

“Enterprise Architecture at Achmea”

Case study

Achmea is an all risk, all care insurance company with a revenue in 2007 of 15.610 millions euro. Achmea employs over 25.000 people. Achmea is successful in its market with over 150 products and services. To deliver these products and services over 250 business processes are active, supported by more than 1750 business applications and numerous infrastructure components. Enterprise Architecture is a key strategic instrument to manage change in business and IT.

In the mid 1990's the first architects were appointed within Achmea. Enterprise architecture was at first limited to technical infrastructure architecture. Currently, around 60 architects work on a fulltime basis within the Achmea Enterprise Architecture Programme. The key stakeholders of the Enterprise Architecture Programme are the COO of the Executive Board and the CIO.

Achmea has embraced the use of enterprise architecture to achieve the improvement of the business value of IT and to align strategic choices in business and IT. By using enterprise architecture Achmea is able to increase its agility and reduce the time to market of new products and services. Major application migrations have been prepared and checked on feasibility by using enterprise architecture. Moreover, enterprise architecture is used to structure and plan change programs and to assess and reduce their risk and costs.

In the last two years Achmea has achieved a Group Business Information Plan (GBIP) and derived from that Division Business Information Plans. In these plans business strategy is translated, based on common agreed architectural principles, into project portfolio's. This includes product and services, processes, information and information systems and technical infrastructure. On top of that Achmea achieved a common agreed Achmea Target Architecture (ATA) based on a set of product models, process models, information models and service models. Target applications and infrastructure is agreed upon. Furthermore, for 90% of the (total of 150) projects Achmea produces a Project Start Architecture (PSA) in which the project change is scoped and in which the GBIP and ATA principles are applied to the specific case in the project.

The future plan is to focus on product, process and application rationalisation within information domains and to further strengthen the discipline of controlling enterprise architecture in an outsourced IT operation.



Organisation and governance of Enterprise Architecture

The Chief Architect role is part of Ronald Polderdijk's role as a Group Technology Officer. Over the past 15 years, Ronald Polderdijk has held managing responsibilities in IT in various parts of Achmea (life & pensions, property and casualty and health). Achmea started with the design of an architecture management process. We standardized our architecture products (GBIP, ATA and PSA) and described the governance procedures. The roles of business architect, information architect, service architect, application architect and infrastructure architect are all present in the current enterprise architecture teams.

Examples of the current responsibilities of the enterprise architecture programme are:

- Maintaining the enterprise architecture models
- Formulating and communicating principles and policies
- Answering impact of change questions
- Supporting the setup of change programmes
- Communicating enterprise architecture necessity



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- Communicating architecture support roles in change programmes
- Understanding and internal consulting in the business and IT strategy
- Internal consulting on the alignment of business and IT strategy
- Judging compliance of major procurement or investment decisions to the enterprise architecture. Every project above €50.000 is controlled by making a PSA.

In the Enterprise Architecture Steering Committee positions are held by both management of the architecture teams in the business and the management of Achmea group enterprise architecture. The primary sponsor of the enterprise architecture programme is the Group Information Officer. The enterprise architecture programme has its own budget for developing architecture services and for prefunding of initial developments.

No change project is started without a PSA. There is no mandate to stop a project, but there is a strong advisory relation to the Group Project Portfolio Steering Committee. All architects within Achmea work within a enterprise architecture community (with a sharepoint meeting place, special meeting events, etc.). All managers of architecture departments are part of a once a month formal Achmea Architecture Council meeting. This is the only table where formal decisions are made regarding architecture principles.

Maturing methods and tools

From 1995 to 2002 the Achmea enterprise architecture practice consisted of a group of people sharing the same interest. From 2003 to 2006 this practice was part of a central IT organisation in which all the architects were centralized. This helped to learn the job of being an architect and to set governance processes, architecture products, etc. From 2006 up till now the architecture practice works in a federated governed organization. This allows a much closer alignment with business change.

The Achmea architecture team decided to develop the skill set first and then decide on methods and the toolset. Until 2007 they only used MS Word and Powerpoint. Achmea now uses dynamic enterprise architecture (DYA) as an architecture method, ArchiMate™ as the architecture modelling language with the BiZZdesign Architect EA tool and IBM's IAA/IIW content repository.

The key requirements for the selection of the enterprise architecture were:

- Adhering to open standards like ArchiMate™
- Ease of use, low complexity, stepbystep growth in advanced use
- Consistent modelling and maintenance
- Easy generation of views for stakeholders
- Input/output generation to office tools and intra net portals for communication and presentation
- Impact of change analysis and visualisation
- Analysis in the form of CRUD tables and color visualisations
- Comparing alternative architectures
- Planning changes
- Central repository

Some major lessons learned in selecting and using proper methods and tools are to overcome the “not invented here” syndrome and to focus the architecture teams on delivering value rather than talking about methods and tools. We choose ArchiMate™ with the BiZZdesign Architect tool because of the positive pilot experiences within Achmea and due to the professional drive of the BiZZdesign employees we spoke with. For the future, Achmea strives to improving the enterprise architecture model management skills. Enterprise Architecture will certainly remain a key strategic instrument to manage change in business and IT.

