How EBSCO Information Services Implemented a Data-Driven Enterprise Architecture with LeanIX

LeanIX

EBSCO

Industry: Information Services

Headquarters: Ipswich, Massachusetts (USA)

Revenues: $2.8 billion (2018)

Results

- Increased IT ownership facilitated by better IT visibility

- Enhanced agility through business and IT alignment

- Faster decision-making process based on data

- Efficient risk management through customized audit reports

By utilizing LeanIX, we have been able to provide business value/risk, technical and functional fitness matrices that provide clear guidance for decision making, asset management, and roadmap prioritization for our IT decision-makers.

Max Bishop,
Director of Enterprise
Modeling and Governance

The Challenge

EBSCO Information Services (EBSCO) is the leading provider of premium information, research databases, e-journals, magazine subscriptions, e-books and discovery services to libraries of all kinds located worldwide. As the largest division of EBSCO Industries, Inc., the fast growth of EBSCO Information Services challenged its enterprise architects to align an increasingly complex IT ecosystem. Information remained siloed within departments and resources were fragmented. EBSCO needed to connect all its relevant Enterprise Architecture (EA) information into a meaningful and interactive map that promised to align the business units and optimize their workflow.

EBSCO Information Services realized that to meet its goal of aligning business units with IT operations, it required documenting the holistic IT landscape and visualizing it with an interactive view. This would enable the EAs to make informed choices about its accumulating technical debt. EBSCO used static spreadsheets and Gantt charts for documenting and planning their IT needs which resulted in large management and maintenance overheads. They frequently missed important pieces of information that would enable them to perform an objective analysis. It quickly became apparent the enterprise architects needed a data-driven tool to track IT inventory to help drive their analysis planning for making decisions. LeanIX stood out among different tools because of its focus on lean information management, clean user interface, and highly intuitive and meaningful reporting functionalities.

The Solution

EBSCO initiated its EA program during the summer of 2018 and made an early and deliberate decision to both minimize the specifications from solution architects and maximize the contributions by product managers. This approach instilled an open and democratized culture of managing IT information. EBSCO used internal metadata nomenclature to make the EA information relevant to stakeholders, using the language and metrics of the development teams. This enabled EBSCO to drive the project quickly and create an information-rich bridge between the technical and business domains.

The EA modelling process and rollout of LeanIX

The LeanIX implementation followed a well-structured and detailed process at EBSCO. The EA team conducted about 30 socialization engagements and learning sessions with different IT teams past the launch of the system. A comprehensive LeanIX user guide was created and customized for EBSCO's unique installation and nomenclature. From there, short how-to guides and introductory videos were created and made available via SharePoint for company-wide access to make it easier for users to embrace the new system.

While the initial focus had been on product managers, it soon branched out to development teams. One of the crucial pieces to kick-start the project was support from the CEO and top executive decision makers. But the EA team still faced challenges for gaining awareness and acceptance of the program organically throughout the company, which required engagement from everyone in the community.

EBSCO customized the LeanIX platform to better suit its internal engagement needs. The development teams were responsible for creating IT Component Fact Sheets and product managers created and maintained the Epic (Project), Market Problems (Process), Behavior (Interface), and Capability (Application) Fact Sheets. See, table below.

Customization Area	Result
Agile methodology	Incorporated agile terms in nomenclature such as renaming a LeanIX "Project" to "Epic."
Pragmatic Framework	Integrated the Pragmatic Framework and renamed the LeanIX term "Process" to the Pragmatic term "Market Problem."
Knowledge tags	Added more tags to track IT component ownership and component support levels, in addition to the existing LeanIX tags.
Modelling process	Created two gates within its modeling process, as forcing functions: a. Epic (Project) Gate: No Epic can be pulled by an agile release train (ART) unless and until the Epic is modeled in LeanIX. This gate functions as a hard stop to make sure everyone is entering their metadata. b. Feature Gate: A feature can only be pulled by a team on an ART if it has been modeled in LeanIX.
Custom reports	Developed custom audit reports to track and maintain fact sheet completion rates and accuracy, enabling the EA team to drill-down into the IT landscape and analyze the data by team, ART, or specific subscriber. Each fact sheet was required to be completed by over 70%. All completed fact sheets were aggregated into a single report.

Source: LeanIX GmbH

A custom audit system was created whereby fact sheets were required to have a 70% completion rate to pass the test. The audit reports allowed EBSCO to drill down Fact Sheets by completion rates, teams, ART (Agile Release Train) or a specific subscriber for more in-depth analysis.
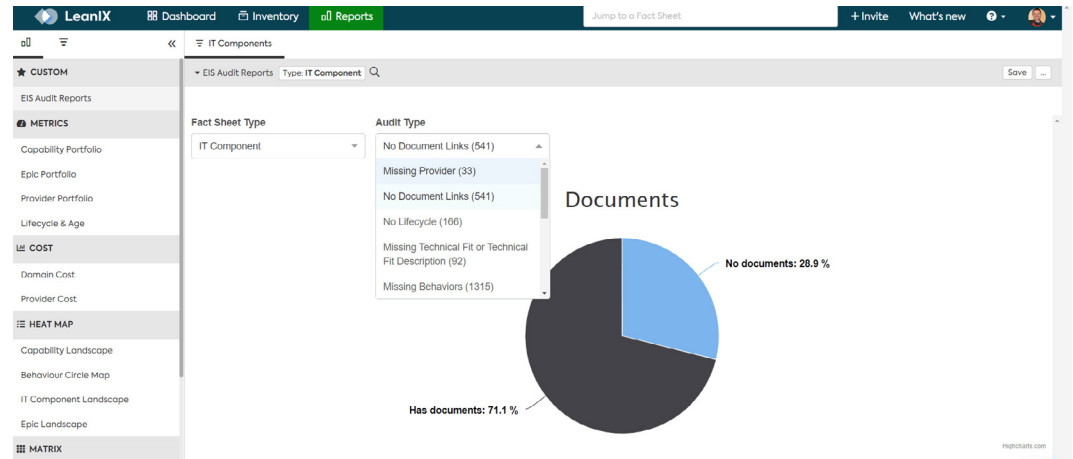
For e.g. the EIS AUDIT REPORT 1 shows the number of fact sheets in different bins of completion rates that failed to pass the completion audit (<70%).

EBSCO AUDIT REPORT 1
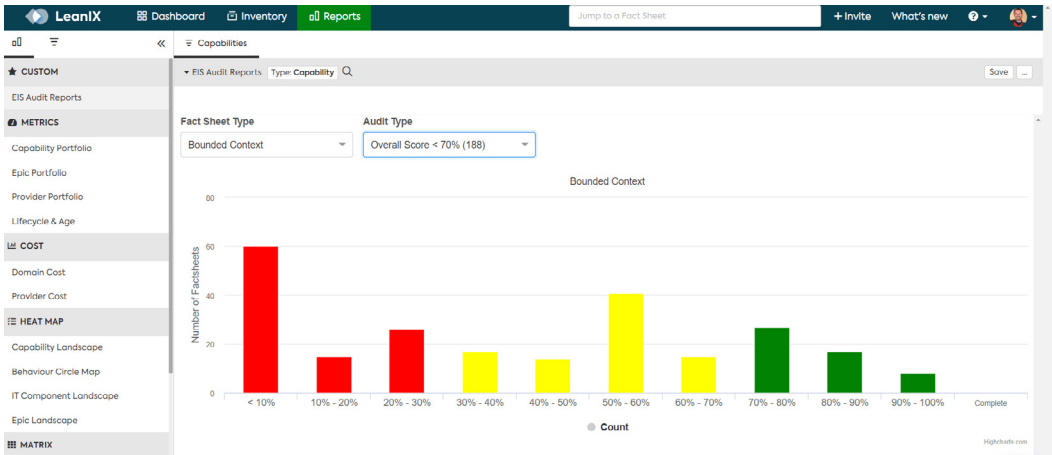
The EBSCO Audit Report 1 shows the count of 'Bounded Context' Fact Sheets according to their data completion rate.

The EBSCO Audi Report 2 illustrates the proportion of IT components which have and don't have the required documents attached to them as well as the list of audit types for IT components.

Source: EBSCO Information Services
Note: Image data is for illustration purpose only and is not intended to reflect upon the state of the organization.

The Success

In a short span of 18 months, EBSCO Information Services realized a number of benefits. EBSCO now has a single source of truth with approximately 5,000 fact sheets replete with an estimated 19,000 cross linkages. This has provided increased visibility while aligning all the business units with the IT landscape. In addition, teams now have a stronger sense of ownership for the company's overall IT transformation.

The LeanIX solution also provided EBSCO with more flexibility and agility by breaking down the silos that impeded its ability to fully utilize its IT environment while incorporating its business concerns with IT management. Implementing an efficient enterprise architecture enabled stakeholders' goals and priorities to be laid out in an organized and transparent way.

Finally, LeanIX has provided greater clarity to EBSCO IT teams and business leaders for their decision-making process. A governance council consisting of vice presidents and IT managers now leverage LeanIX heat map reports to perform application portfolio management and apprise their CIO during quarterly meetings. A new dialogue has emerged in which the EA team also can now provide business value and risk data, and technical and functional fitness metrics to offer guidance for decision making, asset management, and roadmap prioritization.

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LeanIX offers a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) application for driving Enterprise Architecture and Cloud Governance, enabling companies to accelerate their IT transformation. From on-premises to cloud native and microservices, architecture teams using LeanIX have the power to strategically support their business and take decisions faster. More than 250 global brands including Volkswagen, Adidas, Bosch, DHL, Santander, Atlassian, and Zalando rely on LeanIX to improve transparency, visibility, and drive real-time efficiencies. LeanIX addresses IT's critical need to ensure high-quality, real-time data is accessible to stakeholders whenever needed. Use cases include Cloud Governance, Application Portfolio Management, and Technology Risk Management. LeanIX was founded in 2012 by Jörg Beyer and André Christ. The company is headquartered in Bonn, Germany, with U.S. headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

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