CASE STUDY

بنـك أبـوظبـي الأول
FAB
First Abu Dhabi Bank

Building a Foundation for Collaboration and Prioritizing IT Investment at First Abu Dhabi Bank

LeanIX

About First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB)

INDUSTRY

Banking, Finance, and Insurance

HEADQUARTERS

Abu Dhabi, UAE

EMPLOYEES

6,700+

GLOBAL PRESENCE

20 Countries

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INTRODUCTION

First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) is the largest bank in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and one of the largest banks globally. The bank offers a full range of financial services, from retail banking to investment banking and global corporate finance across five continents.

What is the Role of Enterprise Architecture at FAB?

One of the focus areas for FAB's enterprise architecture team is aligning technology and business strategies. The team also focuses on identifying and driving the consolidation of the application landscape.

Initiatives pursued by the EA team encompass defining the target IT landscape, mapping business capabilities, rationalizing applications, modernizing the technology landscape, and establishing technology standards and patterns, including those for FAB's cloud strategy.

"FAB was born from the merger of two banks. As a result we ended up with duplicated systems and capabilities. This presents an opportunity for us to consolidate our landscape while modernizing it."

Santiago Vazquez Freitas, SVP and Head of Enterprise Architecture, First Abu Dhabi Bank

The Challenge

Following the merger, FAB was looking for opportunities to optimize its IT landscape. To be able to do that, it started a deep dive into the capabilities of the existing applications.

As is often the case, the merger also resulted in duplication within the application portfolio inflating the portfolio's total cost of ownership. Lack of clear insight into the business context for these applications compounded these challenges. Without insight into FAB's business capability landscape, there was no shared framework for identifying and making decisions around application rationalization. Lack of business context also made it difficult to define and design a target architecture to support FAB's business strategy.

FAB knew it needed to rationalize its IT landscape and ensure alignment with business priorities. As it stood, however, it was not always easy to make the case for specific technology investments. FAB needed to develop a standardized, repeatable way to prioritize technology initiatives and demonstrate the linkage between the investments made and the business impact achieved.

Addressing these challenges called for reliable data on FAB's technology landscape and the business goals the organization needed to support. With disparate data sources and no single source of truth to unify them, such reliability was hard to come by.

To illustrate the situation, Santiago explained,

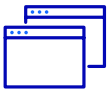
"We couldn't easily look at a business process such as customer onboarding and say which systems were involved and whether they were fit for purpose or required investment to enhance the customer experience. At the same time, we couldn't provide business leaders with transparency into their technology needs or have strategic conversations with them about options."

FAB wanted to address the following challenges:

Inflated TCO of the application portfolio

Lack of business context for applications

Difficult to define target architecture



No single source of truth for data

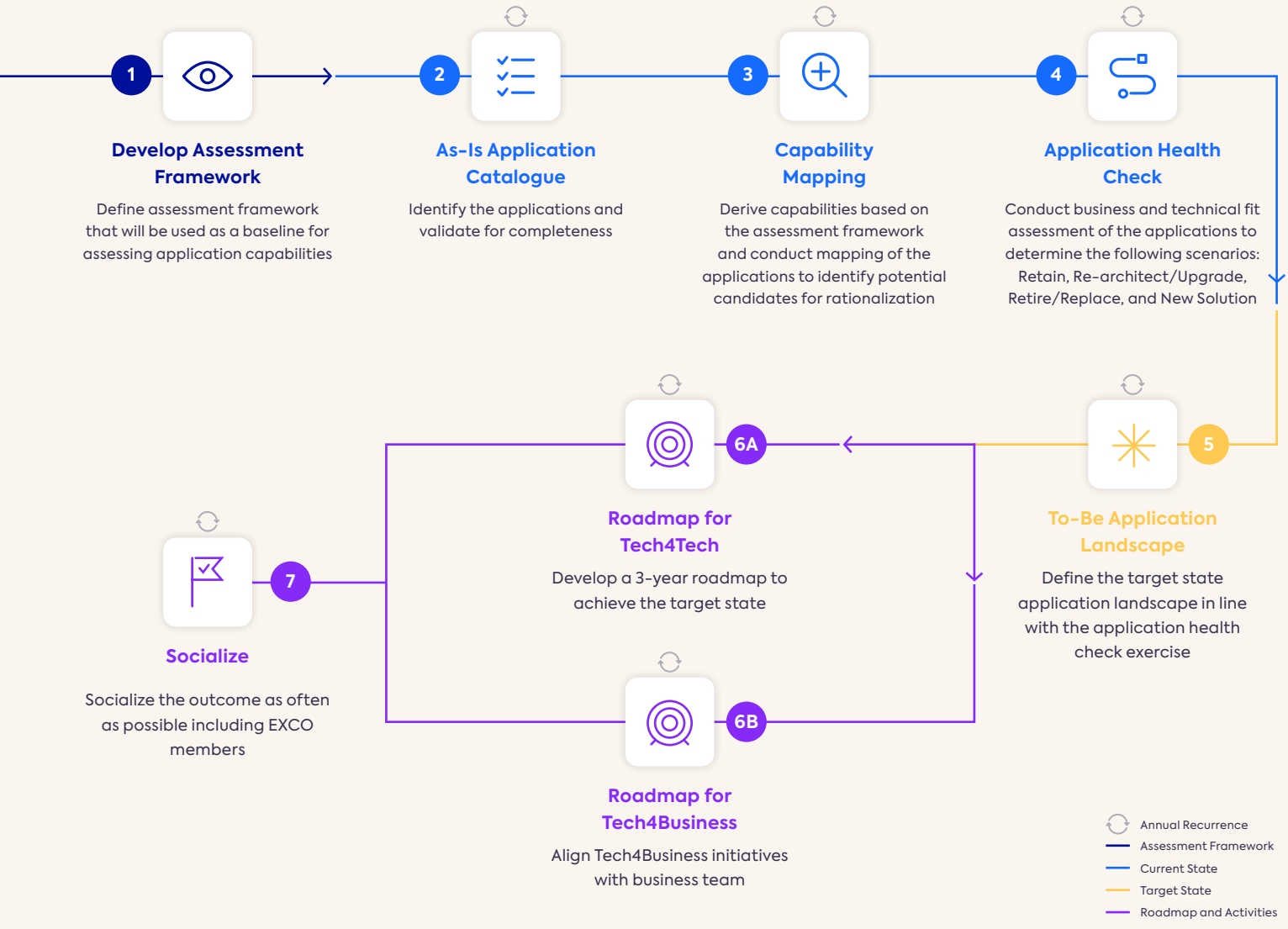
The Solution

The EA team's overarching objective was to consolidate all data related to business capabilities and the IT landscape in a way that enabled FAB to make more informed decisions aligned with its business priorities. This involved modeling the architecture layers, defining the current and target application landscape, and establishing a single source of truth, accessible to all relevant stakeholders, to record and maintain business, application, and infrastructure architecture data.

FAB adopted a structured approach (see Figure 1) to understand their current state, define their target state, and prioritize the projects and investments that would move FAB towards its target state. Since the target state for FAB was not a fixed destination, but rather a point-in-time objective based on customer and business needs, the aim was to create a capability allowing FAB to support evolving and emerging objectives on into the future. FAB iterates over the framework below at least annually.

Figure 1

Approach to develop FAB's target state architecture



The first step involved creating an assessment framework based on a target business capability model that could be applied to their current landscape. The team then inventoried their applications to create an as-is catalogue and assessed applications based on business and technical fit. Using their business capability model as a standard helped FAB understand and take informed decisions regarding application rationalization, reduction in TCO, and the investments required to move FAB towards their target state.

Collaboration between business and IT was paramount to defining the desired future state. FAB also partnered with a leading consulting firm to define the current and target landscape. These efforts resulted in a 400+ page deck that contained all the necessary information but was not particularly helpful when it came to aligning stakeholders and pursuing meaningful discussions about what to do next. The team realized that they needed to maintain and share this critical data in a different way.

"We wanted to democratize access to our target state architecture. Anyone with a business need should be able to access this data in a self-service way. To ensure the reliability of data, we wanted it to be owned and maintained by service owners, rather than by a centralized team. Creating this basic sense of trust in the data was critical to our efforts. Finally, we wanted a tool that served as a communication platform with the rest of the company, not simply a tool for the EA team," Santiago explained.

To find an Enterprise Architecture Management (EAM) tool capable of capturing and maintaining EA data in a manageable and reliable way, FAB began evaluating the leading EAM solutions according to three basic principles:

- It had to be easy to use.
- It had to simplify the complexity of the IT landscape.
- It had to support collaboration.

"We chose LeanIX EAM based on its ability to visualize our complex business and IT landscape in a simple, straightforward way. We also appreciated that we could configure the tool without having to rely on LeanIX or 3rd party services. The modern, user-friendly interface along with the transparent license and support models as a SaaS product were key for our decision. Finally, LeanIX agreed to host the tool in the UAE, which they had not done before. This was key for FAB."

Santiago Vazquez Freitas, SVP and Head of Enterprise Architecture, First Abu Dhabi Bank

Implementing LeanIX EAM

FAB implemented the basic elements of the LeanIX Meta Model, using the Application, Business Capability, Organization, and IT Component Fact Sheets to begin mapping their current architecture. They customized Fact Sheet attributes to capture all the information the bank required. To get data into LeanIX, FAB used the tool's bulk import functionality.

To ensure data quality and proper data governance, the EA team called on stakeholders such as application owners to verify and certify information in LeanIX. Inspired by DevOps practices, FAB stipulated that application owners own the data related to their applications in the EA tool. Distributing ownership in this way helps keep data up to date and prevents FAB's EA team from becoming a data bottleneck.

To further maintain data quality and for purposes of governance, FAB relied on LeanIX's built-in Quality Seal automation functionality. In response to specific triggers, the automation will break the Quality Seal of an Application Fact Sheet and alert the application owner to recertify the data. Finally, to support seamless access to the tool, FAB enabled the platform's SSO capability. Integrating LeanIX into FAB's Active Directory allowed for centralized access management.

To provide relevant views of the architecture for the bank as a whole as well as for specific lines of business, the EA team configured a range of reports, dashboards, and diagrams. This gave stakeholders and the executive leadership team access to a holistic view of the bank's IT landscape—including the current and future state of the application landscape—in a business context.

As Amazon's Jeff Bezos once said,

> *"Good intentions never work; you need good mechanisms to make anything happen."*

For FAB, it wasn't enough simply to adopt a new EAM tool and import the right data. The team focused on integrating the tool into the bank's existing EA processes. This ensured that data would be continuously updated and that the tool would serve as a consistently reliable resource for the entire organization.

Building on LeanIX's Automation Capabilities

Automation can improve efficiency, standardization, consistency, accuracy, and compliance. LeanIX allows users to configure Webhooks in order to capture events, such as a change to a Fact Sheet, in near real time. LeanIX also provides APIs allowing integration and automated interaction with other applications. Leveraging Webhooks and LeanIX's APIs, FAB developed a set of use cases that effectively extended the tool's out-of-the-box capabilities. These use cases include:

Detection and masking of PII and other sensitive data

For Application and Project Fact Sheets, FAB created an automation to check description fields for sensitive and PII data and mask them. The automation checks multiple description fields using regular expressions for email addresses, national ID numbers, and long numbers that could be telephone numbers or other forms of identification. This automation helps enforce compliance with FAB's data privacy rules within LeanIX without the need for human review of every Fact Sheet.

Mapping business capabilities to projects

While LeanIX makes it easy to link Application and Business Capability Fact Sheets, this is not the case for Projects. Because FAB wanted to understand the business capabilities impacted by specific projects, they created an automation triggered whenever a field on a Project Fact Sheet is updated. This automation verifies the applications that are linked to the project, then looks for the business capability to which the applications are mapped. In this way, Project Fact Sheets are automatically mapped to the respective business capability. This makes it possible to quickly understand the relationship between projects and business capabilities.

Custom notifications based on tags

Modifications made to Fact Sheets bearing specific tags (e.g., "Locked") trigger a notification to configured users. By notifying the relevant project leads, this automation ensures that all changes made to "locked" projects are legitimate and, if not, that they can be quickly reversed.

These automations have helped FAB govern their EA data by:

- Maintaining compliance around data privacy
- Controlling changes to data
- Creating data consistency across Business Capability, Application and Project Fact Sheets

FAB built those extensions using a cloud-based, event-driven architecture that enables FAB to continue to extend the platform as required.

Project Prioritization: A Unique and Powerful Use Case

Getting all relevant EA data into LeanIX EAM and making it accessible to business users across the bank addressed challenges regarding visibility into the IT landscape. However, as mentioned above, the bank also wanted to make consistent, informed decisions about future technology investments and avoid investment duplication. Developing and implementing a methodology for prioritizing technology initiatives was key to achieving this goal. To that end, FAB created a framework that considered the following factors: the target state for the application(s) involved; IT and business alignment of the project; the application's criticality; and any associated risk (e.g., application stability and obsolescence).

Fields for scoring each of these factors were added to the Project Fact Sheet and a mathematical calculation logic was configured to generate an overall project prioritization score. When a Project Fact Sheet is updated, Webhooks triggers a FAB hosted API (see above), which calculates scores and publishes the results in a new field (Calculated Project Score) using LeanIX APIs. Any override to this determined score is not feasible, as Webhooks will recalculate and update the score automatically. This maintains data integrity. Other information captured in the Fact Sheet includes project timeline, dependencies, business value, budget requirement, and project ownership.

"We now prioritize projects in a data-driven way. So, if we are looking at projects to modernize our middleware or build an open API platform or create our own onboarding fraud system, we can manage prioritization using LeanIX."

Santiago Vazquez Freitas, SVP and Head of Enterprise Architecture, First Abu Dhabi Bank

The Success

The success of the EA program is ongoing, but there are some highlights worth noting.

Creating clear visibility into the bank's enterprise architecture has been a major success, the impact of which should not be underestimated. Linking applications and projects to business capabilities allows the organization to have more informed conversations about technology investment. Also, the mapping undertaken by the EA team allowed the bank to identify gaps in in support for specific business capabilities. This information then feeds into target state and project planning, creating a virtuous cycle.

"For example, if you work in consumer banking you now have a view showing all the systems related to consumer banking. But it goes beyond that. You can see the particular business capabilities these systems support as well as how they relate to the bank's target state. In other words, you have visibility into how current projects will impact specific applications and the broader business. This was never possible before."

The efforts to increase and democratize landscape data have also led to FAB identifying the opportunity to reduce its application landscape by 11%, in raw numbers. However, when you look at decommissioning and consolidation, the bank has seen more like a 25% reduction opportunity in the landscape.

Finally, on the investment front, the methodology for project prioritization has ensured confident, data-informed investment decisions.

Srinivasan Sampath, FAB's Group Chief Information Officer summarizes the success so far as follows:

"We no longer have to spend weeks and months to identify which applications supports which lines of business, their future state and the investment required to get there; we now know this in a self-service manner. The intuitive user experience from LeanIX enables me to extract the information I require to make informed decisions. This became a reference guide for all future technology investments".

Srinivasan Sampath, Group Chief Information Officer, First Abu Dhabi Bank

If you build something that is flexible enough and has a good set of APIs we can build on, you know as customers we will also surprise you guys.

LeanIX, an SAP company, is a market leader for enterprise architecture management (EAM), driving the modernization of IT landscapes and continuous business transformation. Its software-as-a-service solutions empower organizations to create transparency, enabling them to visualize, assess and manage the transition towards their target IT architecture. By offering a data-driven and automated approach enhanced with AI, LeanIX helps organizations make sound decisions and collaborate more effectively. LeanIX serves over 1,000 companies globally across various industries, including more than 10% of the Fortune 500 and half of the German DAX 40. Headquartered in Bonn, Germany, LeanIX has a strong international presence with offices in Boston (USA), London (UK), Paris (France), Amsterdam (Netherlands), and Ljubljana (Slovenia). In November 2023, LeanIX became part of SAP. For more information, visit www.leanix.net.

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