The role of the Business Architect

Role

The Business Architect analyzes the activities of a particular business unit or line of business and makes recommendations pertaining to the projects that the business unit should perform, in addition to relevant and timely corrections to the governance structure, business processes, and the structure of business information. This person illustrates the alignment (or lack thereof) between strategic goals and key business decisions regarding products and services; partners and suppliers; organization; capabilities; and key business and IT initiatives. The primary focus of this person's work includes the analysis of business motivations and business operations, through the use of business analysis frameworks and related networks that link these aspects of the enterprise together. The Business Architect works to develop an integrated view of the business unit, in the context of the enterprise, using a repeatable approach, cohesive framework, and available industry standard techniques.

Organization

The Business Architect reports into business management and works closely with other business architects, enterprise architects, and counterparts in Information Technology. The Business Architect may have supervisory responsibility, possibly acting as coach and mentor to junior colleagues in a similar or reporting role. In addition, the Business Architect works though others at every level of the organization soliciting strategic imperatives from senior leaders and executives, and supporting business unit managers as they leverage business architecture artifacts to create their business plans. Finally, the Business Architect may provide direct input into the governance cycle for the funding, oversight, and realization of business projects. In that governance role, the business architect helps to insure that business and IT projects are aligned to support the achievement of key goals, that specific business scenarios are considered and that business value is delivered.

Responsibilities

- Develop a business architecture strategy for the business unit based on a situational awareness of various business scenarios and motivations.

- Apply a structured business architecture approach and methodology for capturing the key views of the business unit in the context of the enterprise.
- Capture the tactical and strategic business goals that provide traceability through the organization and are mapped to metrics that provide ongoing governance.
- Describe the primary business functions of the assigned business unit in the context of the enterprise and distinguish between customer-facing, supplier-related, business execution and business management functions.
- Enumerate, analyze, catalog, and suggest improvements to the strategic, core and support processes of the business unit, as needed, to support strategic and operational goals.
- Define the data elements shared between this business unit and other units in the enterprise and the relationships between those data elements and processes, people, systems, and other data elements.
- Enumerate, analyze, and suggest improvements to the structural relationships of the business. This requires the creation and maintenance of an ongoing model of roles, capabilities and business units, the decomposition of those business units into subunits, and the interplay between these units in various business processes, materials, people, and systems.

Skills and Qualifications

- A broad, enterprise-wide view of the business and varying degrees of appreciation for strategy, processes and capabilities, enabling technologies, and governance
- The ability to recognize structural issues within the organization, functional interdependencies and cross-silo redundancies. Those issues may exist in role alignment, process gaps and overlaps, and business capability maturity gaps
- The ability to apply architectural principles, methods, and tools to business challenges
- The ability to assimilate and correlate disconnected documentation and drawings, and articulate their collective relevance to the organization and to high-priority business issues

- The ability to visualize and create high-level models (rigorous information-rich diagrams) that can be used in future analysis to extend and mature the business architecture
- Experience developing and using these high-level models as required to collect, aggregate or disaggregate complex and conflicting information about the business
- Extensive experience planning and deploying either business or IT initiatives (preference for both)
- Experience modeling business processes using a variety of tools and techniques (preference for BPMN)
- Exceptional communication skills and the demonstrable ability to communicate appropriately at all levels of the organization; this includes written and verbal communications as well as visualizations
- The ability to act as liaison conveying information in suitably accurate models between the business unit and their counterparts within Information Technology. The scope of this information includes business requirements, data constraints, business rules, models of strategy and motivation, processes, accountabilities, and many other business and IT operational needs
- Must be a Team player able to work effectively at all levels of an organization with the ability to influence others to move toward consensus. Must be highly reliable, trustworthy, honest, and commitment oriented
- Strong situational analysis and decision making abilities

The Career Ladder of a Business Architect

Describing the career ladder of a business architect is difficult for many reasons. This is a new field, and the business architects that I know arrived at their career from different directions and are likely on different trajectories. What I can say is this: becoming successful at business architecture is an extremely useful skill in many aspects of corporate life, and can provide very useful insight and connections into upper echelons of management.

To become a business architect requires strong business skills. A degree in business is more than helpful… few business architects will succeed without one, although a decade or more of experience in an industry can make up the difference. Note that I'm not

focusing on consultants who perform a business architecture assignment, but rather on full time employees who would be able to perform this role. A firm understanding of structural models is the next prerequisite skill and this kind of thinking is often found in people who "think visually." Look for creative individuals in accounting, marketing, and information technology who can tend to draw diagrams in their presentations that represent the relationships between concepts, people, processes, or business functions.

Once you have proven successful as a business architect, the next step depends on you. The obvious next step is to the role of enterprise architect. To be a successful EA, one should have been successful at one of the key EA roles (Business, Solution, Information, or Technology Architecture) and have a reasonable grasp and appreciation for the other roles. Not an easy step.

Another direction for the successful Business Architect is into business management. A BA can see relationships that most mid-level managers have never been trained to look for, and have a rich understanding of how to use that information.

How a Business Architect is different from an Enterprise Architect

I personally consider an Enterprise Architect as a person who can perform as both Solution Architect (SA) and a Business Architect (as needed) and has some ability as an Information Architect. In addition, an EA can perform at an enterprise level, something that is NOT required of either an SA or BA. What this means, in my opinion, is that you should not call yourself an Enterprise Architect unless you have full capability as <u>both</u> a BA and an SA and at least partial capability as an IA. (No, a course on the Zachman Framework or TOGAF is not sufficient).

In Zachman terms, an EA has to be able to perform across ALL ROWS AND COLUMNS of the framework. A Business Architect doesn't have to extend below row 2 or perhaps 3, while a Solution Architect usually lives in the lower rows. An Information Architect, at the enterprise level, must be able to run the gamut of a single column of the Zachman framework.