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FOUNDER & CEO

\$15

CIO SOLUTIONS
44790, S Grimmer Blvd.
#202, Fremont, CA 94538



Business Architecture: Putting “Business” into Enterprise Architecture

BY WILLIAM M. ULRICH, PRESIDENT, BUSINESS ARCHITECTURE GUILD, DR. RICHARD MARK SOLEY, CHAIRMAN & CEO, OBJECT MANAGEMENT GROUP

By some estimates, there are more than one million professionals worldwide classified as business or Information Technology (IT) architects—collectively falling under the umbrella category of “Enterprise architect.” They can interpret and shape deployment of business strategies

and directives, by crafting a wide range of business transformations, leading to better business decisions. Yet enterprise architecture as historically practiced has garnered a reputation as a “techie” discipline that business executives often dismiss or simply ignore, threatening to push the practice into irrelevancy. John Zachman of Zachman Framework fame puts it best when he says, “The business should be doing enterprise architecture, but they won’t so the information technology team has to.”

Placing a technical stamp on enterprise architecture, deserved in part due to an historical emphasis on technology rather than business capabilities, has several downsides. When enterprise architecture is technology-driven and not business-driven, it constrains successful strategy deployment and business-driven transformation options. This limited perspective also results in wasted IT investments that often fail to deliver business value because there is no clear link between business strategy and those investments. In the worst case scenario, poorly conceived IT investments manifest themselves as silo’ed, disconnected or even conflicted IT initiatives, even as strategic and priority business demands go unfulfilled. Disconnecting IT decisions from business structure is just as bad as disconnecting marketing decisions from product design, development

and delivery. It just about guarantees failure.

Shifting enterprise architecture’s emphasis from technology towards a business perspective requires business architecture to move to the forefront of the discussion. Business architecture enables management to drive strategy deployment, business priorities, portfolio management, initiative scope definition and investment planning from a business (versus a technical) perspective.

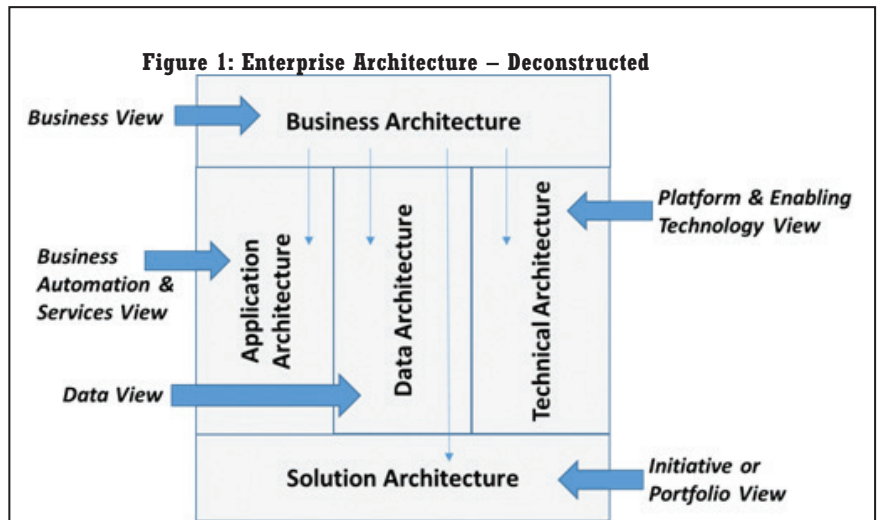


WILLIAM M. ULRICH

Putting “Business” into Enterprise Architecture

To understand the role of business architecture in context, we offer a brief overview of enterprise architecture. One common view of enterprise architecture is shown in figure 1, which highlights how business architecture drives and informs three vertical IT architecture views: application, data and technical architecture.

Application architecture frames the applications and services that automate business capabilities, data architecture frames information into accessible patterns and structures, and technical architecture frames platforms, tooling and protocols. Solution architecture represents a portfolio or initiative-specific cross-section of the other four architectural perspectives.



Business architecture is an essential component of an enterprise architecture. Simply put, business architecture articulates what the business does (capabilities), how it delivers stakeholder, including customer, value (value streams), business vocabulary and relationships (information), and how the business is structured (organization). A working definition as derived from the Federation of Enterprise Architecture Professional Organizations (FEAPO) Taxonomy Working Group, November 2015, states “Business architecture provides holistic, multidimensional views of capabilities, end-to-end value delivery, information and organizational structure business perspectives, and their relationships among strategies, products, policies, initiatives and stakeholders.”

Business architecture links strategy, initiative, product, policy and customer to technology investments and solution deployments. But what does this mean in practice and what are the practical implications of positioning business architecture as the business driver of enterprise architecture and related investments and solution deployments?



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It means that the scope and impacts of strategies, product plans, initiatives and investments are clearly defined from a business perspective first, and only then from an IT perspective. It means that the misunderstandings and miscommunications that occur when business directives are translated into requirements and working software are eliminated up front. It means that the

guesswork of what a business means is virtually erased for planning, requirements and solution delivery teams. Finally, it means that much of the confusion around return on investment and value proposition that often stalls technology-driven projects is resolved up front from a business perspective.

Business Architecture Decouples Accidental Architectures

Consider the practical implications of having business architecture serve as a starting point for tackling some of today’s most challenging business problems. Many of today’s IT architectures are redundant and fragmented. To the business executive, this means that suppliers, customers, partners and internal stakeholders lack transparency as transactions cross business units and systems. The impacts are clear, to even the casual observer; results are inconsistently defined and managed, requiring thousands of spreadsheets and user workarounds to fill the gaps. Critical business data is hidden and fragmented on users’ desktops, creating an auditor’s nightmare. Customers and other stakeholders are frustrated, and management has begun to join the chorus.

Attempts to fix this situation often create more redundancy; adding one more system, one more database, one more data warehouse or one more technical quick fix. Yet executives keep doubling down on technical solutions to poorly defined, poorly articulated business problems. These issues and resulting impacts are the result of “accidental architectures” that have evolved haphazardly over time and are reinforced through vertically funded investments that patch one small piece of the puzzle for one business unit, furthering destabilizing the ecosystem as a whole.

What can be done to ensure that enterprise architecture not only helps realize the future state, but addresses these accidental architectures, which are being propped up in part by business units that lack a big picture perspective? Enter business architecture.



DR. RICHARD MARK SOLEY

Business Architecture in Action

Business architecture is not a theoretical or academic concept, nor is it simply a buzzword spawning from industry analysts or large consultancies. It is, rather, a grassroots movement by thousands of business professionals who have collectively evolved a formal framework for meeting a wide variety of business demands from a cross-section of industries. Business architecture is a well-formed discipline, with a formal certification program and industry acceptance. In fact, numerous companies have shared their business architecture experiences as they have applied it to myriad business challenges.

For those organizations that continue to think that they can use technology with no business context to solve complex business challenges that cross multiple business units and software solutions, the message is clear. Introduce business architecture into your enterprise architecture, ensure that it is conceived and driven by the business, and shift from a technology-driven investment perspective to a business-driven one. This will be your first step towards addressing complex business challenges where solutions have proven both costly and elusive. **CS**