



The Next 5 Years in Enterprise Architecture

Where will the field of Enterprise Architecture go in the future? Many of the tasks of architects are related to navigating change and helping to ease future developments, and this is no less true for their own field.



Solution Architecture: How To Deliver Value Through Enterprise Architecture

In a recent paper on Solution Architecture, we discussed how Forrester expect the role of Solution Architect to come to prominence over the next 5 years. Yet, when looking to the future, there are surely far more changes that may occur than just the rise of solution architects? Here, we'll discuss some of the other major changes that are predicted by the likes of Forrester, Gartner and ourselves.

Continued Growth of Technology

It almost doesn't need mentioning, but it is an important factor: the importance of technology to enterprises will continue to grow, placing even greater emphasis on digital transformation and the need for enterprise architecture. Whilst you can't ever be certain of 5 year outcomes, there is very little chance of any kind of contraction in the demand for technology or enterprise architecture.





Focus on Outcomes/Value

Both Forrester and Gartner see a transition away from the technical focus of building architectures towards delivering value and achieving business outcomes. Both do also suggest that this will occur as part of a natural maturation of an enterprise architecture function, and is not something that can be skipped to without having the grounding of traditional EA processes. Nonetheless, not every firm will be able to achieve this transition, and it is suggested that those that lag behind will not be able to deliver enough value to justify continued investment.

Not only will this affect how architects work, but also how they track their effectiveness. Architects will need to have metrics that more accurately demonstrate how their efforts link up with more general business and technology metrics.



Strategic Alignment

From a similar area, both Gartner and Forrester believe architects need to make efforts to align their goals with general business strategy, and work closer with a wider range of stakeholders to achieve this. This is also an area that Orbus emphasize through iServer, with a number of features dedicated to enhancing communication between stakeholders and disseminating information in easy to comprehend forms.

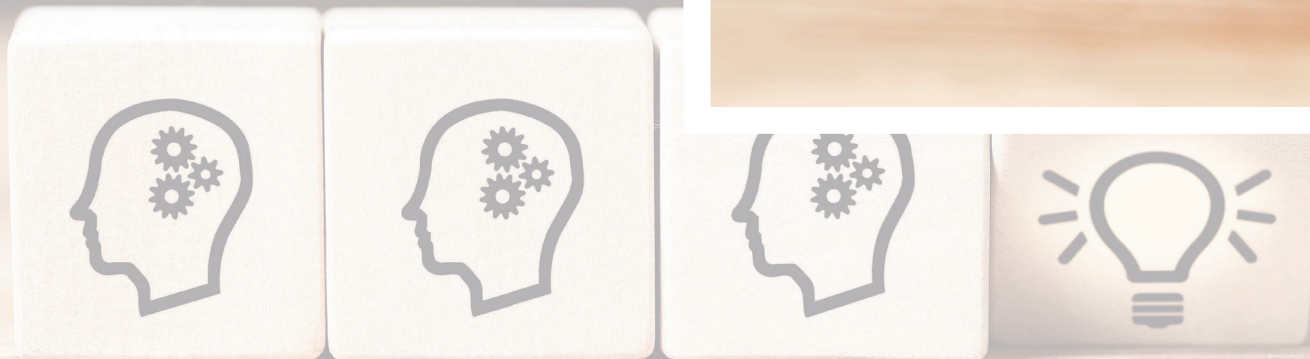


Emphasis on Skills, not Methodologies

The variety of EA frameworks, from the original Zachman framework through to the likes of TOGAF and ArchiMate, have all played a major role in the spread and application of enterprise architecture. Nonetheless, Forrester predict a move away from adherence to these frameworks, and towards

“ *Lightweight fit-for-purpose architecture approaches.* ”

It is perhaps unsurprising, as the more general focus of a framework will always need some adjustment for the individual challenges an enterprise faces. The main impact of this change will be for architects themselves, requiring a broader range of skills and placing pressure on new hires that may not have the internal knowledge necessary for this approach.





Intelligence and Analytics

Gartner are bullish on the importance of business intelligence to Enterprise Architecture, predicting that 60%+ of architecture functions will

Design intelligence into their business and operating models”, “Refocus on information architecture

and use intelligent EA tools. Essentially, Gartner foresee organizations in general focusing more on AI and machine intelligence tools for their operations, which will naturally feed through to Enterprise Architecture. Architects will need to design for intelligence, building architectures that support business intelligence, manage the flow of information in a business, and ultimately support digital transformation with business intelligence.

Agile Development a key goal

We have discussed the trend toward Agile development before, when looking at cloud native applications and integration architecture, but it is worth re-iterating here that Forrester believe building towards agile is going to be important for all architects, not just for integration. Arguably, the agile approach is one that will impact every technology function in an organization, but architects will no doubt be key when it comes to implementation due to the level of change required.





Continued Specialization of Architects

This point was already touched upon when discussing solution architects, but it applies to other areas as well. Firms are likely to move from having a team of enterprise architects to having solution architects, business architects, process architects, etc. Greater specialization is another area that places pressure on human resources, requiring more architects with a greater range of skills.





The impact of COVID-19

Looming over everything, whether in business or otherwise, is the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's not the only possible external impact, but it is the only impact we can be sure of, whereas radical new technologies, systems of business or political changes can't be predicted with any accuracy. As such, architects need to temper expectations for the future with the knowledge that disruption from the pandemic may derail large investments, or help to push forward different initiatives. Having said that, disruption may not emerge at all if an early vaccine or other development sees the world return to normal quite quickly.

Even if the virus itself does not continue to affect the business world, it has already caused a huge amount of economic damage. As business and the economy recover, Gartner predicts a key role for enterprise architecture in aiding recovery. They foresee that organizations will focus on improving their core capabilities, utilizing digital transformation to improve productivity.

The iServer Roadmap

A big part of the future of Enterprise Architecture will be affected by the capabilities of the tools that support it, which means the developments of iServer are very relevant. Like many types of enterprise software, SaaS platforms are going to be important. iServer has already made the move with the release this year of iServer 365, a cloud based version of iServer built on Microsoft Azure and embedded within the Microsoft 365 ecosystem. In a similar vein, Orbus have also released the Solutions Hub, a service platform for iServer users which provides turnkey solutions that can accelerate the delivery of transformation initiatives. As with SaaS platforms, this is an ongoing project that will continue to grow as further solutions are added and more use cases are addressed. The Solutions Hub aims to deliver smarter, faster solutions for common use cases, and already offers key integrations with Microsoft 365, Service Now and Slack.

In the longer term, AI will become a feature of iServer and iServer 365. Artificial Intelligence is likely to have impacts across the sector, not just for EA tools, with machine learning algorithms like GPT-3 already demonstrating their ability to do a huge amount of work previously thought impossible for computers. While radical innovations like that may not find their way into the business world within the next 5 years, they are certainly on the horizon, and a lot of manual work will become automated as more sophisticated AIs arrive, smoothing the process of digital transformation. Orbus also plan to launch a technology partner ecosystem, providing support to partners to create their own digital transformation solutions across a broad set of organizational portfolios, use cases and systems. This will link up with the continued development of the Solutions Hub to provide a truly comprehensive set of solutions for every business need in the EA space.

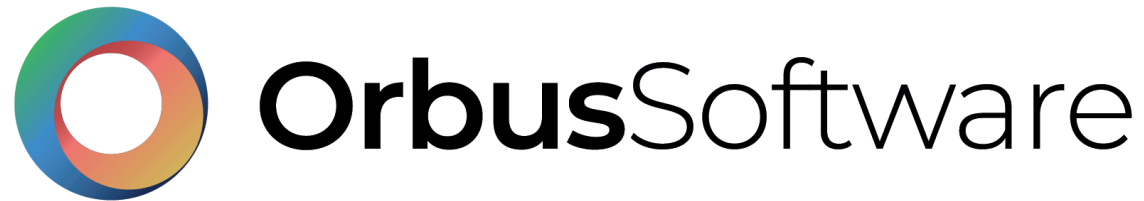




Summary: What are the Implications?

There are clearly a wide range of potential developments, both internally and externally, for enterprise architecture. As these developments necessitate change, and enterprise architecture is focused on enabling change, architects should be prepared ahead of time to ensure speed and efficiency for any outcome. As already mentioned, human resources are likely to be one of the more challenging areas. Organizations will need more architects, with a wider skillset working across more areas of the business. Bringing in new hires will be more difficult and have longer onboarding, which is likely to place more pressure on internal development and training for architects. Given the time-periods over which training may take place, enterprises may wish to start these initiatives sooner rather than later. Strategy is the other area that will be most affected. Enterprise Architecture can no longer be a mere follower of the business direction, but must be involved in the shaping of strategy from the start. Architects will need to be embedded in strategy teams, have early buy-in from key stakeholders, and understand how strategic goals will link up with architecture goals.

The external space is much harder to plan for. COVID-19 may continue to disrupt the function of business, or it may quickly be solved by a vaccination. Recessions in much of the Western world are likely, but it is less clear how this will affect different industries other than hospitality or how long they will last, while much of the Asia Pacific region is likely to avoid high economic damage due to the lower impact of the virus. Technology will continue to develop and grow in importance, but sudden advances in artificial intelligence, in cloud delivery, or even a known development such as 5G service could suddenly shift how many enterprises function.



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