

Case Study: Arup Data Services

We know a lot of Chief Architects and CTOs out there are grappling with a similar challenge – how do they address the data silos that run rampant in their organisation’s data centres and private vendor clouds?

Many Chief Architects would jump at the chance to implement an enterprise data services platform, but source material for business cases are sparse: most advice either focuses on data as a revenue stream or on the possibilities opened up by the right BI tools.

With this in mind, Konvergent set out to find a useful case study to share with our network and were pleased to find that our client Arup’s Architecture team were keen to share their story at our Chief Architect Roundtable event in October.

Their story involved spending 3 years working on the design, roadmap and transition architectures for their data services platform (as well as bringing relevant programmes into the fold with PoCs), but every year found themselves missing out on the funding to roll it out.

They had a good solution which offered great potential ROI so they set out on a marcomms mission and secured their funding by:

- ▶ Finding a message that would raise the profile of data governance within the executive. (Hint: it needs to about money).
- ▶ Finding a C-level champion—then leveraging their sponsorship to drive data governance.
- ▶ Simplifying the data model to make it ‘real’ for business stakeholders .

Their campaign gained strong executive backing to build the platform and a data governance framework for Arup. The success of the programme depended on some key pillars:

- ▶ Executive-level data owners who take responsibility for assigning data managers, stewards and handlers

Q

How does a data services platform rise in investment priority from 20th to number 1 in one year?

A

Comms and the right architecture vision

Key accomplishments

- ▶ Raised the profile of the data services platform to become the top priority for 2017.
- ▶ Saw enormous support from corporate before the business units, but almost all have now embraced the solution.
- ▶ Have set the foundations for data monetisation.
- ▶ A Data Governance Working Group which includes board members and representatives from across regions and across lines of business
- ▶ The clear directive within the organisation that governance needs continual ‘shepherding’.

The Konvergent View

Everyone at the round tables could see how much effort it took to produce a big win like this. It's fair to say there was some envy around the room as all of those in attendance agreed—yet again—that exec sponsorship is key to making a pioneering initiative like Data services fly. We all celebrated Arup Architecture's success at making it over the last hurdle with the platform actually being used for the majority of business operations.

Key takeaways from the round table discussions:

- ▶ 80% of our attendees had no data services platform, but aspired to introduce one in the future.
- ▶ The discussions in the round table centred on the underlying technology, rather than the business imperatives for investing in a data services platform.

In some ways this is not a surprising statistic. If you've no dedicated data architecture in your organisation, you probably won't be able to begin this conversation yet. However, you probably also won't get funding for data architecture until you have a data strategy, so it's a chicken and egg situation.

To start building the business case, we suggest building strong links with the CIO and/or the director responsible for analytics and reporting to help get the momentum and dialogue to bring in the data architecture skills you need.

On this initiative - as any other - architecture needs to start communicating about risk and revenue to the business. If architecture are going to get funding, they need to start talking about the revenue streams that a good data platform can open up.

- ▶ The Arup Architecture team showed incredible persistence with this initiative. We really felt their pain when we found out the team was in place for 3+ years before they got the funding secured. We marvelled that they were able to sustain the team to produce the architectures and PoCs needed for the business case during what must have seemed like dark days.

If you're a Chief Architect and you would like to join us at our next event, please get in touch with **Jeremy Etherington**, Konvergent Founder-Director at jetherington@konvergent.co.uk to book your place at our next session.

Join us

The Konvergent RoundTable Community has developed into a dynamic network of chief architects who appreciate learning from, and alongside, their peers. Our guests had this to say about this event:



Tristan Newton,
Chief Architect,
Just Group

Wanted to say thank you for the session yesterday, I found it really useful and has certainly provoked some thoughts leading into actions on my side.



Richard Gray, Head
of Architecture, Kier

The session was very useful. In particular the journey that Kevan had been on ahead of Dai getting involved; in a strange way it invigorated me to keep going and persevere! Was also useful to realise that there were organisations in a similar struggle!