

A business
architecture
primer



“As an architect you design for the present, with an awareness of the past, for a future which is essentially unknown.”

– Norman Foster

Architects who work in the built environment understand that planning is the foundation of design, development and building construction. They rigorously assess current conditions and document their plans to avoid costly construction errors. Likewise, business leaders should implement holistic business architecture as the firm foundation for change within their enterprises.

In a business environment, architecture provides a framework for leaders to plan organizational changes and future initiatives, ensuring that their business works holistically towards a unified goal. Without recording business architecture, how can any requirement for change be correctly assessed? As a result of mergers and acquisitions and process offshoring, a business' subject matter experts can often be left believing they have the knowledge to assess and implement change when, in fact, these new structures and processes are no longer fully visible to them.

A clear business architecture policy ensures that employees can consistently produce and manage artifacts across the business. It also provides employees with structural transparency, a granular view of interactions between areas, services offered, and controls in place. Employees can benefit from accessible business architecture at all levels of the business, and for multiple purposes. For example, a business architecture review will highlight where disparate parts of an organization undertake the same process, offering significant opportunities for both process and system optimization.

Who benefits from business architecture?

Employees at every level of an organization can use clear and accessible business architecture in multiple ways:

Senior managers may be held personally liable for operational issues and can analyze business architecture to identify gaps in control frameworks. They can plan future initiatives in a more informed way when they have full visibility of their organization's business architecture.

Managers are likely to have visibility of their business structure, but within large companies that operate in siloes, they have no unified visibility into the specific responsibilities and activities performed by disparate teams. Often, they may make assumptions based upon the names of teams; but with processes split across locations, they are unable to see someone's specific responsibilities. This can lead to multiple teams duplicating processes, or inconsistent processes evolving across regions. Without a clearly defined and managed business architecture, there is no way to ascertain whether this is the case within your organization.

Subject matter experts are repeatedly approached by business analysts who request details of current processes relevant to their project. This is not only irritating for the subject matter experts, but can also impact their existing 'business as usual' (BAU) responsibilities. To avoid this situation, analysts often gather information from individuals who were previously in the role—a practice that can have serious implications for the project, as BAU processes continually evolve and analysts may capture current processes incorrectly.

Project managers/business analysts are often frustrated by the slow progress of initiating a project because current processes, services or controls have to first be recorded before a target state is mapped and they can begin development. As a result, they may start a project before fully understanding the existing



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landscape, resulting in coding inefficiencies and delays in delivery. However, they can dramatically accelerate the project initiation if they have consistent business architecture artifacts

Key business architecture artifacts

An organization that consistently creates and maintains standard artifacts will provide its employees with structural transparency and a granular view of services offered, controls in place, and interactions between internal and external stakeholders.

Business architecture artifact requirements may differ from one organization to the next—for example, some will also have a Business Capability Model. However, the following four artifacts are key to all organizations:

Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a high-level overview of a specific business area or team that captures how the organization creates, delivers and captures value. BMC captures a value proposition, key activities, key customers, key partners, key resources, costs, and revenue streams in a one-page format.

Business Process Models (BPM) are graphical representations of business processes. These record the initiating event(s), tasks and end event(s) for a specific process. Notation is used to ensure that they are intuitively understood by both business and IT users.

Service Catalogue is a list of services provided to either the other areas of the organization and/or external clients. This includes the service category, high-level description and the internal team responsible. Service Catalogues can be used to link common processes between areas/teams identified in the Business Model Canvas.

Key controls are mapped directly to the Operational Risk Catalogue, Service Catalogue and Business Process Models. The controls may relate to an entire process or specific task within a process. Mapping controls to the Operational Risk Catalogue ensures that controls are in place to for all identified operational risks.

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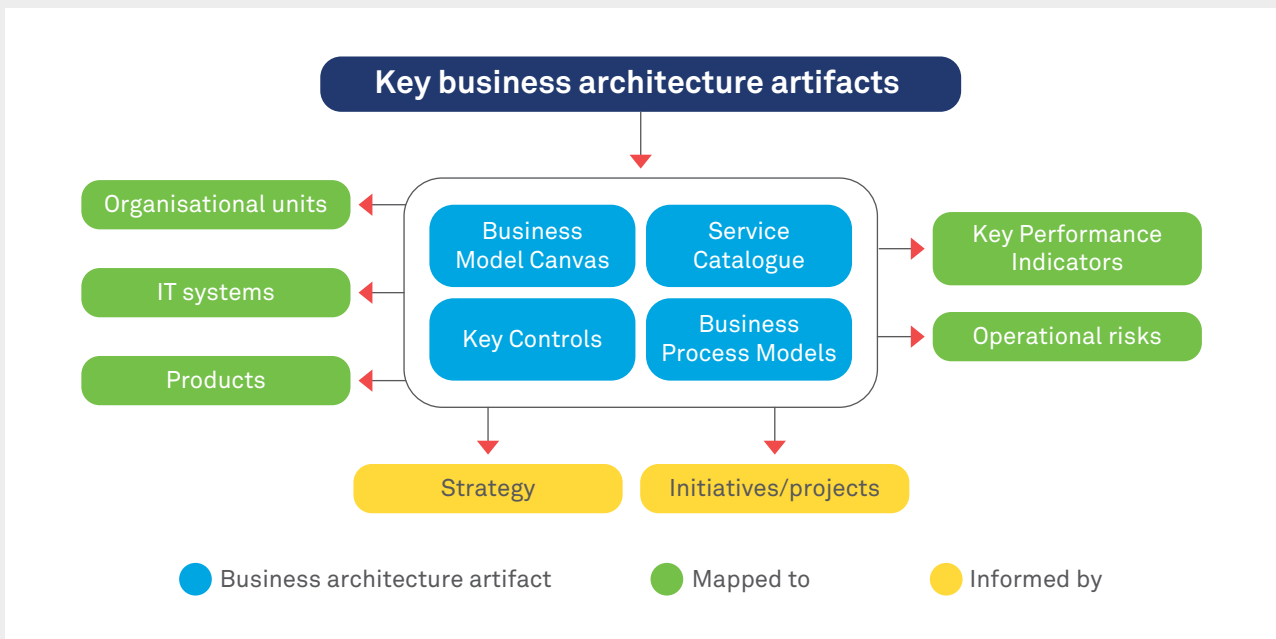


Figure 1: Key business architecture artifacts

Business architecture best practices

The key to producing useful business architecture is to standardize and reduce complexity, whether recording current states or proposing target states. An organization can only achieve this directed (or preferably, if the architecture is produced) by a knowledgeable central team.

Our opportunity, as designers, is to learn how to handle the complexity, rather than shy away from it, and to realize that the big art of design is to make complicated things simple”

– Tim Parsey

While anyone within an organization can produce business architecture documentation and models, only documentation and models that have been produced using a standard methodology will be valued across organizational boundaries. Some business artifacts only require a template and description

of expected field content; others, for example, Business Process Models, will require precise documentation to complete. Creators of a Business Model Canvas should include a mediated group discussion as part of their planning process.

Here are five key points that organizations should adhere to:

Current SME involvement – Employees currently performing this task should be included in, and have approval rights on all business artifacts. Engaging contributors across all levels of a team is particularly critical to producing a Business Model Canvas.

Ongoing attestation – Business architecture can only be used as a reliable source of information if an organization has an ongoing attestation process in place. A central team should ideally record and oversee the production of artifacts so that these can be produced in a consistent manner. Without the guidance of a business architecture team, artifacts could be modelled at varying levels of granularity, and may be unusable in building a view of the entire landscape.

Accessibility – To maximize usage among stakeholders, it is essential to make business architecture artifacts accessible and easy to

use. When the organization regularly refers to these artifacts, those responsible for attestation will appreciate the importance of business architecture accuracy.

Business architecture mapping – Existing artifacts should be mapped to business architecture artifacts where possible. These could include IT application registers, operational risk classifications, and product categories. However, the mapping should not become so complex that it becomes unmanageable.

Standards for Business Process Modelling – BPM should be system-agnostic and use a specific notation. The modelling standards should be recorded in a versioned, continually refined document, to ensure modelling consistency is maintained. BPM documentation must include:

- Standard selected notation (e.g. BPMN 2.0).
- Model level – Models should be of sufficient detail to be meaningful, i.e., include all key decision points and their outcomes, while still offering a view that is easy to review and comprehend.
- Format – Consistency in size, orientation, layout, and font to ensure readability in printed format (A3 landscape recommended).
- Pool and Lane definition
- Examples of acceptable and unacceptable modelling

After undertaking the initial modelling initiative,

an additional subset may be produced with more detailed content for specific purposes. By recording processes using this methodology, areas/teams can find similarities among them, leading to complete transparency for system requirements, and revealing opportunities for the business to automate and rationalize common processes. This is particularly relevant for organizations that continue to operate with a legacy system of acquisitions.

The importance of communication and consistency

Beyond the specifics detailed here, business architecture is only successful when it is grounded in clear communications and consistency. By establishing lines of communication between various stakeholders within the organization, leaders not only ensure that they can adhere to high standards, but can maintain enthusiasm for the initiative and the tasks at hand. Without consistency of use, an artifacts archive that could inform the entire organization will lose its value and become nothing more than a vault of unused artifacts.

“It is not the beauty of a building you should look at; it is the construction of the foundation that will stand the test of time.”

– David Allan Coe

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With over 25 years of experience in the financial services industry, Annette Lovell, Lead Consultant in Wipro’s Consulting practice, works with clients across business functions, including operations, finance and IT. With deep expertise in business architecture,

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