

Is Agile killing the Architect? A timely question, because the role is 20 years old. But also a bit of a conundrum: opinions about the questionable value architects add to projects are strongly held and yet vacancies for architects are as abundant as ever. So what is it? Is architecture in the enterprise misunderstood or is it living on borrowed time?

La Fosse Associates brought some experts together to find out. About half the attendees were from an architecture background and half from engineering. Three speakers put forward their views, covering perspectives from architecture, engineering and agile coaching and six groups were formed to debate how their own architecture functions had either contributed to, or detracted from, value in: business outcomes, speed to market and enhancements. A vote was held on the fundamental question at the start of the session and again at the end.

Key Takeaways

- **Architects aren't dead, but they aren't home safe either**

74% of the group said that the rise of agile had not killed off the need for architects in their organisation. But before architects pop open the champagne, the other 26% had plenty to say about their experiences of architects not adding value to their delivery projects.

- **The Road from A to B is not a straight line**

Given a business target, everyone agreed that objectives and circumstances change along the way, and that Agile has given us the tools to cater for these situations.

However, the architecture mind-set that sometimes presents itself as "we can't do anything unless we can change everything" is still too common and reduces the ability for projects to deliver value along the way.

- **Someone needs to know the Big Picture**

Architects can be useful if they maintain the big picture view across the organisation. This can help projects move faster by not having to reinvent capability that already

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exists. However, it's much more effective to communicate the big picture if it's by facilitating conversations and promoting a "one business" concept of shared success (and failure) and not by enforcing inappropriate corporate standards or vendor products just because they exist.

- **What's in a name?**

There was agreement across all groups that good project delivery is really about people solving problems and working together in collaborative ways. A principle reinforced in one of the agile principles ("individuals and interactions over processes and tools"). Where views differed was in whether some of those individuals could genuinely lay claim to the title of Architect (master builder) and whether the title alone represents part of the problem. Although nobody came up with a better name on the night, possibly the most important takeaway was that architects would be wise to leave their job title at the door and focus their efforts on helping teams deliver in the most cost effective way and with the minimum amount of fuss.

Testimonials

"Great event with useful content and great discussion afterwards!"

"Good debate and insight into the challenges faced by organisations today"

"Great debate format and great participation!"

"Cutting edge of Architecture recruitment"

La Fosse Associates specialises in recruiting technology, digital and change talent from top to bottom. We operate at all levels on a permanent, contract, interim and executive search basis.

We were founded on a shared ownership model, with 40% of the equity gifted to all employees over time. This has helped create a highly motivated and effective team of co-owners.

Please get in touch with Samir or Heidi if you are interested in hearing more about our upcoming events, or have any Agile or Architecture hiring needs: Samir.Ahmed@lafosse.com or Heidi.Anderson@lafosse.com

La Fosse Associates

Level 5 Portland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5BH

+44 (0)20 7932 1630
www.lafosse.com

 lafosseassociates
 la-fosse-associates
 _LaFosse

London
Leeds
Birmingham