How to present architecture issues to higher management

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Abstract

Architects struggle with their visibility at higher management echelons. The introvert nature of architects is a severe handicap. Participation of architects in management teams is important for balanced technical sound decisions and strategy. Improved managerial communication skills of architects are required. This article describes how to give a more effective presentation to higher management teams. Subjects discussed are the preparation, content and form, do and don’t advise.
Architectural issues related to managerial viewpoints

How to present architecture issues to higher management

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AMI introduction
Characteristics of managers in higher management teams

**common characteristics**

+ action-oriented
+ solution rather than problem
+ impatient, busy
+ want facts not beliefs
+ operate in a political context
+ bottom-line oriented: profit, return on investment, market share, etc.

**highly variable characteristics**

? technology knowledge from extensive to shallow

? style from power play to inspirational leadership
How to prepare

Always prepare with small team!

content + mutual interaction + understand audience

70% of effort

+ gather facts
+ perform analysis
+ identify goal and message
+ make presentation
+ polish presentation form

30% of effort

+ gather audience background
+ analysis audience interests
+ identify expected responses
+ simulate audience, exercise presentation

Always prepare with small team!

70% of effort

30% of effort
Recommended content

+ clear problem statement (what, why)
+ solution exploration (how)
+ options, recommendations
+ expected actions or decisions

supported by facts and figures
mention the red information only

recommendation:
- select A
follow up:
- allocate Jan, Piet, Klaas
- go/no go 1/11/03

backup material
Form is important

Poor form can easily distract from purpose and content

Presentation material

- Professional
- Moderate use of color and animations
- Readable
- Use demos and show artifacts

Presenter's appearance

- Well dressed
- Self confident but open

But stay yourself, stay authentic.
Don’t force your opinion, understand the audience

**do not**

- preach beliefs
- underestimate technology knowledge of managers
- tell them what they did wrong
- oversell

**do**

+ quantify, show figures and facts
+ create faith in your knowledge
+ focus on objectives
+ manage expectations
How to cope with managerial dominance

**do not**
- let one of the managers hijack the meeting
- build up tensions by withholding facts or solutions
- be lost or panic at unexpected inputs or alternatives

**do**
+ maintain the lead
+ be to the point and direct
+ acknowledge input, indicate consequences (facts based)
Exercise presentation to higher management

+ Bring a clear architecture message to

+ a Management team at least 2 hierarchical levels higher

+ with 10 minutes for presentation including discussion
  (no limitation on number of slides)

* architecture message =
  technology options in relation with market/product

* address the concerns of the management stakeholders:
  translation required from technology issues into
  business consequences (months, fte's, turnover, profit, investments)
Exercise schedule

13:30 prepare in team of 4
14:00 present and discuss feedback
15:00
16:00
17:00