Architecting in SAFe

Joining the ART Leadership Team as an Architect
I’m making the biggest, hardest to change decisions at the point in a project when I know the least about anything. I’m wrong, and I’m not going to be around to find out how wrong I was. How can I steer things closer to being right if I’m not involved?

— Me

(as a much younger architect)
Architects play a critical role in ensuring the long-term viability of ARTs and the Business Solutions they create.
Leadership, not just expertise

- Step up as the partner are you are capable of being
- Improve your personal leverage and impact
- Create sustainability for people, solutions, and your business
Today

- Architects and Essential SAFe
- Establishing the context for success
- Architects as change leaders
Where do I fit?

You are essential to SAFe
Half of Essential SAFe won’t happen without Architects

Without your leadership, the essentials are at risk.

1. SAFe Lean-Agile Principles
2. Real Agile Teams and Trains
3. Cadence and Synchronization
4. PI Planning
5. DevOps and Releasability
6. System Demo
7. Inspect & Adapt
8. IP Iteration
9. Architectural Runway
10. Lean-Agile Leadership
Culture is the sum of all behaviors

Architects are respected and looked up to by many individual contributors. Your behaviors count more than most in defining that culture.

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Alignment is a core value of SAFe

The architecture briefing is a key source of alignment across the ART, helping people make aligned decisions throughout the PI.

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Release on Demand is a critical business capability

Sustained technical leadership is required for achieving an effective Continuous Delivery Pipeline and building the culture supporting it.

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Program Execution and Built-in Quality are core values too

Define and champion the foundational components that allow the ART to deliver new capabilities with a Sustainable Shortest Lead Time.

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Sustainability is people AND technology

Build the capabilities of the teams and mentor the next generation of technical leadership, creating a sustainable advantage.

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What about the other half?

Your skills are invaluable in building teams, enabling cadenced delivery, ensuring successful demos, and helping teams learn and innovate, too!

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What’s my Impact?

Enable flow using the SAFe Mindset and principles
Architects exemplify the lean-agile mindset

Through this work we have come to value:

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

goodmanifesto.org
Architects establish the context for success

#1-Take an economic view
#2-Apply systems thinking
#3-Assume variability; preserve options
#4-Build incrementally with fast, integrated learning cycles
#5-Base milestones on objective evaluation of working systems
#6-Visualize and limit WIP, reduce batch sizes, and manage queue lengths
#7-Apply cadence, synchronize with cross-domain planning
#8-Unlock the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers
#9-Decentralize decision-making
Architect and facilitate Continuous Exploration

- Architect for experimentation
- Engage in MVP / MMF definition
- Apply innovation accounting
- Champion Lean UX behaviors

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Architect for Continuous Integration

Continuous Delivery Pipeline

- Architect for single-branch continuous testing
- Automate compliance
  - Traceability
  - Static analysis & scanning
  - Automated approvals
- Apply innovation accounting

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Architect for Continuous Deployment

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- Full pipeline automation
- Decoupled deploy and release
- Infrastructure as code
- Pervasive telemetry
- Architect for recoverability
Architect for Release on Demand

Continuous Delivery Pipeline

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- Feature toggles / Canary Releases
- Decoupled releases / streamlets
- Designed for operations
- Value-centric telemetry
How do I lead?

Experts as Leaders
Who is the ART core leadership team?

This team collectively makes the biggest, longest-impacting decisions in the ART:

- Vision
- Roadmap
- Backlog
- PI Planning
- Talent and Staffing

It needs to be a team, not just a group of people.
Showing up as a leader

**Be Present** – attend, listen, and mentor at a variety of ART events, not just the ones you’re “required” to attend

**Be Supportive** – leadership teams demonstrate an environment of mutual influence, working for the good of everybody’s goals

**Be Human** – Take the time to listen and truly understand the needs and desires of people around you, hearing with compassion and empathy
Leaders spend attention wisely

Prioritize architecture work in the day-to-day ‘this PI’ focus to address:

1. Team blockers
2. Cross-team coordination and alignment
3. Team support (especially knowledge and education)
4. Team pairing (on enablers)
5. Work coming from outside the ART’s goals
Great architects behave like great coaches
(and vice versa)

Consultant
- Develop frameworks
- Advice based on skills, expertise, and experience
- Diagnostician with a focus on problem solving

Mentor
- Develop a “how to”
- Advice based on personal experience
- Develops a “trusted advisor” relationship

Teacher/Trainer
- Focus on skills development through instruction
- Develop formal outcomes
  - Formal structure

Lean Leader
- Develop people
  - Promote life-long learning
  - Minimize constraints
  - Inspire and align people
  - Focus on Kaizen

Coach
- Develop and set shared goals
- Formal goal setting
- Opens access to supporting resources
- Focus on changing mindset and behaviors

Counselor
- Develop structure to resolve dysfunction
- Listen, empathise, and resolve conflict
- Focus on listening and treating symptoms

Change Agent
- Focus on embedding change
- Develop formal vision, change plans, roadmaps, artifacts
  - Evangelist
  - Organizational design
  - Visible champion of change

Facilitator
- Support a formal outcome without advice
- Owns a process of collaboration
- Independent

Elite Agile Coach Core behaviors:
- Listen
- Ask Deep Questions
- Empower
- Enable to Act
- Reinforce Behavior
- Increase Insight

https://zenexmachina.wordpress.com/2016/05/11/the-8-elements-of-agile-coaching/
Inspire and steer transformation

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create a powerful guiding coalition
3. Develop the vision and strategy
4. Communicate the vision
5. Empower employees for broad-based action
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more wins
8. Anchor new approaches in the culture
Key opportunities to influence

The organizational design needs to consider the future-state architecture, allowing the ARTs to run fast with minimal dependencies.
Key opportunities to influence

Architects inform the vision, roadmap, and initial backlog contents for the train.
Key opportunities to influence

Architects support teams continuously throughout the PI to ensure successful understanding of approach and technical goals.
Key opportunities to influence

Architects are key sources of problem identification and solution brainstorming for organizational growth and improvement.
Architects play a critical role in ensuring the long-term viability of ARTs and the Business Solutions they create.
What we discussed

- Architects are required for half of Essential SAFe
- SAFe provides thinking tools and tradeoff guidance for architects
- Architects have a key role in leading change