Future Directions of the Software Architecture Technology Initiative

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Presentation Outline

Getting (Re)acquainted

State of the SAT Initiative

Future Directions
Product Line Systems Program

The Product Line Systems (PLS) Program is one of five technical programs at the SEI.

PLS’s mission: *Enable widespread product line practice and architecture-centric development throughout the global community.*

PLS’s initiatives:
- **Software Architecture Technology (SAT) Initiative**
- Product Line Practice Initiative
- Predictable Assembly from Certifiable Components Initiative
What Is a Software Architecture?

“The software architecture of a program or computing system is the structure or structures of the system, which comprise the software elements, the externally visible properties of those elements, and the relationships among them.”

Why is Software Architecture Important? -1

Represents *earliest* design decisions

*First* design artifact addressing

Key to systematic *reuse*

• hardest to change
• most critical to get right
• communication vehicle among stakeholders

• performance
• modifiability
• reliability
• security

• transferable, reusable abstraction

**The right architecture paves the way for system success.**

**The wrong architecture usually spells some form of disaster.**
Why Focus on Software Architecture?

The quality and longevity of a software system is largely determined by its architecture.

Too many experiences point to inadequate software architecture education and practices and the lack of any real software architecture evaluation early in the life cycle.

Without an explicit course of action focused on software architecture, these experiences are being and will be repeated.

The cost of inaction is too great.
Without Software Architecture Focus

Poorly designed software architectures result in

• greatly inflated integration and test costs
• inability to sustain systems in a timely and affordable way
• lack of system robustness
• in the worst case, program/system cancellation
• in all cases, failure to best support the business and mission goals
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Future Directions
Software Architecture Technology (SAT) Initiative’s Focus

Ensure that business and mission goals are predictably achieved by using effective software architecture practices throughout the development lifecycle.

Axioms Guiding Our Work

• Software architecture is the bridge between business and mission goals and a software-intensive system.
• Quality attribute requirements drive software architecture design.
• Software architecture drives software development throughout the life cycle.
SEI’s Architecture Tradeoff Analysis Method® (ATAM®)

ATAM is an architecture evaluation method that

• focuses on multiple quality attributes

• illuminates points in the architecture where quality attribute 
  tradeoffs occur

• generates a context for ongoing quantitative analysis

• utilizes an architecture’s vested stakeholders as authorities on 
  the quality attribute goals
Conceptual Flow of the ATAM\textsuperscript{SM}

Business Drivers → Quality Attributes → Scenarios → Architectural Decisions

Software Architecture → Architectural Approaches

impacts

Risk Themes

distilled into

Tradeoffs
Sensitivity Points
Non-Risks
Risks

Analysis
ATAM Led to the Development of Other Methods and Techniques

Quality Attribute Workshop

Quality Attribute Driven Design

Attribute Driven Design

Architecture Reconstruction using ARMIN

What if the quality requirements are not well-understood?

What if there’s no architecture?

What if I don’t know my system’s architecture?

Our scenarios tend to be incomplete or ambiguous.

What are some of the most important questions to ask?

Which risks should I work on first?

What information should be included in my architecture documentation?

Views and Beyond Approach

Cost Benefit Analysis Method

Quality Attribute Tactics

Risk Themes

Tradeoffs

Sensitivity Points

Non-Risks

Risks

Quality Attribute General Scenarios

What if there's no architecture?
SAT: Technology
SAT:
Transition

- Ongoing
- In Sustainment
- Just Begun
Other Recent Work

Showed how to use aspects for architecture enforcement

Investigated categorization of business goals accumulated from ATAM evaluations

Building tradeoff analysis into ArchE

Conducted first annual ATAM Lead Evaluator Workshop

Launched licensing of the Software Architecture Principles and Practices Course
Work “Hot Off the Press”

“A Comparison of Requirements Specification Methods from a Software Architecture Perspective”

• What does it mean for a requirements document to be really what an architect needs?
• What do the existing requirement specification methods offer in capturing architecturally significant requirements?

Business goal and risk theme analysis

• Based on examining data collected from ATAM evaluations, is there a useful categorization of business goals and risk themes?
• Is there a correlation between business goal categories and risk theme categories?
• What is a useful data collection and analysis methodology for analyzing the results of the ATAMs?
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Future Directions
Architecture-Centric Life-Cycle Practices -1
Architecture-Centric Life-Cycle Practices -2

In support of the SAT axioms:

• Since “Software architecture is the bridge between mission/business goals and a software-intensive system”, we need to better understand
  - The relationship between business goals and quality attribute requirements
  - How to specify business goals

• Since Software architecture drives software development through the life cycle”, we need to better understand
  - Refining architectures to detailed designs
  - Techniques for ensuring that detailed designs conform to the architectures
Architecture Evolution -1

Since “Quality attribute requirements drive software architecture design” and “Software architecture is the bridge between mission/business goals and a software-intensive system”:

• The quality and longevity of a software system is largely determined by its architecture.

• Therefore a system’s software architecture offers leverage for ensuring that a system continues serving an organization’s business as those goals evolve.
Architecture Evolution -2

Evolution requires making architectural decisions under uncertainty:

• Responding to change effectively while maximizing value-added using notions from utility theory
• Exploiting theories such as *real options* theory to place a value on flexibility
• Exploiting quality attribute theories to make sound quality decisions
• “Optimizing” the timing of and trade-offs in design decisions
Architecture Evolution -3

Methodological support

• Defining *practical* and *economics-driven* methods for valuing architectural decisions in relation to quality attributes. The Architecture Improvement Workshop (AIW) is a starting point.
• Tying together existing methods such as QAW, ADD, ATAM and CBAM

Augmenting methods with automation support

• ArchE – automated architectural design assistant
• ARMIN – architecture reconstruction
• Prototype documentation environment
Architecture Practice in Context

1. Business / Mission Context
   - General scenarios
   - VaB

2. Organization Context

3. System Context
   - Bus Goals
   - Reqmts
Architecture Competence

What does an organization need to do to model, measure and improve its competence in performing architecture-centric software engineering?

- What are the skills that enable a competent architect such as technical, social, leadership skills and situation-specific skill profiles?
  - We plan to start by conducting structured interviews and surveys

- How do you systematically capture organizational experience?
  - We plan to build simple models using checklists and then look at Design for Six Sigma

- What’s the relationship between organizational structures and architectural structures?
  - We plan to build on the results of an SEI IR&D investigating communication patterns vis-à-vis architectural dependencies
Systems Architecture Practices

*How can we close the gap between the engineering practices of system architecture and software architecture?*

- How do you manage the system's quality attributes within and between the system and software architecture(s)?

- How do you describe the mapping between the operational architecture, system architecture and software architecture representations? How do you relate the views in the architectures?

Game Plan
- Use structured interviews to assess state of the practice
- Augment current methods to account for system architecture practices
Architecture Technology

We plan to continue investigating technologies such as
• Service Oriented Architectures
• Aspect-oriented design

As systems continue to get larger and more complex does the nature of architecture change?
• We intend to investigate potentially applicable techniques from areas such as
  - Mechanism and institutional design
  - Self-adaptive systems
  - Complex adaptive systems
SAT “Axioms” and New Directions

“Axioms” Guiding Our Work
• Software architecture is the bridge between mission/business goals and a software system
• Software architecture drives software development throughout the life-cycle.
• Quality attribute requirements drive software architecture design.

New Directions
• Expand current work from design and development to also address system evolution
• Investigate architectural competence
• Investigate the use of economic models, various theories of design, and theories from other disciplines
• Investigate the nature of architecture as systems become ultra-large
We want your input!

Our ongoing goals are to

• Respond to the needs of the world
• Increase our level of impact
• Base techniques and methods on theoretically sound foundations

We are very much looking forward to getting your thoughts!