

New Era Enterprise Architects Need Sweeping Skills to Straddle the IT-Business Alignment Chasm

Transcript of a sponsored BriefingsDirect podcast on the role, qualifications, and career paths of enterprise architects. Recorded at The Open Group's 23rd Enterprise Architecture Practitioners Conference and 3rd Security Practitioners Conference in Toronto.

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Dana Gardner: Hi, this is [Dana Gardner](#), principal analyst at [Interarbor Solutions](#), and you're listening to BriefingsDirect.



Today, we present a sponsored podcast discussion coming to you from The Open Group's [23rd](#)

[Enterprise Architecture Practitioners Conference](#) in Toronto. [See a [related discussion on the effect of cloud computing on the architect role](#).]

Our topic surrounds the issue of the [enterprise architect](#) (EA) -- the role, the responsibilities, the certification, and skills -- both now and into the future. The burgeoning impact of [cloud computing](#), the [down economy](#), and the interest in projecting more value from IT to the larger business is putting new requirements on the enterprise IT department.

So who takes on the mantle of grand overseer as IT expand its purview into more business processes and productivity issues? Who is responsible? Who can instrument these changes, and, in a sense, be a new kind of leader in the transition and transformation of IT and the enterprise?

To help us sort through all of that, we're joined by our distinguished panel. Please join me in welcoming [James de Raeve](#), vice president of certification at The Open Group.

James de Raeve: Hi.

Gardner: We're also joined by [Len Fehskens](#), vice president, Skills and Capabilities at The Open Group. And, [David Foote](#), CEO and co-founder, as well as chief research officer at [Foote Partners](#). Welcome.

David Foote: Thank you.

Gardner: And [Jason Uppal](#), chief architect at [QRS](#).

Jason Uppal: Thank you.

Gardner: Well, let's look first at this whole issue of the down economy in the changing environment. Let me take that first to you, David. What is afoot, if you will, in the field? Why so much change all of a sudden?

Always in flux

Footte: We're always in flux. There's no doubt about it. There's no doubt about the fact that, when money is scarce, people get scared.



You have a lot of very frightened IT departments out there and a lot of frightened business lines with customers bailing out right and left. Everybody is just focused on the moment, thinking reflexively on how do we possibly save money. How do we renegotiate our vendor contracts in IT? How do we not lose customers? This is probably the thing I hear about the most.

IT does not want to be in a position of being responsible for the loss of market share in any way, because the business loves to blame IT, as you know, for a lot of things -- most recently, challenges to market share and revenues.

But, it's the greatest time possible to be talking about things like [enterprise architecture \(EA\)](#) and transformation, because transformation tends to happen in times like this. It tends not to happen in times of prosperity.

As I've been telling everybody, this is the greatest opportunity you'll have personally in your career, if you're a manager in the management ranks, and especially as an executive, to start raising issues that you were afraid to ask for. These are those plans that were shelved at times when you were making so much money that nobody was listening to your conversation. Right now is a tremendous opportunity. I want to be very positive about that, because you'll probably hear about some negatives today too.

Gardner: Let's go to James. Why are these forces around us forcing the change on the definition of the enterprise architect?

De Raeve: There's been a realization, hopefully a growing realization, that the term enterprise architect means something different to everybody who uses it. In this time of increased pressure and constraints on budget and focus on results, there's ever-increasing need to have more coherence and more commonality and the idea of what EA is as a discipline, what it should be as a profession, and what skills and competencies enterprise architects need to display in their job to succeed.



Gardner: Moving from a mismatch of definitions and application of EA, to a more standardized approach or perhaps more fragmentation?

De Raeve: I think there is increasing convergence. There is increasing realization that there is a need for a common understanding. I wouldn't say a standardized approach, because you don't have standardized problems and people aren't standardized, but there is a growing realization of the need for common core skills and competencies.

What the members wanted

We develop certification programs, but the reason we do it and the reason we have one in the architecture space is because that's what our members wanted us to do. They want us to do things for good, commercial, self-centered reasons. As organizations, they need this kind of concentration and increased commonality of understanding of skills and competencies.

Gardner: Well, if we're not moving towards a standardized definition, perhaps we're moving to a more strategic role for the architects. Is that fair?

Len Fehskens: That's always been the case. In many respects, strategy is sort of the last frontier.



One of the things that I've seen over my career in architecture is that the focus of architects has moved up the stack, so to speak. Initially the focus was on rationalizing infrastructure, looking for ways to reduce cost by removing redundancy and unneeded diversity. It's moved up through the middleware layer to the application layer to business process, and now people are saying, "Well, the place where we need to look for those kinds of benefits is now at the strategy

level." That's inevitable.

The thing to understand, though, is that's it's not moving forward in a linear front across the entire industry. The rate of progress is locally defined, so to speak. So, different organizations will be at different points in that evolutionary path.

There are still organizations where the primary role of an enterprise architect is, in fact, to rationalize the infrastructure. On the other hand, we're starting to see lots more places where they're playing a major role in strategy development.

Gardner: As we move up the abstraction, based perhaps on the maturity of the technology and its importance and its role in the larger enterprise, do we see a stratification of sorts among the architects? If so, how do we rise up this pyramid to more of an über-architect, if that makes sense?

Fehskens: There is some stratification. Again, the people working at the highest levels are not going to be making decisions at the lowest levels, they have to pass those decisions down the

chain. They may get passed down and passed down. So, just as we talk about a layered architecture, there is a layer of architecture of enterprise-wide responsibility at those various levels in the overall stack.

This gets into a lot of interesting questions about [governance](#), as a result of this. The ideas of architecture purveyed organizational structures from the bottom to the top. Issues of governance are going to become increasingly critical. You talk about the change in the skill profile. A couple of years ago, governance was something that an architect could get by just knowing about.

Now, an architect has to have full-blown competence in the governance area -- how to turn it into decision-making and implementations that conform to the architecture, both across the enterprise and then vertically through this structure of architectures that go down from the strategy level.

Gardner: Jason, one of the least comfortable positions is to be responsible for something, but without authority. How is the role of the architect from your position as a practitioner reaching up this stratification towards a higher level of strategic overview, but gaining authority at a commensurate rate?

Protecting their turf

Uppal: Several things have happened. Especially in the economic downturn, there are a lot of people who are very sensitive and are afraid about their positions and the power that they have accumulated. Or, it's just the normal nature of protecting their own turf.



As role of the architect starts to ascend in the organization, an acceptance has place to some degree, but it also made a lot of other professionals very nervous about what we do. In this day and age, do you have to be very good at what you always did in the rationalization technology, doing this and doing that, and you also have to be very much almost a priest-like sensitive person so that you don't trample on somebody's feelings.

Another layer that I saw come into architect skills in last 6-12 months is how you make sure that you don't trample somebody else along the way, because, without them, you're not going to go very far. Otherwise, they're going to throw a lot of stones along the way.

So, that's another a huge challenge that we have from skills of the architect as you're going up -- considering everything else, but having this soul who would be sensitive to the other professions that are going along.

Gardner: Is it fair to say that the skill set of an architect, at perhaps a solution level or a technology level, is quite different from the skill set at that higher strategic level you mentioned, a priest-like bearing? How do you transition when the skill sets are different?

Uppal: Well, you need those skills at lower level. Those are just part of the game. They are no longer sufficient for you to do your job. Now, you have to have all of those skills, plus on top of it, you have to have more, and that's where it's more of a challenge for the architect, as we're going up. We're being accepted when we go up, but if we don't succeed there, being insensitive to all those other issues around, we will be sent back very quickly.

Gardner: David, what are you finding in your practice in terms of how people are grasping and grappling with the transition from a high level of technical skills to this more collaborative people type of skill set?

Foote: As I was talking about yesterday, I see so many parallels between the maturation of the CIO job with what's happening in EA.

Basically, true EA is a collaboration between the company's executives and everyone who works for them -- and they pay your salaries. They tell you when you are an enterprise architect. You don't tell them. They will tell you. They will put their arm around you and say, "You are one of us."

You're one of us

At the same time, you want the IT organization having their arms around you, saying, "You're one of us." The moment they tell you you're an architect is when you are an architect. At the moment, what Jason has said is really true.

In the total group of enterprise architects I've met, to a T, every one of them was a great communicator. They were able to really make people feel comfortable around some very abstruse, very abstract, and, for people who are not technical, very technical concepts. They just could communicate. They could set people at ease. They were nonthreatening, and by the way, most of them, I think, were really close to genius or über already.

You have to be über level to be an enterprise architect at this stage in the game, because there really isn't a good role description. The model would be what's happened with project managers. At some point, IT was trying to just teach them so much about [project management](#), how good it was for the organization, much like architecture.

But, at one point the CFO learned that project management can really help me to integrate companies that we're acquiring and merging with. The moment the business discovered it, it was no longer an IT sort of discipline. It was a business corporate competency.

I would love to see that happen to architecture, to be just a natural corporate competency, so that IT could just give it away.

The greatest thing in the world is when you just give something away that you introduced and the business adopts it as if you never even gave it to them or you never really were at conferences like this. Where are the business people at this conference? Well, maybe five years from now they will be here -- the MBAs are whom I'm talking about.

Fehskens: Dana, if I might elaborate on something David said. I had a real "aha" moment. Before I came to The Open Group, I was the worldwide profession lead for the architecture profession at HP Services. One of the architects who I worked with on a fairly regular basis told me that the most satisfying moment in her career was when one of her clients told her, "You make me feel smart."

That for me really encapsulated the communications goal for an architect -- to make points about these complex issues so clear that people understand them and feel comfortable with them.

Gardner: I've heard IBM, in several instances, refer to the architect as having to be a team person and to have deep technical understanding and then horizontal understanding of the business. I want to put another axis on there for those people skills, and to be sensitive and effective in communication. These are very challenging roles, but if you can fill them, you might have yourself one fine career.

James, how do you position yourself to get into this? What's required, and what's the stepping-stone pattern in order to achieve this very fine challenging and well-paid position?

Community crying out

De Raeve: I think what you're asking for is the universally agreed professional framework for the enterprise architect, and I'll give it you the moment we have it.

The community is crying out for it. They may not know that they're asking for it, but they're asking for it. One of my things is that I have to go and sell our certification programs to people. So I visit a number of different organizations and explain what we're doing and what it means.

I've come away with the firm conclusion that we're way too soon in that process. They don't yet have methods of developing, growing, retaining, and managing their people and organizing them as professionals. They've got job definitions and all kinds of stuff from HR, but nothing that actually enables them to develop their architecture practice.

I go along with the idea of, "Well, here are all these criteria that a good competent architect should have, all these things about communication skills and architecture skills and technical knowledge, this whole panoply of stuff, and all of the experience." They say, "That's great -- if I knew whether we had anyone like that, or if I knew how to develop people like that, but we haven't got all of the rest of it."

My analogy is that we've got these certification things there, the cherry on the icing on a cake, but we don't have the icing and we don't have the cake. We need the professional frameworks that help organizations attract, develop, grow, and build these people into professionals. I think it's a gap.

Gardner: Len, you had something?

Fehskens: Yeah. I think one of the real challenges for an individual who aspires to be an architect is to get past the first hurdle, which is, you're usually not allowed to be an architect until you already are one.

In my experience, all the people who started in this profession started acting as architects before somebody was willing to call them one, and that requires networking with architects who are willing to spend some time mentoring you and stepping into the architect role in complex projects.

In the architecture group at [Digital](#) -- Digital got acquired by Compaq, which got acquired by HP -- we used to joke that if you had a program without a program manager, the architect filled that role. If you had a program without an architect, the program manager filled that role.

There's a lot of symmetry between the program manager role and the architect role. Often, one of the ways you can get your foot into the architecture space is by taking on the responsibilities of program manager and acting like a program manager. Then, pushing that into the technical domain and starting to act like an architect.

When you start acting like an architect, as Dave pointed out, you're not really one until they tell you you are. But, you have to look like one before they will tell you you are one. The best way to do that is start behaving like one, and best way to do that is to learn by experience. You just put your foot in the water and go for it. As Nike says, "Just do it."

Gardner: So Jason, if this is an experience-based rather than a certification or rigorous predefined process towards architecture position, what is it that you've done in this experience side that allowed you to actually get in and convince people to give you the authority? How do you manage that transition?

Managing the transition

Uppal: That's an interesting question, and Len left it wide open for me to respond. Before Len called me an architect, about four-and-a-half years ago, I was an engineer for the longest time, and I worked as an engineer. That's your job. Nobody told you you were an architect or project manager. That was your degree and that was your title and that's what you did.

But, somewhere along the line, somebody came around and said, "Here are the performance criteria. If you pass all of these things, and we agree that you pass all these things, we'll call you an architect." That's what happened, Len called me an architect, and I became an architect that day.

Going back to "developing the skills" conversation -- how you got here -- if we step outside of the IT industry, you'll see a lot of parallels of other professionals being developed in the industry, very similarly to how we develop architects. Architect is not this nebulous thing that just grows. They are developed.

I remember when I first started working as an engineer. I worked for a French tire company. We won't name any names, but one of the biggest challenge that they had is that it was a dirty job. Nobody wanted it. So they'd go to universities looking for engineers, bring them into the company, and teach them how to do the job. They would stay there six months and they would leave. That was not necessarily a good attrition. They had close to 100 percent attrition of the newly hired engineers.

Then, they looked at the skills of the people that they were trying to develop and they said, "We need to have people who understand our culture, our product, and our people. Then, we just need to give them some technical skills on how to do analysis."

That was an easy thing to do. So, we created an apprenticeship program. Since then, that organization has developed hundreds and thousands of industrial engineers who are continuous improvement engineers who know how to do things. I came out of that process and became an industrial engineer. From that I became an architect, because I had an affinity for applying information technology.

All of that stuff that they taught you -- respect for the person who is doing the work -- still applies today as it did before. That's one of the areas where, if we want to develop architects in IT, we have to step outside of IT into some of the other areas and learn from it. If you can somehow figure out how to show respect to the person who is doing the work today, we have a much easier time in developing the architects.

Gardner: David Foote, we could leave this to an organic process -- willy-nilly and ill defined -- or, to Jason's point, we could follow the lead of other career tracks. In other career tracks, it's not just the people that fill the positions who are involved. We have human resources (HR) departments, recruiters, and headhunters. In fact, you might have an entire industry setup in order to find, cultivate, and place people in these jobs. Why haven't we seen that with the enterprise architect?

Lack of understanding

Foote: Again, people really don't know who enterprise architects are. As much as you try, try, and try, you haven't reached the critical mass where the average HR department person, at least that we talk to -- and we talk to thousands of them -- really understand what they are.

What they think architects are is a title that all people in IT want to have, so they will get a better job offer. They know that architect is a hot, hot item. Just Google it, or go to any [Monster](#) site or [Dice](#) or any of those. They make a lot of money. So what's happened is, without really grabbing hold and defining the architect, they've let the IT organization simply hand out these titles to people as a way to attract them to the organization.

The worst thing that you ever want to have happen to you in HR is the CIO to say, "Okay, we now have a solution architect in this area, whether we had one or not, we have one now. So, go and figure it out." That lack of control in HR is commonplace today. I tell HR organizations that if that's the question they have, send the best people.

You should have a representative to the HR organization that was selected by the CIO or the IT management there to represent them to HR. That person should be the person who advocates also for HR, so that they never are handed job descriptions that do not exist in the company. Then, a compensation person tries to figure out what to pay that person.

That's when they come to Foote Partners, saying, "We don't know what to do?" What do we pay this person?" Call them whatever you want, but I can tell you what that solution architect should be making in your town.

But, this is a workaround solution. Eventually, you're going to have to actually ordain this job, if you think you're going to have several of these in your company, I said, probably you will have. Let me talk to your IT department. If I talk to them I'll say, "You're probably going to be continuing to hire in this area. It might be a good time to just establish this as a job family, and then make sure that this doesn't happen again."

Mainly the lack of control is around job descriptions. Compensation is more egregious in architecture right now than it is in developers, database people, security people, and even voice engineers. They know what a voice engineer is more comfortably than an architect. So, it's just this natural progression.

But the last thing I want to say is, people still don't know what CIOs are. CIOs make anywhere from \$25 million a year to \$80,000, in our salary surveys. What a crazy job title. Yet, we've been able to exist very well with CIOs for any number of years.

Gardner: I was going to say, James de Raeve, this sounds a lot like what I heard in the CIO category ten years ago, where it was amorphous, and the skill and compensation scales were all

over the map. But, over time, what became sort of a hot potato ended up being a very important role that most organizations seem to understand. Should we expect a similar track?

Early stage of maturity

De Raeve: Oh, absolutely. We're at an early stage in the maturity of this concept in the profession or in the industry. One of the roles of organizations, such as this, this community of people, is to try and help us evolve that, to get an understanding of what we mean by it and an understanding of how organizations should address this problem and develop their people. I think it's inevitable. We've got a long way to go. Maturity is needed, and we're in the very early days.

Gardner: Well, does it make sense then to look at the CIO role and say, "Here is what an architect is vis-à-vis it or in contrast to it. Is there a relationship that would help in this maturity process?"

De Raeve: I'm not so sure that CIO is the right model. Maybe CTO would be a better match. But as the profession matures, we're also seeing enterprise architects become less technically focused and, as we talked about earlier, more strategically focused and more concerned about the business and less about the technology.

So, there is something to be learned by looking at how those professions developed, but I don't think the specific details of how they sorted themselves out apply directly to enterprise architects, because I think it's enough of a different role.

We used to joke that the best architects have their feet on the ground and their head in clouds, and they span this gap from the business side to the implementation side, regardless of what the implementation technology is, not necessarily just IT. It's that extremely broad coverage that makes it really difficult to pin this discipline down and say it's just this.

I've often told people that I've tried unsuccessfully many, many times to tell my family what it is I do for a living. After a couple of sentences, their eyes just glaze over and they say, "Well, you drive a nice car. So, you must be successful." We've got that problem in general, as David pointed out. HR can't get their arms around it, because it's such a vaguely defined thing.

The other thing is that architects are, by their nature, extremely adaptive, and they redefine themselves to fit into where there are gaps in the organization where there are needs. They reshape themselves to address those needs. So, we're sort of like chameleons or shape-shifters, depending on what the organizational context is.

If you've got a whole bunch of people doing that, it's very hard to say, "You people are all basically performing the same role, because it will look different in some respect. See one person

do it. It's even worse. So the only thing you could do is say, "Oh, [shape-shifter](#), some kind of a magician."

Gardner: What strikes me that, if the role of the architect is so different from organization to organization that the org chart within those organizations is also very different, and we might have the architect reporting to different types of individuals from enterprise to enterprise. So Jason, among the architects that you know, is there a great variability in who they report to, or am I reading this wrong?

Based on behavior

Uppal: Who architects report to depends on how they behave. There are a lot of architects who behave like technocrats who report to the CTO. There are other architects who operate at a different level and they start reporting to the CIO, the CFO and even to the COO level. I know one very successful architect, he reports to the CEO, along with the CIO.

It's more how that group behaves, and also their EA practices maturity within the organization dictates how they behave and whom they report to. It has a lot to do with the maturity of the practice. In some of these organizations, the maturity of the practice depends on the maturity of the individuals. A couple of them are leading it, because as soon as you take them out of this thing, the whole thing is going to fall apart, because there is no talent in the organization to repeat it.

Foote: Let me add one thing to that. One of the things that we're not looking at is, there are a handful of industries -- it's becoming a much larger group now -- where the CIO and the COO are the same job. You see this in banking, financial services, and insurance. You're seeing it in healthcare. You're seeing it in education, in particular. Now, you're seeing it in retail and all these other places.

Those organizations, where the CIO and the COO are basically the same person, are the ones where you really see these hybrid enterprise architects that really are business/IT. When you meet them, you can't really tell.

A lot of it has to do with whether you are working in a company that has this hybrid, where the operations are under the control of a CIO, whether they have that title or not. Usually, they are vice chair, or they just call them an executive vice president or a senior vice president, as we've seen it in the United States. Usually, CIO is not the title unless they're speaking at a conference, but CIOs are separate. It's really important to understand, again, what kind of organization model you have and who is at the top?

Gardner: So, if we have a hard time standardizing the job of architect, perhaps we need to start at some standardization around the organization and the org chart. Is there an accepted methodological approach to setting up the IT department in the context of the business

requirements, goals, and so forth, or are we still just sort of thrashing around in a storm, hoping to grab onto some life raft?

Anybody want to take that question? How do we mature the organization, not just necessarily the architect?

Fehskens: First, I'm not sure that standardization equates to maturity, but, again, it's this question about adaptability. My experience is that most organizational structures, at least with respect to who is in what job, have a lot more to do with politics and social chemistry than explicit engineering-driven design.

Gardner: But, aren't these really too important subjects to leave to the vagaries of personalities and popularity contests?

Ability to get along

Fehskens: You'd think so, but the reality is that if you have a perfectly rationally structured organization, and the people that you put into these roles are perfect for those particular roles, but they hate one another, it's not going to work. A feature of a successful architect is the ability to get along with everybody, including people that we would call uncharitable names, and just find some way to work successfully with them.

My attitude about architecture is pretty much that most of the stuff you have to deal with, you have no control over. So, you just have to accept it and figure out how to deal with it and cope with it. You pick your battles wisely and don't waste time trying to change things that you can't change. My experience has been that an awful lot of organizational structures are pretty much cast in concrete, and changing them to be optimal is very, very difficult. So, you just have to figure out how to cope.

Foote: The most frequent question we get right now from companies that have fairly advanced EA groups, is, "Where do I promote these people to?" In other words, they usually don't want to be in management, because they are too hands-on. Their next shot is really to be a director-level manager.

We've been coming up lately with a lot of interesting cases for where they go. They have a great organization, but they never planned for these architect/analyst types, and these are companies where the architects are really doing long-range planning. They're doing a five-year plan, and, usually, we a lot of Silicon Valley, Calif. technology companies is where we find these people.

They're out there doing the strategic planning. The CIO is head of strategic planning in these companies. Maybe not in your company, but they don't know what to do. We just say, "Well, you create a distinguished engineer title or a distinguished architect title, and put them on the road.

They should be evangelizing. They should be helping you build market share, not just the strategic plan. Put them out as marketers for the company, and they will probably do very well."

Gardner: How about putting this in the context of some of the other impacting trends in the industry -- [ITIL](#), for example? Changing the character of the IT department from a cost center to a productivity center, a shared-service provider, a partnership in the organization, rather than some ivory tower or dark arts center. Doesn't that provide a springboard for the role of architect, and wouldn't that perhaps lead to maturity more than we've seen in the past? James.

De Raeve: Gosh, as the challenges of the environment are just going up and up and up, the organizations rely on their architects to be sufficiently flexible to be able to change shape, to adapt, and to adjust. So, yeah, I that's the driver, absolutely.

Gardner: External forces like ITIL and shared service, Len, are these going to add to more complexity and more chaos, or is it going to be more of a focusing impact?

Just do it

Fehskens: I tend to think it's the latter. Those kinds of things are a special case of commoditization, which is that after something is well enough understood that there really are, if not just one, at least a very small number of sensible ways to do it, you don't have to spend a whole lot of time thinking about it anymore, you just do it the right way.

We don't spend a whole lot of time each morning trying to figure out how to get dressed. You put your underwear on first, hopefully. Doing it any other way doesn't work. We've gradually learned those things about various aspects of the IT organization and of the organization as a whole.

So there's a whole lot of stuff that gets standardized, because it's appropriate to standardize it, because there's really no value in gratuitous variability anymore. It just makes sense to do it, get it over with, and do it the most efficient way possible. That stuff all generally becomes candidates for outsourcing.

The really interesting question becomes, what do you keep? Where is the stuff where that variability, that customization really makes sense in delivering strategic value to your organization?

Knowing what stuff you can safely commoditize and ultimately outsource, and what stuff you need to keep close to the vest is a really important decision that companies have to sort out. I think it will vary from industry to industry, and people just have to make smart decisions about that set.

One of the things that scares me sometimes about standardization is that premature standardization can be a real catastrophe, where you make things the same that really can't afford

to be the same yet, because that's an opportunity for competitive differentiation. Every time you take away one of those opportunities, you close down your opportunities and the space that you have to move in and you limit your options. So, you have to be very smart about that stuff.

Gardner: We have a question from our audience, and it revolves around the outsourcing word that you brought up, Len. Isn't this all similar to the old role of management consultant? It begs further question of, is this something that, perhaps in a transitional period like we're in, is best done from the outside?

Jason, what do you think? Is the role of architect something you should outsource, at least for a period of time?

The role of outsourcing

Uppal: That's an excellent question. There are a number of organization that I'm aware of that have actually flirted with the whole idea, because they are fairly good at ITIL and they are fairly good at [COBIT](#), [PMI](#), and all that stuff. At the same time, when they tackle a very fundamental issue for the organization, how to reengineer their entire business process, they don't have anybody in the organization who can step up to the plate and do it.

They have a hell of a time running a million dollar project, let alone running 10, 20, 50 million dollar thing. At that point, they started thinking that perhaps they should outsource this thing and bring somebody else from outside.

Then, they have another dilemma and say, "We decided fundamentally architecture is our internal competency and we have to have somebody internally." Then, they stick in this guy who has no idea about what to do with this thing, and the next thing is the whole thing falls apart. Then, they say, "Well, we did the architecture thing, and it doesn't work.

Some of the organizations are going to do that first part, bring somebody from outside for a short period and get them started to understand the value of it and also understand what is it going to take for them to institutionalize that practice. Then, they'll take the next step, building their own capacity and capability, only to the point that they need to build.

One of the things that we found is that a number of architectural activities that they thought they were uniquely theirs, are commodity. They didn't have to have them. If you're implementing [SAP](#) or Oracle, do you really need to own a SAP solution architect in-house? How many times are you going to implement SAP in house? That's a commodity that exists out in the marketplace.

Those are the kind of things that organizations have dealt with. Bringing somebody from outside for a short time is critical, but also understand that it's a short time. Don't turn that consultant into your staff over the next two years. Then, you're just paying a lot of money for this person who

should be an employee. That consultant becomes very useless in about two years, because he knows nothing other than your organization.

Gardner: David Foote, what's your position on this insource, outsource, or hybrid approach?

Foote: There are definitely some activities in architecture that you can't outsource. I wouldn't say that you can't outsource it, but most companies that we talk to say, "We like our architects. They've done very well, because we trust them. The business trusts them. We trust them. They are good channels of communication. They've opened up a lot of thought in our company. We'd really like three times more of these people. How do we accelerate the growth internally?"

Keeping core competency in house

They want to know how they can develop architects internally, because they know that they're not going to get that same quality. Now, these are people who are architecting out of that very delicate core competency, strategic level that you don't want to share with outsiders -- for a lot of reasons.

By the way, one of the things that we talked about when populating the panel is that I said I had an interesting experience at a conference, where they had a headhunter on that did chief security officers. But, I've never met a recruiter who specialized in architects. I don't know that those recruiters exist. They probably don't, because there isn't a lot of demand on the outside for hiring architects.

I do think the architects that I see that are brought in from outside are often consultants, formerly of [Accenture](#), IBM, [CSC](#), or one of the large houses. They are brought in basically to calm down the chatter, to educate, and train. They're there to cleanup a fire, to calm things down, get people on the same page, and then go. Sometimes, that's the best way to bring in an architect.

Gardner: To the point of the question here, that does sound a lot like management consultant. James or Len, what's your position on that?

Fehskens: In a couple of conversations that I've had with people about where we seem to be evolving the role of enterprise architect, they have said basically, "Yeah, these people are going to become in-house management consultants and they're going to be better for that. They're going to know your business intimately, because they're going to have participated in strategic evolution over time."

There is a lot of merit in that analogy and a lot of similarity. I think the only difference is that what we're trying to do with EA is bring more of engineering rigor and engineering discipline to this domain and less of the touchy, feely, "do it because I think it's the right thing to do" kind of stuff -- not to disparage management consultants and the like.

Uppal: One of the big differences between management consultant and enterprise architects is that what you put on the table, you have to execute. The management consultant says, "You should do this, this, and this," and walks away. At the end of the day, if you, as an architect, put something on the table and you can't execute this thing, you have basically zero value. People are no longer buying management consultants at face value. They want you to execute.

Look to the boutiques

Footnote: But they are buying people with consulting talent -- management consultants, because they have consultative talent. When I said bring somebody from Accenture or IBM, I didn't mean from those companies, but rather formerly of those companies, consultants who now are on their own in boutiques.

If you want to look at how to grow a lot of the stuff -- not just architecture, but a lot of areas that are having trouble with definition -- it's the boutiques. They are excellent. Some of these people who used to work with these companies were constrained by the frameworks and programs they had to work with and they went out and created it as it should be.

If you're lucky enough to find one of these and they're not research constrained -- because everybody else wants to have them come in and help them -- you've done a good thing. Always look for the smaller firms, if you're going to bring in any consultants.

Gardner: James, for those folks who have been listening and think they've got the right stuff, where do they go to help convince the rest of the world they have the right stuff? Where do you get started on this beyond some of the traditional and organic approaches we've heard?

De Raeve: This was the very problem that we were given when developing our certification programs. How do we determine whether someone with a business card or a title that's got architect in it actually is an architect? What do we mean by that? How do we manage and control that?

In response to that, we developed our [IT Architect Certification Program \(ITAC\)](#) for the skills and experience, the ITAC Program, and we also have the [TOGAF](#) program, which is more about knowledge. What those programs do and the real value of those programs is twofold.

We've got some documentation, which defines what those skills and experience levels are. You can look at that, if you're practicing architecture or you are in the architecture space. You could look at that stuff and say, "These are really good things that I ought to be drawing from as I work on my definitions of roles, or as I look at recruiting people or developing or promoting people." The certification is a separate piece of value.

So, we provide a lot of material that enables you to actually come to grips with what best practice things are, a set of core skills, competencies, and experiences that are needed by successful architects.

Seeing results

Then, there is the certification piece, which allows individuals to be recognized for having met those criteria at different levels. We're trying our best to and introduce the idea of certification for architects into recruitment or procurement, and we're having some results. That's an ongoing piece of work, as we're fairly new in this certification. This professional level is pretty new.

So, we've got the two things: tools to enable organizations to start understanding what best practice is in the space, and then the certification program that allows people to communicate to their customers, their employers, and their next employer that they actually possess these skills and competencies.

Gardner: David Foote, these certification programs aren't the same as a vendor or supplier type of highly focused technical certifications. This is something quite different.

Foote: Yeah, it is. The certification industry has been on a decline lately. The reason why is that certification, for the most part, was an industry created by vendors who wanted to sell and resell their products. In that sense, the certification group is always in the marketing department of any company. Name one vendor, and I don't know any certification group that is not in the sales and marketing departments.

Then there came this whole group of vendor independent certifiers of talent, like in project management and architecture. These are extremely important. These are probably the survivors. Microsoft's certified architect program showed up very high in a recent survey of ours, and we put it on our hot list. I felt bad about that, because The Open Group also has excellent architecture certifications.

The reason a vendor can show up and create a lot of buzz around their products is because they have an enormous amount of money to sell their programs to their vendors. Microsoft evangelizes their products through all of their certification programs. This isn't to say that it's not good to have a certification, but the foundation is to evangelize the Microsoft point of view, and they're very successful at that.

The independents, if they're in competition with a vendor, won't be able to have the resources to get to market, to get the word out. On the other hand, they can create exceptional education and training programs. In architecture, though, if you create a program that caters too much to IT at the exclusion of business, and you are selling EA certification, you're not going to develop the profession.

Three people came up to me at this conference yesterday and today. They were enterprise architects who said, "Should I get an MBA?" Great question. How many of you have MBAs in the room? You're well positioned for the future of EA. You need to be able, if anything, to speak the language of business and make them feel comfortable about you.

But, in general, I'm very bullish on vendor-independent certifications, because you guys have to work so much harder. I have so much respect for The Open Group, and it's where I send anybody who talks to me about educating, training, or wanting to learn more about the profession.

I don't think there is anybody else really to go to, unless they're a Microsoft shop, and they've got a ton of Microsoft stuff. Then, I would say they might want to consider them too. I'm sure it's an excellent certification, but The Open Group has a great opportunity, and as long as they can expand, these MBAs.

Gardner: Well, thanks. I'm afraid we're about out of time. I want very much to thank our panel. We've been joined by James de Raeve, vice president of certification for The Open Group. Len Fehskens, vice president for Skills and Capabilities at The Open Group. David Foote, CEO, co-founder and chief research officer at Foote Partners. And, Jason Uppal, chief architect at QRS. Thank you to everyone.

This is Dana Gardner, principal analyst at Interarbor Solutions. We're coming to you from The Open Group's 23rd Enterprise Architecture Practitioners Conference in Toronto, the week of July 20, 2009. Thanks for listening, and come back next time.

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