

Why Should Your Consulting Company Join the OMG?

The Value of OMG Membership for Consulting Companies

A White Paper by:

Vartan Piroumian, Enterprise Architect

August 2014

Copyright © The Object Management Group

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

Copyright © Vartan Piroumian

The author grants a non-exclusive license to the Object Management Group to publish this document in full on the World Wide Web (prime sites and mirrors) and in printed form. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the author.

TOGAF™ is a trademark, and The Open Group®, UNIX® is a registered trademark of The Open Group in the United States and other countries. The Enterprise Kaleidoscope™ is a registered trademark of Vartan Piroumian. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

CORBA®, MDA®, Model Driven Architecture®, UML®, and XMI® are registered trademarks and BPMN™, Business Process Management Notation™, Object Management Group™, OMG™, OMG Interface Definition Language (IDL)™, and Unified Modeling Language™ are trademarks of the Object Management Group, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
A Closer Look at the Problem	4
The Technology Fashion Industry	5
The Value of OMG Membership	6
The Nature of Consulting	7
The Value Proposition of Consulting Companies: Trusted Adviser or Job Shop?	8
The Serendipity Effect of OMG Membership	10
The Folly of the Fair Weather Member	11
Enterprise Architecture and Standards-Based Consulting - a Natural Fit	12
Summary	14
Conclusions	15
References	17
About the Author	17

Executive Summary

International standards organizations such as the Object Management Group® (OMG®) collaborate to produce information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) standards to help manage and ameliorate the overwhelming complexity of today's IS/IT landscape.

Yet, despite the availability of a wealth of robust open standards, only a fraction of commercial IS/IT products and services represent an informed, consistent, disciplined incorporation of these standards. This stark paucity in the adoption of standards has exacerbated the intrinsic complexity of the field. As a result companies have found it even more difficult to

- achieve interoperability,
- maximize their IT return on investment (ROI),
- achieve longevity of their IT investment,
- mitigate the risk of uncertainty resulting from uncoordinated change in IT,
- remain viable and competitive

The lack of standards adoption stems from the fact that the vast majority of IT-oriented product and service companies are not members of these standards organizations and thus do not participate in the standards creation process. The predominant reason is that many commercial organizations simply do not believe that their membership and *ongoing participation in the standards creation process* affords significant or meaningful value for them.

This white paper argues that membership and continuing, active participation in the standards creation process is not only beneficial to companies and corporations of any size who rely on IT, but proffers that said participation is necessary in order for the organization to maximize its value and position and remain viable and competitive in the long-term.

Notwithstanding, this paper's main thesis is that the risk of foregoing membership to consulting firms in particular is even greater than that experienced by product- and service-oriented companies. But the reward of membership and active participation is also greater.

This paper argues that membership in the OMG is the sensible choice. It is the world's largest organization of its kind, and specifically strives to cultivate ongoing participation and collaboration between the best minds and companies in the world, representing academia and industry, to create robust, relevant, practical IT standards. Membership therein has proven, measurable value.

Finally, this paper shows that consulting companies who actively participate in the standards definition process benefit the most and reap the greatest rewards, helping them become “top-tier” firms viewed as true strategic advisers strategists and trusted partners by their clients.

Keywords: Object Management Group, OMG, standards, model-driven architecture, consulting, enterprise architecture, EA, enterprise kaleidoscope™, modeling.

Introduction

In the information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) worlds, standards organizations world-wide experience a puzzling phenomenon: consulting companies both big and small choose to forego membership. As a result, they do not participate in the standards creation process sponsored by these organizations. The situation is notably peculiar given the *proven* value of membership in these globally established, well-respected, serious, professional organizations whose charter is to ensure the creation, identification, selection and proliferation of the best technologies, to standardize the practical manifestation and use of technology and to ensure that the standards collectively support interoperability among computing platforms world-wide.

This white paper presents an argument for membership in these organizations, particularly the Object Management Group (OMG) whose charter and activities are specifically focused, tailored and organized to encourage their member companies to participate in the standards creation process. The OMG focuses on producing standards that represent the collaboration of the best work of academia and industry, thereby resulting in robust, practical standards that are useful, pertinent and effective in the real world. Moreover, the OMG collaborates closely with the most prominent standards organizations worldwide.

This paper's thesis is that membership in the OMG (and potentially other standards organizations as well) is not only suitable for consulting firms in particular but perhaps *even more important* for consulting firms than for other types of companies that rely heavily on IT to ensure their continuing viability. But before we present that argument in detail, the reader will benefit from some contextual background on the OMG and on the general problem of the IT landscape today.

A Closer Look at the Problem

The OMG has observed that the large consulting companies in particular, such as the “Big 6” firms, move in and out of OMG membership. They seem to join the OMG when they have a particular need related to a specific client engagement. The OMG surmises that the need is for information that is only accessible to members. Upon completion of that project, the consulting firm cancels their membership. In fact, typically the consulting firm joins only if it can bill the price of membership to the project! This paper is not suggesting or implying that consulting companies should not bill the price of membership to their client. The reality is that the opportunity to bill membership price to a project might be a good catalyst or initial step along the membership journey. Rather, the point is that the value of your company's membership extends way beyond the value associated with any project in particular.

The information and experience that you gain through active participation in OMG activities is in fact *valuable to your entire enterprise*. And for consulting firms in particular, your ability to recognize and address the needs of your clients' *entire enterprise* is what distinguishes you from those firms that are really glorified temporary skilled worker placement firms.

In contrast, as you extend the horizon of your view to encompass the clients' extended enterprise, the benefits to your clients expand. You now have a more holistic view of the client's needs – the needs of their entire organization. You now are poised to engage the client at the highest levels and show value as a true strategic thinker, trusted adviser and partner to the company leaders. Your consulting firm is now seen as a leader, not just a supplier of temporary labor.

Moreover, as you apply the knowledge you gain as an active OMG member to every project throughout the enterprise, you more convincingly demonstrate the effectiveness of your knowledge across the

enterprise's entire landscape, and your work exemplifies the benefits of standards-based work and enterprise architecture (topics discussed in detail subsequently).

So why do these firms (possibly yours) opt for this “in-and-out” membership behavior? Obviously, if your consulting firm has gone in and out even once, it must see value in membership or it wouldn't join even for a single, short-term, project-related need. The value might be timely access to technical standards information ahead of the availability of that information to the general public, access to the definitive source of a standard, access to the industry experts working on standards or simply the credibility gained with the client who sees that their consultants are OMG members. Regardless, your consulting firm must see some recognizable value in membership or it wouldn't join at all.

Nevertheless what your firm is missing if it's engaging in this sporadic membership behavior is the very real, quantifiable value and benefit of *continuing, sustained membership and regular participation* in OMG activities such as the quarterly OMG technical meetings.

IBM, for example, has been a stalwart flagship OMG member of the highest level since its inception 25 years ago. IBM's uninterrupted presence and active participation have enabled them to positively affect the industry via the OMG's standards process. They have successfully incorporated some of their own R&D labs' best research into many *open standards* created under the auspices of the OMG. IBM's example represents the hallmark behind the motivation for the creation of the OMG and also how the OMG still works today.

And, if the IBM anecdote is not convincing enough, the reader need only consider the pitfalls of today's IT landscape and the difficulties and challenges of navigating it to appreciate the value of continual, active participation and involvement with some of the industry's best and brightest individuals and corporations. In that context, the adage that “one cannot do something really well by only dabbling in it ephemerally” is poignantly appropriate with respect to today's IT industry.

The Technology Fashion Industry

Today's IS/IT industry experiences ongoing, repetitive disconcerting, predictable rehashing of the same “technology” and the deleterious effect and confusion it causes at the expense of true progress. Dr. Richard Soley, CEO and Chairman of the OMG, has said that

“... the IT industry has a prevalence of fads more typical of the fashion industry than of an engineering discipline...”

Not only is he astutely correct, but he is not alone in his observation. Other highly respected individuals in the field echo Dr. Soley's viewpoint. In a statement of similar sentiment, Ivar Jacobson and Ian Spence have said

“...people need to stop constantly repackaging and re-branding old ideas just for the sake of it. Instead they should focus on helping people understand how to build great software.”

A discussion of the impetus behind the cyclical re-hashing of things that are often purported to be advances in “technology” are beyond the scope of this paper (reserved for another upcoming white paper by the author). Nevertheless the effects thereof are poignantly germane here.

As a consequence of the relatively short lifetimes of IS/IT products, platforms and environments, any company that relies on IT faces the difficult problem of constantly rethinking their IT strategy in order to have the best chance of serving the needs of its business and remain viable in the face of competition. Moreover, the incessant flux in the IT landscape – change that is usually not for the better but for the worse – often wreaks havoc in the IT arena and further exacerbates a company's ability to

intelligently and safely plot a safe course through the IT morass.

Amidst this hazardous landscape, how can any company overcome the plethora of challenges, the need to constantly evaluate competing platforms and services, the relentless onslaught of change, uncertainty, risk and so forth? How can a company anticipate or identify with any semblance of reasonable accuracy the future direction of technology? How can a company gain greater return on investment (ROI) of its IT expenditure? How can a company extend the lifetime of its IT investment by making the right strategic technology decisions, thereby reducing its technology churn and spend? How can a company mitigate the risk of making the wrong technology decisions?

The Value of OMG Membership

These questions and more are aptly addressed in the OMG white paper entitled “Why Should My End-User Company Join OMG”, written by Dr. Jon Siegel, Vice President of technology transfer at the OMG. That paper lists the following six points as the primary benefits of OMG membership.

- Help shape industry standards and vendor products
- Leverage work and knowledge of the industry's best minds
- Plan, purchase and implement far in front of the curve
- Stay ahead of your competition
- Enable your company to be seen as an industry leader
- Save money (architecture pays back)

The paper you're now reading won't attempt to rehash the very cogent, incisive case that Dr. Siegel makes in explaining how one derives the above benefits from OMG membership. However we will emphasize that the OMG is not about creating things that are fashionable. OMG standards reflect neither the latest “cool” thing nor any newfangled purported “technology” nor even the latest fad upon whose bandwagon the entire industry seems to jump like children hopping from square to square during a game of hopscotch.

On the contrary the OMG represents quite the antithesis of the deleterious forces that conjure the obstacles to true industry progress. The OMG creates globally relevant, well-thought out technical standards for the practical advancement of information technology. Its coordinated set of meaningful standards represent the best experiences of academia and industry, ensure interoperability, and offer robustness and longevity. In this way it helps companies negotiate the gauntlet of challenges, obstacles, confusion, uncertainty and risk that they face every day when using IT to meet the needs of their business.

Dr. Siegel's white paper gives a clear exposition of the benefits of OMG membership available to companies that fall into one or both of the following two categories:

- Technology creators
- Technology users

The former category represents those companies that create information technology or foundational IT products. Typically systems companies comprise this category. They create platforms upon which applications, products and services can be built.

The typical company that falls into the latter category builds applications, products, solutions or services upon the technology platforms produced by the companies in the former category above. These products might be a company web site (both internet and intranet for use by its customers and internal employees, respectively), an internal IT system (either created in-house or purchased as a third-

party product), a set of cloud services, distributed systems or services or even a suite of software products that clients install and operate in their own premises.

The companies in both of these categories must ensure that their products (and the companies themselves)

- interoperate with other products,
- show value – maximize return on investment (ROI),
- stay abreast of the “technology curve” at the very least,
- distinguish themselves from the competition.

Dr. Siegel's paper provides copious detail on how OMG membership enables companies to achieve the above goals. An important inference of Dr. Siegel's thesis is that the above goals can be aptly described as the measures by which a company remains competitive and viable – the ultimate goal of any company whether it be for profit, non-profit or not-for-profit.

But these goals are also pertinent – nay, *imperative* – for your consulting firm. In fact, this paper argues that membership in bona fide standards organizations such as the OMG, and continual, active participation in their standards creation process, is even more important for your consulting company than for technology- and product-oriented types of companies. To understand why, the reader need only look at the nature of consulting and the value proposition and challenges to consulting companies.

The Nature of Consulting

True consulting companies act as trusted advisers to their clients. The advisory role spans every facet of management consulting, business consulting and technical and technology consulting. Practically, the consulting engagement can involve tactical advice on short-term planning, longer-term strategic planning, forecasting, and so forth related to both business and technical domains. The reality is that there is a close association between business and technical consulting as a consequence of IT's charter to serve the needs of the business. After all, technology is the primary mechanism that supports every facet of business operations. Thus a typical consulting arrangement almost always includes consulting in technology domains.

Your consulting company's “product” is knowledge. Clients look to your consulting firm to help them make informed decisions about technology to enable them to realize or maximize the ROI in their IT investment. Better ROI means more profit, more cash reserves, reduced opportunity cost and reduced risk. A sound investment and better ROI imply cost efficiencies that eliminate the inefficient churn of technology investment that results from impulsive reaction to IT fads. Eliminating this churn eliminates the constant “re-tooling” of infrastructure, retraining of human capital, and so forth. All of these factors in turn help your client remain flexible, viable and competitive.

Distilling the above points leaves us with the overarching crux of the matter: your consulting firm must help its clients remain competitive – or better yet surpass their competition. Clients engage your consulting firm for its knowledge and expertise in helping them achieve or retain their competitive edge.

So how can the true advisory type of consulting firms do this without up-to-date knowledge about technology, knowledge of future direction of technology and standards (as opposed to guesses), and so forth? How do consulting firms acquire this knowledge? How do they stay ahead of their clients and thus show value for their services?

The Value Proposition of Consulting Companies: Trusted Adviser or Job Shop?

Companies that provide true consulting services can only show real value to clients in a few ways.

- True client advisory and strategic consulting
- Contracting and providers of temporary labor

The first category comprises the upper echelon of consulting firms who have true cutting edge knowledge of industry trends and direction, technology and expertise. These are the firms which are capable of providing true client advisory services based on strategic knowledge of future trends, not guesswork.

The second group of “consultants” are really contractor shops which provide temporary labor to their clients. These companies have a variety of skilled staff including enterprise architects (EA), software architects and developers and so forth. But their staff are skilled in the “meat and potatoes” mainstream technical platforms of the day. Clients engage these companies to provide temporary skilled labor.

In contrast, the true consulting firms have the gravitas and the breadth and depth of knowledge to educate their clients about the leading edge in any number of areas including the client's business domain, management consulting, finance, tax, program and project management, technology, systems integration, enterprise architecture (EA) and so forth. They tell their clients where their IT needs to go to remain competitive in the future.

How can they do this without having real knowledge of where the IT industry is heading? How can your consulting firm advise its clients with concrete knowledge of trends and future direction if it's not “ahead of the technology curve”? How can your consultancy serve as a true thought leader and provide trustworthy strategic advice if its knowledge only represents the present state? How can your firm help its clients maximize ROI, reduce expenditure, extend the lifetime of their technology investments, avoid wasting money on dead-end alternatives, and stay flexible in a highly fluid landscape?

The answer is “*by joining and participating in standards organizations like the OMG*”. Similar to the way that the formulation of hypotheses in science follows empirical observation, in IT the creation of ideas and leadership follow the acquisition of knowledge. Standards organizations are the source of knowledge for technology direction, interoperability, longevity of IT investment and so forth.

In the world of technology, the OMG is the largest standards organization of its kind. Its specific charter is to coordinate the efforts of those commercial companies, universities, research labs and even users of technology to produce the best standards in IT. The OMG in particular provides a forum, technical clearing house and repository of knowledge for the collaboration and coordination of the activities of its member companies, which include research institutions, universities, international standards organizations and technology companies. If your firm is part of this group you will hear about the future before it arrives – well ahead of your competition who is not part of the OMG. And that information will be accurate because the OMG member companies are the ones *defining* and *creating* the technology of the future, not guessing about what it might be.

Moreover, as a participating member, you will know about that future sometimes years in advance of the mainstream public. When the public first hears about a new technology or standard, it has most likely been in the university or corporate research lab (or both) for years, and it's been in an OMG working group committee for at least two years. By the time the average technologist hears about it in a conversation with colleagues in the local pub, reads about it on the Internet or spots a new book in his or her favorite technical book store (either physical or web front) it's way too late to be “ahead of the

curve”.

The disadvantage of being behind the knowledge curve is particularly striking and deleterious for consulting companies whose clients solicit their services for their purported ability to be true leaders, strategic thinkers and trusted advisers. If your consulting firm first learns of a new technology or industry trend or impending standard at the same time everyone else does, namely when it is first introduced in the mainstream, then you are just another mainstream public entity surprised by the sudden frenzy of activity to adopt that new technology. When that moment arrives, like everyone else, you scramble to hire staff with the new skills. Or you ask your employees to learn those new skills on their own. If this is the case, you've already failed as a leader.

The conundrum for your consulting firm is how to adequately train their staff and do it faster than your clients can train their staff? Who conducts the training? Who is creating the training courses? I'll tell you who: *those people who stay ahead of the mainstream by being continually involved with the leading edge organizations, those who don't guess where the industry is going but who know its direction – those that participate in standards organizations like the OMG.*

If your consulting firm is not part of that circle of technology definers and creators, how likely is it that your staff will even be able to know *what* technologies to learn? And if your consulting firm is not ahead, but also scrambling to learn along with everyone else, your clients will discover it soon enough.

If this scenario comes to pass, your consulting firm ends up being no different than a contract firm or “job shop” who places temporary skilled labor. You are no longer in that elite echelon of consulting firms that command the highest levels of respect or that command the greatest profits for their services. Your consulting firm has lost its stature as an elite trusted adviser, leader and strategist that can map a clear path for your clients.

So the risk to consulting companies that don't participate in organizations like the OMG is not only very real, but greater than the risk to other companies. The typical company who just uses technology to create their web presence, intranet or internal IS/IT system or what-have-you does not have the same level of pressure. Despite the industry hype, in most cases there is no real need for an arbitrary company to reimplement their web site or their back-end systems using the latest “cool” programming language, server-side platform, web framework or what-have-you. If their IS/IT systems and environment were *well-architected* in the first place, the company can keep those systems operating for years. Let's face it, despite the selective memory of certain forces in the IT world, *most of the world's business* is still supported by IS/IT systems hosted on mainframes running software written in COBOL, a programming language and environment that's now more than 50 years old!

Nevertheless, your consulting firm must address its clients needs. If a client wants to use IT to gain competitive advantage, for example by modernizing their IS/IT systems, then that is the task at hand for your consulting firm. In this case, you must still be on the leading edge, which means your consulting firm needs to run faster and stay ahead of the pack – and ahead of your clients.

Once again the author invites you to consider the case of IBM's Global Business Services, which enjoys the highest levels of respect from companies all around the globe as a trusted adviser and partner. Notwithstanding the historical strength of IBM's own corporate R&D campuses world-wide, their clients know that IBM is an active supporter of open standards. Those clients have faith in IBM's ability to lead their clients down the right path as a true enterprise-level leader.

But even if your consulting company is more like a contract job placement firm, it must remain ahead of its clients. After all, why would the client hire a consulting firm if it can't offer any intellectual property beyond the knowledge of the client's technical staff?

The typical reason is the potential advantage of using temporary labor. The client saves the overhead

cost of hiring and supporting a full-time employee (health benefits, retirement plan contribution match, office space overhead). But, as the old adage says “there's nothing free in life”. The “cost” to the company is the eventual loss of the knowledgeable temporary staff member. Perhaps this model works in some cases, but the benefit is not a result that can be predicted with certainty in all cases.

And clients still have certain expectations that their consulting firm knows how to provide value beyond temporary labor. The typical client still expects the consultants who are “on the ground” to be able to produce IT artifacts that will carry them forward into the future and reap all the benefits discussed previously such as ROI, longevity, interoperability and so forth. So, even for the temporary placement firms, staying ahead of the client is important. When you add the subjective factor of perception of value for cost, there is always pressure for consulting firms to deliver.

The Serendipity Effect of OMG Membership

Now that this paper has (hopefully) convinced you of the importance of joining the OMG and enjoying the benefits of staying ahead of the technology curve, let's look at the full extent of those rewards. Dr. Siegel's white paper, to which this paper has made several references, says that companies that are OMG members

“...participate in writing the standards [and] have information about the standard a year before it becomes public...”.

Another way of interpreting the above quote is to say that one benefit to all companies who participate is that they are positioned to become industry leaders.

Contrast the value of your consulting firm being seen as a leader with the typical product or service company. As long as an IT product or service *delivers as expected*, do its consumers really care what technologies were used to implement that product or service? Probably not. However, for your consulting firm, the relevance and implications are far greater.

Your clients are the ones *implementing* systems, not simply using them. Their perception – and rightfully so – is that their IS/IT landscape must be able to accommodate the technology of the future in order to maximize ROI, reduce investment churn, reduce risk, obtain longevity of their IT investment – in short *to remain competitive*.

If your consulting firm can achieve this stature of being seen as the trusted partner who can deliver this kind of advantage, the results will be particularly rewarding for you. Naturally, leaders enjoy respect, trust and client affinity. But this is not the benefit itself. Your consulting firm, now viewed as a true leader, will experience an increase in its consulting engagements, and most likely the duration of those engagements will increase as your clients understand the value that you bring to them. And as a result of your OMG participation and the advantage it gives you, your consulting firm's stature matures and solidifies. And your firm's maturation leads to more involved, longer lasting, lucrative engagements. And then, your client's competitors want to know how you did it. So their competitors solicit your services too. And there you have it: the serendipitous effects and benefits of the positive feedback cycle.

An important point related to the maturation process is that the OMG maintains all of its standards for as long as they are being actively used in the industry or commercial settings. Thus, if a consultancy – such as yours – has advised its clients to use a certain OMG standard, they will be guaranteed that as long as it is in use, OMG members will be maintaining or creating revisions that will work with the environment in which your clients have invested. Your clients will continue to enjoy the ROI and stability that results from the continuing support of a good standard, and they will continue to save

money and time when upgrading their IS/IT infrastructure over many years.

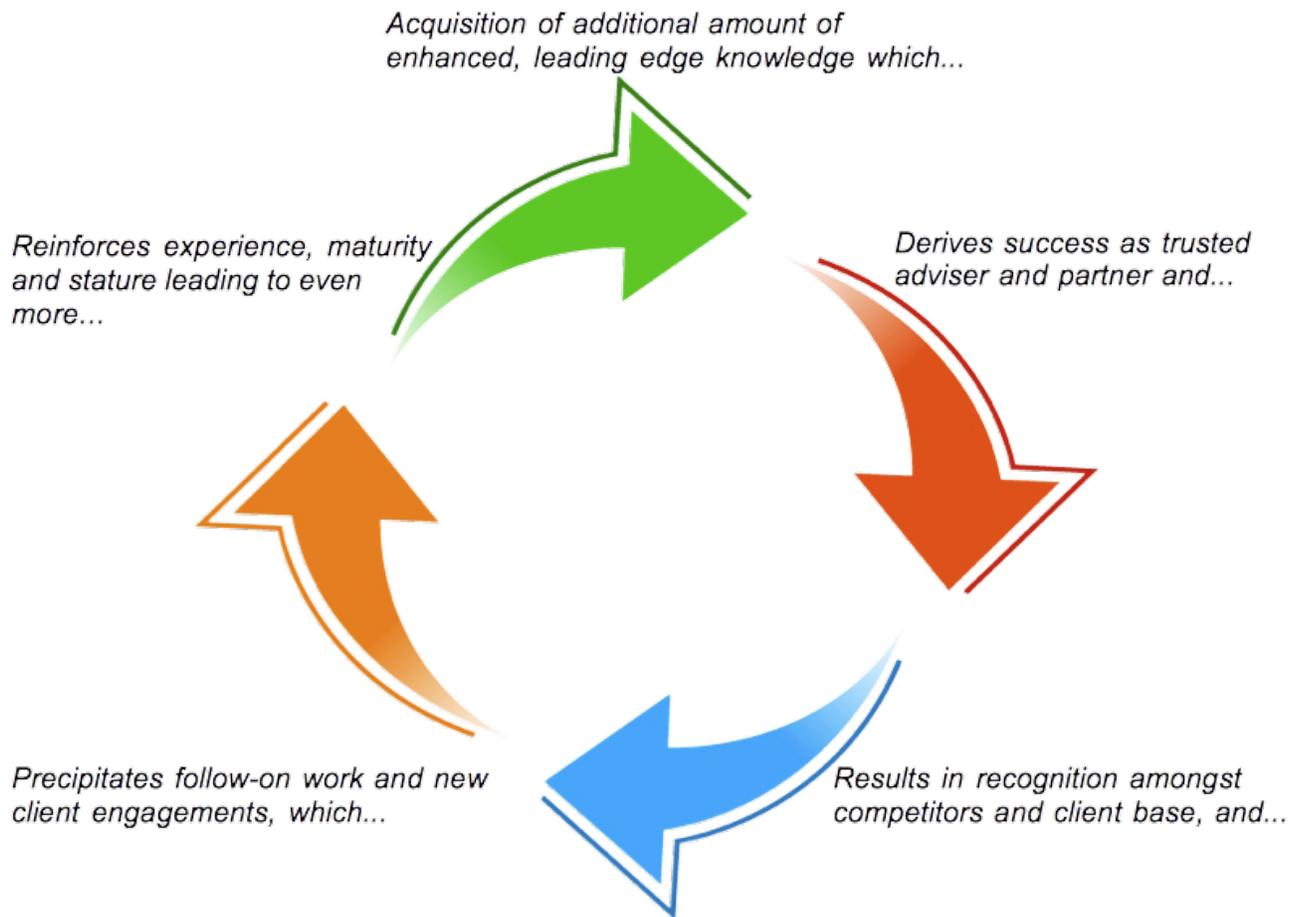


Illustration 1: OMG membership engenders increasing success via the positive feedback cycle.

The Folly of the Fair Weather Member

The beginning of this paper highlighted an interesting observation of the OMG, namely that consulting companies move in and out of OMG membership. Presumably they use their membership to get access to some specific piece of information, perhaps a standard that is in the review process and not yet publicly available.

In order for that consulting firm to be aware of the standard – or the pending, non-finalized, non-ratified standard – they must have read about it somewhere. That means that the standard has already been through a lengthy cycle of creation, inception, elaboration and finalization. So, once again, if your consulting firm wasn't a participant in the standards process, it's already behind the knowledge curve when that standard is published. (See Dr. Siegel's paper for his description of the time line of standards development)

It's more than likely that your consulting firm would have benefited by participating in the standards creation process. It might employ experts in areas comprising business or technical domains. Who better to make the types of determinations regarding what constitutes a good standard than those

experts? That is the whole point of the OMG's structure as an organization that encourages participation of its members.

The “fair weather” member who moves in and out of membership misses out on the continuity of OMG membership and the ability to get and stay ahead of the knowledge curve and ahead of their competition. They're really only hurting themselves. For these companies who use the OMG as a technical library, checking out a standard when needed, by definition means that they are not the leaders but the followers. They are not the “professors” doing the research and then writing the textbook; they are the students studying the text book that has already been written.

And your astute, sophisticated clients will know this. In the same way that you look for the credentials of credibility when seeking an attorney, dentist, doctor, home improvement contractor, and so forth, so do companies consider the reputation of the consulting firms they hire. The “fair weather” members don't appear on the list of OMG member companies. And their people don't have close personal relationships with some of the industry's best minds, many of whom are active OMG participants.

The OMG has received feedback from consulting firms that they don't like the term “membership fee”. Perhaps the issue is that consulting firms don't see themselves as *participants* in the standards creation process. Instead, perhaps they simply view themselves as *consumers* of the standards albeit ahead of the general public.

Even if your consulting firm does not wish to participate in the standards creation process, membership is valuable. The OMG does not require member companies to work on any standards definition. Members can do as much or as little as they like with their membership. They can participate via email distribution lists, or attend quarterly meetings in person, join specific working groups, write thought papers such as this one (the author is an enthusiastic participant in OMG activities) or simply read the intellectual capital produced by OMG members. In short, there is something for everyone – “member” or “sponsor”. But you need to *be* a member to have access to the wealth of knowledge represented by the OMG members.

Enterprise Architecture and Standards-Based Consulting - a Natural Fit

By now you've read several times that the true consulting firms are those capable of acting as the trusted partners who provide leadership to their clients, helping them maximize ROI of their investments, extend the longevity of their IT investments, and achieve flexibility and mitigation of risk through real knowledge of the future of technology innovation instead of speculation. These firms can set their clients on trajectories that will result in the best chance of continuing success, viability and competitiveness. Practically speaking how do they do this?

Consulting firms that provide this kind of consulting are engaged at the highest echelons of their clients. The software engineers, data center operators, database administrators or project manager are not the ones doing this kind of work. Instead it is the true client advisers who actually take on the responsibility of creating the vision of the client's future. But who are the individuals who accomplish this? While domain experts (for example an expert in health care or energy or what-have-you) provide insight to “the business” it is the enterprise architects (EA) who really bring to fruition the end result.

The EA plays an important role in consulting, one that is often the cornerstone role of an entire account team. The EA is the one who draws together the work of the various specialists – domain experts, program and project managers, account managers, business analysts, data center specialists, software developers, organizational change management specialists, operations management, risk management

specialists and so forth.

More importantly, the EA might just be the one whose role elicits the greatest perception of value to your clients. The EA becomes the representative of your consulting company – the single most visible face of your consulting company in the eyes of your clients.

It is the EA who is best suited to recognize the vision *and* plot the client's most favorable course through hostile, turbid seas and successfully navigate the whimsical technology landscape and the morass of uncertainty and risk. This might strike the reader as a bold statement, so it's useful to understand *why* EA is best suited to coalesce all of the orthogonal viewpoints of the various stakeholders and specialists: the executive board, the business, domain experts, operations, finance, manufacturing, compliance, risk, R&D, IS/IT and so forth.

The EA is the individual best suited to operate the metaphorical kaleidoscope. The EA turns the lens of the kaleidoscope to focus the view to examine the enterprise from the most appropriate viewpoint for the task at hand. By turning the kaleidoscope's lens 'round and 'round, the EA constructs an integrated view of the entire enterprise comprised of all of the various complementary viewpoints representing the various roles mentioned above. The EA's perspective is the one that incorporates the knowledge of all the other roles.

The EA can thus form the single most informed, *integrated* view of the entire enterprise and understand its needs. Couple this position with specific, vetted knowledge of the future landscape of IT (obtained via your consulting firm's OMG membership) and you have a synergy that is greater than the sum of its parts. The EA can best assess *how* to use IT to support the business in all the ways discussed up to now: suitability to the needs of the business, efficiency, maximization of ROI, longevity of the IT investment, flexibility, risk mitigation and so forth.

And it is the EA who is naturally a good fit for regular participation in standards organizations such as the OMG. After all, if the EA can best analyze and comprehend how IT can best support the business, then the EA is also well-positioned to identify the technologies and the standards that are most suitable, relevant and appropriate around which to build an IS/IT infrastructure. Moreover, the EA is best suited to suggest new standards as a result of being “on the ground” and seeing what practical, real-world challenges his or her clients face in their efforts to define the technical and technological strategy that will enable them to remain viable and competitive.

All of the popular EA frameworks and methods such as the UK Ministry of Defence Architecture Framework (MODAF), the United States Department of Defense Architecture Framework (DoDAF) and The Open Group Architecture Framework (TOGAF) as well as others all specify and define the collaboration between business and technical architecture domains: business, information systems (data and applications) and technology. Put another way, it is the purview of the EA, who employs these EA methods and frameworks, to understand technology and use it appropriately to support the business.

The Synergy Project conducted under the auspices of the OMG and the Open Group successfully demonstrated the powerful outcome that resulted from the synergy between the application of enterprise architecture methods with the use of open standards. It mapped the EA methods to elements of OMG specifications, and leveraged modeling standards created under the auspices of the OMG.

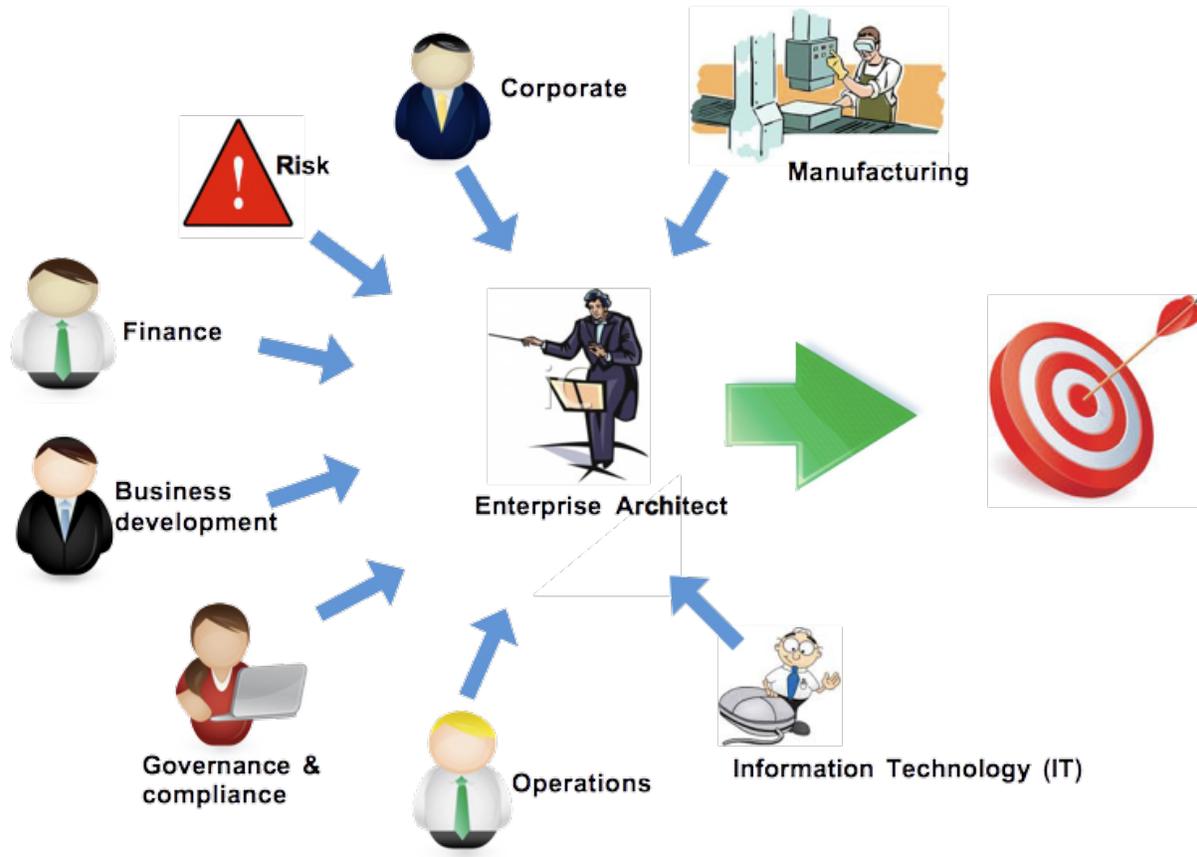


Illustration 2: The enterprise architect is the conductor of the symphony, the one who orchestrates the collaboration between all parties, coordinating and coalescing the specialized knowledge of each specialist towards an outcome that serves the overarching needs of the entire enterprise.

Summary

Consulting companies have greater challenges than product- or service-oriented companies. Nevertheless, fortuitously, those who join and participate in the OMG also experience an even greater advantage and benefit. Clients and potential clients view their consulting firm as a true leader, client adviser, strategist and trusted partner. OMG membership and active ongoing participation give your consulting company the ammunition to really deliver the expectations of your clients. The reward is unprecedented levels of recognition, respect, trust and increased clientele. There is no greater advantage than being ahead of the pack, especially in a sea of change and uncertainty. The old adage says “the one-eyed man in the land of the blind is king”.

Increasingly, consulting firms are looked at with skepticism. Clients are increasingly cost-sensitive. Global outsourcing continues to erode heretofore lucrative profit margins and unchallenged market dominance. Today, clients expect more results for less money. Consulting companies face even greater challenges than product or technology companies. While product companies have only themselves as potential critics, every client scrutinizes their consulting company, constantly evaluating

whether they're getting value for their money.

What better way to show your value than to be able to tell your client that they are not wasting a single penny on dead-end technical or technological alternatives? What better way to show value than to demonstrate to your client that their investment will last or that, looking retrospectively, what you told them years earlier was in fact true and that they did indeed save money in the long run? After such a positive experience, guess which consulting company they'll engage next time?

Consulting companies have an intrinsic disadvantage compared to technology creators. Their charter is not creating technology. They are not doing R&D which represents the future direction of the IT world. So they do not have first-hand access to the latest research. Thus they need to find other ways to be ahead of the companies who are creating or using technology.

Consulting companies have to work hard to glean insight into the future direction of the industry. Amidst this foreboding, what could be better than a sure bet, *knowing* where the industry is going? OMG membership gives your consulting firm this advantage. Almost all of the major world-wide technology creators, systems platform companies, defense systems contractors, aerospace corporations, utility companies, banks, insurance companies and many of the kinds and stature of companies whose products form the computing infrastructure that “runs the world” are OMG members.

Even in a world of competition they collaborate under the auspices of the OMG to create these technologies of the future. They collaborate because they, too, want to ensure that their work is not wasted and does not become irrelevant but, rather, that it will indeed help comprise the technology medium that forms the world's computing infrastructure. Part of that success is interoperability. So even competitors are OMG members, and, finding common ground, work mutually to ensure that neither they nor their competitors become an isolated archipelago that can't interoperate in a connected world.

Conclusions

The benefits of OMG membership and participation for any IT-oriented company are clear and *proven*. By being an ongoing, participating member of the OMG your firm will be able to

- maximize the ROI of your IT investment
- reduce the opportunity cost of IS systems and IT infrastructure
- extend the lifetime of your IT investment
- increase your flexibility and adaptability in the face of change and uncertainty
- reduce your company's risk by avoiding dead-end alternative IT strategies
- collaborate with and learn from some of the industry's best minds and companies

Companies who build their products around good standards such as the open standards created under the auspices of the OMG and the international standards organization with which it closely aligns and cooperates, enjoy all of the above benefits. And the OMG's multi-platform specifications are designed to support the needs of *any and all* businesses who build an IT capability at *any* level of extent or complexity.

But the *additional* benefits to consulting companies are the ability to

- compete in timeliness of knowledge acquisition compared to the R&D and technology development companies
- be seen as a true leader by clients looking for leadership through the IT morass
- gain credibility as a true client adviser, informed strategist and trusted partner to their clients

- justify the cost of hiring a top-tier consulting company

The OMG is the largest standards organization of its kind in the world. Now in its 25th year, it has proven its ability to achieve the goals of its original charter: to bring companies together to create a harmonious, orchestrated international standards creation process and the standards themselves.

In today's world of ever-increasing pressure to justify expense, show value and ROI for expenditure, mitigate the risk of uncertainty in a whimsical technology arena, the OMG will be your ally and trusted partner in the same way that clients look to your consulting company to be their thought leader, trusted adviser and ally.

References

Michael E. Porter, “Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industry and Competitors”, New York : Free Press, c. 1998, ISBN-10: 0684841460.

Michael E. Porter, “Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance”, New York : Free Press, c. 1998, ISBN-10: 0684841465.

Jon Siegel, Ph.D., “Why Should My End-User Company Join OMG?”, c. Object Management Group, 2013.

Brady Orand, Julie Villareal, “Foundations of IT Service Management with ITIL 2011: ITIL Foundation Course in a Book”, c. August 2011. ISBN-10: 1466231327.

Ivar Jacobson, Bertrand Meyer, Richard Soley, “Software Engineering Method and Theory – A Vision Statement”, <http://blog.paluno.uni-due.de/semat.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/SEMAT-vision.pdf>

Ivar Jacobson, Ian Spence, “Why We Need a Theory for Software Engineering”, Dr. Dobbs Journal, c. 2009, <http://www.drdoobs.com/architecture-and-design/why-we-need-a-theory-for-software-engine/220300840>

F. Warren McFarlan, James L. McKenney, and Philip Pyburn, “The information archipelago — plotting a course,” Harvard Business Review 61, no. 1: 145-156, 1983.

Chris Armstrong, Judith Cerenzia, Ed Harrington, Pete Rivett, Fred Waskiewicz, “TOGAF ADM/MDA Synergy Project”, The Open Group, c. 2007, <http://modeldriven.com/Synergy%20Project%20White%20Paper.pdf>

Ministry of Defence Architecture Framework, United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, c. December 2012, <https://www.gov.uk/mod-architecture-framework>.

The Open Group Architecture Framework Version 9.1, The Open Group, c. 2014, <http://pubs.opengroup.org/architecture/togaf9-doc/arch/>.

United States Department of Defense Architecture Framework Version 2.0, c. August 2010, http://dodcio.defense.gov/Portals/0/Documents/DODAF/DoDAF_v2-02_web.pdf.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the OMG staff members who made this paper possible. In particular, Diane Ebrahimian first proposed the concept for this paper during the OMG technical meeting in Santa Clara, CA in 2013. Her comments, insight and detailed review of this paper have proven to be an invaluable contribution to making it better. The author also sincerely thanks Richard Soley, OMG chairman and CEO, for his very detailed review of the paper. More than 30 years of personal and professional friendship have re-affirmed the author's opinion that, despite Richard's wit and charm, his comments are always intelligent, incisive and relevant. I truly thank him for his obviously careful reading of the paper amidst his frenetically busy travel schedule and headlong immersion and ongoing commitment to continually improve the OMG and the community it serves. Finally, the author would like to thank Mr. Jay LaTournerie for his dedicated review and suggestions. His viewpoints reflect his insight and expertise in economics, program management and risk, all issues that the enterprise architecture must address.

About the Author

Vartan Piroumian is an Enterprise Architect who consults with companies across the globe, helping them use technology effectively to support their business. Mr. Piroumian's formal training is in computer science, and his journey from software engineer to software architect to Enterprise Architect has given him a unique perspective on the importance of using technology appropriately and effectively to serve the needs of the business. Mr. Piroumian has numerous publications, including technical books, journal and periodical articles and white papers, and also conducts training in the areas of EA, risk management and various technical subjects. He is also a fervent supporter of *good* standards and, thus, is both an enthusiastic supporter of, and a regular participant in, OMG activities. Mr. Piroumian can be reached at vartan@alum.mit.edu.