Burlton: Why I Wrote *Business Architecture*

By Roger Burlton

My motivation

In 2001 I wrote a book titled Business Process Management: Profiting from Process. At the time I felt that BPM was in danger of becoming a short-lived fad rather than a professional practice to be sustained. Everywhere, there were self-serving groups twisting the truths and promoting myths that would surely lead to disappointment and poor results with a consequent abandonment of sound practices. The book was well received and, for many, established rigor and repeatability in professional practices and management of processes as an enterprise asset. As I started to find myself engaged in a wider set of methods in the realm of Business Architecture in the 2010s, something felt familiar. In my opinion, there were several camps forming with a single sided view of what Business Architecture was and how it should be performed. I was concerned that much of what was being touted was from a single perspective and neither holistic nor practical. My related efforts had been broadly based and since I was applying them all the time to real business challenges, I had to learn what was hype and what would make a difference in reality. I also learned that there is no one way to assure success – blindly following a cookbook – but that each case had to be tackled on its own merits based on a set of principles. I was afraid that, like in earlier times, unrealistic approaches driven by vested interests and academic methods would scuttle a good thing. Consequently, I decided to write once again. I strove to publish a book that would give sound guidance to architects, managers and analysts alike to help them be pragmatic and deliver great results.

Book Description

'Business Architecture: Collecting, Connecting and Correcting the Dots deals with ways to design a business so that it can get better at continuous enterprise level change. Since there is so much pressure on organizations to never stop adapting to outside influences, a common-sense approach to navigating the effort and creating reusable business knowledge was required that is understandable, practical, and manageable. For Business Architects, Business Analysts and Business Managers, that is what this book is intended to do.

Its scope covers the lifecycle from business strategy to the implementation of the critical changes the organization most needs. It aims to ensure the conversion of business strategy into usable and effective business designs and optimum

investment decisions. It guides the identification of the main knowledge domains required to understand the business and to connect these to assure an understanding of the impact of each on the others so that everything contributes to create optimum value on a continuing basis.

In what I hope is a logical order it articulates what domain knowledge (dots) need to be *collected*, how these are *connected*, and which provide the greatest opportunity if *corrected*. The book covers the major transitions into and out of the main business architecture stages of 'Define the Business', 'Design the Business', 'Build the Business', and 'Operate the Business'. It brings ways of making sure our strategic intentions are clear, agreed and always front of mind by establishing a direct interconnection of the artifacts. Models of the external ecosystem, business stakeholders, business information, business processes, business capabilities, change prioritization, and the performance management system are shown in detail along with their relationships to one another and to the external environment of the business This knowledge reduces the risk of implementation surprises and unintended consequences.

I have tried to make sure that 'Business Architecture: Collecting, Connecting and Correcting the Dots' contains sufficient illustrations and examples of how to capture architecture knowledge and how to represent the models to be built to communicate it. It is an essential companion guide for new business architects and analysts and is an ideal reference for experienced architects who will surely learn some new ways to enhance their practice.

The Business Architecture Framework illustrates the flogic behind the approach. Since it is a framework and not an unequivocal working instruction it has to be adapted to suit the challenge at hand.
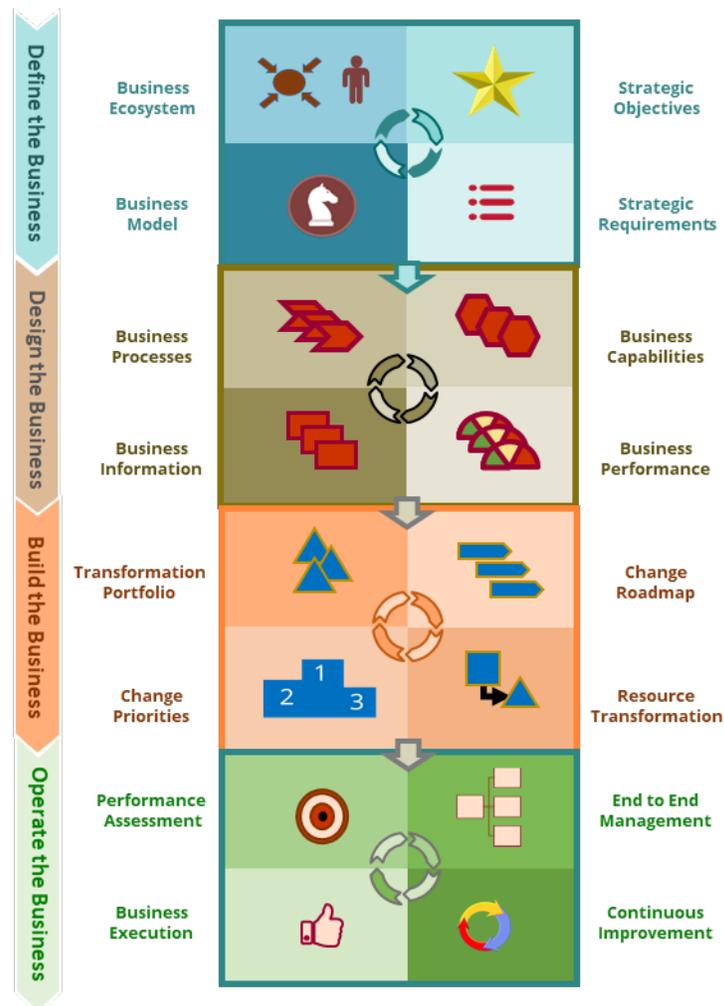
The Framework is a tool to help us realize our Vision – our Dream – of what we wish to become. Our dream without the means of the framework is devoid of strategy – it's just a hope. The Framework without a shared dream, however, is like sleepwalking – good walking but with no outcome of value realized. For the purposes of this synopsis, I will focus on the big groupings of 'Define the Business', 'Design the Business', 'Build the Business' and 'Operate the Business'. I will describe the Risks and Critical Success factors of each of these main phases. The challenge is how these connect among one another as well as how they align within each quadrant. I have heard many professionals say the job of moving from the top to the bottom of the framework is to translate from perspective to perspective. I prefer to think of the journey as a series of aligned interpretations considering the context of the effort and the need for different architects and business experts to understand one another in their own language. That role is one of interpretation more than literal translator. I think that great business architects bring additional value to the discussions.
Let's look at the four building blocks from top to bottom.

Define the Business
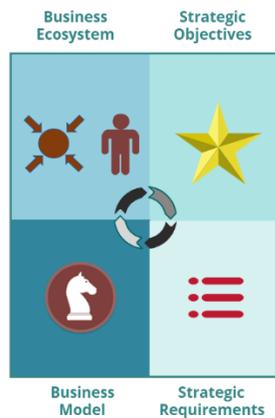
This phase is intended to interpret the strategic direction of the enterprise in focus for architecture articulation. It may be the whole business or select value chains within it. Once done we should have an agreed unambiguous end state that we are striving to reach. It presumes that the business architect will not be a creator of business strategic intentions but will be an active participant or interpreter of it so all following architecture work can be executed and aligned to the intentions. Despite great hope this work is often not well done. Doing the rest of the business architecture phases without strategic clarity is a big risk.

Risks

Some of the risks at this point are that the existing statements are:
- not understandable or relatable to anyone except the writers
- not credible or perceived as a dream with no realistic chance of making it
- too complex to understand or alternately too naively simplistic
- unmeasurable with no chance of finding evidence of performance later to trace back
- done from an internal point of view and not outside-in on behalf of external stakeholders such as customers
- conducted as an exercise perhaps because it is that time of the year and the box has to be ticked

Critical Success Factors

Some factors critical for success are:
- separating and not confusing the end business objectives with the means of the ability to get there
- establishing measurable outcome goals and targeted KPIs as shared objectives
- ensuring it is driven by external stakeholder needs first and foremost
- establishing timed checkpoints to mitigate risks
- conducting regular reviews and revisions to be able to adapt on the journey
- continually interpreting and communicating within the enterprise and assuring a sense of relevance

Design the Business

Business Processes
Business Capabilities
Business Information
Business Performance
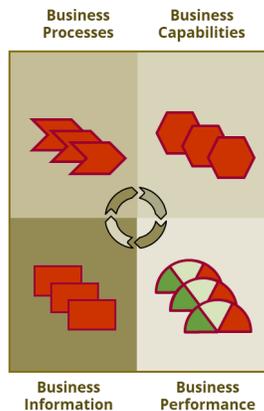
This Phase is intended to establish the foundation for the knowledge domains that describe the structure of what will have to be in place to convert the strategic intent and strategic capability requirements of the 'Define the Business' phase into real life assets that the business needs to have in place. Each of the component domains are highly interconnected and a change in any one will have consequences on the others. This phase is what many business architects consider the essence of business architecture. Each of these must be well defined while also be interdependently associated. All are needed. Any one alone will not suffice.

Risks

Some of the risks at this point are that the developed models are:
- developed with an academic methodological purity point of view or the developers get stuck in professional dogmatism
- focused on one single domain as opposed to a broader perspective that tackles the set of knowledge areas needed to work together as a whole
- derived from a business functional orientation as opposed to a cross functional value-creating one with the consequences of being organizationally oriented not external stakeholder focused
- invented from scratch missing the opportunity to leverage knowledge gained and embedded in or the opposite where only an industry model is used
- seen as a constraint in getting to solutions so is short circuited – attention deficit
- lack of consideration for strategy as context / decision criteria for the structured models

Critical Success Factors

Some factors critical for success are:
- iterating within and among domains and updating each as we learn
- working from outside stakeholders and work to align to inside models
- assuring shared semantics and common meaning of all key terms used
- tracing each knowledge object to specific aspects of the strategic goals and objectives
- connecting performance indicators to processes and information quality
- communicating and collaborating with upstream (Define the Business) and downstream (Build the Business) players

Build the Business

Transformation Portfolio   Change Roadmap

Change Priorities   Resource Transformation
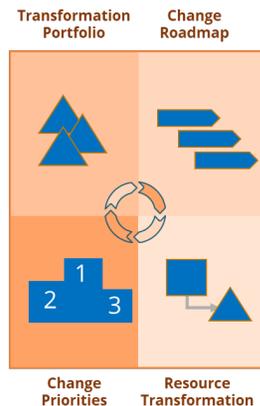
This Phase is intended to make sure we decide upon the changes that are most impactful towards the strategy of the North Star and Strategic Requirements identified in Define the Business. In addition, it strives to assure the build out of business solutions happens in the optimum sequence for resourcing and management of these programs. It assures that the capacity of required resources – both human and technological – is balanced with other projects and programs which may be calling upon the same resources. It also tackles the development and implementation of all of the capabilities required to realize the benefits of the changes.

Risks

Some of the risks at this point are that the plans developed are:
- developed ignoring context of the Strategy and Business Design work in the prior phases
- siloed along the lines of disparate professional groups each of which defines its own unaligned plans and solutions independently
- redeveloped the plans of attack which do not stay aligned with others along the way losing sight of the total need as we progress
- influenced by functional manager incentives in conflict with enterprise outcomes
- dominated by IT solutions as the prime factor disregarding other domains and solution components that are critical
- not synchronized by a cross functional governance framework or gating mechanism as we progress

Critical Success Factors

Some factors critical for success are:
- utilizing the strategic goals, North Star, KPIs and current performance as criteria for prioritization
- aligning all domains of 'Design the Business' in prioritization and including all in an integrated portfolio not just by domain
- tracking planned changes back to the gaps in current situations to assure no unanticipated consequences created by solutions
- using domain architectures to be sure of clearly defined scopes of each program initiative

Operate the Business
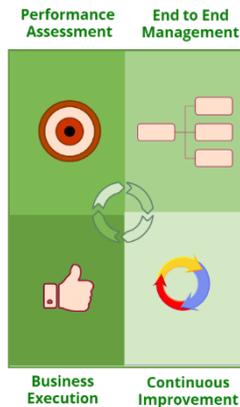
This Phase is intended to assure that the benefits of the business architecture work are continually realized and sustained, and that progress continues to occur as the business operates. It executes the new processes and capabilities and tracks performance results. Critically, it has in place a cross functional responsibility to assure there is no reversion to functional management solely. It is concerned with continuing to evaluate and improve and to identify needs for any needed larger scale improvement which will be communicated back to the beginning phases of 'Define the Business' and 'Design the Business'.

Risks

Some of the risks at this point are that we may witness:
- there is little or poor training for workers to work in new ways and to adopt new behaviors
- the line managers lose sight of end-to-end management and cross-functional teamwork and revert to functional management and suboptimization
- no change sustainment mechanisms are executed to stay on track and improve for the whole
- goals do not cascade down and any that exist are contradictory and not aligned with one another
- accountabilities for stakeholder outcomes are fractured and sub optimal – there is no process ownership
- the ability to collaborate while operating or while changing is lacking

Critical Success Factors

Some factors critical for success are:
- establishing the measurement capability and monitoring of performance data
- execute a process governance framework for tracking and improvement
- making available a CoE for continuous improvement practices and governance support
- raising awareness and training all participants in their contribution to end-to-end outcomes
- monitoring and coaching the required behaviors and culture alignment

In Conclusion

The book is now available through all the normal booksellers. Please enjoy the read. I hope it will help.