. To do this they simply took materials from the Introduction of the TOGAF documentation, as this provided an outline of TOGAF and its documentation, and an Executive Overview. In particular the Executive Overview summarized the advantages that could result from a good enterprise architecture and the benefits in using TOGAF.

This was not an easy task; senior execs were receptive to the benefits in using an established and standard approach, but they remained sceptical about gaining any real business value. Eventually the EA team made their case by using an external consultant to build a strong, tangible business case, and drawing on real-life case studies that showed how other companies had benefited. They made a big step forward when the team broadened their focus from IT to reveal business and organizational benefits.

Key points: TOGAF complements other EA approaches! Even when using the TOGAF documentation it is not easy to explain what enterprise architecture is or demonstrate its value. You will need to find concrete examples, tailored for your enterprise, that demonstrate both the value of EA and the benefits of TOGAF. You might also need to provide high-level training for some of your key stakeholders.

Preparing for action

Once the EA team got the go ahead, they wanted to get started quickly in order to prove that this had been a good decision. Fortunately, TOGAF has plenty of material to help. The Preliminary Phase of the Architecture Development Method (ADM) is all about preparing an organization to undertake a successful EA project, and ABBIE used the objectives, steps, inputs and outputs of the ADM as a guide. Part of their proposal to senior management included taking on new people with previous experience of TOGAF, but it took several months to get people with the right experience. In the interim they used a consultant to help make the necessary changes.

They also started a training programme to make sure that everyone in the team knew about TOGAF. They used the Architecture Skills Framework provided by TOGAF to work out what training was needed by each member of the team, and then used this to devise an overall training programme with the help of human resources. Because the full TOGAF course is usually four-days in duration, they also provided a series of brief one-hour sessions to explain what they were doing and how TOGAF helped.

A key reason for choosing TOGAF had been the detailed Architecture Development Method, which they intended to embed as the core of their new practice. They quickly realized that it didn't fit well with the processes they already had in place for system development or for reviewing project designs.

The consultant described the differences between architectural and solution thinking, and showed that there were three major processes that needed to work together – architecture development, system development, and governance. The three processes are not a sequence: each process is an iterative cycle, and the vital handoffs between them use core architectural deliverables. Getting the balance between these processes from the outset will make a big difference to your success with TOGAF.

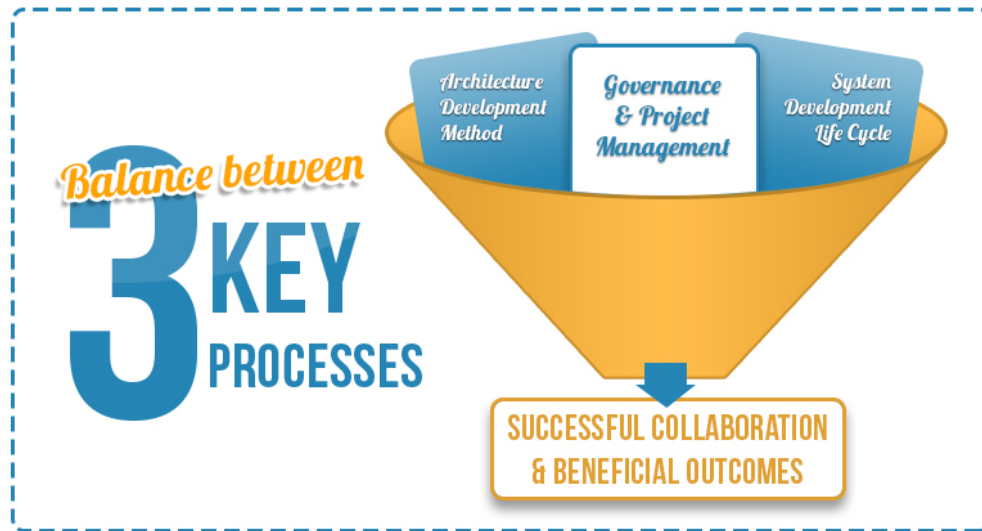


Diagram 2: Balance Between 3 Key Processes

ABBIE then looked at the ADM in more detail. In particular they wanted to make sure that they didn't take on more than they could handle, but took on enough to be able to deliver results! The realized knew that they couldn't follow the detailed process exactly as documented by TOGAF. Key to success was customizing TOGAF in the light of the outcomes that key stakeholders were expecting. They therefore decided that it was very important to get a clear Request for Architecture Work, which in this case was to drastically simplify the architectural landscape.

With this clear objective they then decided to make the first iteration of the ADM quickly, focusing on phases C, D and E – the information systems architecture, technology architectures and opportunities and solutions. The idea was to have a clear overview of the future architecture that would inform migration planning, while leading to a stronger architecture vision on the second and subsequent iterations.

This focus also meant that they could gradually supplement team roles with new roles and skills as they needed them.

The team were also aware that they didn't have a dedicated EA tool, and were unlikely to get the funding to buy one until the team had proved their worth. They also knew

from EA forums and talking to other companies of the dangers of document overload – of producing too many presentations and being too wordy. In this first iteration they therefore decided to focus on one or two deliverables that would help achieve the Request for Architecture Work and guide decision making. They defined ten core principles, initiated an architectural catalogue of required functionality, and then used this to perform gap analysis against functionality provided by the existing IT landscape.

This simple set of deliverables allowed the team to complete a quick assessment of duplicate and redundant functionality, together with criteria to assess potential solutions. (At the end of the first iteration of the ADM they were able to report that there were four key areas where architectural change would produce significant business results within a short time frame).

Finally, in terms of the Preliminary Phase, the EAG had previously been referring to the Zachman Framework, while the data architects had been using the Information FrameWork (IFW). With ABBIE now adopting TOGAF, which meant there were three architecture frameworks in circulation. They decided that in the long-term they wanted to tailor practical components from each framework to produce one that met their specific needs. But they felt that this would take too long, and might be seen as a bit academic, so in the short-term they decided to continue to use Zachman and IFW, while supplementing them with TOGAF.

Final points

This case study highlights two important points:

Firstly, it is impossible to simply take TOGAF on board by using everything that it has to offer. There is a lot of detail in TOGAF. Coming to terms with its content can be overwhelming. Using TOGAF takes time, so my first piece of advice is: select bits of TOGAF that will really help you to deliver value and benefit.

Secondly, TOGAF really does have to fit in with everyone else! To get the best out of TOGAF means that you have to customize and adapt it to your needs and to other established methods. This isn't just a matter of adjusting a process here or there – it means doing things differently, establishing the right hand-offs, and getting buy-in from the right stakeholders.

Get these two things right, and you will improve your chances of creating a truly successful EA practice.

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