

E Pluribus Unum: Strategies for multi-site, multi-division VISTA

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Webinar Overview

VISTA is complex. We overlook its complexity at our peril. To plan VISTA's architecture properly, we must first fully appreciate what it means for it to be that complex, especially in terms of our own reactions to that complexity - because it is those very reactions that usually defeat us. If we could appreciate its full complexity and our reactions to it, we would greatly improve our chances of coming up with a viable architecture. The problems inherent in multi-site, multi-division enterprises are no exception.

A good paradigm for studying complexity and our response to it is the game of chess, which seems odd because chess is so vastly simpler than VISTA by over a dozen orders of magnitude. Yet that is its virtue for our purposes. It is only thirty pieces that can move on sixty-four squares according to limited rules, and the pieces themselves are arranged into six kinds and two sides. These are small numbers. How hard could it be? What could possibly go wrong?

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Part 1: Complexity & Complication

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Part 2 - The Hidden Nature of Order

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Enterprises self-conflict. The needs of each individual hospital conflict with the needs of the multi-hospital enterprises they are a part of. They have different needs, and they compete for resources and priorities. This is the level at which the complexity of multi-site, multi-division VISTA has to be managed - not at the level of packages, technology, or other details. If we could learn to see the forces and their conflicts, we would be able to understand what a viable architecture needs to accomplish. Conflict-management theory has a lot to teach us about this. Identifying the competing needs and the nature of their conflicts is crucial. But so is changing our thinking about conflict. If we think in terms of victory and defeat, then our solutions cannot do justice to the full complexity of the problem we're trying to solve. If we think in terms of compromise, the same is true. So what else is there? How can we resolve these inescapable contradictions within VISTA enterprises?



Part 3. Conflict & Forces

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Vitality requires conflict. Instead of eliminating conflicting forces, sustainable solutions require us to design those forces and conflicts into our solutions - since what's in conflict are necessary but competing needs. If we could design our systems to meet all of those needs rather than suppressing some or all of them, our designs would be viable, sustainable. This is how we have to think about the design of a multi-site, multi-division VISTA architecture.

How can we possibly resolve the conflicts inherent in such an enterprise? By following the only paradigm that builds conflict into solutions in a way that harnesses it - life itself. In the realm of biology, all living organisms bend internal conflicts back upon themselves to create oscillating systems that strengthen the organism rather than tearing it apart. VISTA's most successful architectural elements and software-lifecycle features follow the model of living systems. How does this model work? How can we apply it to the design of multi-site, multi-division VISTA systems?



Part 3. Conflict & Forces

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