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EA Practitioners, What's your profile: Strategist, Generalist, Versatilist, or Specialist?

I recently sat in on a Gartner Research local briefing session where the topic of discussion was about the new frontier of talent management in the 21st century. The analyst, Diane Morello, delivered the content which I found to be quite enlightening as it gave me a deeper insight into the people/skill/talent segment of the enterprise.

I learned about a new skill profile called VERSATILIST, which is someone who can straddle both Generalist and Specialist worlds -- that is, someone who has deep skills, wide scope of roles, broad experience, and is recognized in other domains. Another interesting thing that resonated was the definition given for talented people, and I quote...

"Talented people contribute tangibly and vitally to the innovation, development, and delivery of pivotal services and products."

This then lead me to pose the above question (by the way, I've added in the Strategist profile as it was not explicitly mentioned in the briefing). So, as EA practitioners,

- 1) Where do you think you fall on the EA profile/skill spectrum?
- 2) Why? Is it by personal choice, organizational mandate, nature of your work environment, or other reasons?
- 3) What's the recommended profile or combination of profiles that may best suit EA practitioners today?

Your feedback is most appreciated.

Posted 2 months ago |

Comments (8)



Alexander Samarin
 Author of "Improving enterprise
 business process
 management systems"
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From my book:

13.6 Different roles of an enterprise architect

Below is a list of the roles which should be effectively fulfilled by any enterprise architect in order to use EA as a tool for improving an enterprise.

- Scribe who keeps up to date the documentation about EA artefacts and the relationships between them. This is the traditional role of an enterprise architect.
- Scout who brings new technologies into the enterprise.
- Salesman who finds good arguments for investments in not-so-obvious improvements.
- Superman who is usually asked to provide a quick rescue for a rotten IT project, often by completing during the weekend work that should have been done over many man-months!
- Sociologist who has to understand the concerns and fears of everyone in the enterprise.
- Servant who is at the service of all others in the enterprise.
- Scientist who uses scientifically proven methods in his/her work.
- Student who is ready to learn quickly new technologies, new tools and new business domains.
- Shepherd who can guide others.
- Secretary "de luxe" who helps others to do some work (although this may be considered as a rather low qualification, it is nonetheless important to achieve the common goal).
- Skipper who can lead complex projects.

Thanks,
 AS

Posted 2 months ago |



Kinshuk Adhikary
 Experienced software bizapps
 leader - and a versatilist
 exceeding Gartner's
 definition...
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Versatilist.

Hey, I saw that word way back in 2006/7, when Gartner first came out with the term, and have been using it for my profile. This is soooo unfair :-)

Riddle : Name an American of 2 centuries ago who was an early versatilist ?

Answer : Find it out in my blog profile at

<http://me-plumber.blogspot.com/>

Posted 2 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
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@Alexander:

It sounded like an Enterprise Architect should be a "Jack of all trades". I'm not sure if this is practical or even possible... our brain is finite in capabilities as well as capacity.

@Kinshuk:

Read your profile... looks like you are a "Jack of many trades". Could Benjamin Franklin be one answer to your riddle? (answer gotten from your profile)

Posted 1 month ago |



Alexander Samarin
Author of "Improving enterprise
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@Carval,

I would say that an Enterprise Architect should have a capability to learn quickly any new domain in the extend required to do the job.

Thanks,
AS

Posted 1 month ago |



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@Carval

Yes. I read Benjamin Franklin's autobio every now and then, and feel energized. Another person's bio which architect's IMHO ought to read is Christopher Wren.

Being a [Jack of all trades] OR [learn a trade fast] - (both seem identical to me) - is important. Esp. as one deals with technology in its more abstract aspects.

One of the key problems of today's businesses is - the CEO's are usually very unidimensional. Most are basically excellent sales people, deal makers, contact builders. Some are accountants. Some are people practitioners. Rarely, some are technologists.

Most CEOs today do a huge amount of fire-fighting, and in whatever spare time they get, they pull things towards their own area of specialization. As a result of which, many long term visionary efforts in other directions get less space.

I am not criticizing and not qualified to - but that is the way I feel. And many CEOs do know this, the lack of time, the lack of generality, the constant pressures from financial analysts. There is just too much to do in too short a time to be a good general(ist) of peacetime, so the war must go on.

I envision a future in which CEOs will be familiar with code, just as today's CEOs are familiar with MBA concepts. You cannot build IT superstructures unless the leader has worked in its concrete. But to prevent them from being unidimensional, they need to know many trades.

Posted 1 month ago |

Alan Dyer
Operations Manager at EWA
Australia
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To finish the quote: Jack of all trades, master of none.

Are Enterprise Architects destined to be generalists and not seen as masters of their own "trade"? I hope not.

Cross referencing to other discussions: EA Practitioners should not be technologists by default; EA is not just the technology domain. There are a swag of other Architects who can fill that role (e.g. IT Architects, Solution Architects, Data Architects). EA Practitioners must be able to harness these skills and outputs where necessary to architect the enterprise (across many domains).

Oh, and Gartner seem to be good at making up new words - what does it really mean?

Posted 1 month ago |

Arne Vajhoej
Architect at GTECH
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Versatilist must be the best for EA's.

If EA is to be more than just paper, then it is essential for the EA to understand what the paper is describing.

Since EA cover a lot, then the EA need to know a lot.

Occupational hazard!

Posted 1 month ago |



Kinshuk Adhikary

Experienced software bizapps leader - and a versatilist exceeding Gartner's definition...

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Let's (hypothetically) put an EA in, let us see, say the scotch whisky industry.

Much of this industry is a curious mix of modernity and tradition. For example, one of the very important guys in this industry is the "blender". Has the final say on a LOT of things related to production - and often uses the gas chromatograph as well as the taste buds to make a decision.

I can quite imagine an EA who has not absorbed the atmosphere, the role definitions, and the "wisdom that lies beyond science" of this industry - to more or less be a large bull in a small china shop (if too empowered) and make a mess of things and also lower IT/software image in the eyes of all concerned.

For example, a instant's data analysis will show that this industry will reduce its capital costs to half by selling all its copper stills and using stainless steel ones. That ways lies lynching.

Better for EA's to be a specialist in a few IT things and jack-of-many general business things, and work in some specific business domains.

Posted 1 month ago |

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