

White Paper

Architecture Capability – Where are you on your Architecture journey?

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The maturity of an organization is often a direct reflection of the maturity of its Architecture function and in this white paper I will outline an approach to understanding where you are in the Architecture maturity cycle and what potential next steps can be taken to mature the Architecture function in your organization.

The Architecture function plays a vital support role in the Plan and Build phase for many organizations by providing clarity and purpose to the business strategy and ensuring the build programs and projects are aligned to the business strategy. The Architecture Function can also influence and support the Run function in a number of ways including SOA - Service Definition, Architecture and Governance however, the focus of this white paper will primarily be on Architecture support for the Plan and Build phase.

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The model below highlights the role that Architecture plays in Strategy, Planning and Portfolio Management.

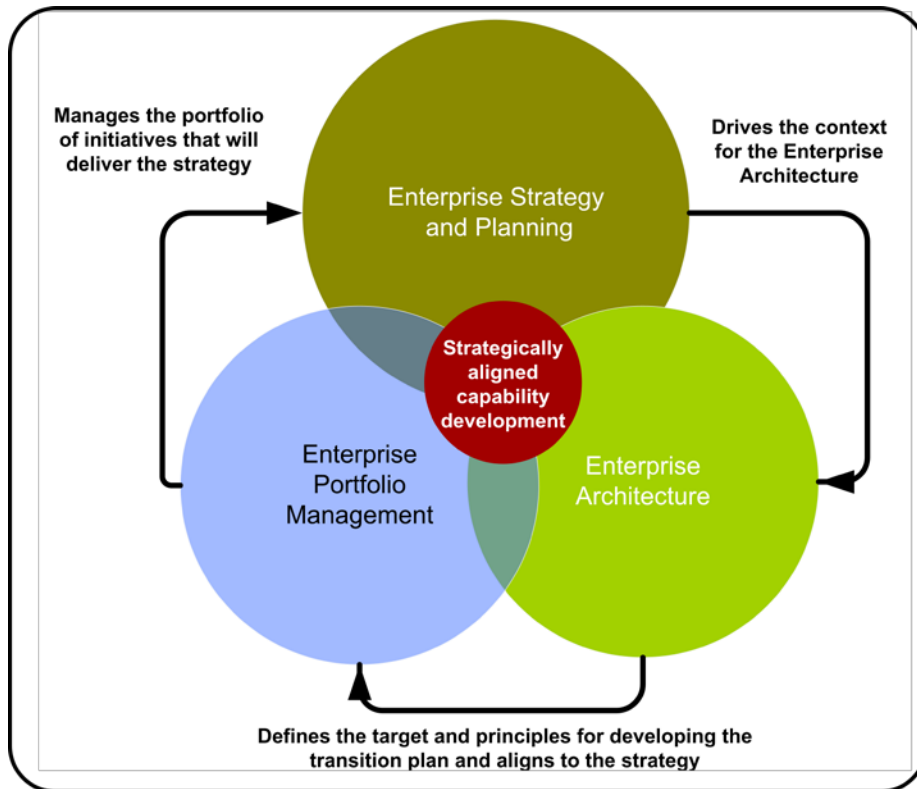


Figure 1: Conceptual Architecture domains

Disciplined Portfolio Management practices, good governance, clear line of sight through your architecture and a single toolset to manage data inputs all contribute to aligning your Architecture and Portfolio investments. Leveraging tools such as the iServer Enterprise Architecture product provided by Orbus Software enables much of this alignment to be achieved with support from good processes, accurate data and clear ownership and governance. Its use and alignment with Microsoft Office tools also ensures easy uptake and enables Excel spreadsheets and Visio models to be integrated into a clear picture of your Portfolio.

One of the key outcomes from the Architecture function is the development of documentation and reference models that reflect the DNA of your organization and support your change programs. If these documents are not readily accessible or do not reflect a consistent methodology then the level of re-use and consistent understanding across your environment is generally low.

I will use the term “Architecture” generically to represent both Enterprise and Solution Architecture as both disciplines should be joined at the hip to influence strategic direction and delivery through building collaborative working relationships with stakeholders and project teams.

Where are you on your Architecture journey?

An understanding of your current maturity and positioning of Architecture in your organization is critical to establishing the next steps on your journey. What is also critical is the level of acceptance and understanding of Architecture value from your stakeholders as this will drive demand for your Architecture services.

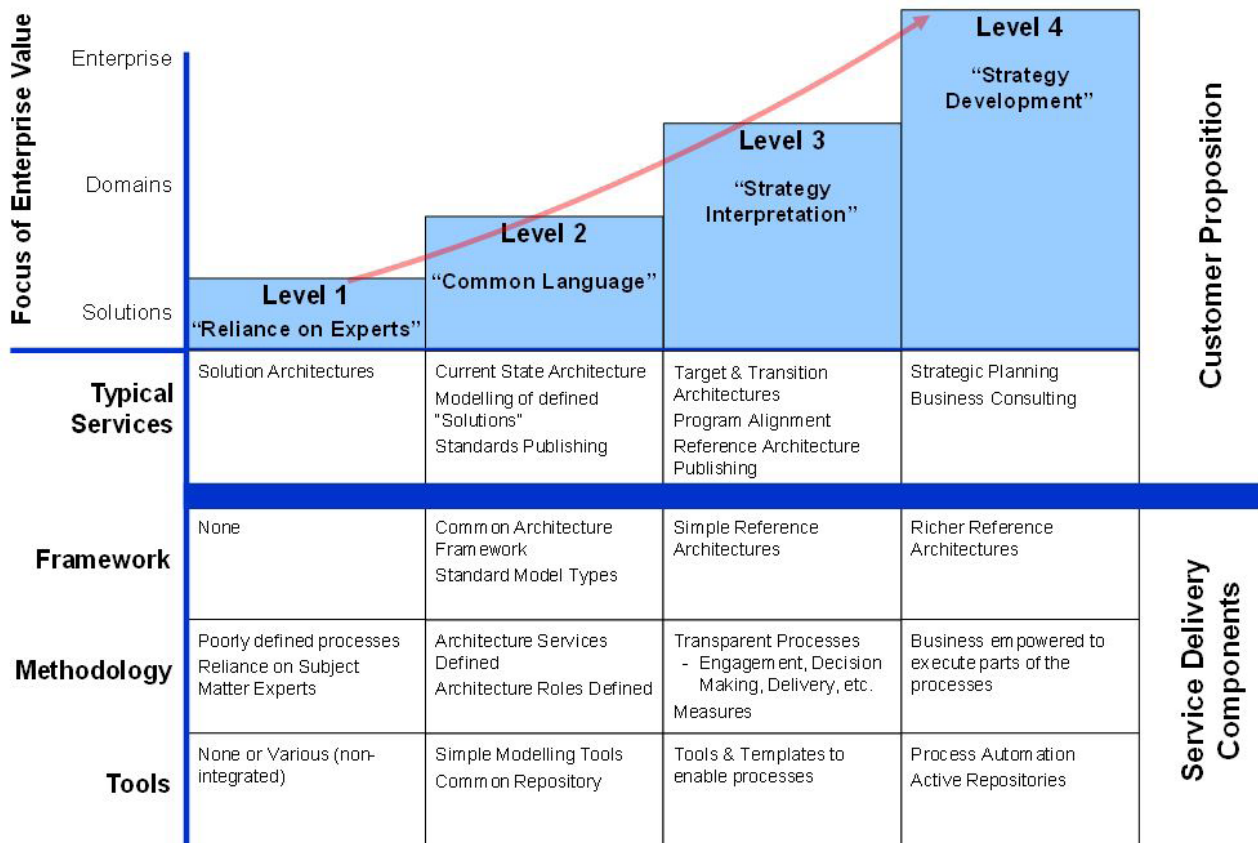


Figure 2: Architecture Maturity Model

There are a number of Architecture Maturity Models outlining the various levels of Architecture Capability required including COBIT 5, however I like the one below as it is a simple model outlining key deliverables required to guide the planning and development of your Architecture capability.

The model outlines four levels of maturity and the Architecture inputs required at each level of maturity. Organizations rarely reflect only one level of maturity and can span 1-2 levels depending on what has been developed to date.

Below is a description of the characteristics for each level of maturity:

- **Level 1** – Reliance on Experts, SMEs to provide architecture guidance, limited re-use of architecture with individuals acting independently of each other and no consistent processes or Framework applied to deliver Architecture value

- **Level 2** – Common Language – Architecture modeling framework established for all Architects with definition of Architecture services, simple modeling tools and a common repository. This level enables some Solution based modeling with current state architectures defined and Principles created for governance purposes.
- **Level 3** – Strategy Interpretation – Simple Reference and Target Architectures provide guidance and enable the Architecture function to interpret the business strategy and apply consistent processes to delivering Architecture value. It also enables alignment of Programs and Projects through Governance and using standard models and templates.
- **Level 4** – Strategy Development – is the holy grail for the Architecture function enabling Architecture to be a consulting partner in business and technology strategy development. Architects work in teams and are supported by consistent Reference Models, modeling language, common repository, joint business and technology governance and the organization benefits from having aligned and supported Architects working with business and technology stakeholders

Each level can act as a stepping stone to the next, however, it is better that the majority of capability is built as you move up the maturity curve. The reason for this is if you aim for level 4 and target Executive stakeholders without the building blocks in place you can set yourself up for failure and over stretch the Architecture function. This negatively impacts your credibility and can take many years to regain a seat at the strategy table.

Undertaking an Architecture Audit of your environment using the model above enables a realistic view of Architecture positioning and outcomes and is another opportunity to engage stakeholders in a discussion on your Architecture journey. The ultimate goal for the Architecture function is to proactively support and align business and technology strategy with delivery and execution activities, however, it is fair to say very few organizations have achieved the level 3 or 4 milestones above on a regular basis.

I have been involved in a number of successful strategic consulting assignments that have operated at the Level 3 and Level 4 of Architecture maturity. Using Enterprise models that simplify the business and technology domains, they provide a simple clarity to Executive.s complex world and also enable a range of inputs to be mapped against the models for context.

Below are three examples of generating Level 3 and Level 4 business outcomes using a mature architecture capability:

- One such assignment turned a 67 page business strategy document into a simple one page representation of the business model, the channels, products, customers, suppliers and the key business outcomes they were chasing. This enabled a complex business to be simplified for consumption across the wider internal teams as well as external stakeholders;
- Another architecture strategy exercise enabled the CEO and Executive team to re-iterate their business strategy and reshape the portfolio of change programs to focus on those projects delivering the greatest value. This was off the back of significant deficiencies and complexity in their Business Model, Application and Infrastructure portfolios;
- Another strategy assignment that leveraged a set of Enterprise Architecture reference models recovered a \$90m program that had lost its way on the critical outcomes to be generated. Using the Reference Models and a top down approach enabled the business and technology stakeholders to re-focus delivery streams and resources on those priority deliverables and overcome significant political pressure to avoid further wastage of scarce funds.

Starting your Architecture journey

A number of critical Architecture inputs are required to manage and control an organization's Architecture and enable the Architecture function to improve outcomes with stakeholders including:

- Establishing the core Architecture Team and cross-functional Architecture Review Board with the backing of top management to oversee the implementation of the future Architecture vision and roadmap.
- Establishing a comprehensive set of Architecture Principles, Standards, and Reference Architectures to guide, inform, and support the way in which your organization sets about fulfilling its strategic objectives and priorities through the use of IT.
- Implementing an Architecture Review and Approval Process to ensure architecture is engaged and individual projects and procurement decisions comply with the Architecture.

Developing the Architecture models and modeling standards are one of the first steps to gaining traction in your Architecture maturity journey. In many environments multiple architecture methodologies have been deployed which only serves to confuse your stakeholders and unless you have a baseline agreement within your Architecture community you will forever be seeking clarification and hamstrung in your Architecture efforts.

Essentially the choice of Architecture modeling frameworks is more

about making one choice and deploying it consistently as most of the Architecture modeling frameworks are evolving and do not address the full gamut of Architecture requirements and opportunities.

Final say on Architecture Capability

Set up an Architecture maturity plan and create a shared agenda across your Architecture community (Enterprise and Solution Architects) in developing your Architecture capability. It is a parallel activity to engaging your stakeholders and delivering Architecture value and avoid working in your own architecture sandpit to the detriment of adding value to the business.

Deploying Architecture at every opportunity and seeking out ways to add value to the Programs, Projects and Business Processes will enable a more positive response to your architecture efforts and enable the Architecture Function to move forward as a mature and important part of the organization's business and technology strategy.

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