

Experience your Enterprise (Architecture)

Any manager should spend time in the execution of his field of responsibility. If you have seen the TV program Undercover Boss, you'll know what I'm talking about. In this program we see a senior manager or even the company owner telling his management team he or she will go under cover in his own organisation. The goal is to see and experience improvement possibilities. Why is it necessary to go undercover? Any company has its reporting organised so the management board will know what is going on at the work floor. What new insights will going under cover reveal?

Undercover boss

First of all, experiencing a problem first hand is completely different from reading about a problem in a weekly report. In the TV program Undercover Boss you will see managers working with poor equipment, carrying heavy load over long distances, struggling with incomplete deliveries and still serving customers. You can see the urgency of the problem growing.

Biased information

Secondly, reports don't always tell the whole story. Unfortunately, it is common practise to report information in a format the reporter thinks management wants to see. Resulting in biased information so management does not have a picture of the actual situation.



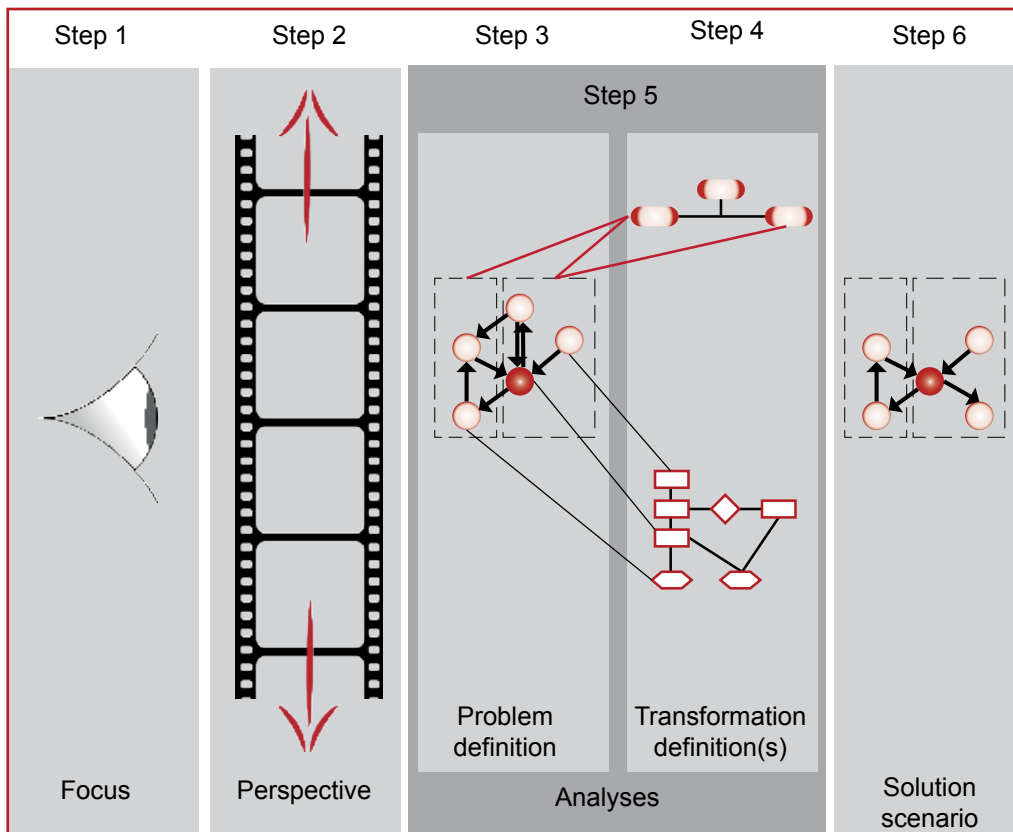
Instantiation

Thirdly and maybe most important, the actual enterprise is defined in its execution. It is all about the instantiation of the ideas and strategies of the enterprise management. Going under cover will show them how strategies are translated into execution. They can see how people interpreted the strategies and implementation plans. They will be confronted with assumptions or conclusions they never meant but people made anyway.



Weak spot

Is there an alternative for going under cover? To be honest there is no alternative with the same impact but there is an alternative which can be even better. Going under cover does have a weak spot, you will only see a limited part of the actual operation, it is not possible to work with all employees in all departments to discover how your strategies are transformed into execution. I offer you an alternative that will make up for the lack of impact but adds a wider view. It will only require to look at the enterprise different from the way you are used to.



Step one: **Focus.**

Be realistic and focus on the specific area you want to improve or investigate.

Step two: **Your perspective.**

It is crucial to understand from which perspective you look at the problem. Be aware there is a difference between the perspective of senior management, your enterprise architects and the people in the actual operation.

Step three: **Problem definition.**

Break down your problem into elementary elements which fit your perspective. Add the elements related to the problem but stay within your perspective. Define the relationships between the elements and you will have a complete definition of your problem area.

Step four: **Transformation definition(s).**

This is actually a combined step. Be aware your perspective is most likely a transformation from the perspective of someone else. For example, your perspective needs to fulfil business goals or strategies created from another perspective. You need to find the stakeholders who can define this other perspective. Together you can determine if the transformation into your perspective is complete and correct. This also works the other way. Your perspective needs to be fulfilled with a transformation towards the actual execution. You will also need to find the stakeholders who can define how they will transform your perspective into theirs. Again, together you can determine if the transformation is complete and correct.

This step four makes the difference. This step does guarantee everything you do, from analyses to solution implementation, is in line with the business goals and strategy¹.

¹ See the publication 'No way around EA' in which I explain how principles and patterns structure any Enterprise.

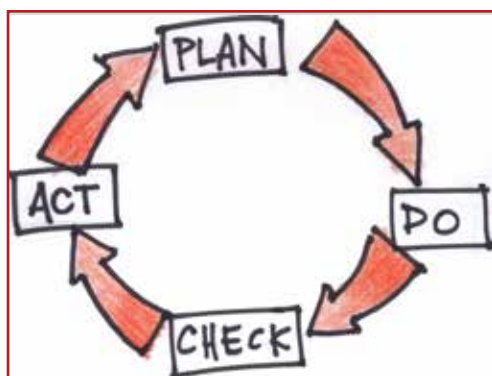
Step five: **Analyses.**

Now you have all the information to analyse your problem: which elements are involved, which ones can be improved, changed, replaced and how will that effect the rest of your enterprise in all perspectives. It might be necessary to go back to step five and add elements to complete your view on the problem area and possible solutions.

Step six: **Choose your solution scenario.**

Based on your analyses you have found multiple solution options from different perspectives. You need to choose your preferred solutions scenario. This choice might depend on expected impact, stakeholders involved, relations with other initiatives and your own preferences.

Demming Cycle



Now we have a Plan on what to Do and we can continue with the Do and Check phase of the famous Demming circle. Based on the results you might need to go back to Step one, continuing the Demming circle into the Act phase.

Results

How will this give you similar information compared to going under cover? Let's look exactly at the results of going under cover. When under cover, you are part of operations. You will experience *How* things are done, *What* can be used to do it and *What* needs to be realised. It is obvious *Who* is responsible and *Where*, at which location, you need to be. And even if the time aspect is not made explicit, you will experience it during the day and at the end of the day you know *When* you had to be where and how much time is involved. Maybe the biggest lesson of being under cover is learning *Why* things are done the way they are done. Which motivations apply to the execution perspective. So the total experience is a interrelated combination of How, What, Who, Where, When and Why. And this is what we will explicitly add to the definition of our perspectives. Each perspective is not just defined in elementary elements but in elementary elements of *How, What, Who, Where, When and Why.*



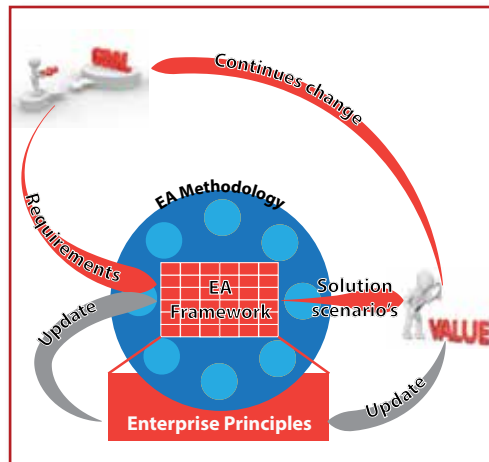
High quality solutions

Only if we learn to look at our enterprise and learn to see the different perspectives and the six types of elements with their interrelationships, we can change and improve our business with the same impact as when we go under cover to experience it at first hand. It is less time consuming and it gives you a wider overview of your problem area resulting in higher quality solutions than you have ever experienced.

This approach is based on Enterprise Architecture principles as defined by John Zachman. This is why it is called *Applied* Enterprise Architecture.

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Applied Enterprise Architecture



Jef Bergsma has a broad experience with developing business solutions and IT. He has an unparalleled understanding of the importance of Business and IT alignment within an enterprise.

JZZ-3d is specialised in applying Enterprise Architecture to solve integration problems and prepare enterprises for the demanding future.

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