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HOW TO SUCCEED WITH BUSINESS ARCHITECTURE



An Interview with Steven Scott, Director of Business Architecture at Autodesk

From the podcast "Business Architecture Practice Leader Series (8 of 9)"

WHYNDE KUEHN: It is my pleasure to introduce Steven Scott. Steven is the Director of Business Architecture at Autodesk, where he leads a team of business architects who focus on the ecosystem supporting the future of Autodesk business models and offerings. Steven, 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?

STEVEN SCOTT: So, for us, our team, we have a basically a deep well of experience and then we're able to leverage sort of a wide and expanding suite of techniques. And I would also say mindsets that allow us to connect the dots that others can't even see. So, what we're really doing is we're building these bridges between what's vision and what is delivered, which results in a much tighter alignment to our strategy.

WHYNDE KUEHN: What do you think the key factors are that have made business architecture successful at Autodesk? And maybe you could speak to how you gained buy-in and with whom?

STEVEN SCOTT: So, we started grassroots with a small cabal of business architecture, what I call "friendlies," and I'm putting those in air quotes. They were key influencers of our roadmaps within Autodesk itself. And so jointly we had been seeing the need to kind of better connect and align these initiatives that were in flight or being planned. And we thought that business architecture might actually provide a toolset for us to do so. So, what we did was we took that small group, we learned enough about business architecture to be slightly dangerous, and then we had some early wins with using some of the business architecture artifacts. Actually, it was a stakeholder-to-capability cross-map and that gained us some backing. We were trying to solve a problem of ownership and conflicting requirements within like an ordering space. And we that gained us this back in with our EVP of Supporting Operations at the time and then a key exec in Marketing. So, then what we did was we leverage that backing to train ourselves up in the details and we going through the five day trainings to kind of get people set up to be certified. And then we also trained a couple dozen Product Managers and some other kind of key roles, some architects as well, that could help



carry that cause forward. I think really made a difference was we tried to keep the costs low, so we were really creative in how we actually went about getting folks trained and of promoting that cause. And we've gone from there.

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

STEVEN SCOTT: The importance of storytelling as the key skill in the practice. So, if you think about it, we typically can't mandate something to happen, we can't tell people what to do. We are basically, you know, cajoling, guiding, we're trying to convince these people to change something to better aligns to our strategy. And a lot of people, it's typical a lot of groups and organizations, they don't really want to hear that their current thinking needs to change or necessarily needs to be aligned. So being able to sell the story is really the only way we can get to the aligned outcomes that we want. And that that's something that story goes for both sort of up the chain all the way up to sort of CEO staff, as well as down into the folks that are doing the execution. We want to make sure that we can tell those stories in a way that resonates. Then they can adopt and take forward because they're the people that are actually ended up doing the work.

WHYNDE KUEHN: One last question for you. What advice would you share with people out there who are starting and growing business architecture practices within their organizations?

STEVEN SCOTT: I'm a big fan of grassroots. I think it's easier to recover from sort of under-promising and over-delivering than overpromising. And so, I like to start small and almost a little bit stealthy in a way. With that in mind, then, the goal that you're trying to get with your business architecture practices you're starting up, is to get that organization to crave the clarity and understanding of how to get from strategy to execution that your new skills bring. You want to be relentlessly persistent in building, not craving. Everything you do should be about building the craving, building the demand for those skills, and if you can find that little tribe that can help you advance those skills and start to adopt the need for that skill, embrace them wholeheartedly. And eventually, if you keep on that path, you'll have more asks than bandwidth, more requests for help, then you have bandwidth to do. That's the opening then to actually formalize and or expand your practice.

WHYNDE KUEHN: Right on. Thank you so much, Steven, for sharing your story with us today. Well done to you in the team on all that you've accomplished. And we wish you all the best.

STEVEN SCOTT: Thanks so much for having me.