

Software AG Government Solution's IT Portfolio Management Helps Federal Agencies Run Efficiently

The platform allows apps to be managed and provides more oversight into agencies' data.

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Why is IT portfolio management so critical to government?

It is actually critical for the executives and the agencies to have their portfolios ready for them to make sure that their IT environment lines up with their mission requirements and not vice versa. It's important that their portfolio data gives them

the confidence to make better decisions and therefore the data in the portfolio has to be accurate and up to date.

The thing that we're seeing with the portfolios these days, it's not just about applications and systems. There are a whole lot of data points in the portfolios. It's growing every day, so the portfolios have to accommodate all of those areas. There are many policies that are shaping the IT portfolio activities, and mainly the mandates and directives such as FEAF (or the Federal Enterprise Architecture Framework), the FITARA legislation just to help you account financial accountability, and then most recently, the technology business management (TBM) methodology, which was going to bring in a consistent approach to cost management. These mandates are having the executives and the portfolio managers take stock in their data to make sure that it is in a consistent format. It is in a consistent access point so that they can use it and readily get to it to make decisions.

Heretofore, the portfolios were built around the applications, and so you've had siloed applications and siloed pieces of the portfolio, but right now it's growing and growing so that the decisions have to be aligned, the mandates and directors are bringing consistency to portfolio activities, and so we're seeing that as a key requirement.

How is IT portfolio management helping government?

IT portfolio management has been around since the early 2000s. At that time, it was focused on applications and systems. It was important to understand how applications talk to each other, and it was important to understand the technologies that they were built on. Since they were built in silos, they evolved in silos. What that means is that they were built and documented and cared for in their own little project teams.

What we have now is that those aging systems are getting older. The documentation and the data describing those continues to age, and in essence, these are the prime targets for modernization. What we see is that even though the legacy systems are working, there's a dwindling supply of resources to help keep those systems alive. And like today, enterprise architecture has driven from a graphical modeling approach toward more of a data-driven approach. What this means is that the data is coming from a variety of areas and when we ask for a visualization, tools today are taking that data and turning it into visualizations or

pictures of what the data looks like. Now you can see what your data is telling you.

With all of that — and the portfolios are growing and the activities are growing — we're seeing more data points now that are just almost impossible to manage in traditional spreadsheets or older tools. So, we see the portfolio management evolving along with the enterprise architecture disciplines in which portfolio management is based.

Being data driven means that the agency can assign responsibilities to the portfolio owners and they can take and segment their portfolio owners according to the architecture landscapes. We have the business architecture, we have the application architecture, we have information architecture, even the technology portfolios, but now we're seeing new portfolios being added to those landscapes. Just recently, TBM was adopted as a mandate for government agencies on managing their financial cost. That introduced a service portfolio, so now we have another portfolio, we have risk portfolios and also planning and roadmapping portfolios that we have to manage.

It's not enough just to have individual portfolios, but the data points that describe those portfolios come from all across the IT landscape. Being data-driven means that that data is in the repository, it's available, it's kept up to date, and it generates consistent visuals no matter who is asking to see that data.

Who should be involved in IT portfolio management and planning decisions?

Years ago, enterprise architecture started off as a handful of people with the title of enterprise architect. Portfolio managers, again, they sort of followed that, "Here's a portfolio management team for application, here's a portfolio management team for services, here's a portfolio management team for financial matters." Instead of just a few people involved in the portfolio management process, we are actually involving a variety of resources and people from across the agency or the enterprise. They are all contributors, so we have moved from a few people, small team, focused on getting all the data into teams that are being fed with data and provide data from their own teams into this coordinated repository. It's moving from "some do all" to "all do some."

By doing this "all do some," we are ensured that everybody's perspectives and everybody's data points get incorporated into that repository for planning purposes.

For example, the roles involved in portfolio management — enterprise architects are called on to capture the data and make sure that it's structured for portfolio management decisions. We have project planners that are running projects that are reacting to change in the portfolios, and so as the projects move and deliver change, they're ensuring that that data is in the repository.

We have technology managers that are responsible for investigating new technologies as they emerge. They are defining standards so that we can be compliant with the standard set forth by the agencies. We have strategic planners who are looking two to three to four years out saying, "What is our technology landscape going to be if we move toward the future?" That's the the "all do some." We cover all the aspects of the portfolios and then we give our executives all of that data with high-impact visualizations so that they can see if there is additional data that they need to make a decision. So from that high-impact graphic, they can drill down and see the data that supports their decision-making process.

How can Alfabet help conquer the future?

Alfabet was introduced back in 2005 in the U.S., and at that point in time, it was sort of the leader in this data-driven approach for portfolio management and enterprise architecture. At that time, the analyst community received the Alfabet launch in the U.S. very well. It has established a leadership position in doing portfolio management and enterprise architecture. And it has stayed in that position as a leader in those two markets since its launch.

Just recently, we have continued to evolve the Alfabet platform and recently released an Alfabet accelerator that is focused on faster time to value for the executives — a more meaningful approach toward capturing the portfolio data. Some of the things that we have introduced with our Alfabet accelerator, configured just for the government, is full support for the federal enterprise architecture framework that comes with a set of capture metrics, comes with a set of heat maps and comes with a set of business impact reports.

We have also introduced support for the technology business management methodology and framework, and we are continuing to evolve that. Then as other portfolios grow, we're now starting to introduce a set of business questions into the accelerator and these business questions are being very well received by our customer base because they represent the common questions that everybody faces

in doing IT portfolio management — not just the government, not just the United States — but across the globe.

We've surveyed hundreds of companies and hundreds of executives, and we found that the questions are basically the same. Our accelerator puts these questions right in the forefront. It asks a question, it presents a question, it gives you a high-level snapshot, and then it allows you to drill down into the data that is supporting that summarized view. So these business questions — we ship over 40 business questions already with our accelerator that allows us to get the executives' attention very quickly.

We also provide a structure so that the agencies and the companies can add their own questions with their own drill downs. Along with that comes the data that's needed to answer the question. IT portfolio management is really a business discipline, and we have to remember that there is the business of IT at stake here. Software AG has built its platform to make sure that we can capture the current state of our portfolio and realize the current state tomorrow is the next current state, and as that current state evolves into the future, we're making sure that we have kept track of our history. All the changes that we've applied to get to our new current state, and then we also give you the tools for making sure that for two to three years out, we can have a clear vision of where we want to go with the future, what technologies are important to us, and also, those technologies, how they help us deliver our mission.

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