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HOW TO SUCCEED WITH BUSINESS ARCHITECTURE



An Interview with Linda Finley, Global Architecture Lead at Cargill

From the podcast "Business Architecture Practice Leader Series (4 of 9)"

WHYNDE KUEHN: It is an honor to introduce Linda Finley. Linda is an original in the business architecture space, the Founder and President of the Twin Cities Business Architecture Forum, a BIZBOK® Guide primary author and former Guild board member, and a practitioner, teacher, speaker and writer from more than a decade. Linda is currently leading the global enterprise architecture function for Cargill and is using the business architecture discipline to build and advance the architecture practice. So, Linda, let's start with positioning. What is the value proposition of business architecture for your organization and what unique outcomes are you focused on delivering?

LINDA FINLEY: Well thank you, Whynde. Thanks for the opportunity to answer these questions and be here today. The value proposition for business architecture is the same for Cargill as it is for everywhere else, which is: what we do is we illuminate the organization for the people that need to make the decisions about strategies, about investments, about prioritization. We do all that through a capability lens which is unique to the business architecture discipline, and let's us see things in a really, really unique way. We focus on outcomes around: are we on the right track or are we doing the right things? Does the business model work? All of the normal things we think about for business architecture, but really get into the serving and closing a gap that is existing in many, many organizations today.

WHYNDE KUEHN: What do you think are the key factors that make business architecture successful within an organization, and how do you gain buy in-and with whom?

LINDA FINLEY: The key factors that have made business architecture successful...one of the things I was really happy about when I came to work with Cargill was that there was already a clear expectation of the value and the expectation around business capabilities and what they bring to an organization for clarity of understanding and for how they create context for other things. The thing is that we have to work on getting quite clear about what those business capabilities are, what they can represent and the power that they have. But I think that one of the key factors that business architecture uses or has to be successful, is the business capability model and the mindset and the buy-in of that. Of course, we have to get leader buy in. We



have to get the whole governance structure around owning business capabilities, as well as the architects buy-in. And we really need to bring the capabilities to an actual active part of how we run and think about our day-to-day operations.

WHYNDE KUEHN: I'm curious, what has surprised you the most about the business architecture journey?

LINDA FINLEY: Well, I can answer that from all the way back pre-2010 to where we are today and then also for where I'm working today. What surprised me the most is just how many people, when the light bulb goes off over people's heads, when they really understand the power and the value of a business architecture can do to do for them. And really pulling that thread from the strategy of an organization or even before that, the purpose of an organization and how we enable that through capabilities, through the enablement models, through the value streams, and how we apply and create value streams. I don't know if it is surprising, but delighting. I think I get delighted when I see that happen, when they really start to understand what the opportunity they have for the organization through business architecture is. And when that light bulb goes off, like I said, over their heads, it's a really good day. I think that I'm surprised because I understand what the value of business architecture is and can bring. I am always surprised a little bit and disheartened when people don't get it quickly. But we have to keep working on that, bring the stakeholder messages to them and speak where they can hear us and show them things that they can consume to the point where they really get it too. And that is the best part about this whole discipline and frankly, our jobs.

WHYNDE KUEHN: Absolutely, and just one last question. What advice would you like to share with people out there who are starting and growing business architecture practices within their organizations?

LINDA FINLEY: It's all about value. So, let's start there, right, if we can link what we do with business architecture, not for the purposes of here's a model, here's a picture, we must do a business capability map. We have to be relevant. We have to resonate. We have to deliver value to the organization that we're serving. So what I would always say to people, and I try to live this every day, is that if I'm doing something that feels at all like I'm putting it out there for the sake of the discipline, even though I know what I'm doing is using the discipline, it has to be valuable to the people that were serving with it or it we shouldn't do it. We just shouldn't do it. It has to be valuable to the people that were serving with it and the organizations that were serving. And that as long as we do that, people will get it and they'll and they'll begin to use it. And once they catch it, they'll share it and it will just continue to propagate. But in the end, the other thing I would add is in that same thought, it's not about the models, it's not about the discipline. It's not about the rigor as much as it is about the why of it. So how do we think about things? We need to think about things in terms of business models, in terms of capability alignment, in terms of strategic importance and executing on strategies. It's a change in our thinking style. And I think that that's the thing that I'd really challenge architects to do, is really, really get into it. So you speak, from a place of knowing about it rather than doing it.

WHYNDE KUEHN: Linda, thank you so much for sharing your journey, your words of wisdom with us and for inspiring us about what is possible. Congratulations on all you've achieved. Thank you for all that you do for the business architecture discipline and community. And we wish you all the best.

LINDA FINLEY: Thanks a million. Talk to you soon.