



# Case study

Rapid growth through the convergence of many teams and systems into a single larger organization had left Becta struggling to keep with their diverse and undocumented infrastructure, let alone to control and manage it's future development.

Enterprise Architecture brought immediate relief.

### **The background.**

Becta had developed from a small agency to a senior strategic partner of the DfES in a matter of just a few years.

It was ironic that an organisation tasked with defining a way forward for technology in the Education arena had themselves fallen foul of rapid growth and the convergence of too many diverse systems and teams.

Finding and maintaining sufficient skills to keep all of the systems running, especially in a competitive labour market was a continuous headache. Some parts of the infrastructure were already being described as a spaghetti bowl.

### **The challenge.**

As a result of their strategic leadership position, it was imperative that Becta retained the flexibility to nurture different viewpoints and to support diverse initiatives as opposed to implying prescriptive or rigid rules on it's people.

By the same token, it was equally imperative that it's systems, some of which played a critical part in education, worked well and worked consistently and were maintainable over the long haul.

Previous attempts to develop strategic documents and to impose various rigorous regimes had not only failed, but had caused unrest and tension

between busy departments. With deadlines to meet and unconnected stakeholders to satisfy.

*" I simply can't hire the level of skills I need to keep the systems working on the pay scales I am allowed to offer and as soon as I train somebody up they leave and treble their salary. I need to reduce complexity not increase it"*

—Ian Piper Head of Internet Services

Ed Taaffe worked with directors and senior management to agree a framework that would work within the organisation.

The basis for the solution was the "Zachman" framework for Enterprise Architecture. This framework helps the organisation to develop it's strategy as a team exercise with a clear shared understanding of the issues faced at different levels in the organisation from strategic planning to process, external influences and of course technical challenges.

Having agreed informally a version of Enterprise architecture that would be acceptable and valuable to the organisation, the job of defining and agreeing it was achieved via an initial workshop to paint the outline, a number of weeks collating strategic documents and plans that existed and a series of five workshops with appropriate stakeholders to finalise the agreements, agree terms of reference and put in place the governance structures.

With a framework in place and a mutual understanding between stakeholders, work got under way quickly to eradicate some of the duplications, co-ordinate plans and harvest low hanging fruit in terms of agreements to phase out or stop high expense/low return systems.

*" Every IT director faces the same dilemma at one time or another.*

*The business must remain agile and it must make certain changes within specific time windows that do not support good planning and ideal technical architecture.*

*Duplications are inevitable and as quality slips maintenance costs rise very rapidly.*

*Different stakeholders will hold different views of what is priority and the job of standing in their path when they are demanding the unreasonable can be daunting if not career threatening.*

*An initiative that every IT director can take with a considerable level of success, is to put in place the enterprise architecture.*

*This is mostly a framework within which senior stakeholders can agree as a group with the it director on future plans for the IT infrastructure reducing the levels of poorly planned investment and reducing the potential for disagreement"* Ed Taaffe