



Get Serious About SOA Governance

A Five-Step Action Plan for Architects

Whether your organization's Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) has 50 services in use by one customer, or 50 customers using one service, you need SOA governance in order to fully benefit from your SOA. Increased business agility depends on SOA governance: the ability to quickly and continuously translate and transmit business strategy and requirements into the processes, policies, and controls that will guide the evolution of the SOA—and your enterprise.

Failure to provide effective SOA governance exposes your organization to serious risks:

- Insufficient knowledge of available services
- General failure to reuse services
- Unnecessary, uncontrolled service duplication
- Resources wasted on services that can't be reused
- Service sprawl across siloed SOAs
- Ineffective communication of best practices.

The success of a governance initiative rests on the shoulders of the architect, and you'll need to play several roles, including strategist, communicator, and enforcer. This document describes five key practices to take into consideration as you help your organization achieve SOA success. There's more to SOA governance than can be covered in these five practices, of course, but they provide a solid basis for your SOA endeavors.

Step 1. Get real—from vision to strategy

Your job is to translate executive vision to corporate strategy by building a reference architecture and an implementation roadmap to your business goals. It is essential to communicate that strategy to the various stakeholders through guidelines and policies that extend into the life cycle. Make sure that everything from high-level metrics to detailed best practices is accessible by everyone, from executive to developer. Implement processes and technologies to break down barriers and establish a collaborative environment. SOA is a dynamic, more “organic” environment. Continuous, closed-loop communication is important for the ongoing refinement of your strategy and roadmap.

Step 2. Set strategy—and enforce it

Support your strategy by creating standards, policies, and process gates to ensure projects meet requirements before they are funded. Collaborate with your team, publishing the best practices in a central repository along with the appropriate standards. You also need to provide guidelines for prioritizing service requests. For example, a service that could be used by multiple applications should have priority over one that may only be reused once or twice. Reward compliance with funding. You might, for example, use the calculated reuse percentage as a basis for rewarding achievement. Also, if developers aren't following a certain policy, find out why, and share information with them to determine if the policy is applicable.

Step 3. Get the (ever-changing) picture

As SOAs are dynamic, you'll need continual information about what's going on at run time to avoid “ivory tower” syndrome, and to make good decisions. With constant analysis, you can get a clear view of what's really going on—as opposed to what you expected. Don't try to do this using a heap of spreadsheets. You'll need an automated and structured tool for monitoring, enforcing, traceability, and compliance. Use this information to support a product life cycle approach, complete with a versioning strategy, service retirement, and upgrade path, to minimize disruption to your customers.

Step 4. Support innovation—and protect performance

A well-managed SOA nurtures innovation by providing an environment in which services and systems can be used in creative, unanticipated ways, such as in “mashup” applications, which can provide unexpected business value. Effective governance must balance this flexibility with system performance through continual monitoring in order to proactively address potential performance issues. In addition to monitoring, security measures can control access to services to guard against accidental overload and performance degradation. Don’t overlook security as a critical component of effective SOA governance.

Step 5. Keep score and flaunt success

Good SOA governance depends on a steady flow of information up and down the value chain. Communicate goals and progress to all stakeholders to help ensure both top-down and bottom-up support for the SOA. Many organizations have found that it helps to provide a scoreboard to fuel momentum, demonstrate commitment to programs, and provide recognition of progress among stakeholders. For example, you might want to publish service reuse or uptime statistics on your public scoreboard to significantly improve future investment decisions.

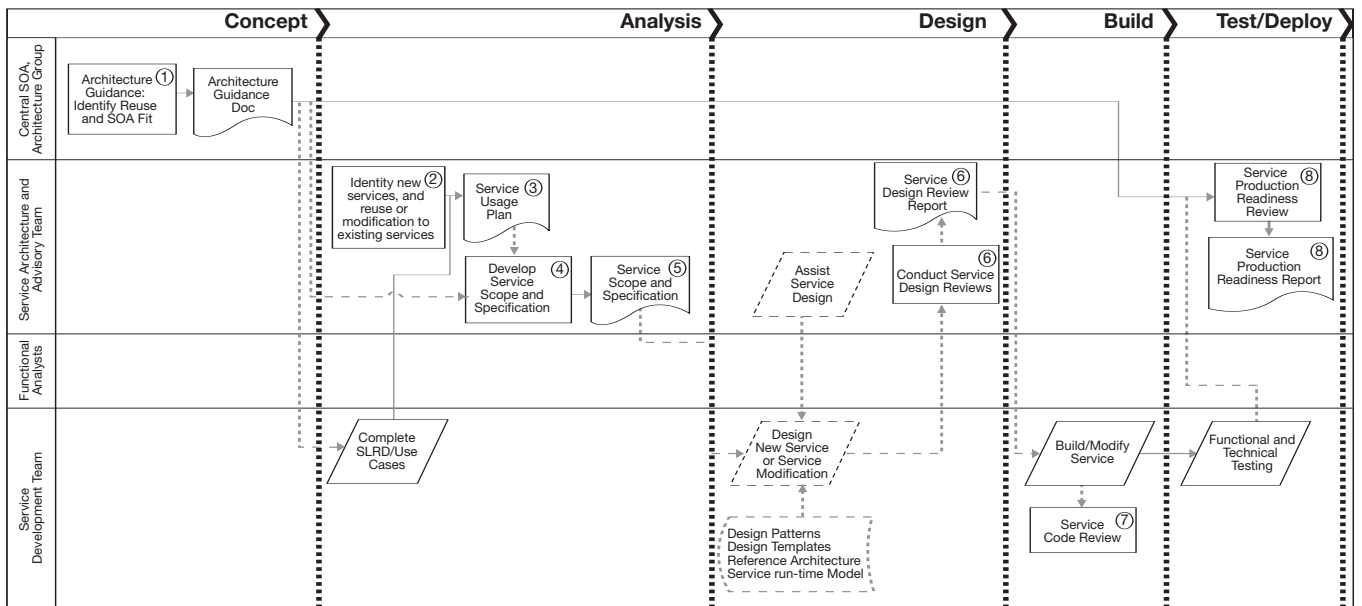


Figure 1. SOA governance—SDLC control points. Sample checkpoints and controls to support governance processes.

SOA governance—beyond the basics

SOA governance has implications beyond the confines of SOA: It's also the conduit that connects and aligns corporate, IT, and enterprise architecture policies and standards. Throughout this process, communication, collaboration, and the two-way flow of information help ensure alignment between the SOA and the enterprise in order to deliver sustainable business value. The five steps presented in this document are key to any SOA governance program. For a more in-depth look at SOA governance, please visit bea.com/soa-governance.

BEA offers an end-to-end SOA governance solution, with key enabling technologies including a repository, registry, and SOA management to help your organization successfully adopt SOA governance. In addition, BEA's consulting and professional services offerings can provide direction and practices, based on practical experiences.

About BEA

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