

2 Role and Task

2.1 Engaging Question

The starting questions to engage students are

1. What are the *deliverables* of a systems architect?
2. What are the *responsibilities* of a systems architect?
3. What does a systems architect *do*?

The purpose of asking these questions in this order is to let the students discover that they spend a relative small amount of their time on their most visible deliverables. They will also discover that the responsibilities of systems architects are not very sharp and overlapping with many other project members.

2.2 Learning Objectives

- to understand the role of the systems architect in the organization context
- to be aware of inherent overlapping nature of architecting responsibilities
- to have insight in the balance between (technical) depth and breadth

2.3 Exercise

Perform a role play in teams of three to four students. In every team we need the roles of *project leader*, *marketing manager*, and *systems architect*. The other team members are observers. In the ideal situation, we have one observer per team.

The teacher provides one actual system. The team has to discuss a very early definition and feasibility. Every team has to create the following deliverables:

Product definition: a very brief summary of the essentials of the specification.

Business relevance: a very brief overview why this investment makes sense from the business perspective

Technical feasibility: the core ideas for realization

Initial plan: a very rough plan of when, what, who

Typically, the group will go through the following phases:

1. Use a few minutes to allocate the roles.

2. Spend 5 minutes individually to think about one's own role in relation to the product. For example, the marketing manager will have to think about customer needs, timing, and prices. The architect will explore technologies and potential solutions, and will prepare questions to ask the marketing manager. The project leader will explore required budget, resources, and time.
3. Have a group meeting of about 30 minutes about the deliverables.
4. Use 5 to 10 minutes to make a flipchart-based presentation in the classroom.
5. The observer also makes one flipchart to explain the observations. Note that it is wise if the team discusses these observations before these are presented plenary.
6. The teams report their deliverables and observations plenary, 5 minutes per team.

Purpose of the exercise

The main purpose of this exercise is to let the students experience the differences in responsibilities of the three roles, and as a consequence the differences in behavior and contribution. Secondly, this exercise serves as a warming-up for the next chapters, where some methods are provided to approach the question more structured.

Role of teacher during the exercise

The teacher monitors the groups and intervenes if the group gets stuck. About half way during the exercise, the teacher reminds the groups of their deliverables at the end of the exercise.

After the presentation of the results and the observations, the teacher asks the group once more for their own reflection on the exercise.

Outcome of the exercise in the classroom

The outcome of this exercise is not "right" or "wrong". However, the teacher looks for coverage (are business, product, and project aspects covered?), balance (between these subjects), consistency, and credibility.