How to appraise or assess an architect?

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Abstract

The appraisal of system architect is handicapped by the vague and abstract responsibilities of the system architect. The success criterions for architecting are discussed. An approach to ”measure” or assess the architect is described.
Problem statement

- difficult to define yardstick
- difficult to measure
- difficult to compare
- difficult to certify
- difficult to translate in (financial) consequences

abstract (vague) responsibilities
lot of overlap of responsibilities

How to assess an architect?
Tangible deliverables based upon many invisible activities

Deliverables
paperwork only

Responsibilities
abstract and qualitative

Activities
necessary but invisible

many very detailed

thinking, talking, discussing, scheduling, presenting, measuring, writing, reviewing, visiting customers
analyzing, listening, brainstorming, supporting, teaching, testing, reading, visiting trade-shows
simulating, communicating, troubleshooting, selling, integrating, browsing, consolidating, visiting suppliers

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Criterions for successful architecting

Architecting

Stakeholders
expectations, needs, concerns, constraints

result satisfies

PCP team
architect, project leader, engineers, product manager

problem know how
preceeding architecture
solution know how

team is enabled

Human context
business context
technology context

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Yardsticks for architect assessment

**formalized expectations**

*function appraisal system*, f.i. from Hay Management Consultants

- impact
- scope of control
- freedom of thinking

**job description**

- deliverables
- timing

**career development plan**

- skills
- know how

**actual architect performance**

*architecture fitness*

- sales turnover
- business success
- market continuity

**internal stakeholder satisfaction**

- contribution
- deliverables
- timing
- skills
- know how
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Ranking as trigger for discussions

1. Ask for ranking
2. Ask for justification (why ...?)
3. Clarify criterions
4. Iterate ranking and justification

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