Business Objectives and Business Processes: Alignment and Verification

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ABSTRACT

The Portuguese Air Force has made an effort to remain at the forefront of organizations, examining problems like the inadequacy of Information Systems and the treatment of business as rigid hierarchical structures. The process of change initiated in 2009, which is transversal to the organization, recommends a set of actions, including the definition of business processes, to determine the organizational “AS IS” important to the establishment of “TO BE”. Simultaneously, the Air Force is studying concepts related to enterprise architecture while trying to deepen the relationship between mission, vision, goals, objectives, strategy, tactics, policy, business rules, and process architecture. In this context, considering important creating and identifying a way to validate the consistency between Enterprise Architecture and Process Architecture important, the authors propose the creation of a value matrix, representing objectives and processes associated with a set of rules for its creation and update.

Keywords: Business Processes, Enterprise Architecture, Management Objectives, Objective, Objective Architecture, Process Architecture, Value Matrix, Value Model

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have been subject to profound changes due to the growing competition that has been seen over the years. Factors such as market uncertainty, the development of marketing strategy and the increase of supply, make the companies of nowadays act quickly to so many disturbing factors. The traditional way in which organizations used to be viewed is therefore inappropriate in the evolving world we live in today.

Along with changes in organizational environment one can observe on the one hand, the development of theories of management and, on the other, the technological development of Information Technology (IT). Over the years, various methods, tools and standards that support the process of decision making have emerged, providing a new way of looking at organizations whilst taking into account the final product as well as customer satisfaction. The discipline of Organizational Engineering
(OE) contains within it the knowledge of those methods, tools and standards, the desired result being not only the outcome of just the sum of these different parts, but the added value of an efficient coordination of all the factors outlined above (Magalhães & Silva, 2009).

All these changes inevitably lead to the new direction that the Portuguese Air Force is taking. Access to information in real time as well as knowledge of the organization by its personnel, are just one example of the objectives that companies today look to achieve. In order to achieve that, IT, business processes and business objectives must be perfectly aligned and also be able to be measured (Rodrigues, 2010; Bullen, 2001; Franceschini et al., 2007; Gama, 2007).

One of the purposes of the existence of Information Systems Architecture (ISA) is that Information Systems (IS) meet the objectives for which they were created (Sousa, 2008). The IS must be perfectly aligned with business goals and provide the information necessary to the processes that occur in the organization. The theme of the alignment of architectures that constitute the ISA has been studied by the OE. For this work the alignment between the Enterprise Architecture and Process Architecture is important.

Organizational Self-Awareness (OSA) (Tribolet, 2005; Magalhães, Zacarias, & Tribolet, 2007; Zacarias, 2008; Aveiro, 2009) represents an evolution from the traditional organizational view, since it brings in the need for capturing the static and dynamic aspects of the interactions of the organization’s agents with the organization’s activities and resources and enabling the construction of models exhibiting non-deterministic interaction patterns.

The Air Force Commander’s Vision (Araújo, 2008), emphasizes the need for effective, flexible and dynamic organizational mechanisms and methods that allow the Air Force to adapt to its environment. Obtaining those mechanisms and methods comprehend a set of activities, including identifying the Organization’s business objectives and business processes and their relation in terms of coherence and consistency. In an organization, a desired result is achieved more efficiently when activities and related resources are managed as a process (Tribolet & Páscoa, 2009). In this context it is considered that business processes must be perfectly aligned with the objectives they achieve.

It is then desirable that, through a simple form, one may able to identify which business processes achieve the objectives for which they were created. We considered the possibility of creating a simple and intuitive matrix, allowing for this identification and subsequent validation.

Quivy and Campenhoudt (1998) suggest a methodology for research, applied to social sciences, which supports the existence of several stages. At the first stage a starting question must be set and auxiliary questions with hypotheses that may validate their answers. Accordingly, the starting question (SQ) is:

- SQ. How to create a value matrix that crosses business processes with the objectives for which they were created, making it an effective tool that supports decision making?

The question was divided in derived questions (DQ) as follows:

- DQ1. How to create the value matrix that crosses business processes with the objectives for which they were created?
- DQ2. How to check the consistency between objectives and business processes?
- DQ3. What rules are needed to create and update the matrix?
- DQ4. Does the value matrix check the consistency between Enterprise Architecture and Process Architecture?"
- DQ5. Is the value matrix an effective tool for decision making support?

The assumptions (A) built for verification of the questions are (the following identifiers gather the DQ number and the A number):
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