

# WHITE PAPER

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S2E consulting

## **The Business Architecture Team**

*Building an effective team within your organization*

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# The Business Architecture Team

## Audience



This white paper is primarily designed for business architecture practice leaders and business architecture practitioners, as well as anyone who is looking to understand how to structure the business architecture team and role. It is equally applicable whether you are starting a new business architecture practice or looking to further mature an existing one.

## At a Glance

### ***There are three key aspects to design when establishing a business architecture team.***

These include the organization (positioning and distribution), team (composition, size and sourcing) and role (definition, competencies and career path).

### ***The business architecture team structure with the most long-term success to date is a COE hybrid.***

In this structure, some business architects report to a central business leader and others report to individual business unit leaders. The central business architecture team serves as a Center of Excellence (COE) and virtual partnerships are maintained with business people and IT architects. No matter what the structure though, all business architects across the organization must share two things: a common business architecture knowledgebase and a common set of practices. In the end, the “best” team structure is the one that fits best within your organization.

### ***Positioning business architects strategically is a critical success factor.***

- Business architects work upstream in the strategy execution life cycle—not as project resources.
- A business architect does not just build the business architecture knowledgebase and create maps and models—the focus should be on applying business architecture for value.
- Business architects are not an extension of the business analyst role—business architecture and business analysis are two separate but mutually beneficial disciplines which work together.

## At a Glance, *continued*

### ***A great business architect can come from anywhere.***

Some of their most defining and differentiating characteristics are passion and ability to think big picture, synthesize and abstract, architect and design, and communicate with creativity and influence.

### ***Working as a business architect provides an opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and exposure that can be highly beneficial for advancement.***

A successful business architect can shift their career in the direction they desire, either making the business architect role a long-term career or a step in a larger journey.

## Introduction

Establishing a business architecture team within an organization is about more than just introducing a new discipline. At the core, it is really about enabling a new vision for strategy execution and creating a new capability within an organization to enact change<sup>[1]</sup>. As a result, how a business architecture team is introduced and structured is critical to its long-term success.

Once the decision has been made to create a formal business architecture team, even if just a team of one or two people to start, teams progress along a similar path and often seek answers to the same set of questions such as: “To whom should the business architecture team report?” “How do we distribute business architects across the organization?” “How many business architects do we need?” “Where do we find great business architects?” “What does a business architect do?” and “What is the career path for a business architect who masters the role?” While any approaches must be adapted to an organization’s specific situation, needs and culture, there is a large body of experience that can be drawn from on how to most successfully establish a business architecture team.

Based on more than a decade and a half of firsthand experience with business architecture teams around the world, as well as work with various industry bodies and thought leaders, this white paper aims to provide practical guidance and useful best practices to help you successfully establish a business architecture team within your organization. It will focus on three key levels of design: the organization, the team and the business architect role. It will also provide a glimpse into the future and discuss steps you can take to move into action now. While there is still much depth, detail and application related to each of the topics covered here, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of all the pieces you need to consider for a successful business architecture journey.

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<sup>1</sup> If you are new to the topic of business architecture, you may find the following three S2E white papers of particular benefit for background:

- [“What is Business Architecture?”](#)
- [“The Value of Business Architecture”](#)
- [“The Strategy Execution Metanoia.”](#)

## Key Aspects: Implementing a Business Architecture Team

The most important purpose of a business architecture team is to use business architecture—and help others to use it—in support of a wide range of business scenarios from translating strategies to driving business transformations to informing investments and other decisions. In order to do this, two other key functions are necessary including creating and maintaining the reusable business architecture knowledgebase as well as establishing and maturing the business architecture practice.

The first step to establishing a business architecture team is knowing all of the pieces to consider. As shown in Figure 1, there are three key aspects or levels to design:

- **Organization** — Where the business architecture team will report and how key partnerships will be maintained (positioning), as well as how business architects will be distributed across the organization and how they will collaborate with each other (distribution).
- **Team** — How diversity is built into a team (composition), how many business architects are needed (size), and how business architects will be discovered and developed (sourcing).
- **Role** — How the business architect role will be defined (definition), which competencies are needed in business architects (competencies) and the options that exist for business architects to advance within the organization (career path).



Figure 1: Key Aspects for Implementing a Business Architecture Team

The following sections will explore each of these three aspects in more detail.

## Designing the Business Architecture Organizational Structure

This section will discuss options for positioning a business architecture team and distributing business architects across an organization. It will also provide best practice structures for a business architecture team and key considerations.

### How Do We Position the Business Architecture Team Within the Organization?

One of the most important decisions to make is where the business architecture team will report, as this may have significant bearing on the team's long-term success and effectiveness. There are a few common options:

- Business architecture team reports to a business leader(s)
- Business architecture team reports to an enterprise architecture leader
- Business architecture team reports to an IT leader(s)

When establishing a new practice, there may be just one option for where the business architecture team will report based on factors such as where there is initial buy-in and support. However, an ideal leader for the business architecture team is:

- **Aligned with the value proposition for business architecture** — Business architecture supports a wide range of business scenarios, so organizations must identify and articulate the value of business architecture within their own context. The business architecture team should report to a leader which best helps to achieve the overall value proposition. For example, if one of the main focuses for using business architecture within an organization is to enable enterprise-wide business transformation, then the team should report to a leader within a strategy or transformation department.
- **Responsible for results which require cross-business unit collaboration and successful end-to-end strategy execution** — Business architecture is most powerful when leveraged for facilitating cross-business unit transparency and collaboration as well as bridging strategy and execution to produce better results. As a result, a leader who cares about good strategy execution and / or enterprise change initiatives that require coordination across business units would likely find business architecture to be a key enabler to their success.
- **Located within the business** — The number of business architecture teams reporting to business leaders has been increasing for quite a number of years. Generally speaking, these teams demonstrate success for various reasons from proximity to strategic efforts and decision makers to leveraging the human dynamic of being seen as “you’re one of us.” The generic recommendation is that business architecture teams should report to a business leader, which truly embeds the intended strategic and business focus of the discipline. However, this decision very much depends on the structure and dynamics of each individual organization, and business

architecture teams that report to an IT leader may be equally as successful as long as the other conditions are right.

- **Open to new approaches** — While ultimately beneficial to an organization, introducing business architecture is not always an easy endeavor. As a result, having a business architecture leader who seeks and advocates for new and better ways of doing things can make the journey easier and more successful.

The table below describes each of the three common positioning options in more detail, including benefits and considerations.

Position Options	Description	Benefits	Considerations
Team Reports to a Business Leader(s)	The business architecture team reports to a leader within one business unit (for a centralized team) or business architects report to multiple business leaders across business units (for a decentralized or hybrid team).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to create access to, tighter integration with and acceptance by the business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business architects may be perceived as too distant from the IT architecture disciplines</li> <li>• May lead to inconsistent practices or lack of integration between business and IT architecture</li> </ul>
Team Reports to an Enterprise Architecture Leader	The business architecture team reports to the enterprise architecture leader, together with the IT architects. The enterprise architecture leader most frequently reports within IT, but may report to the business or a neutral department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to create a shared vision, consistent practices and integrated architecture among business and IT architects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business architects may be perceived as too distant from the business and perceived to have an IT-focused perspective</li> </ul>

Position Options	Description	Benefits	Considerations
Team Reports to an IT Leader(s)	The business architecture team reports to a leader (outside of enterprise architecture) within IT (for a centralized team) or business architects report to multiple IT leaders (for a decentralized or hybrid team).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to create access to, tighter integration with and acceptance by IT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business architects may be perceived as too distant from the business and perceived to have an IT-focused perspective</li> <li>• Business architects may be perceived as too distant from the IT architecture disciplines</li> <li>• May lead to inconsistent practices or lack of integration between business and IT architects</li> </ul>

It is always important to remember that a business architect must play a part in two different worlds simultaneously: as part of the business and as part of the enterprise architecture team. Thus, there is almost no perfect place for a business architect to report where they can easily maintain relationships with both. If a business architecture team reports to a business leader, they need to diligently cultivate relationships and maintain ongoing collaboration with IT architects—or vice versa with the business if the team reports to an enterprise architecture leader. Close relationships have never been more important, especially as the lines between business and technology have become blended in the digital world. Business architects should of course always maintain close relationships and collaboration with all other related teams across the strategy execution life cycle, such as strategy teams, customer experience teams, planning teams, business analysis teams and business process teams.<sup>[2]</sup>

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*A business architect must play a part in two different worlds simultaneously: as part of the business and as part of the enterprise architecture team. Close relationships and ongoing collaboration must be in place for each, especially as the lines between business and technology have become blended in the digital world.*

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## How Do We Distribute Business Architects Across the Organization?

Another key decision is how business architects will be distributed across the organization, especially as the team grows over time. There are a few common options:

- A centralized business architecture team
- A decentralized business architecture team

<sup>2</sup> See the S2E white paper "[Business Architecture Integration](#)" for more detailed information about how business architecture teams relate to and work with other teams across the strategy execution life cycle.



- A hybrid business architecture team (i.e. a combination of both the centralized and decentralized options)

While the centralized and hybrid options tend to be the most effective, the decentralized option can also be effective as long as there is strong virtual coordination to ensure that all business architects share a common business architecture knowledgebase and set of practices. The following are typical situations where each distribution option is utilized:

- **Centralized Team** — Often used for new business architecture teams to allow for ease of coordination and incubation as well as for mature teams that prefer to report to one leader such as one in strategy or transformation.
- **Hybrid Team** — Often used as business architecture teams mature and scale to allow for increased coverage, integration and socialization.
- **Decentralized Team** — Often used when there are specific structural or cultural constraints, such as where architects must work across multiple legal entities or where there is a strong bias that business architects should report to business units and potentially even have subject matter expertise.

The table below describes each of the three common business architect distribution options in more detail, including benefits and considerations.

Distribution Options	Description	Benefits	Considerations
Centralized Team	All business architects report to one leader. The business architecture knowledgebase and practices are centralized with the team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More likely to ensure an enterprise view of business architecture</li> <li>• Provides a focal point for the discipline and ensures consistent business architecture practices</li> <li>• Simpler to manage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be perceived as too distant from the business units, leading to lack of access, integration and acceptance</li> <li>• May be challenges with socialization</li> </ul>

Distribution Options	Description	Benefits	Considerations
Decentralized Team	Business architects report to separate leaders (e.g. in different business or IT units). Virtual collaboration is used to ensure the business architecture knowledgebase and practices are shared by all business architects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close to the business units leading to access, integration and acceptance</li> <li>• Can lead to quicker socialization of the discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May create a fragmented view of business architecture</li> <li>• May lead to inconsistent business architecture practices</li> <li>• May dilute the business architect role with non-business architecture responsibilities</li> <li>• More complex structure to manage; requires effective virtual collaboration</li> </ul>
Hybrid Team	Some business architects report centrally (e.g. for horizontal domains) and some report to separate leaders (e.g. for vertical domains in different business units). The business architecture knowledgebase and practices are typically stewarded by the centralized team which functions as a Center of Excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally provides the benefits of both the centralized and decentralized options together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More complex structure to manage; requires effective virtual collaboration</li> </ul>

The options above describe ways to distribute business architects as part of a dedicated business architecture practice. However, as an organization's needs and understanding of business architecture evolve, and as the practice matures and becomes more embedded, other creative structures may emerge.<sup>[3]</sup> For example:

- **Business architects may be deployed as part of a multi-disciplinary design team** — This emerging structure may either be formed temporarily, such as where agile teams deliver a specific capability, or permanently such as in a digital or mobile area. This structure emphasizes the business architect's role as part of strategy execution and enterprise design and allows them to be more closely integrated into the business and more valuable. However, this can make it more difficult to ensure cohesiveness and consistency of the business architecture function.
- **Business architecture responsibilities may be deployed as part of multiple people's roles** — This concept is emerging and may co-exist with one of the other business architect distribution options. In this case, business architecture responsibilities are performed not just by business architects, but by people in other roles as they utilize and refine the business architecture as

<sup>3</sup> These two structures were originally referenced in the white paper entitled "[The Evolution of the Business Architect](#)" by Mike Clark and Whynde Kuehn, July 2017.

part of their jobs. This structure allows business architecture to scale, be adopted, and permeate across an organization, though again, it may be difficult to ensure cohesiveness and consistency of the function.

## What are Best Practice Structures for a Business Architecture Team?

To date, the business architecture team structure that has had the most long-term success, especially as a team matures and scales over time, is the hybrid structure represented in Figure 2. The following are key points to note:

- **Business architect reporting is split among a central business leader and individual business unit leaders** — Some business architects report to a central business architecture team leader while one or more business architects report to each business unit leader. This not only allows for full coverage, integration and socialization across the organization, but the business architects can work together on change initiatives as necessary. For example, a business architect on the central team may take responsibility for architecting a horizontal domain / initiative related to a set of customer-facing capabilities that crosses business units while working with the appropriate business unit business architects to architect the specifics within their area. In the Figure 2 example, the central business architecture team reports to a Business Strategy and Transformation Head. This is common and teams often report to leaders responsible for strategy, transformation, innovation, strategy execution and / or planning. They may even report to leaders responsible for centralized services, finance or other functions. Note that the central business architecture team reports directly to the Business Strategy and Transformation Head in the example, but in reality there may be other levels in between where the team reports directly to a Business Architecture Director, for example.
- **The central business architecture team serves as a Center of Excellence (COE)** — In addition to architecting horizontal domains / initiatives, the central business architecture team also stewards, coordinates and oversees the business architecture knowledgebase and practices for all business architects.
- **Virtual partnerships are maintained with both business people and IT architects** — The central business architecture team is essentially a virtual structure that includes all business architects, including those that report to the business units, as well as business leaders and staff and IT architects. When appropriate, business architects collaborate with each other and with IT architects, especially within the context of the strategy execution life cycle. Business architects also work closely with business leaders and staff to obtain, inform and translate business direction.
- **The business and IT architecture leaders must be aligned** — In this structure, the leader of the central business architecture team reports within the business and the leader of the IT architecture team (whether an enterprise architecture leader or other role) reports to the CIO or elsewhere within the IT department. This essentially splits the enterprise architecture function across two leaders and business and IT. However, this structure can still work very well as long as the central business architecture team leader (who serves as a focal point for all business architecture leadership) and the IT architecture team leader are closely aligned in terms of direction, plans, priorities, communications, knowledgebase and practices.

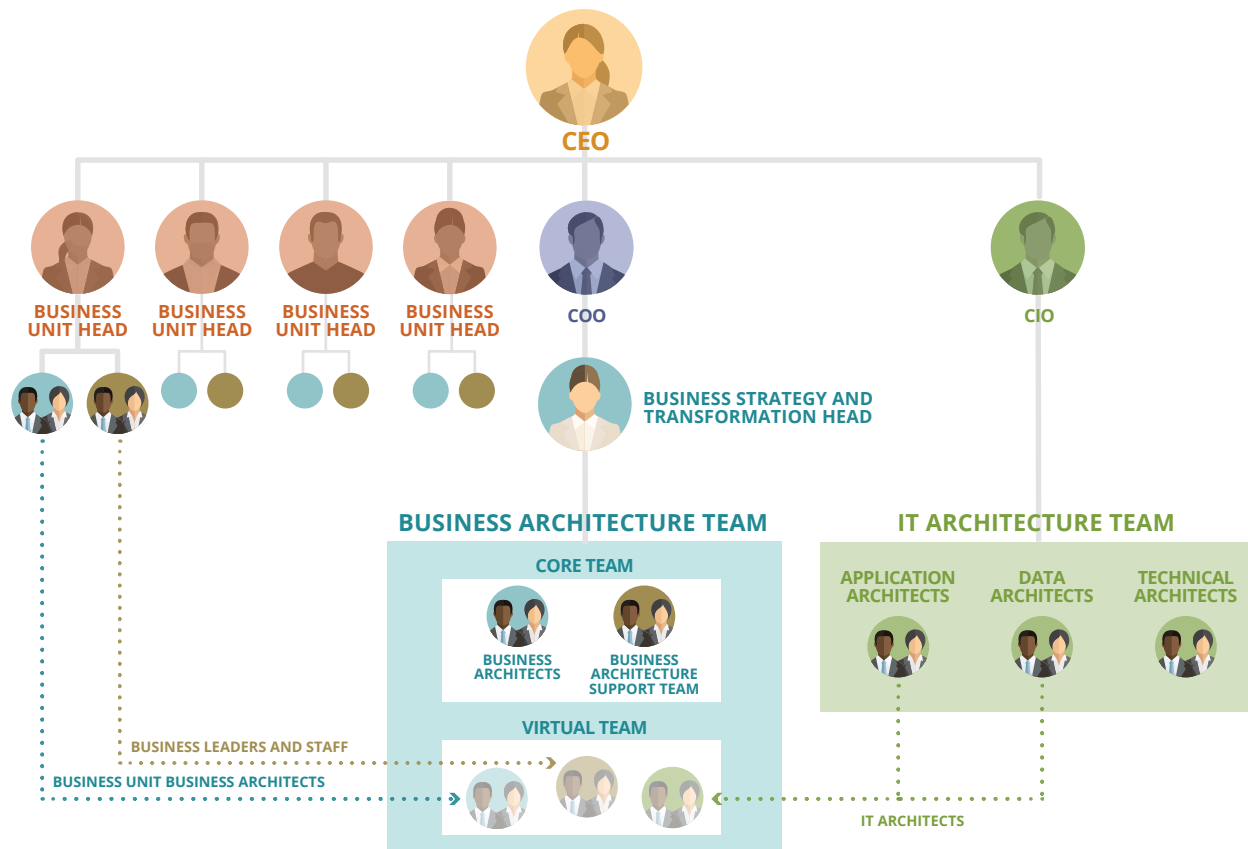


Figure 2: A Common Best Practice Business Architecture Team Structure <sup>[4]</sup>

## What are Key Considerations for Business Architecture Organizational Structure?

When creating and evolving the business architecture organizational structure, there are a number of considerations to keep in mind. These include:

- **No matter what the structure, all business architects across the organization must share two things: a common business architecture knowledgebase and a common set of practices** — While there are many areas for flexibility, this one is non-negotiable. All business architects must share the same knowledgebase which encompasses the entire scope of the organization at a high level. Separate business architectures should not be created by business unit, product or any other division. In addition, all business architects should share a common methodology and set of practices for the way in which they create and apply business architecture. Not following this key principle will likely result in a business architecture team that is not only ineffective, but that reinforces—instead of breaking down—the current organizational silos.

<sup>4</sup> Redesigned and adapted from an original diagram by TSG, Inc.

- **The “best” team structure is the one that fits best within your organization** — Regardless of what is best practice, what works for other organizations, or what it you would like to do, in the end, the “best” structure is the one that fits your organization at this point in time. This is particularly true for a new practice that is being established. Sometimes you have to start where you can start and that is where you have advocacy, investment, cultural fit and the ability to build the practice in the right way. It is better to just get started and then evolve the structure later on once the team has demonstrated success and the organization has become more familiar with the business architecture discipline.
- **The business architecture team structure will likely evolve** — As business architecture teams mature, they frequently evolve their structure, including positioning, distribution and even definition of the business architect role. For example, a team may have been incubated while reporting to an IT leader and then it later shifts to report to a business leader. Or, a team may have initially been centralized, but then domain business architects are later put into place and it shifts to a hybrid model. It is important to set expectations with stakeholders up front that structural changes can and should occur as the organization adopts and expands its needs for business architecture.

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*No matter what the structure, all business architects across the organization must share two things: a common business architecture knowledgebase and a common set of practices. While there are many areas for flexibility, this one is non-negotiable. Not following this key principle will likely result in a business architecture team that is not only ineffective, but that reinforces—instead of breaking down—the current organizational silos.*

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## Designing the Business Architecture Team

This section will discuss team composition and team size, including how to manage fluctuations. It will also discuss options for sourcing business architects.

### How Should the Business Architecture Team Be Composed?

Experience has shown that what makes a great business architecture team is diversity. When a team has a collection of people with different talents and personalities, it performs better because it can address a broader range of scenarios, build partnerships with different types of people and solve problems more comprehensively. Business architects are also happier and stay on the team because they can leverage their strengths and do what they enjoy. Creating a diverse business architecture team should be an intentional goal. Key areas of team diversity include:

- **Levels of Knowledge and Experience** – Team members may have varying backgrounds a range of depth and breadth in their business architecture experience. The business architect role and level definitions should reflect the expected levels of knowledge and experience. Business architects can also do “rotations” to gain exposure and new experiences as well.
- **Focus Areas** – Team members can have various focus areas, including one, two or all three the following:

- ▶ Applying business architecture to various scenarios (i.e. “architecting”) – The majority of architects should focus here
- ▶ Building and maintaining the business architecture knowledgebase
- ▶ Creating the business architecture practice infrastructure

For those business architects that are focused on architecting, the focus may also vary by:

- ▶ Business scenario (e.g. strategy translation, business transformation, mergers and acquisitions, project portfolio management support, application portfolio management support, etc.)
- ▶ The scope of the business they are responsible for architecting

As a business architecture team scales over time, there may also be a need for additional non-business architect roles such as a graphic designer or a role which manages aspects of the practice infrastructure related to tools and administration.

- **Personalities** – Business architects are naturally drawn to different aspects of the role. For example, some are outgoing and enjoy facilitation and relationship-building, while others prefer the more introspective and analytical activities such as building and leveraging the knowledgebase.

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*Creating a diverse business architecture team should be an intentional goal. A team with a range of knowledge, experience, focus areas and personalities not only allows for better coverage of business architecture scenarios, but also gives business architects a career path, increases retention, and alleviates hiring and compensation demands.*

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## What Is the Right Size for a Business Architecture Team?

Most business architecture teams start with one, two or a few people and then scale up over time as needed. As a team scales, determining the ideal size and managing fluctuations to meet business architecture demand become important to consider and plan.

### *Team Size*

The size of the business architecture team needed is based on the size of the organization and the level of organizational change occurring or planned, which may of course fluctuate over time. However, there are two key factors that can help to approximate the ideal number of business architects needed—especially when the intention is to scale across the enterprise—as described in this simple formula:

**Business Architecture Team Size =**  
**Number of Business Architects to Cover Demand + Number of People to Support the Practice**

The total number of people needed on the business architecture team at any point in time will come from the:

- **Number of Business Architects to Cover Demand** — By far, the majority of business architects will fall into this category. The key is to identify where business architecture coverage is needed based on the organizational structure and planned or in flight change initiatives. Then, one or more business architect can be hired and assigned to each in priority order over time. Organizations typically allocate business architects to work with:
  - ▶ Vertical domains (e.g. for a business unit or product area)
  - ▶ Horizontal domains (e.g. for a cross-business unit set of enterprise capabilities)
  - ▶ Horizontal or vertical change initiatives
  - ▶ Other strategic activities (e.g. supporting project portfolio investment decision-making)
- **Number of People to Support the Practice** — A smaller number of people typically fall into this category, and as mentioned earlier, some may have a non-business architect role. In most organizations, there are relatively few people who focus exclusively on this category which entails building and maintaining the knowledgebase and supporting the practice in various ways.

Team members will likely split their time across more than one area described above (and of course should not be double counted when calculating team size). For example, a business architect may:

- Support multiple vertical domains
- Support a vertical or horizontal domain as well as take responsibility for various aspects of the practice (e.g. stewarding the methodology, delivering some training, etc.)
- Support vertical or horizontal initiatives, but spend a portion of their year supporting the project portfolio management process

Most business architects always play some role in refining and / or expanding the enterprise business architecture knowledgebase through usage, as well as mentoring other business architects.

### *Team Fluctuations*

A business architecture team's size can fluctuate over time. The primary reason for this is change initiatives. For example, organizations that are embarking upon large, enterprise-wide business transformations may need a larger business architecture team for awhile to architect and plan the changes needed across business units. As a result, having the ability to surge in capacity can be useful.

Organizations have found various clever ways to scale up their teams during times of surge, including:

- Shifting internal business architects from their current focus area to one where additional capacity is needed
- Leveraging experienced external business architecture resources
- Hiring or borrowing internal resources and training them to become part-time or full-time business architects
- Allocating portions of the business architect role to non-business architect resources

These surge capacity techniques can also be used as creative options to staff a new business architecture team when there is not yet budget to hire all of the internal resources needed.

When bringing new people into the business architecture practice, having a strong foundation of training, methodology and consistent practices is critical to ensure they can get up to speed quickly and perform the role effectively.

## From Where Should We Source Business Architects?

In almost any geography and industry, there is a high demand for a limited number of experienced business architects, partially due to the fact that business architecture is still an emerging discipline so the pool of people with experience is fairly small. Many people assume that the business analyst community is the best place to look for potential business architects, but it depends on the individual. Great business architects can come from anywhere, so it is important to stay open minded and accept that time and investment is necessary to train and align the team.

The following are typical options for sourcing business architects from within or outside of the organization:

- Hire an experienced business architect who has worked in other organizations as an internal business architect or a consultant
- Hire a business person (e.g. from an area such as strategy, planning, innovation or within operations) from within or outside of the organization and train them on business architecture
- Hire an IT person (e.g. business or systems analyst, IT architect or another role) from within or outside of the organization and train them on both the business and business architecture

Sourcing Option	Benefits	Considerations
<p><b>Hire an Experienced Business Architect</b></p> <p>An experienced business architect from outside of the organization, who either worked as a business architect in another organization or in an external consulting role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerates time to deliver business results and value</li> <li>• May help to establish a new business architecture practice or mature an existing one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is currently variation in the market on how people define the business architect role, so request Certified Business Architect (CBA)<sup>®</sup> certification, interview closely and ask for specifics</li> <li>• Time to learn the company</li> <li>• Time to build relationships and credibility within business and IT</li> </ul>



Sourcing Option	Benefits	Considerations
<p><b>Hire a Business Person and Train Them in Business Architecture</b></p> <p>A business-focused person with expertise from a specific business unit or who has worked on a business team such as strategy, innovation or planning. May or may not have been in a leadership role. May come from within or outside of the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If an internal hire, saves time learning the company</li> <li>• Creates tighter integration with and adoption by the business due to existing relationships and credibility</li> <li>• Adds diversity to and expands the range of the team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is currently variation Time for training and experience</li> <li>• Depending on background, may take time to understand the business architecture discipline and the higher-level, structured thinking</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hire an IT Person and Train Them in Business Architecture</b></p> <p>An IT-focused person with expertise from a specific unit within IT or who may have worked as an IT architect, business or systems analyst, etc. May or may not have been in a leadership role. May come from within or outside of the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If an internal hire, saves time learning the company</li> <li>• Creates tighter integration with and adoption by IT due to existing relationships and credibility</li> <li>• Adds diversity to and expands the range of the team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time for training and experience</li> <li>• Depending on background, may take time to understand the business architecture discipline and the higher level, business-focused thinking</li> <li>• Depending on organizational dynamics, may contribute to perception that business architecture is an IT discipline</li> </ul>

Leveraging all of these options will not only increase your available pool of talent, but will also lead to a more diverse business architecture team.

The table below describes each source option in more detail, including benefits and considerations.

## Designing the Business Architect Role

This section will discuss the business architect role, necessary competencies, and career path options.

### How is the Business Architect Role Defined?

A solid understanding of what business architecture is, the business scenarios in which it is used, and its role within the strategy execution life cycle are all highly important prerequisites before defining and implementing the role within an organization.<sup>[5]</sup> This will ensure that the business architect role is positioned strategically and appropriately delineated from other roles.

#### *Differentiating the Role*

<sup>5</sup> These three S2E white papers are particularly useful for this background:

- ["What is Business Architecture?"](#)
- ["The Value of Business Architecture"](#)
- ["The Strategy Execution Metanoia."](#)

There are some common misconceptions about the business architect role, so below are a few key clarifications:

- A business architect does not just build the business architecture knowledgebase and create maps and models. This is a part of the role, but the focus should be on applying business architecture for value. The knowledgebase supports this.
- Business architects do not work as project resources. They work upstream in the life cycle to translate strategy, architect / rearchitect the future, and define initiatives.
- Business architects are not an extension of the business analyst role. Business architecture and business analysis (and others like Business Process Management) are separate but mutually beneficial disciplines which work together. Business architecture focuses on an enterprise scope where business analysis typically focuses on a project scope.

### *A Business Architect “Job Description”*

There is not an industry standard business architect job description in place yet and the descriptions created by organizations vary widely based on their understanding and implementation of the role. As a place to start, some key responsibilities and qualifications for a more senior, experienced business architect are provided below in Figure 3. This of course requires expansion and adaptation before use as a job description within a specific organization.

Keep in mind that as discussed earlier, three main areas need to be covered by a business architecture team: applying business architecture to various scenarios (i.e. “architecting”), managing the business architecture knowledgebase and managing the business architecture practice infrastructure—and not every business architect may have all of these responsibilities as a practice grows—but the description below references them all at a high level.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Develop relationships with business leaders and strategy owners; work with them to inform, articulate (where necessary), rationalize and translate business direction; leverage business architecture to provide business insights and counsel
- Lead and facilitate cross-functional teams on business transformations and other complex change initiatives to translate business direction; develop, communicate and govern target architectures and strategic roadmaps (in close partnership with the IT architecture team); maintain traceability from strategy through execution; ensure alignment of initiative results back to business direction; serve as an agent for change
- Work with various leaders and teams to integrate business architecture into the strategy execution life cycle including activities related to strategy development and translation, initiative scoping and selection, and solution design and development
- Partner with the IT architecture team to align the IT strategy and architecture with the business strategy and architecture

- [List other bullets to describe how business architecture is used within your organization and / or adapt those listed above]
- Facilitate the creation, maintenance and governance of an enterprise-level business architecture knowledgebase, based on BIZBOK® Guide aligned mapping techniques including capturing content and relationships for the core domains (capabilities, value streams, organization, information) and extended domains (strategies, policies, stakeholders, products, metrics and initiatives)
- Maintain current state assessments of the business architecture, and, using the architecture and other techniques, identify and suggest improvements to the organization
- Partner closely with related teams to facilitate alignment between strategy and execution, including strategy, customer experience design, planning, IT architecture, business analysis, business process and organizational design teams (This list should be customized to the relevant teams within your organization.)
- Guide and mentor other business architects and other roles as applicable on the creation and utilization of business architecture
- Lead and / or participate in activities to help mature the business architecture practice such as methodology development, governance, tool usage, talent development, practice planning and measurement, change management and socialization, and organizational alignment and integration
- Communicate and serve as an advocate for the business architecture discipline and vision within the organization
- Acquire and apply advanced knowledge of relevant internal domains or subject areas within the organization as well as external trends, market and competitive environments, technologies and techniques

### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree (Note: A variety of concentrations have proven to be effective for business architects such as business, various types of design, organizational development, information systems and computer science, engineering and science, and industry-specific degrees.)
- Experience with related disciplines (e.g. strategy, customer experience design, planning, IT architecture, business analysis, business process, etc.), business techniques (e.g. business case development, cost benefit analysis, etc.) and modeling and analysis techniques (e.g. process modeling, requirements management, data modeling, solution design, etc.) (Note: A desired number of years may be specified, and the list may be customized to the needs of your organization.)
- Ability to facilitate large, cross-functional work sessions and conversations
- Excellent communication skills for all levels of the organization, including written and verbal communications as well as visualizations
- Strong working knowledge of Microsoft Office tools
- [List other required knowledge, competencies and / or skills as desired]

## PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Familiarity with and usage of the BIZBOK® Guide in practice, and ideally a Certified Business Architect (CBA)® certification
- Business architecture experience including:
  - ▶ Developing an enterprise business architecture knowledgebase (per the full ecosystem defined in the BIZBOK® Guide) including usage of automated repository tools
  - ▶ Working across business units with leaders and related teams throughout the strategy execution life cycle to architect and plan change initiatives as well as leverage business architecture in various other scenarios
  - ▶ Establishing and maturing a business architecture practice (Note: This may or may not apply depending on how the role is defined.)

*(Note: If specifying a desired number of years business architecture experience, consider the relative maturity of the discipline globally. Finding a resource with 1-5 years of experience is fairly realistic; finding one who has 10+ years of focused business architecture experience is rare.)*

- MBA or other Master's degree
- Experience working in [your industry and / or preferred area of subject matter expertise]
- [List other preferred knowledge, competencies and / or skills as desired]

*Figure 3 – A Business Architect Job Description Starting Point*

### *Levels of Business Architects*

Organizations frequently create multiple business architect roles, and potentially multiple levels within each role. A commonly used set of roles, in progression, is shown below in Figure 4. The first role is typically a Business Architect, followed by a Senior Business Architect and then by the most experienced Lead Business Architect. Occasionally, some organizations use an Associate Business Architect role which can be used for an aspiring and high potential resource, though less experienced than the others. The logical progression of the business architect roles not only creates a diverse team and makes hiring more feasible, but it provides a great development and career path for business architects. They can learn the business, the discipline of business architecture and other foundational skills as they progress towards the more experienced business architect roles.

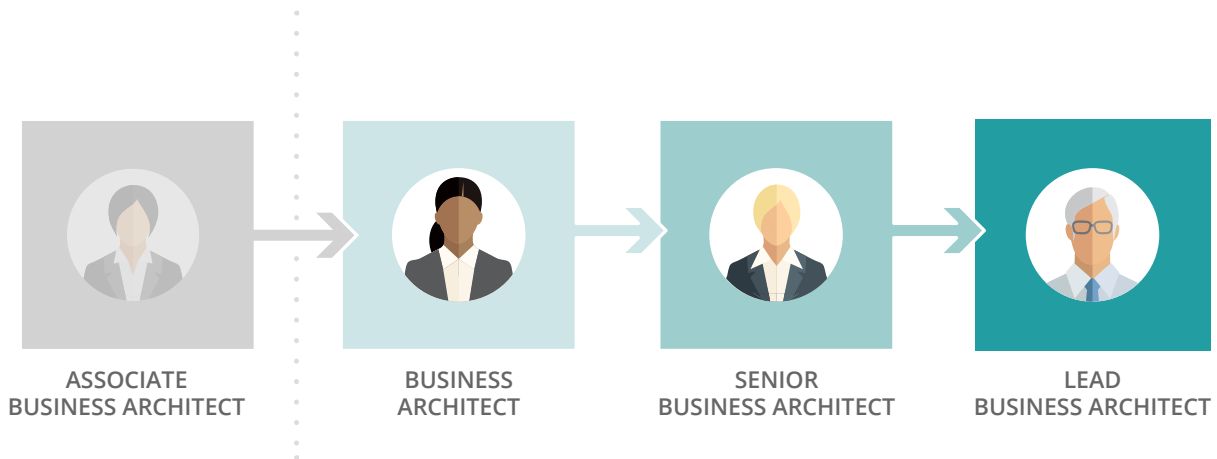


Figure 4: A Common Progression of Business Architect Roles

The business architect roles may vary by factors such as:

- **Scope of Business Architecture Responsibility** — A business architect may be responsible for architecting at the initiative level, a single business unit / domain level or multiple business units / domains (e.g. for a set of capabilities). Business Architects, Senior Business Architects and Lead Business Architects may work at any of these three levels. There may be an architect responsible for the scope of business architecture for the entire enterprise as well, and if this exists, it may be performed by a Chief Business Architect (occasionally used in practice) or other top level business architect.
- **Focus Areas** — As discussed earlier, business architects may have different focuses (e.g. what they architect as well as any knowledgebase or practice responsibilities). Within these focuses, Senior Business Architects and Lead Business Architects are typically assigned to lead the most complex efforts such as cross-business unit or enterprise-wide business transformations.
- **Level of Strategic Involvement** — Senior Business Architects and Lead Business Architects typically have the highest level of involvement in strategic activities, such as informing strategy formulation or advising business and IT leaders. This is not only a function of experience, but also of reputation, respect and relationships that are earned over time to have this very special role and a seat at the table.
- **Business Architect Mentoring or Management Responsibility** — Since business architecture is a relatively newer discipline, which often draws upon a wealth of other knowledge, skills and experience, an apprenticeship model is key to developing a solid business architecture team. Business architects should intentionally mentor each other on an ongoing basis. The level of mentoring responsibility is greater for Senior Business Architects and Lead Business Architects, where Senior Business Architects mentor Business Architects and Lead Business Architects mentor Senior Business Architects. From a management perspective, most organizations tend to have business architects report to a leader(s) versus to another (higher level) business architect, but some have leveraged this model, both with success.

Finally, when establishing the business architect role, the appropriate positioning and organizational context should be strongly considered. For example, the business architect role is robust in terms of its role in strategy execution and the leaders and teams that a business architect needs to interact with. As a result, consideration should be given to ensure that business architects report high enough within the organizational structure to allow them to be respected and involved in these types of conversations and activities. In addition, the IT architect roles should also be considered to ensure that they correspond as applicable (e.g. that the top IT architect role is not higher than the top business architect role). As an organization matures around business architecture, these considerations tend to become more relevant.

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*There is elegance in the logical progression of the business architect roles. It not only creates a diverse team and makes hiring more feasible, but it provides a great development and career path for business architects.*

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## What Competencies Does a Business Architect Need?

The topic of business architect competencies is one warranting much more in depth discussion, but an overview of key points is provided here.

### *Business Architect Competencies*

There are many competencies which enable a business architect to be effective and successful. These competencies can be grouped into categories for ease of understanding and management. A business architect competency palette is available in Appendix B.2 of the BIZBOK® Guide. The BIZBOK® Guide uses categories of behavioral, professional and knowledge.

As a starting point, some key business architect competencies are listed as examples in Figure 5, and grouped into categories. This of course requires expansion and adaptation before use as a final set of competencies for a specific organization.

Domains (Knowledge, Experience and Hard Skills)			Individual (Characteristics and Soft Skills)		
Business Architecture	Business	Other	Thought Process	Behavioral	Group Dynamics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Architecture Knowledgebase Development</li> <li>• Business Architecting (e.g. Business Model and Target State Architecture Development)</li> <li>• Initiative Definition and Strategic Roadmap Development</li> <li>• Business Architecture Framework Application and Analysis</li> <li>• Business Architecture Practice Establishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Business Knowledge and Acumen</li> <li>• Strategy and Planning Knowledge</li> <li>• Customer Experience Knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology and IT Architecture Knowledge</li> <li>• Operating Model Discipline Knowledge (e.g. Process and Organizational Development)</li> <li>• Solution Development Knowledge</li> <li>• Business Modeling and Knowledge of Techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Picture and Systems Thinking</li> <li>• Strategic Thinking</li> <li>• Design Thinking</li> <li>• Problem Solving</li> <li>• Creativity and Innovation</li> <li>• Information Abstraction and Synthesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Humility</li> <li>• Candor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication (including Visualization and Story Telling)</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Facilitation</li> <li>• Influence</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Team Management</li> <li>• Relationship-Building</li> <li>• Change Management</li> </ul>

*Figure 5: Key Categories of Competencies for Business Architects*

The competency examples above do not reference specific business subject matter knowledge, though it may be included where applicable. However, keep in mind that the business architect role is first a specialized practitioner, not necessarily intended to be a subject matter expert—though a depth of knowledge can certainly increase a business architect’s effectiveness and value.

### *Characteristics of a Great Business Architect: What To Look For*

As mentioned earlier, a great business architect can come from anywhere—from any business or IT role, and from within or outside of the organization. Whether to further develop an existing business architecture team or identify potential business architecture talent, the characteristics below encompass some of the most defining and differentiating characteristics of a business architect.

A business architect has both a passion for and the ability to:

- Think Big Picture – Business architects can’t help but think, observe, analyze and architect with the big picture and a long-term view in mind. They are systems thinkers, they look for alignment and they ask “why” and other hard questions. Conversely, people who have a hard time getting out of the details or that continually think within a narrow scope, such as constrained by a certain business unit or project, may not be a natural fit for the role—or they are just not ready for it yet.

- **Synthesize and Abstract** — Business architects see patterns; they abstract, categorize, synthesize, and decompose information. They create and utilize frameworks to methodically represent, analyze, communicate and design various view perspectives on the organization.
- **Architect and Design** — Business architects love to architect and design, and continually learn new techniques and frameworks for doing so. They are passionate about improving and growing their organizations, especially from a big picture perspective.
- **Communicate With Creativity and Influence** — Business architects are great communicators, both written and verbal, especially since they are often agents for change. They are emotionally intelligent, politically astute, effective and influential. They create visualizations and compelling documentation, they present, they have conversations, and they tell stories to educate, influence and drive decisions and action. They appreciate and are continually learning new techniques for visualizing and communicating information effectively.

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*A great business architect can come from anywhere. Some of their most defining and differentiating characteristics are a passion and ability to think big picture, synthesize and abstract, architect and design, and communicate with creativity and influence.*

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### *Creating a Competency Model*

Formalizing a business architecture competency model for an organization is important, especially as the team grows. The applicable competencies should be created (using inspiration from the BIZBOK® Guide Appendix B.2, this white paper and other industry sources) and organized into categories. Some discernment should be used to limit the number of required competencies (and categories) to the absolute minimum or the model can become unwieldy and ineffective.

An organization's competency model provides the basis for:

- Hiring criteria
- Training and development plans for individual business architects
- Consistent and methodical performance assessment for individual business architects

It is also important to align the business architect roles with competency expectations. This can be represented through a competency model structure as shown in Figure 6. The competency expectations for each role may be indicated by a binary yes / no, a scale such as high / medium / low (or Harvey balls as shown in the figure), or even a formal scale with defined levels from 1 through 5. Some competency expectations may apply uniformly for all roles / levels, while the expectations for others may increase for the more experienced roles / levels.



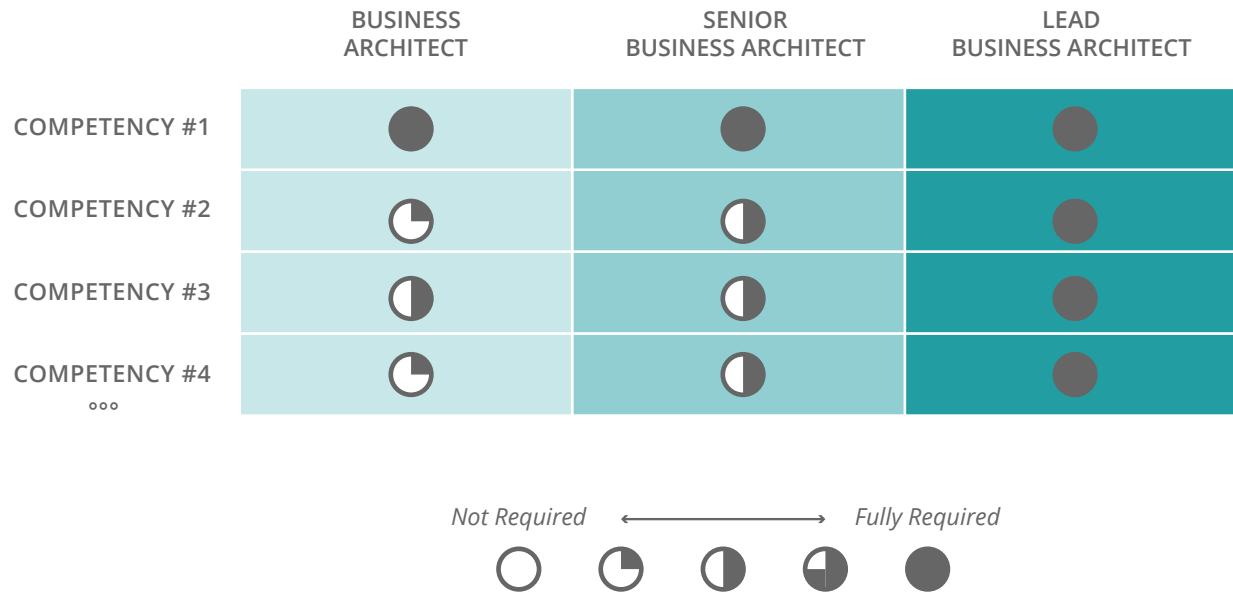


Figure 6: Example of a Competency Model Structure

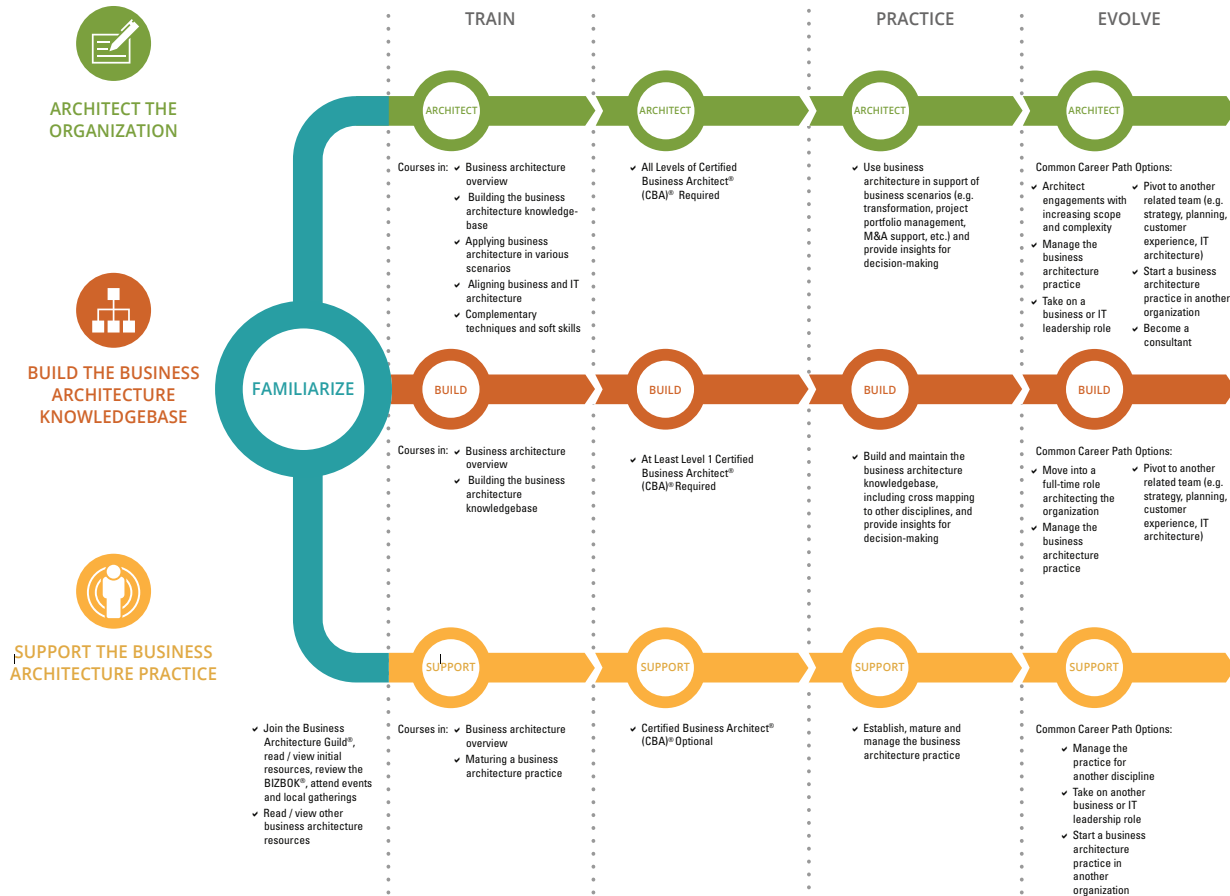
## How Do Business Architects Get Started and What is the Career Path?

This section addresses two of the most frequently asked questions as the field of business architecture grows and matures including: “How Do I Get Started?” and “Is There Life After Business Architecture?”

### Getting Started

The business architect role is a robust one, and for one to truly be effective, it requires him or her to not only have business architecture ability, but also a broad range of other knowledge and experience. As a result, most business architects have previous career experience before moving into the role.

Figure 7 describes a business architect’s journey from familiarizing themselves with business architecture to taking training, becoming certified, practicing the discipline and then eventually evolving their career down whatever path they choose. A business architect may work on one, two or all of the focus areas as shown in the diagram for architecting the organization, building the business architecture knowledgebase and / or supporting the business architecture practice.



<sup>1</sup>Refers to the Business Architecture Guild® Certified Business Architect® (CBA)®

Figure 7: The Business Architect Journey

While business architects (current or aspiring ones) need to take responsibility for driving their own careers, there are a number of things which leaders can do which will make them much more successful:

- **Position the Business Architect Role to Be Effective and Stay True To It** — Hire the best people for the role, formally name them in the role, assign them responsibilities at a strategic and enterprise level, and empower them to act. Particularly in the beginning of a new practice, actions speak louder than words. The people in the role and how they perform it will demonstrate to the organization what business architecture is and is not.
- **Invest in Training and Help** — Since business architecture is a new concept to many people, there can be some hesitancy to invest. However, an investment in good training and some hands-on assistance in the beginning goes a long way to accelerate a business architect’s career and the practice itself, versus the all-too-common alternative of requiring a new architect trying to learn by putting the pieces together through their own research project. This approach can also lead to a practice getting off track, which can be highly time consuming to fix later or even lead to the eventual failure of the team.

- **Provide Opportunities** – Even in the beginning stages of forming a business architecture practice, business architects need opportunities to apply the concepts in practice, even if informally to start. There is of course no better way to learn or prove the discipline than through action.
- **Create a Culture of Mentoring** — As discussed earlier, business architecture is best learned not just through training, but also apprenticeship. Create a structure and culture of all business architects mentoring each other right from the beginning. Mentoring approaches can include one-on-one relationships and group sharing sessions, and may also include mentors outside of the business architecture team (e.g. where a business leader or IT architect also mentors a business architect).

### *Career Path Options*<sup>[6]</sup>

Once a business architect has truly mastered the role and reached a high level of competency, there are a number of possible career path options they can pursue. A successful business architect can shift their career in the direction they desire, either making the business architect role a long-term career or a step in a larger journey.

Working as a business architect provides an opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and exposure that can be highly beneficial for advancement. This includes:

- A solid understanding of the organization from end-to-end, including awareness of how it creates value and how business direction is executed
- Recognition and trust as a strategic advisor
- Significant achievements such as leading and architecting a successful business transformation
- Relationships across the organization and knowledge of how to work within the culture

As shown in Figure 8, there are multiple paths for a successful business architect, such as:

- **Specialize In Business Architecture** — A business architect may continue to advance their business architecture career within their own organization or move to another one. Some business architects shift focus to leading the practice, while others choose to continue architecting increasingly complex and large change initiatives.
- **Move Into a Business or Technology Role (Within the Organization)** — A business architect can pursue a leadership role in a business or IT unit / department or become a product owner. They can also move into (or even lead) another function or practice such as strategy, innovation, planning, customer experience design or IT architecture.
- **Transition to a Different Career (Outside of the Organization)** — A business architect can take their skills and experience and apply them in a completely different realm such as management consulting or working with a start up organization.

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<sup>6</sup> This section is based on and expanded from content in the white paper entitled "[The Evolution of the Business Architect](#)" by Mike Clark and Whynde Kuehn, July 2017

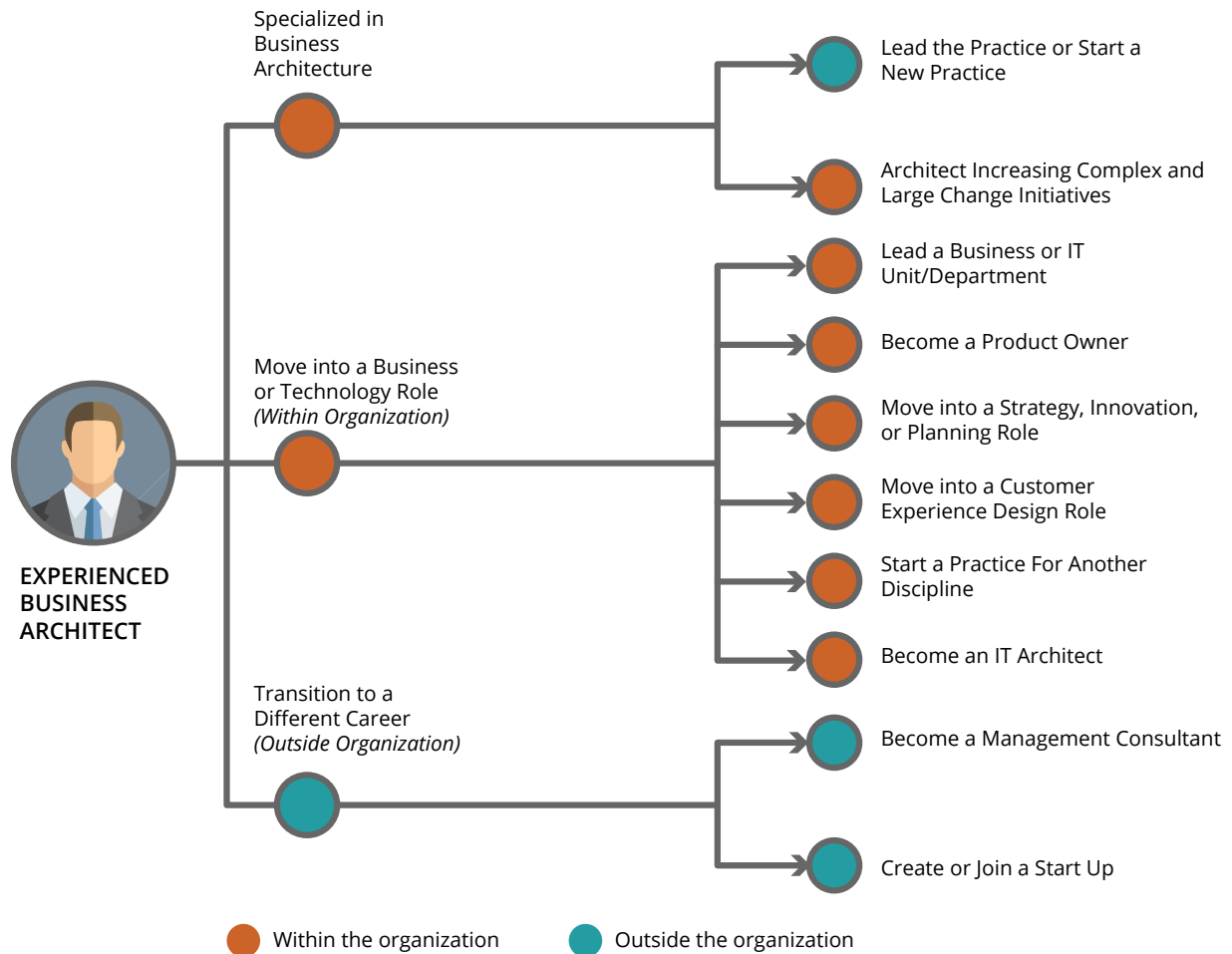


Figure 8: Possible Business Architect Career Progression

Working as a business architect provides an opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and exposure that can be highly beneficial for advancement. A successful business architect can shift their career in the direction they desire, either making the business architect role a long-term career or a step in a larger journey.

## Looking Into the Future

As the discipline of business architecture further expands globally, the business architect role will continue to evolve and formalize. A number of industry bodies<sup>[7]</sup> are increasing focus on the architecture profession and the role of business and IT architects. As this happens, formal job descriptions and competency models will emerge, the business architect role will be better understood by human resource departments and organizations will seek candidates with standard industry knowledge and certifications. As these industry bodies continue their work and socialization, hopefully business architecture will

<sup>7</sup> For example, the Business Architecture Guild®, the Federation of Enterprise Architecture Professional Organizations (FEAPO) and IASA.

become recognized and adopted widely by executives and the academic community over time as well, and the business architect role will continue to elevate and become a desirable career path.

Extrapolating some of the current trends, the following are possible future evolutions for the business architecture discipline and the business architect role:

- **The business architect role continues to shift focus on architecting the business versus developing the business architecture knowledgebase** —The ultimate value is in applying the architecture and while the industry reference models that are emerging certainly accelerate creation of an organization’s knowledgebase, in the future they may even “commoditize” some of the mapping skills needed by an architect.
- **Business architecture is deployed in new ways across organizations** — As business architecture becomes better understood and embedded within an organization, the function may be deployed in new ways, such as those discussed within this paper where business architects work as part of a cross-functional design team or aspects of business architecture become part of multiple peoples’ roles.
- **Organization’s architect across their boundaries** — The scope of organizations’ business architectures should represent their entire ecosystem (e.g. including aspects that may be performed by external partners), but some are beginning to actually work with those partners to architect or rearchitect together towards a common goal. This type of collaboration will likely increase in the highly connected world.
- **Architecture becomes a true profession** — As business and IT architecture industry bodies come together and create a common foundation with specializations by discipline, a true architecture profession can emerge with characteristics such as accountability, institutional preparation and ethical constraints.
- **Architects use their talents for “good”** — By nature, architects are passionate people who want to make a difference. There is a growing interest among business architects to help others by working with non-profits, churches, start-up organizations or other social initiatives—and hopefully this will grow into a movement of architects who use their rare talents and unique mindset to do “good.” And, to take it a step further, business architecture will be practiced in all types of organizations (for profit, non-profit or governmental) of all sizes (from start-ups to multinational organizations) for improved success.

## Moving Into Action

Whether you are starting a new practice or maturing an established one, there are steps you can take to act upon the information discussed in this white paper.

If you are starting a new business architecture practice within your organization...

This white paper was intended to provide you with a comprehensive perspective on all of the steps you need to take and decisions you need to make as you structure and grow your business architecture team. In particular, heed the recommendations on:

- Positioning the business architecture team and business architects strategically
- Investing in business architecture education and help up front to accelerate and improve your results later
- Being intentional and forward-looking—while you are likely focused on what needs to happen to establish the practice now, the more you can act today keeping the future in mind in terms of what the ultimate role of business architecture and business architects should be, the more successful you will eventually become as the practice matures

### **If you have an established business architecture practice within your organization...**

If you have already established a business architecture practice, you can use this white paper as a resource for reflection and new ideas. Some key questions to consider are:

- Is your current team structure effective in helping you to achieve your business architecture value proposition? Are there opportunities to evolve how the team is positioned or how business architects are distributed? How strong is your partnership with the business, the IT architecture team and other related teams such as strategy, customer experience, planning and business analysis?
- Does the composition of your team allow you to achieve your value proposition and scale to meet the demand for business architecture in your organization? Are there opportunities to diversify with people that have different knowledge and experience, focus areas and personalities?
- Is the business architecture team and discipline positioned and perceived as strategic within the organization? Do you have the right balance on time spent mapping the business architecture knowledgebase versus applying it for business value (considering that most of the focus should be on the latter, especially for a mature practice)?
- How does your business architect role(s) compare with the description and competencies articulated here? Are there opportunities to evolve?
- Is the business architect role a respected, revered and desired one within your organization? Are career path options defined, understood and pursued with intention?
- Are there opportunities to create more deliberate structure to support your practice, such as a formal competency model with a corresponding business architect performance assessment and hiring criteria?

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### **Acknowledgment —**

*This paper is dedicated to the business architecture teams throughout the world, small or large, who have had the vision, courage and determination to build this important capacity for change into their organizations. We are bonded together by a shared journey and passion for making our organizations and world a better place. — Whynde Kuehn, S2E Consulting Inc.*

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## About S2E Consulting

S2E Consulting Inc. is an established consulting practice dedicated to accelerating successful business transformations, with a focus on *Fortune 500* companies. We help our clients to:

- Streamline the strategy-execution life cycle from end-to-end, including optimizing the project and application portfolio management processes
- Design and plan major enterprise change initiatives from a business perspective, including digital transformations and mergers and acquisitions (M&A)
- Create and mature in-house business architecture practices
- Get started with basic business architecture concepts and training

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## About the Author



Photo credit: Tereza Červeňová,  
[www.terezacervenova.com](http://www.terezacervenova.com)

Whynde Kuehn is Founder and Principal of [S2E Consulting Inc.](#) She founded S2E to help clients bridge the gap between strategy and execution, and achieve their greatest visions for business transformation in a practical and business-focused way. She has extensive experience in enterprise transformation and planning, and was a key player in one of the largest business transformations in the world. She also led one of the largest business architecture consulting practices prior to starting S2E.

With a strong track record of creating successful teams that become embedded into their organizations, Whynde most enjoys helping clients to build their own business architecture practices. She also provides business architecture training and has developed and taught comprehensive, large-scale business architecture training programs for the public and for clients.

A long-time business architecture practitioner, educator and recognized industry thought leader, Whynde regularly speaks, writes and chairs/co-chairs events with a mission to advance best practices and facilitate community across the globe. Whynde is a Co-Founder, Board Member, and Editorial Board Chair of the [Business Architecture Guild](#), a not-for-profit organization focused on the advancement of the business architecture discipline. She also founded the New York Business Architecture Guild Community, and is Co-Founder and Partner of [Business Architecture Associates](#), an educational organization committed to business architecture training.

In April 2017, Whynde launched [StraightTalk](#), a business blog on a mission to explain business architecture, end-to-end, with the goal of helping to advance the discipline globally through shared knowledge. She is the regular contributor of this professional publication that also features prominent guest thought leaders.

Whynde also serves as a Senior Consultant for [Cutter Consortium](#), a global information technology research company. In 2014, Whynde Kuehn founded [Metanoia Global Inc.](#) to apply solid business approaches and design to help social initiatives and social entrepreneurs successfully start, scale, replicate, and sustain.