

# ALIGNING PRODUCT CONCEPTS IN AGILE EXECUTION WITH BUSINESS ARCHITECTURE

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*A Business Architecture Guild® White Paper*

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## Introduction

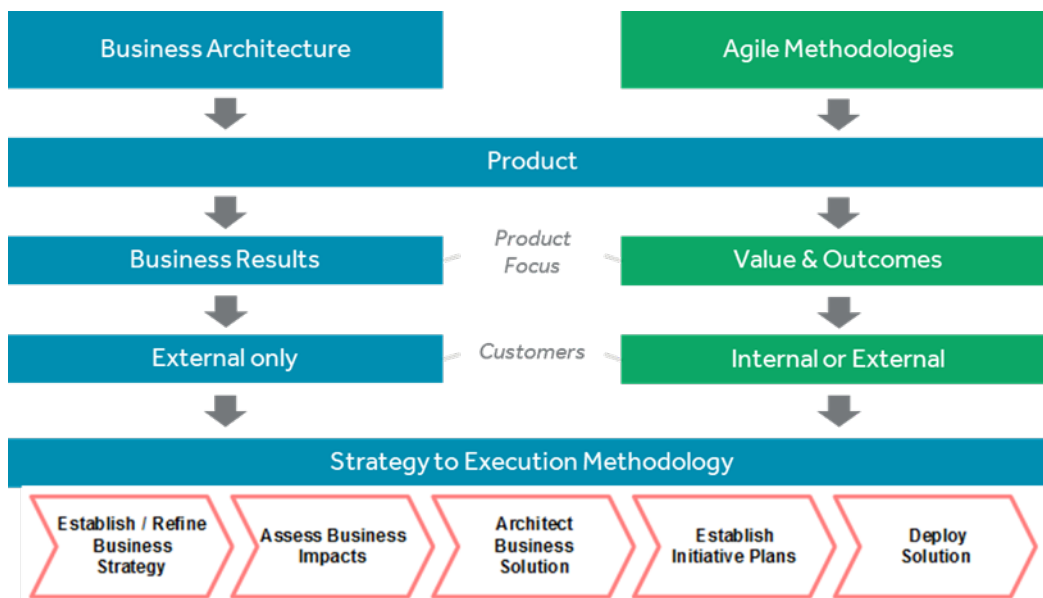
Business architecture and enterprise agile methodology approaches, such as the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), are complementary practices on the continuum of solution delivery represented in the strategy-to-execution value.<sup>1</sup> Learning how to blend the two in practice can be challenging nonetheless. Despite the inclusion of strategy and portfolio concepts in frameworks for scaling agile, there is still open interpretation and confusion about how to effectively connect strategy to execution, especially around the definition and implementation of product.

## Product Definition

A *Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge*®, v8.5 (*BIZBOK*® *Guide*), states that “Products and Services are the way in which businesses create value and build revenue”.<sup>2</sup> Product is further defined as being

“the overall experience provided by the combination of goods and services to satisfy the customer’s needs”.<sup>3</sup>

They “... are dynamic and need to be fine-tuned, modified, or discontinued on an ongoing basis, in order to stay in sync with rapidly changing markets”.<sup>4</sup> In the *BIZBOK*® *Guide*, there is a clear boundary also established in product mapping principle #7 — a concept not currently or intended to be offered in the future to an *external* party for any purpose is NOT a product; it is constrained by a customer focus.<sup>5</sup> This is where agile approaches often diverge from business architecture as shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Business Architecture versus Agile Methodology Focal Points**

In agile methodology, a customer is external or internal, and products are delivered to either. The use of product is about driving outcomes, where an outcome could be testing a hypothesis or exploring a concept versus addressing a problem statement. The primary focus is on continuous delivery of value to an internal or external customer, and that value is articulated by a loosely defined role of Product Management. Agile may deliver a product for an external party, but that is not always the case. This is further confused by the terminology of the roles in scaled agile approaches such as SAFe®, where the Product Managers and Product

Owners are responsible for representing the customer as an advocate, often referred to as the voice of the customer, with accountability for content decisions.

In agile, the Product Manager role or Product Management function is responsible for translating prioritized work at higher levels (e.g., Epic) to lower levels (e.g., Features with acceptance criteria), creating the prioritized backlog of work to be developed by the agile teams. The Product Owner role is an agile team-level development and implementation role. A Product Owner owns the deliverables that the team produces and provides the user story backlog from the Features that the team uses to develop functionality. While agile proposes that these roles are responsible for identifying customer needs, the reality is, in many cases, that identification and understanding of products has to be done upstream through customer and market research by a team of people before the agile work is identified to keep work flowing smoothly, as getting this input can be time consuming.

In contrast, from a business architecture perspective, there is no product if the customer is internal. Further, business architecture would identify such roles as Product Owner and Product Manager as resources providing a Product Management capability, typically instantiated in a Product Management organization. This can cause confusion as agile product management is typically not the same as the enterprise's product management function or organization — responsible for identifying new products (i.e., goods and services as defined above).

## Using Business Architecture in Product Definition

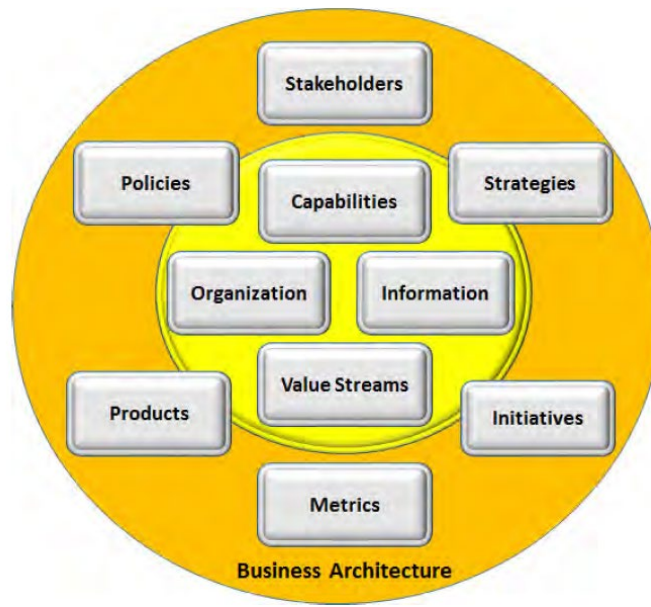
Business architecture enables the delivery of strategy execution depicted in the value stream shown in figure 2. Every product, essentially a solution in the form of a good or service for an external customer, should begin with a defined business strategy derived from competitive and market analysis as well as customer research. Strategies define how the organization can enhance or leverage its capabilities to provide differentiated value<sup>6</sup> —in the case of a product, to an external customer.



**Figure 2: Strategy Execution Path**

The Establish Initiative Plans and Deploy Solution steps in this strategy execution path are where agile often facilitates the development and delivery of that product. Business architecture translates the strategy into product-related initiatives that are fed into the agile funnel for prioritization, then execution. Agile is the mechanism by which technical- and sometimes business-work is iteratively done, with product releases made to provide value to the customer. While agile frameworks like SAFe® can improve how initiatives are executed and delivered, business architecture helps ensure that the organization is working on the right product initiatives, that related or overlapping products are considered, and that the scope of the overall effort is clearly defined.

The product domain falls in the extended area of the business architecture knowledgebase as shown in figure 3, due to the changing nature of products.



**Figure 3: Business Architecture Domain Summary**

The business architecture practice of product mapping identifies existing products within an enterprise and their relationships to each other, categorizes them into product lines or groups as appropriate, and determines which capabilities enable the product. By understanding the capabilities that enable product entitlements, as well as the value streams and associated organizational units (including third parties), it is easier to determine the focus and scope of a proposed product initiative to address the strategy. Cross-mapping products with other business architecture domains provides the needed understanding to reduce any product fragmentation, redundancy, or inconsistency as well as reduce gaps within the organization's ability to create the product and deliver value to its customers. Heat mapping the capabilities that enable product entitlements that a customer expects will indicate which products are the most effective at delivering the desired capabilities as well.

Mapping products to strategic objectives helps identify which objectives the products enable. This visibility highlights where several products or product lines are tied to a given strategy. As a result, product mapping can enhance Product Management within the enterprise by highlighting any gaps and redundancies that the enterprise may need to address through new strategies, initiatives, products, and/or value streams. Business architecture helps make these connections transparent, leading to better investment decisions.

At this point, product-related work can be prioritized for an agile program to pull for development and progressively elaborate. Using agile and lean techniques, the process of continuous exploration is used to understand market and user needs, identify a roadmap, and prioritize agile work (such as features and user stories) that address those needs. Some of the requirements of the solution, i.e., product, are likely to be well understood and defined from the beginning, while others need to be explored further and can only be finalized during the development process. Managing this approach is the primary responsibility of agile Product Management who keep the work backlog groomed to facilitate the flow of product work.<sup>7</sup>

In agile, as work is decomposed, the requirements become more specific and granular. The product that is ultimately delivered to the customer in a release is a sum of these requirements that provides value — some capabilities the customer needs.

## Summary

The complementary practices of business architecture and an agile methodology approach provide strong frameworks to execute strategy for new and enhanced products delivered to customers. Understanding should be clear of what are an organization's true products to customers, versus those defined within an agile delivery system context that could be for internal stakeholders. In some cases, these may be the same, but organizations must be aware of both uses of the term 'product'. It is then of paramount importance to ensure that investments are focused on customers as the primary recipient of business value.

Collaboration between business architects and agile roles can focus investment in the right product initiatives at the right time. When developing a product, the following guidelines based on business architecture will be useful:

1. Products can be grouped into product lines, which can point to gaps in products or common requirements.
2. Map the business objectives to the product that satisfies that objective to ensure alignment to business strategy. This should be backed by competitive, market, and customer research that identified the gap that the objective (and product) is closing.
3. Understand how the product is mapped to business architecture value streams and delivery to your external customer to satisfy a value proposition. If this is not evident, then further definition is needed.

The use of business architecture with product development optimizes the strategy-to-execution methodology, where strategy provides the vision for what needs to be done, business architecture provides perspectives to define the initiative effectively to fulfill that vision, and agile implements strategic solutions through iterative development.

### **About the Business Architecture Guild®**

A cadre of leading industry experts formed the Business Architecture Guild® to develop *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge® (BIZBOK® Guide)* and to promote best practices and expand the knowledgebase of the business architecture discipline. The Business Architecture Guild® is a member-based and member-driven nonprofit organization dedicated to growing and disseminating authoritative information on business architecture. Contact the Guild at [info@businessarchitectureguild.org](mailto:info@businessarchitectureguild.org) or visit [www.businessarchitectureguild.org](http://www.businessarchitectureguild.org).

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<sup>1</sup> *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge® (BIZBOK Guide®)*, Version 8.5, Business Architecture Guild®, 2019, Section 3.8, “Requirements Alignment with Product”, p390-391.

<sup>2</sup> *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge® (BIZBOK Guide®)*, Version 8.5, Business Architecture Guild®, 2019, Section 2.7, “Product Mapping”, p241.

<sup>3</sup> Greg Geracie and Stephen Eppinger, *The Guide to the Product Management and Marketing Body of Knowledge (ProdBOK)*, Association of International Product Marketing and Management, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge® (BIZBOK Guide®)*, Version 8.5, Business Architecture Guild®, 2019, Section 2.7, “Product Mapping”, p241.

<sup>5</sup> *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge® (BIZBOK Guide®)*, Version 8.5, Business Architecture Guild®, 2019, Section 2.7, “Baseline Product Concepts”, p242.

<sup>6</sup> *A Guide to the Business Architecture Body of Knowledge® (BIZBOK Guide®)*, Version 8.5, Business Architecture Guild®, 2019, Section 2.1, “Principles of Strategy Mapping”, p30.

<sup>7</sup> *Achieving Business Agility with SAFe® 5.0 White Paper*, December 2019, <https://www.scaledagileframework.com/safe-5-0-white-paper/>