The Leadership Skills Ninja

*This page is an output of the Itana Spring Face2Face 2016 meeting, contributed by **Scott Fullerton**.*

The intent of this very rough draft is to give shape to the leadership skills topic -- a way to understand how they fit into the architecture practice.

We have laid out some techniques in this workshop: Building Relationships, Planning and Managing Meetings, Inspiring Action, Mobilizing, and Acting, and more (see the Architecture Leadership site).

Following are two aspects worth calling out that span these specific techniques

The leadership skills ninja and marketing

Marketing is hard but crucial. Many Higher Ed Enterprise Architects are not natively endowed with these skills. It is so easy to believe that what is self-evident to me, should be self-evident to any stakeholder. But because I can conceptualize the issue and express it holistically and define implications, and because I can see how clearly important a thing is, doesn't mean that others can. Because a single page graph or short write-up conveys the full picture to me it doesn't mean that it will to others.

- Why is this thing worth doing?
- If a small-ish instance of success, or on the other hand, instance of dysfunction suggests a strategic need or opportunity, how do we get that across to the right people
- Note: a portion of EA engagements are presented to the architect from elsewhere; a portion are driven by the architect herself. In either case, marketing is required.

The leadership skills ninja and collective analysis

Once the team is engaged they have to walk through the process themselves. Who knows, the architect may learn something too.

Across the life-cycle of a team engagement, the leadership skills ninja must act as the voice of the group. Before and during the norming stage, she will constantly summarize the common set of things.

- Things that are self-evident to the group. Some of them are axiomatic. They could be common, non-controversial principles and statements of goals. They could also be assertions of some current-state conditions
- Things that are not yet well defined (but everyone thinks they understand). This is the set of things that needs a lot of attention. Often this is the problem statement. Sometimes it is a definition of the solution space. Leadership involves helping the group delve into these things and understand them thoroughly.
- The set of shared discoveries
- The set of commonly accepted implications

The leadership skills ninja spends a lot time in meeting and outside of it writing up and talking through the above, working steadily toward the bottom of the list. If successful, the team members will feel that the leader speaks for them, that the conclusions are organically derived, that the new insights, the discoveries and implications are clear and commonly held, and that the process was fair.