

Executive  
SUMMARY

BUSINESS &amp; ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE

# Architecting the Agile Enterprise: Adapting EA for Agile at Scale

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In today's business environment, with increasingly competitive market forces, changing legislation, and the potential for disruption, it's rare to speak with an enterprise leader who is not adopting some form of Agile development practice. The concept of Agile software development entered the enterprise scene more than 15 years ago as a reaction to traditional approaches to software development projects. Originally promoted as a movement, many people viewed it as a challenge to entrenched practices such as waterfall. Today, a vast amount of organizations is either in the early stages of Agile adoption or struggling to scale Agile throughout the enterprise. Doing so is far more difficult than adopting it at the team level. Despite these challenges, Agile has been making big strides since its roots in the mid-1990s.

Increasingly, global companies of every size are adopting Agile practices and principles, and not only within the walls of the corporate IT function. *Forbes* recently called the concept of Agile "[The Best-Kept Management Secret on the Planet.](#)" suggesting that it was time for enterprise leaders outside of the IT team to adopt the principles in their operating models and processes. This observation is accurate given that as word of the reported benefits of the Agile approach leaked into other businesses and industries outside of software and hardware, enterprises have begun adapting it to the peculiarities of their own circumstances. Enterprise leaders interested in adopting Agile practices and principles are motivated by an array of different potential influences to their ability to deliver value. A [recent survey of development and IT professionals](#) reveals a few interesting points with the overarching finding that suggests Agile is now the norm. In terms of motivations for adopting Agile, the survey respondents' top reasons were: (1) better collaboration between business and technology professionals, (2) increased customer satisfaction, and (3) a shorter time to market for new, innovative ideas. In addition, the majority of teams responsible for developing new products and services now embrace the methodology, while those utilizing pure waterfall approaches are in the minority.

While the benefits of Agile are compelling, many businesses struggle to become truly Agile — particularly when trying to scale Agile throughout the enterprise, as indicated above. Agile adoption is easy to start; it often takes root as a pilot initiative by a single team. Successful pilot programs, in turn, can foster expectations that Agile practices can be easily replicated across the business. Yet, many organizations struggle to achieve the benefits of Agile when deploying products that require enterprise-level planning and collaboration. Furthermore, traditional Agile does not

consider enterprise architecture (EA) as a key part of the process but assumes that architecture guidance is being provided in the background. Moreover, traditional EA has also failed to evolve and the majority of EA teams are under pressure due to the increased adoption of Agile within enterprises. Thus, the traditional role of EA has been under attack by the emergence of Agile within enterprises and its adoption beyond the IT domain. In particular, three areas are creating an impact:

- 1. Quick pace of change.** Since business plans change frequently with Agile, it diminishes the value of the EA team building long-term business and technology roadmaps.
- 2. The move to iterative value delivery.** As enterprise teams, consisting of technology and business professionals, collaborate to deliver value in an iterative approach, target architectures developed by the EA teams are less valuable.
- 3. Growing number of projects.** The traditional role of governance becomes more difficult to manage given that projects continue to become smaller in size as enterprises move toward Agile and the enterprise architects are spread thinner in terms of impact.

To successfully support the adoption of Agile and to scale Agile throughout the enterprise, progressive EA leaders must focus on finding ways to provide just-in-time, relevant, and useful input into the process. In the accompanying *Executive Report*, we provide an understanding of specific issues Agile adoption and transformation leaders face when scaling Agile practices and principles to the enterprise level and how enterprise architecture can help manage these challenges and support Agile at scale. The report offers insights from my own personal experiences as well as those from other progressive EA teams working in highly Agile environments across a variety of industries that have adopted these principles. There are multiple challenges that emerge as an enterprise moves toward an Agile development approach, both at the team level and when scaled to the program and portfolio level.

The report concludes with five pieces of advice from my personal experience with Agile development at the team and enterprise level and how EA leaders can influence and affect the ability to deliver value:

- 1. Engage to learn.** For EA leaders motivated to develop these new practices, start by learning what and who influences the drive toward Agile approaches and determine the enterprise drivers for this change.
- 2. Think “judiciary” and not “policing.”** To make the mindset and practice shift in the EA team, members of the architecture community will need to shift away from governing and policing attitudes toward approaches that are more guiding and judiciary.
- 3. Approach the opportunity with an “architecting” — not an “architecture” — mindset.** Architecture is not who you are, it is how you think, the tools you use, and the value you bring to the enterprise.
- 4. To start new practices, you have to stop old ones.** The reality is that enterprise architects are also constrained in their bandwidth. So, to start new practices and influence a new mindset, it is likely that there are old practices or redundant tasks that need to be identified and obsoleted from the responsibilities.
- 5. Use “enterprise architecture as a service” (EAaaS).** Rethink your offerings to Agile development teams and view them as if you are offering a service.