BrandPost Sponsored by KPMG Learn More

KPMG

THE CIO FACTOR

By IDG Contributing Editor

SEP 18, 2017 2:12 PM PDT

SPONSORED

Enterprise Architecture: The Scarce Skillset in Big Demand

Three years ago, demand for enterprise architects — those who focus on building a holistic view of an organization's strategy, processes, information, and IT assets in order to support the most efficient and secure IT environment — was declining.

Three years ago, demand for enterprise architects — those who focus on building a holistic view of an organization's strategy, processes, information, and IT assets in order to support the most efficient and secure IT environment — was declining. Some were whispering that the days of the architects were over. But this unique skillset has recently staged a major comeback: According to the Harvey Nash/KPMG 2017 CIO Survey, enterprise architecture (EA) has become the fastest-growing, in-demand skillset in technology, up 26% from last year's report.

In fact, the second and third-fastest growing in-demand skillsets — Business Process Management and Data and Analytics — while separate, are key components of an architecture, and buttress the push for enterprise architecture expertise, says KPMG.

Why the shift? Most notably, new digital innovations make for a more complex project landscape, which means re-architecting may help organizations grapple with a world in which customers expect to use one channel just as easily as another, or even move between channels during a single transaction.

Enterprise Architecture, Evolved

Demand has also picked up because the 25-year-old discipline of EA has substantially evolved from its early days, when it was seen strictly as a technical way to wire up an organization's infrastructure, says Roland Woldt, Director of KPMG's Enterprise Architecture practice at KPMG. "Standardization was the big topic at that time," he says. "IT had to get control around the efforts they created and deployed on the client's server," he says. Next, IT-focused EA expanded into applications — moving beyond hardware standardization and towards "getting the most bang for your buck" — as well as integrating data into different applications.

Independently, a second stream of thought around efficiency emerged: Business Process Management (BPM). BPM homed in on process improvement and documentation with a focus on reducing the gap between business and IT. Based on that premise, EA organizations were created whose underpinnings were based on BPM methods, but confusion came up as they developed their own language that was neither "business" nor "IT" — forgetting how to communicate what value they bring to the table.

Now, the pendulum has swung back toward a focus on tangible solutions and results with a modern twist — the idea that all layers need to be integrated, including strategy, business, applications and infrastructure. This has now become what Michael Idengren, Manager at KPMG's Enterprise Architecture group, calls "capability-centric architecture." EA, he explains, has primarily become focused on business outcomes. "It's all about what capabilities do you need to make a digital transformation happen?" he explains. "Everything behind that — for example processes, or what software to purchase — has transitioned into second-level detail discussions."

With its many moving parts and relationships, EA has become incredibly complex in a universe where companies are no longer simply building a better mousetrap — instead, "coopetition" means they may partner with competitors in some areas while doing battle in others, and dealing with vendors of vendors and customers of customers. "EA needs to understand that entire value chain," says Idengren. "It's the architects that are responsible for wiring everything together and providing a service to everyone else — whether they are dashboard builders or analysts — to summarize the complex information and provide visibility and transparency."

Enterprise Architecture Stages a Comeback

EA became less valued over time, says Woldt, because organizations didn't appreciate the rigor, structure and standards that came with it, or the time it was taking to establish a mature Enterprise Architecture function. Unfortunately, now companies who want a greater focus on EA lack the

people who can understand the complexities of all of those moving parts and relationships and how to use the organization's information — leading to an uptick in demand for the very things they removed.

"Now, EA is coming back, because organizations need people who understand what's going on," says Woldt. "And, they want it in a one-stop shop of strategy, EA and project delivery, merged together in a unified portfolio management."

There are plenty of challenges organizations need to overcome as they journey toward EA success, says Woldt. One is fighting a lack of understanding of frameworks such as TOGAF (The Open Group Architecture Framework) or disciplines such as BPM. "Logical thinkers are good on using these labels, but others are overwhelmed," he explains.

In addition, in many cases organizations still have to convince people that EA is necessary. "So many people are busy implementing a single tool, with no availability to look left or right, and are under pressure to deliver by cutting IT budgets, devaluing the IT function, etc.," he says.

A Diverse Set of Roles is Needed for Successful EA

Enterprise architects may now be in demand, but what makes a good one? Is it a chief architect, or the modelers and analysts that provide specific services to an architecture group? According to Idengren, there will be a diverse set of roles required: "You need people who understand history of the organization, deep subject matter experts," he says. "You need internal leaders who know how to communicate with executives, working with groups to provide services and match up with a consultancy that can come in and create a roadmap to success."

"Architects don't grow on trees," adds Woldt. "[There is] not a 3-day class to create one." There is some self-selection by curious people who want to figure out how things work, with candidates from different domains — some, for example, from a business, process and organizational background, while others with more of a technical background who are curious to see what technology can do.

"What you will see over time is that those people grow out of their comfort zone," he explains. For example, an expert in lean/agile principles could become interested in other domains, and how different areas relate to each other. "The next step is wondering how to move the organization

from one transition state to another and, finally, that person has to come up with a roadmap and sell it," he says.