

Managing Uncertainty – What’s an Enterprise Architect (and the rest of us) To Do?

Government shutdowns. Budgets on the brinks. Reorgs and layoffs. Uncertainty these days is everywhere. And it’s not just a passing trend—uncertainty and doubt are becoming permanent aspects of our work and personal lives.

Richard McCarthy, professor of computer information systems at [Quinnipiac University](#), has some thoughts on how EAs can help organizations facing uncertainty. “EAs can help manage or even avert a crisis with one word: planning. Budget crises change priorities drastically. They force organizations to go from a strategic thinking mode to simply maintaining operations. EAs can help bridge the gap between what’s needed to keep going, and what’s possible beyond that point. They can help organizations seamlessly move from one such situation to another.”

Planning For a Crisis

On April 28, the federal government will shut down if a funding bill isn’t passed into law to keep operations running. McCarthy said, “A shutdown or even a budget crisis shouldn’t come as a surprise to any federal agency. It’s happened before. It will happen again. The risk is ongoing which creates a baseline, which in turn produces patterns. From there, the agency can start planning a response. EAs can help by evaluating every aspect of an organization to determine how well it all works together—or not—and identify areas where efficiencies can be gained.”

McCarthy cited an example of this approach. “The airlines are perpetually in crisis due to unpredictable weather. Recently, my family was returning from Florida back home to Connecticut, which normally takes two and a half hours. We left our hotel at 6:30 a.m. and finally made it home at 10:30 p.m. that same night.”

What happened?

“Storms caused multiple cancellations across the country. They airlines can’t always predict when and where bad weather will occur, but they can say with certainty that it will happen. The airlines have a rich history when it comes to predicting patterns that result from bad weather. EAs analyze patterns to change operations, and mitigate such events when they occur. That’s why the airlines often ground their planes before a major storm and stage them in hubs. When the storm passes, they’re ready to go.” Why aren’t the airlines doing more of this? McCarthy said, “They’re not connecting the data points and integrating it into all aspects of their operations. EAs can help make these connections.”

It’s safe to say that a crisis—no matter the size—can paralyze any organization. EAs can identify patterns where possible, and help put a plan in place that factors in all aspects of an organization. Doing so can help an organization weather the storm, or sail right through to calmer waters. Planning makes all the difference.



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