

White Paper

Selling Architecture -

Taking Guidance from the Sales and Marketing disciplines to sell value

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Introduction

I have covered a wide range of Architecture topics addressing the technical aspects of the Architecture function, however it appears one of the most critical issues to be addressed by Architects and Architecture teams everywhere is how to sell architecture outcomes and values to our stakeholders.

Getting the Architects to agree on Architecture methodologies and concepts, leaving our ego's at the door and avoiding Architecture debates in front of our stakeholders all appear to be some of the biggest hurdles we face in gaining acceptance and commitment from business and technology executives.

These Executives and Stakeholders are our customers and we are on show every time we elicit requirements, discuss their strategy and explore the simple "On a Page" Architectures that we know so well. Also known as the "Opening Night" principle, it can take months and years to build credibility and trust and only seconds to destroy it.

Getting your customers to engage the Architecture function and treat the relationship as a partnership is vital to improving the overall credibility and acceptance of Architecture and its value at all levels in your organization.

Treating the Architecture function like a business where Architecture products and services are distributed via communication channels to a range of customers enables a focus on repeat buying, acquiring new customers, cross selling existing Architecture products and services and understanding customer satisfaction.

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In this white paper, I will explore these concepts as they relate to the Architecture function and hope that there are some gems in here that help with improving the Architecture business at your company.

Architecture Planning

It should go without saying that if you don't have an Architecture plan that is communicated, agreed, and regularly managed amongst the Architects in your team, then you will more often fail to achieve significant Architecture outcomes for your customers. The Architecture teams need to be at a place where they all leverage each other and understand each other's outcomes to ensure that delivery to stakeholders is aligned and provides benefit.

The opportunity to regularly engage Architects in a discussion on what is valued by customers, what are they likely to buy, how they will consume your Architecture value and in what timeframes is a critical part of your engagement model.

The term "Herding Cats" often applies to the Architecture function where different libraries, levels of expertise and perceptions of value are the norm amongst Architects. It is important to engage, articulate and execute on the Architecture Plan to enable a focus on the most important outputs for customers.

An understanding of your current maturity and positioning of Architecture in your organization is critical to delivering realistic outcomes for your customers. What is also critical is the level of acceptance and understanding of Architecture value from your customers.

I have been involved in environments where Architecture has a poor reputation and Architects are actively disengaged by Project Teams / Business and Technology customers and I have also seen environments where Architecture has a strong voice and a partner seat at the strategy table. Both require a different Architecture response and the experience and Architecture exposure of your customers and your Architecture Leaders will dictate the strength of Architecture outcomes achieved.

The ultimate goal for the Architecture function is to proactively support and align your business and technology strategy with delivery and execution through logical frameworks which become the tools to facilitate the relevant conversations. Creating a focus on metrics such as customer acquisition, cross sell, retention and satisfaction enables you to monitor the relative success of the Architecture business within your organization. Regular reviews of how customers use your Architecture products and services will enable a picture of health, maturity and acceptance to be created and support refinements as part of your ongoing Architecture planning process.

Architecture Products and Services

Developing and delivering an effective set of Architecture Products and Services is critical to capturing the hearts and minds of your customers. Architects must have a tangible Architecture capability to sell, a set of organizational reference points and something customers are prepared to buy, adopt and leverage.

If the Architecture function has a set of accepted Reference Models, Templates and Roadmaps already in place then the time from start up to value generation for customers is far quicker. Following is a summary of some of the key Architecture Products and Services available:

Products

- **Reference Models and Catalogs** – Establishing an agreed Business Capability Model, Operating Model, Information Model, Applications or Infrastructure Portfolio model at the Conceptual level enables all company inputs to be represented and understood in context.
- **Defined Architecture Models** – based on agreed modeling standards and principles is one of the first steps to gaining traction with your customers. In some environments, multiple architecture methodologies have been deployed that only serve to confuse customers and your architects.
- **Current and Target State Assessments** – Analyzing current and target states is an opportunity to create transition paths or Roadmaps as a basis to seek funding or confirm a change program to meet business objectives. Using the same templates for both current and target state assessments enables gaps and transition planning to be easily identified.
- **Roadmaps** – These can be Strategic, Vendor or Program level Roadmaps and are a critical service to business and technology customers as they imply an agreed organizational direction and trade-offs can be made to support business and technology decisions.
- **Program or Project Architectures** – The Solution Architectures provided by a Program and Project Architecture provide critical guidance during the Build and Execute phase and enable decisions such as scope exclusions, impact assessments to be made against these architectures.

Services

- **Develop and support IT and Business Strategy** – Architecture has a critical role in supporting and positioning the IT or Business Strategy. Using conceptual models enables a strategic perspective to be established that will resonate with customers and provide a

consistent perspective on the issues and challenges to be addressed.

- **Governance** – Architecture Governance is an important channel for managing the Architecture expectations of your customers. They enable the Principles and investment priorities to be agreed between business and technology teams and encourage discussion and agreement on direction.
- **Impact Assessments** – Impact assessments enable Executives to test the water with strategic options and direction. Using Architecture reference points can enable these impact assessments to be completed in relatively short periods of time with scope, size, risk and key inputs identified and costed.
- **CIO, PMO and Executive Support** – Architects can play a critical role in providing line of sight across the technology and business landscape and also provide the glue that fast tracks projects / program delivery and delivers on the IT / Business strategy.

Below is an example of how Conceptual and Logical Reference models (Products) can be used to baseline and provide line of sight and traceability to lower level Architectures for customers.

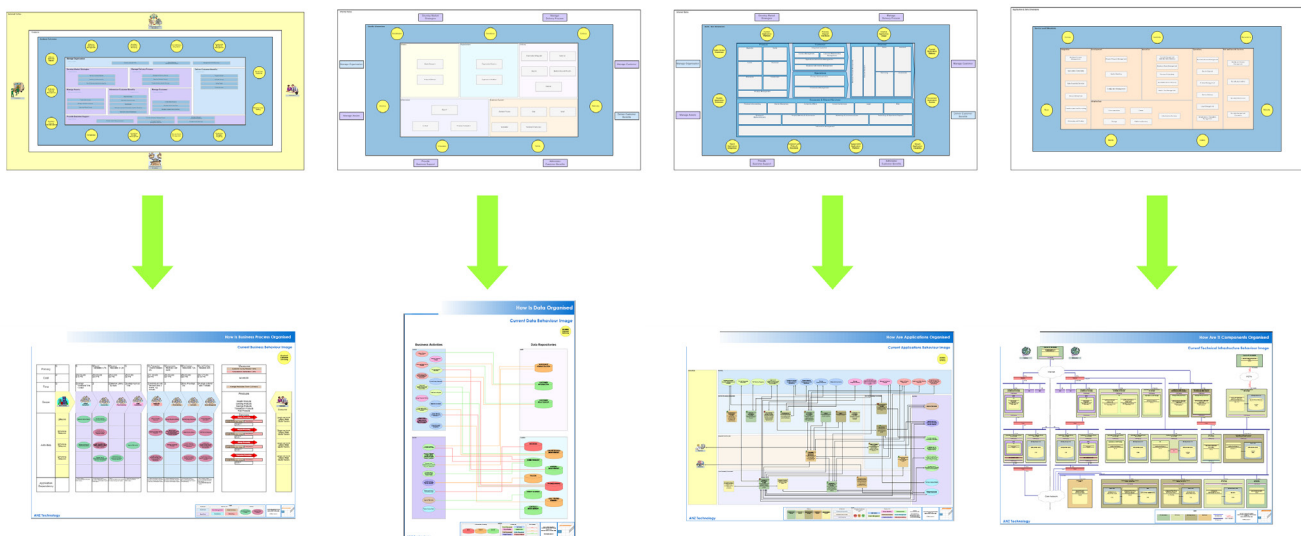


Figure 1: Conceptual and Logical Reference Models

Architecture Channels

Communicating and engaging your customers and delivering Architecture value requires a number of different customer touch points and a multi-channel approach. Enlisting a marketing and communications plan for your Architecture capability with a focus on formal and informal as well as push and pull communications will bring Architecture value to your customers attention and elicit issues or challenges to be addressed.

An example of formal architecture channels includes:

- Architecture Forums and cross-functional Architecture Review Board with the backing of top management to oversee the implementation of the future Architecture vision and roadmap.
- Architecture Reviews and Approval Process to ensure individual projects and procurement decisions comply with the Architecture principles and standards.
- Architecture Newsletters and communication of success stories.

An example of informal architecture channels includes:

- Individual customer engagement plans and coffee meetings
- Participation in Business Unit strategy workshop sessions
- Participation in business working group and progress report meetings

If all Architects are engaged and contributing to Architecture outcomes via these channels then the Architecture function stands a better chance of providing consistent Architecture value for customers.

Architecture Customers

As Architects, we are acutely aware of the need to provide a consolidated set of architecture guidance to our customers as it builds credibility, trust and acceptance of the partnership role that Architecture should and can provide. Not all Architecture Customers are equal and it is important to understand who the decision makers are and who can support your Architecture goals and outcomes and match the Architecture communications and engagement to the role each customer can play.

A summary of the key Customer Roles and Architecture activities that can be deployed in your organization is as follows:

Chief Information Officer

- Owns the EA Strategy and provides Technology and Architecture leadership
- Liaise with IMT / Business Committee regarding strategic direction and priorities
- IT Managers
- Establish Architecture framework and methodology
- Initiate and Influence a Program or Project of work

- Assign a Program or Project Architect
- Identify projects in collaboration with Program Architects
- Communicate EA Principals, Standards and Architecture Vision
- Communicate program outcomes and business value to Architecture Review Board

Business Unit Executives

- Communicate Architecture Principals and Standards
- Govern solution outputs and identify synergies between projects
- Facilitate and co-ordinate collaboration between projects
- Communicate Program Architecture and Architecture Decisions

Program / Project Managers

- Communicate solution options to customers (e.g. Custom build vs COTS)
- Define Conceptual Architecture for business case
- Define Logical Architectures for system design
- Communicate the Solution Architecture

Final say on Selling Architecture

Architecture value comes in many forms and invariably it is your customers who dictate the success of your Architecture objectives. Placing a strong coordinated focus on your customers and their needs is critical to selling the Architecture message and leveraging the value from your Architecture capability.

Ensuring your team of Architects are all pulling in the same direction and running your Architecture function like a business all significantly contribute to architecture success in your organization.

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