WHITE PAPER

S2E consulting

The Business Architecture Practice

A practical approach to establish and mature your internal practice

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Audience

This white paper is designed for Business Architecture Practice Leaders and Business Architecture Practitioners.

At a Glance

A business architecture practice should be formalized.

Once business architecture gains enough traction and acceptance within an organization, invest in formalizing and building a solid practice. This will provide a necessary focal point for integration and create consistency, efficiency and ability to scale.

Take a value-focused and practical approach to establishing and maturing a practice.

Once the case for business architecture and a team has been established, work along two parallel tracks: one for developing the business architecture knowledgebase and applying business architecture for value, and the other for maturing the business architecture practice. Develop just enough practice infrastructure just in time to support the relevant business architecture scenarios.

A common set of components are necessary for any business architecture practice.

Establishing a business architecture practice requires components to mature, measure and sustain the business architecture, the business architecture team and the practice itself. This includes activities such as developing people, managing methods and practices, maintaining tools, assimilating into the organization and measuring success.

While all components are important, a few key artifacts will jump-start your progress.

Four key artifacts can accelerate the process of establishing a business architecture practice and create significant clarity. These include the team charter, role definition and team structure, engagement model and roadmap.

The journey to establish a business architecture practice is worth taking.

Organizations who invest in their business architecture practices will know they have succeeded when the discipline becomes embedded into the very fabric of the organization and enables an essential organizational capability: the ability to execute strategies and continuously adapt to change.

Background

Business architecture is proving to be critical for bridging the gap between strategy and execution. When in place, it allows organizations to take a top-down, business-focused, cross-business unit perspective on designing and planning change initiatives—from implementing new strategies to business transformations to regulatory changes—and harmonizes them into a coordinated set of actions for downstream business and IT execution. As the discipline expands globally, many organizations are establishing their own internal business architecture practices.

When a business architecture practice matures, the value it delivers increases in strategic nature, scope and complexity. Establishing a successful, sustainable business architecture practice is a journey which takes time, particularly for large organizations. However, those who commit to the journey will develop an essential organizational capability: the ability to execute strategies and adapt to change in an accelerated, coordinated and efficient way. In today's environment where change is the norm, the ability to move strategy into action, and constantly innovate and adapt to change, has now become competitive advantage in itself.

This white paper will provide a pragmatic perspective on how to establish and mature a business architecture practice. The approaches described here are based on proven best practices and methodologies that have been applied in many different organizations for far longer than a decade. This paper will discuss why formalization is important, the steps and components required to establish and mature a practice, top recommendations for success and ways to move into action.

The Importance of a Business Architecture Practice

Establishing a business architecture practice can and should be treated like setting up any new team or department, including all of the components necessary to mature, measure and sustain the business architecture, the business architecture practitioners and the practice itself.

What is a Business Architecture Practice?

The concept of a business architecture "practice" is simply a way to refer to the intentional collection of activities performed to achieve the defined mission for business architecture within an organization. This includes activities such as defining blueprints, role and team structure, methods and standards, governance processes, and organizational alignment.

A business architecture practice is like a "service provider" to an organization and should be positioned accordingly, enabling practitioners to have influence, objectivity and cross-business unit visibility. As a result, many organizations leverage a Center of Excellence (CoE) model for structuring their practices.

Why Formalize the Practice?

Once business architecture gains enough traction and acceptance within an organization, it becomes important to formalize the practice. As business architecture's footprint expands, there will inevitably be an increasing need for:

- Sharp clarity on the purpose of business architecture and its expected value to the organization
- Clear structure for team interactions and decision-making
- Consistent methods for creating business architecture and applying it in various scenarios
- Effective processes for planning and managing the practice
- Formal integration with other functions, disciplines and processes within the organization

Ultimately, building a solid practice enables it to scale and meet the demand for business architecture across the organization. The act of formalizing a practice makes it real and gives it credibility. It also provides a focal point for:

- Sponsorship, leadership, advocacy and socialization
- Resources and funding
- Measurement of results against the defined value proposition and success metrics
- Business architecture best practices, standards and guidelines
- Governance and oversight
- Integration with other teams

While creating and applying business architecture to deliver business value is top priority, building a solid practice will provide the ability to scale and meet the demand for business architecture across the organization—with quality and consistency.

Where to Begin and How to Grow: A Practical Roadmap

The catalyst for starting a business architecture practice is often a passionate practitioner or leader within an organization, or a small group of them. As the discipline continues to mature globally though, there will be a more inherent understanding of business architecture, not just by practitioners, but in executive board rooms and universities as well. This will eventually make the business architect's job easier so they can focus more on doing the work and less on justifying the value and proving how it is different than other disciplines.

With this as a backdrop, the reality for most business architecture teams is that they have to start where they can start, even if it means their structure, focus areas or time allocation is not ideal in the beginning. In addition, teams frequently have pressure to not only build the baseline business architecture, but also start using it to demonstrate value as quickly as possible (a sort of "building while in flight" approach).

How Do We Quickly Build a Practice Along Parallel Tracks?

The roadmap shown in Figure 1 provides a pragmatic and time-tested approach to establish and mature a business architecture practice. It addresses common realities while still staying true to business architecture principles. Once the case for business architecture and a team has been established, the roadmap continues along two parallel tracks. The first track is for developing the business architecture knowledgebase and applying business architecture for value. The loop within this track will continue indefinitely, though the applications for business architecture typically increase in scope and complexity over time.

The second track is for establishing and maturing the business architecture practice, which includes all supporting aspects such as developing people, managing methods and practices, maintaining tools, assimilating into the organization and measuring success. This loop will also continue indefinitely, but once a practice reaches a state of desired maturity, the focus becomes more on continuous improvement versus significant advancements.

The most important activity a business architecture team performs is apply the business architecture for value. Building the knowledgebase and creating supporting practice infrastructure should be carried out in a "just enough" and "just in time" manner to support the relevant business architecture scenarios at the time.
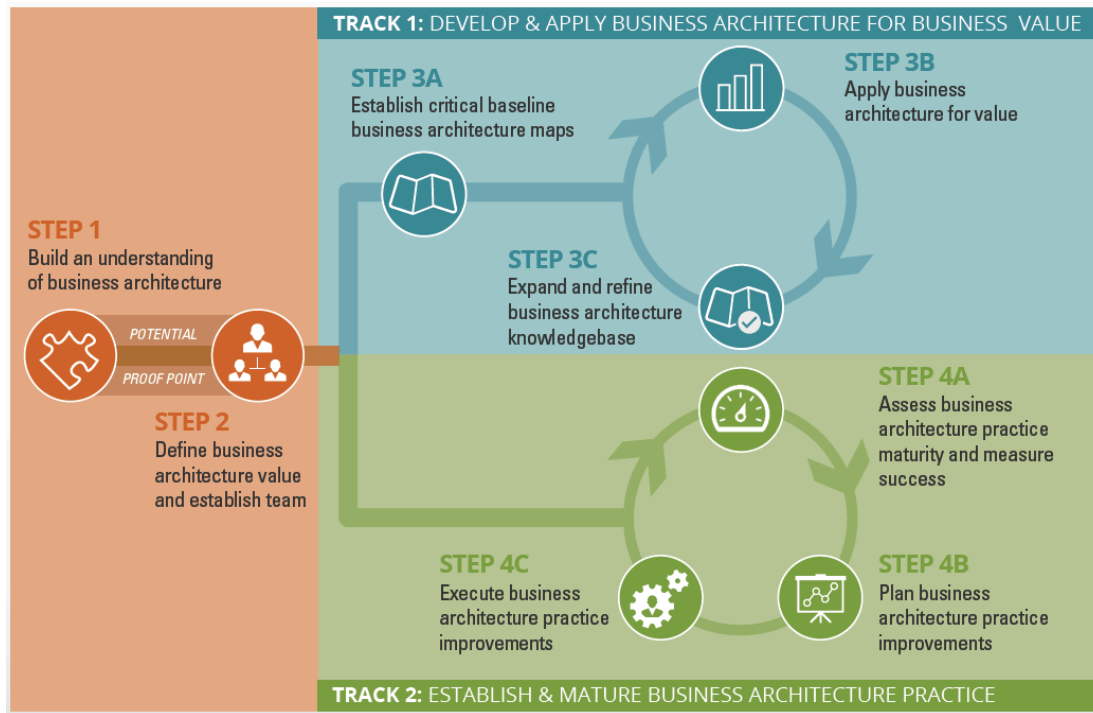
Figure 1: Roadmap to Establish and Mature a Business Architecture Practice

How Do We Execute the Roadmap?

Steps 1 and 2 Set the Foundation

Steps 1 and 2 of the roadmap must be executed first. They provide a critical foundation upon which all of the remaining ones will build. The importance of these first two steps cannot be understated. They are not only critical to ensure adoption, but will also set direction for the business architecture team's activities, decisions and priorities going forward.

In Step 1, the initial business architecture champion(s) and practitioners gain an understanding of what business architecture is and is not, how it can be used and where it fits within an enterprise context. In Step 2, the value and usage of business architecture specific to the organization is defined and the team is established. One of the top areas that business architecture teams struggle with is articulating the value of business architecture. Their challenges have less to do with building the business architecture blueprints or even applying them to various scenarios, and more to do with getting the adoption in the first place. The value of business architecture must be clearly, simply and consistently articulated to all stakeholders—in a compelling way—and aligned with strategic priorities.

A Potential Proof Point

Some organizations need additional time to prove the value of business architecture and gain support before they move onto Step 2, as shown by the Potential Proof Point in Figure 1. During this time, some basic baseline business architecture maps may be developed (though not in full detail), and then applied to an initial scenario or two. During this proving period, it is important to:

- Develop any business architecture maps from an enterprise and long-term usage perspective
- Select scenarios which will demonstrate the true value of business architecture (e.g. a cross-business unit opportunity)
- Execute on the scenarios quickly and successfully
- Share stories and results to build advocacy

Once Steps 1 and 2 are complete, Tracks 1 and 2 are performed in parallel.

Track 1: Developing and Applying Business Architecture for Value

Within Track 1, Step 3A establishes critical baseline business architecture maps, such as an enterprise capability map, an information map and core value streams. Of course the entire business architecture baseline can and would ideally be mapped up front, but this is not always feasible for some organizations for various reasons. Business architecture is then put into action quickly in Step 3B in order to start providing business value. Step 3C continues to build the business architecture knowledgebase by expanding on the current content and adding new types of content, such as for objectives, products and initiatives. It also refines the content of the entire knowledgebase as needed on an ongoing basis. The expansion activities in Step 3C are typically prioritized based on the types of scenarios in which business architecture will be applied during Step 3B, particularly in the case of a new practice where limited resources are available.

Track 2: Establishing and Maturing the Business Architecture Practice

Within Track 2, there is a continual loop for maturing the business architecture practice, starting with Step 4A which provides an assessment of the current practice maturity[1] and measurement of its success. In conjunction with practice goal-setting, this leads to Step 4B, which plans enhancements for the practice during the next horizon. Step 4C executes on the planned enhancements, which are measured again in Step 4A. This loop typically occurs as an annual planning rhythm where the measurement, goal-setting and next horizon planning for the business architecture practice are done at the end of the year, and then practice enhancements are executed during the following year. All planned practice enhancements should be directly aligned with how business architecture is being applied in Step 3B.

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1 An industry standard maturity model should be used. The Business Architecture Guild's Business Architecture Maturity Model (BAMM) is recommended.

Work along two tracks to mature a practice—guided by delivering business value—and develop just enough practice infrastructure just in time to support the relevant business architecture scenarios.

What is Entailed: The Components of a Practice

A common set of activities apply to any business architecture practice, so the components described below serve as a "check list" for everything that needs to be completed during Track 2 of the roadmap over time.

What are the Components of a Business Architecture Practice?

There are three essential categories of business architecture practice components related to the business architecture, the business architecture team and the practice, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Components of a Business Architecture Practice

The Business Architecture Components

The business architecture components encompass the activities related to the business architecture content. The outcome of each is described below.

- **Business Architecture Mapping** – All business architecture content (both core and extended domains) is consistently created, organized, leveled, attributed and related to other related domains (e.g. processes, requirements, system applications) across the organization**.**

- **Architecture Process, Methods and Practice** – A methodology for how business architecture content is created, maintained, governed, used and integrated with other disciplines is defined and used by practitioners.

- **Governance** – Business architecture content is governed both from a business perspective to set and align direction, as well as from an architectural perspective to ensure adherence to methods.

- **Tools** – Shared tools provide an organized, central repository for all business architecture content as well as support visualizations and analysis.

The Business Architecture Team Components

The business architecture team components encompass the activities related to the business architecture practitioners. The outcome of each is described below.

- **Talent & Capacity** – This component can be broken down into multiple sub-components:
    - o **Structure & Roles** – The team structure is defined as well as the business architect role(s) and competencies.

    - o **Education & Mentoring** – Formal and / or informal training and mentoring programs are in place to build the skills of business architects and ensure consistency.

    - o **Resources & Staffing** – Business architects are trained, mentored and evaluated consistently, and the competency and number of business architects meets enterprise demand.

- **Community & Support** – Business architects work together as a community to provide communication, collaboration and support.

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The Business Architecture Practice Components

The business architecture practice components encompass the activities related to the business architecture function. The outcome of each is described below.

- **Practice Planning** – The business architecture team deliberately plans and manages the activities necessary to deliver on the defined value proposition and mature the practice.

- **Measurement** – The business value provided as well as the maturity and effectiveness of the supporting business architecture practice are tracked, reported and acted upon.

- **Change Management & Adoption** – The business architecture discipline is understood, adopted and invested in across the organization, facilitated by intentional change management and relationship building activities.

- **Organizational Alignment & Integration** – The business architecture discipline is integrated into all related functions, processes and disciplines across the organization.

Where Do We Focus First?

While there are many steps to take throughout the journey of establishing and maturing a business architecture practice, there are four key artifacts that when put into place can accelerate the process and create significant clarity. These artifacts, as shown in Figure 3, include: the business architecture team charter, role definition and team structure, engagement model and roadmap.
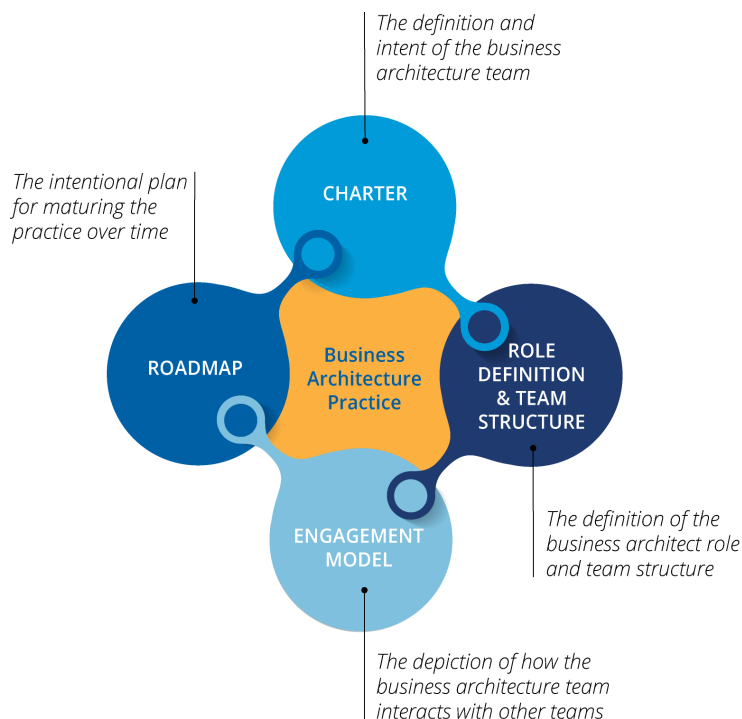

Figure 3: Priority Business Architecture Practice Documentation

All of these artifacts are intended to be consumed by both the business architecture team and its stakeholders. Ideally the artifacts should be created as a new practice is being established, but are always useful even if put into place later. The charter, role definition and team structure, and engagement model are defined upfront in Step 2 of the roadmap, while a new business architecture practice roadmap is typically created every year during Step 4b. Of course business architecture often exists within the broader context of enterprise architecture, so these artifacts should be developed in partnership with other architecture disciplines if applicable.

Business Architecture Team Charter

The charter communicates the definition and intent of the business architecture team. The very process of creating it can be a valuable way for a team to fully think through and come to consensus on the value they deliver to the organization and how they do it.

The charter is created through a series of conversations, the results of which are compiled into a document containing sections such as definition of business architecture, purpose and value of business architecture for the organization, scope of the team, measures of success, principles and the engagement model (another key artifact).

Business Architect Role Definition and Team Structure

The role definition and team structure communicate the responsibilities and scope of business architecture practitioners, as well as provide clarity on reporting relationships, decision-making and team interactions.

The role definition and team structure are both typically created in partnership with the business architecture team, its leader(s) and Human Resources. More than one level may be defined for the business architect role, reflecting different scopes and types of responsibilities, and providing a career path for advancement. The team structure results from decisions made related to where the team should report and how it should be structured. It is documented through an organizational diagram and is formalized through Human Resources.

Business Architecture Team Engagement Model

The engagement model communicates how the business architecture team will interact with other upstream and downstream teams. This could include teams such as strategy, innovation, customer experience, product management, planning, IT architecture (e.g. application architecture, data architecture), program management, business analysis, business process management, etc.

The engagement model is created collaboratively through conversations between the business architecture team and each partner team to confirm inputs and outputs, as well as any process or role adjustments needed to ensure integration. The results are documented in an interaction diagram with the business architecture team shown in the center and all relevant partners organized around it, with the inputs and outputs listed for each. This exercise not only creates clarity and efficiency for team interactions, but also helps to jump start relationships and can diffuse any concerns about the scope and role of business architecture.

Business Architecture Practice Roadmap

The business architecture practice roadmap communicates plans for maturing the practice in an intentional way. It can also include a second track to communicate work being done to develop and apply business architecture. Progress is reported against the roadmap to the business architecture leader(s) on a regular basis. The roadmap can also be used to justify resource needs and to align plans with other teams.

The roadmap is defined primarily by the business architecture team. The practice activities are typically identified after performing an annual business architecture maturity assessment, which uncovers key gaps that need to be improved over the next year.

Top Recommendations for a Successful Practice

Below are top recommendations for success, based on years of experience with what works—and what doesn't—when establishing a business architecture practice.

1. **Know who you are and communicate it simply** – Having a clear value proposition for business architecture will not only help with buy-in, but will guide all other practice-related activities and decisions in the future. Define and communicate the value of business architecture to the organization clearly, simply and consistently to all stakeholders.

2. **Focus on business value** – Delivering business value should be the number one priority for a practice, while other activities are performed in support of it. A focus on results creates quicker buy-in and investment to scale the practice.

3. **Build a strong foundation of support** – Establishing a business architecture practice requires investment in marketing and relationship building, not just the services provided. Focus on building support within the organization both top-down and bottom-up. Of course it is ideal to obtain business executive sponsorship at the highest possible level within the organization as quickly as possible, and if you have it, leverage it. Communicate your value and results from the beginning. Apply formal organizational change management approaches. Build relationships and formalize integration points with all related functions, processes and disciplines upstream and downstream.

4. **Take a practical approach to building the business architecture practice** – Build "just enough" practice infrastructure "just in time" to support the relevant business architecture scenarios as the practice grows. Start small, demonstrate success and build a foundation, then scale up appropriately.

5. **Take the leap** – In the beginning, opportunities to apply business architecture are often won not given. The business will continue functioning "good enough" until the business architecture leader or team identifies an opportunity to help and asks for the chance to do so. Execute upon this precious opportunity and then quantify the results and tell the story. A business architecture practice is built one win and one advocate at a time, until it becomes integrated into the fabric of the organization.

6. **Don't overcommit** – As a counterbalance to #5, be aggressive but build on a strong foundation. Having high quality business architecture maps in place, even if just the initial minimum baseline, is a pre-requisite before business architecture can be applied. In addition, as the demand for business architecture increases, resist the urge to overcommit resources, which often leads to attrition and poor execution. Focus the team on the highest business architecture and practice priorities and build additional capacity over time.

7. **Invest in building a strong team of business architecture practitioners; don't dilute the role and position them well** – People are what make the business architecture practice, so make hiring, training and ongoing mentorship a top priority. Formally define the business architect role as distinctly different from others, and put the best practitioners you can find in it. Position the role within the organization to succeed—at the right level and reporting to the right leader.

8. **Stay active in the business architecture community; keep learning, evolving and contributing** – Business architecture is continuing to evolve as a discipline. Even mature business architecture teams should stay close to advancements in the body of knowledge and become involved in both the global and local business architecture community. This will not only keep the team sharp and competitive, but will continue to shape the discipline from a wide range of perspectives.

Moving Into Action

Whether you are starting a new practice or maturing an established one, there are steps you can take now and over the next 3-6 months to act upon the information discussed in this white paper.

Starting a New Practice

Focus: Quickly build a solid practice foundation and demonstrate value.

Steps You Can Take:

1. Educate yourself on the business architecture discipline and attend training (roadmap Step 1)

2. Find an experienced partner to accelerate your progress

3. Build an initial case for business architecture in your organization and start socializing it (roadmap Step 2)

4. When you have enough buy-in from the organization, start forming your practice (roadmap Step 2):

    a. Define the business architect role and team structure

    b. Recruit and train initial business architecture team members

    c. Refine the case for business architecture and create a business architecture team charter

    d. Create a business architecture team engagement model and start socializing it with other related teams

5. Create and execute upon a business architecture practice roadmap for the next 6-12 months which should include priority activities related to building your critical baseline business architecture maps, identifying and executing an initial application(s) of business architecture and performing relevant practice formalization activities (roadmap Steps 4B and 4C)

Maturing an Established Practice

Focus: Build on your success by increasing value to the organization, improving team efficiency and ensuring alignment to industry best practices.

Steps You Can Take:

1. Perform a practice self-assessment (or engage an experienced partner who has an objective, external perspective) to identify gaps and opportunities (roadmap Step 4A). In particular, you should:

    a. Assess your business architecture practice maturity if you haven't done so recently (using a business architecture industry standard maturity model)

    b. Evaluate how well your business architecture value proposition is documented and communicated throughout your organization

    c. Identify opportunities to refine and expand your business architecture value proposition

    d. Evaluate whether enough time is dedicated to socializing the practice, managing your stakeholders and building relationships with related teams

    e. Reconcile your business architecture knowledgebase with the principles and best practices in the business architecture body of knowledge[2]

    f. Reconcile your practice infrastructure with the components and key artifacts described in this white paper

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2 Refer to the Business Architecture Guild's *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge®* (*BIZBOK® Guide*)

2. Create and execute upon a business architecture practice roadmap for the next 6-12 months which should include activities to close any gaps related to your business architecture knowledgebase, how you apply business architecture and your practice foundation (roadmap Steps 4B and 4C)

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

Learn more by visiting www.s2etransformation.com, email info@s2etransformation.com or call us at +1 917 727 3244.

About the Author

Whynde Kuehn

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 a New York Business Architecture Community (NYBAC), and is Co-Founder and Partner of Business Architecture Associates, an educational organization committed to business architecture training.

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.

Acknowledgement —

We've had the pleasure and honor to work alongside many leaders and practitioners over the years to help them establish their business architecture practices. We want to recognize and thank all of the people who had the passion, determination and courage to introduce the discipline to their organizations and pave the way for others to follow. If you are just starting out on your business architecture journey, have patience and remember that establishing a business architecture practice within an organization is a journey that takes time. One step will lead to another, and the benefit to you and your organization will be worth the wait.

— Whynde Kuehn, S2E Consulting Inc.