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5 information architecture questions



If you are any type of 'information architect' (and I loosely define an enterprise architect as such a person) perhaps you would like to have a crack at these 5 questions before looking at the answers 2 other people and I gave.

In the LinkedIn discussion on 'Architects are broken not architecture' an assertion was made stating "People are not broken, just the practice (the people doing), as it is complex, and there is nothing which defines WHO-does-WHAT".

To which I commented "I have already determined the Who, What, When, Where, How & Why for the Technique/framework that I use and aligned them to the Eskill's 6 levels of abstraction. I would be interested to see if anyone else is prepared to undertake the same exercise to prove that their approach (or the one they use) is credible (ie it is unambiguous, no redundancies, no overlapping phases, repeatable, teachable and supported by a fully integrated repository and software application) and not a waste of either taxpayer's money or senior management's time. This could also prove that both the architect (for using) and the architecture (which is ineffective, inefficient and difficult-to-use) that is indeed broken."

I felt the response to my comment was not really appropriate and I countered with "What you have written is fair enough but only leads to more questions. Getting back to the topic, if the architecture is not broken, then perhaps someone can answer these 5 questions:

1. How long will it take an architect to come up with the number of strategies an enterprise will need?
2. How does one get senior management to agree on the relevance and the priorities of them?
3. How many business objectives does enterprise need
4. How much data will it take to convince the IS-IT professionals not to go off and develop their own solutions before the business strategies and objectives are understood?
5. Which comes first strategy, objectives or data or can they be developed simultaneously and integrated later?"

And added "Surely the developers of the frameworks must have used their framework (as a practicing architect) to answer these questions. If they have not, then how can other architects blindly follow something that is full of flaws?"

Two participants answered my questions and after thanking them I commented “Person 1 & 2 < Thank you for your answers. As you can see both of you have come up with some response, and yet very different. To see the full impact of both your answers I suggest you copy and paste the questions and answers into either a Word document table 3X6 or into a spread sheet. And see how you differ.”

This article contains such a table and includes my response.

Person 1’s overall remark was “The questions are broader than ‘framework’. Realistically, most of the 5 questions can have no definitive answer” and I disagree with this statement.

The following table contains the differences in opinion:

Q	Person 1	Person 2	CMR
1	This is a 'How long is a piece of string' type question	I will argue that the architect is not the strategist on the c-suite team. The architect may define some alternative ways of achieving the goals and objectives--from the strategies defined by senior management--but is not the initiator of that part of the change process	If a corporate knowledge model is in place, it will take no more than 10 elapsed days for a strategic planning information architect, working with all the C-types in not more than 2 one hour sessions to discover and document 5 strategies and a minimum of 15 tactics (depending on the nature of the business). If the corporate model is not in place, then it will take not more than 20 days for a knowledge information architect holding 2 or 3 one hour sessions with the 5 C-types to discover and document a knowledge model of approximately 150 entity classes.

2	???	Management needs to determine its strategies and priorities of action, and the architect can provide means through alternatives	If one were to first develop the business objectives (a maximum of 10 elapsed days with 3 or 4 one hour sessions with the C-types to discover and document the business' goals then using SWOT analysis the business objectives information architect will identify the weakest goal (value) which will provide the knowledge information architect with the priorities to focus their and the C-types to develop the corporate knowledge base.
3	As many as are necessary and no more	A business needs as many objectives and strategies equal to the number of strategies they choose to adopt. That is usually a result of management decision-making which responds to proposed customer requirements.	A minimum of 16 goals (1 purpose, 4 benefits and 11 values) and between 55 and 100 performance indicators
4	Not quantifiable, Depends on Business and IT Management.	Organizations which allow the IT people to develop their own 'solutions' which are not consistent with senior management goals and objectives is out of control and will not meet its needs over time. The IT staff is not some independent group that doesn't do its own thing--it responds to needs expressed through business processes	A rapidly developed corporate knowledge base should take between 20 and 25 elapsed days (see Q1). This will immediately help with the identification of the prioritised systems and tactics thus holding the IS-IT professionals at bay.

5	Strategy is first as objectives are part of strategy. The meaning of "data" in this context is unclear.	The first step is executive direction, expressed through vision, goals & objectives, which can be expressed through strategies responding to customer needs. Once those requirements are defines, the BA can then determine what is presently capable, what needs to be developed or changed, and what the models, descriptions, and definitions of those initiatives might be to satisfy those objectives approved by senior management.	1 Business objectives drives 2 Knowledge which directs 3 Strategies
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Without the framework like the one I developed and use, together with the skills and the 2 compilers I developed, I can appreciate the other answers. Perhaps reading my article on [‘The ideal information architecture’](#) may assist the reader’s understanding.

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