

# The Ultimate Guide to Job Architecture

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## Preface

The world of work is rapidly evolving. As businesses face the winds of digitalization – including the latest pressure from generative AI to redesign jobs – and a new generation of employees with different needs and expectations, HR leaders and business executives must respond to the challenge.

They must infuse greater flexibility into their organizational structure, ensure that their workforce has the right skills and competencies, and help that people-related decisions can be of the highest quality.

But where do you begin? By building a modern job architecture. A job architecture offers unparalleled transparency, consistency, and flexibility to your workforce, aligning it with your business objectives in an engaging way.

This whitepaper is for those who want to design or improve a job architecture for their organization. It provides an overview of the benefits and challenges, along with best practices for the design process and available software tools to support you. By reading this whitepaper, you'll have the insights needed to make well informed decisions about your company-individual design and implementation process. Don't miss out on the opportunity to unlock the full potential of your organization and your people.

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# Introduction

## What Is a Job Architecture?

A job architecture is a system that organizes jobs within an organization into groups based on the company's value chain. This system goes beyond just listing job titles and includes details about the skills and competencies required for each job, the grades and levels associated with them, and how they compare to similar jobs in the region or industry. Essentially, a job architecture helps companies structure their jobs in a logical and meaningful way.

## What Are the Key Components of a Job Architecture?

A job architecture is made up of several key components, including job families, sub-job families, levels, job titles, job

descriptions, and required competencies or skills. These elements are crucial for organizing and defining roles within an organization. By ensuring that these components are aligned with the company's business strategy, values, and culture, HR professionals and business leaders can create a structure that promotes the organization's goals, supports HR programs, and facilitates employees' career growth.

## Job Architecture Vs. Related Concepts

Job architecture may be confused with other concepts such as job analysis or organizational design. Knowing the differences helps us understand what precisely a job architecture does for our organizations and how it fits other existing practices.

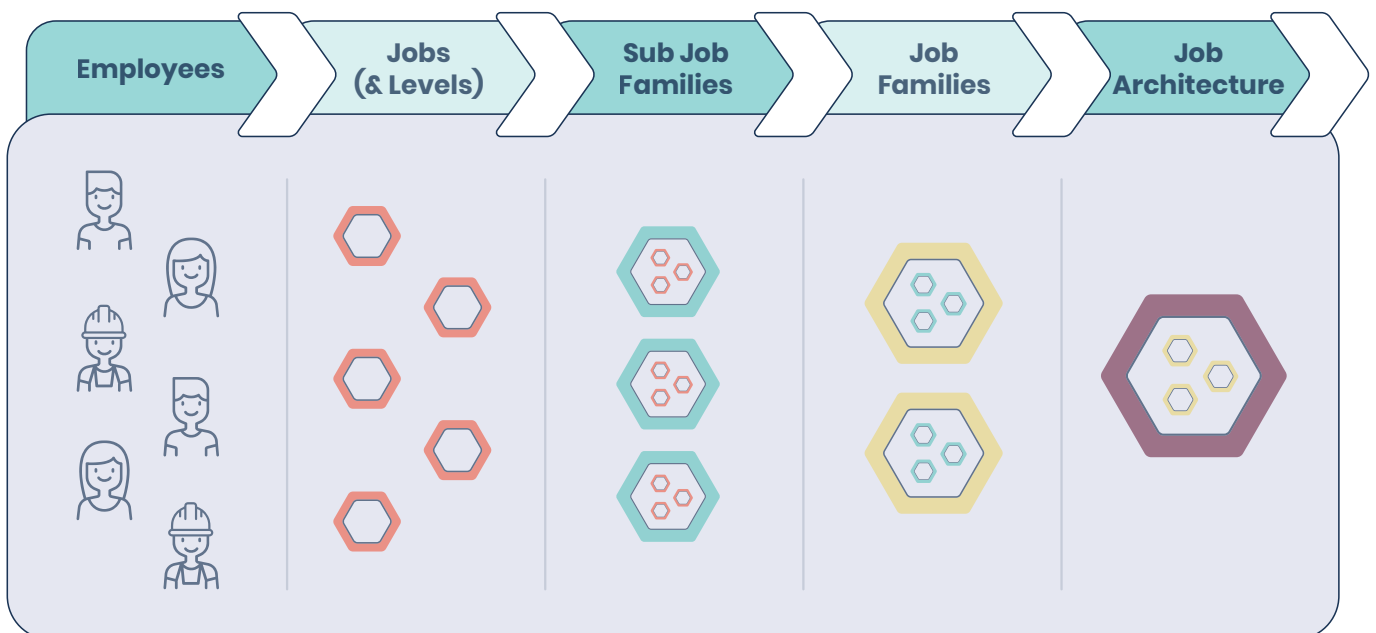


Figure 1: The key components of a Job Architecture and their relations.

- **Job analysis** is the process of examining the different components of a role to gain a deeper understanding of its requirements and responsibilities. This helps to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a job effectively, allowing HR professionals to determine the qualifications needed for a job, set performance standards, and develop training programs.
- **Job design**, on the other hand, refers to organizing and structuring tasks, responsibilities, and duties within a job. The goal of job design is to create jobs that are efficient, effective, and fulfilling for employees, balancing the needs of the organization with the needs and abilities of the employees. Job design is a sub-step of job architecture, as it focuses on the design of individual jobs, while job architecture concentrates on all roles within an organization.
- **Job catalogs** are structured lists or databases of job descriptions, including details such as tasks, qualifications, and pay grades. They are used as reference tools for organizing and grouping jobs into job families and sub-job families, which then feed into the overall job architecture. The job catalog provides an essential foundation for the job architecture, but it is only one part of it.
- **Organizational design** is a broader concept than job

architecture. It refers to modifying the overall design of a company by adapting the structure, roles, and responsibilities to achieve specific goals, such as better customer service or improved innovation. A job architecture is an important subset of organizational design, providing the internal consistency and transparency of all jobs needed to align the entire structure with external requirements.

## Why Should Companies Have a Job Architecture?

Today's global and ever-changing business environment, the increasing digitalization of work and the occurrence of unpredictable external shocks impose the new requirements that HR Management needs to cope with. In response, innovative HR trends have emerged in recent years. Concepts such as New Work, self-management, agile processes, remote work, people-first culture, skill-focused training, and many others have emerged to increase resilience.

A well-designed job architecture is setting the scene for all these concepts. It provides a consistent and transparent classification, content library, and description language that are essential for effectively organizing work. A job architecture serves as the backbone for many HR and talent management processes, including compensation and

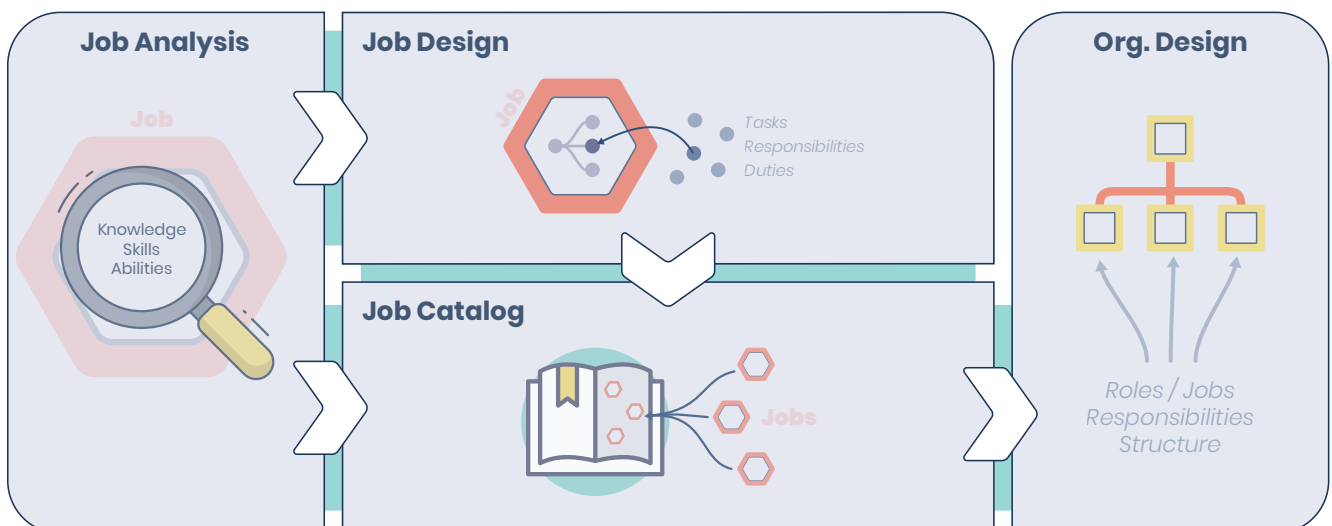


Figure 2: How is Job Architecture fit to related concepts?

benefits, career planning, learning and development, skills and competency management, strategic workforce planning, and succession planning.

This, in turn, provides valuable and up-to-date insights to design better HR concepts and programs, such as engaging career paths, a fair compensation system, and improving strategic workforce planning.

But the impact goes beyond HR. By disclosing precisely what a company is working with, a job architecture enables better transformation initiatives, greater agility, and more focused organizational design. Additionally, a job architecture provides the data backbone for the effective use of Human Capital Management (HCM) software.

In short, a job architecture provides an underlying structure with the flexibility needed to accommodate transformation and growth, which will not be compromised by the external pressure of change.

# The Benefits of Working With a Job Architecture

Having a well-functioning job architecture is not a universal remedy. It does not fix everything in HR which might need improvement. But it has such a tremendous effect on the outcomes of HR activities that organizations with a job architecture do significantly better than the ones without.

Imagine working with a job architecture like maintaining a healthy lifestyle. One healthy meal or one day of exercise will not make a great difference. It's the regularity that leads to noticeable effects on your physical health. And if you hold on, other aspects, such as sleep, or mental health will also improve.

A job architecture is like the habit of a healthy lifestyle. The clarity, consistency, and transparency over the organizational structure and its elements (roles, responsibilities) across the whole organization (departments, teams, jobs, locations) are like the regularity of healthy habits. One single instance where a better understanding of talent needs, or structure, leads to a better decision might not make a great difference. But all of them together will be mutually reinforced and prevent new problems from coming up.

And just like with the habit of a healthy lifestyle, the positive effects are not limited to HR. Transparency radiates throughout an entire organization. Strategy, Transformation and IT will also benefit.

The systematic and consistent method for making decisions about everything connected to people is a hidden lever to align activities even better with your business goals and become more agile. After all, you don't want to run a

21st-century business with 20th-century workplace programs. In the following, we give an overview of the most important benefits that you can expect, beginning with talent management because that's where the benefits become most apparent.

## Improve Talent Management

### Acquiring Talent: Recruiting

A well-defined job architecture contains all the requirements of a job with a view to the organization's value chain. This includes job descriptions, skills, qualifications, and experiences. It helps providing clarity to recruiters in identifying suitable candidates and streamlining their search process. Clear communication of the scope of work and responsibilities helps candidates understand expectations. This limits the risk of job dissatisfaction and raises retention. Recruiters and candidates have the same realistic understanding of what a job is about.

### Developing Talent

**Career Paths:** A comprehensive job architecture is a practical tool for creating career paths as it defines all levels and functions with their respective requirements. With this system, one can analyze job requirements, compare them with other jobs, and provide a clear path for career progression. This includes vertical career moves within a function, horizontal career moves between functions, and even new career paths for employees who do not want

managerial responsibilities. By providing transparent career paths, employees are motivated with growth opportunities, which promotes internal mobility.

**Learning and Development:** Clear and up-to-date job requirements aid decision-making regarding learning and development initiatives. It is possible to identify skill gaps and customize learning content to meet individual needs, which simultaneously leads to more efficient use of training budgets. Performance management is also improved. A well-defined job architecture allows organizations to set realistic and trackable performance goals based on the actual responsibilities and levels associated with a position. This provides managers and employees with a common understanding and framework to identify and evaluate individual performance.

**Engagement:** Even though a job architecture may seem like an abstract concept, it has direct implications for employee engagement. It enables you to create a clear employee value proposition and provides visibility on what is needed to progress. If you link skills to a job, you can align them with the interests of an individual and offer more personalized career paths.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion:** A job architecture furthers your DE&I initiatives by reducing bias in job descriptions and job requirements and revealing potential disparities in salaries.

### Performance Management

A well-defined job architecture allows organizations to set realistic and trackable performance goals based on the actual responsibilities and levels associated with a position. This provides managers and employees with a common understanding and framework to identify and evaluate individual performance.

### Rewarding Talent: Compensation & Rewards

A fair and competitive pay structure is crucial for organizations and a job architecture with a corresponding leveling is the quickest way to achieve it. Fairness originates

from consistent job mapping, creating transparency for all employees. In practice, companies use pay bands to align compensation with individuals even better, making it perceived as fair. Competitiveness emerges from making your job architecture comparable with market standards so that salary benchmarks provide meaningful results. If you make periodic job architecture reviews, then you will keep pace with market changes and maintain a competitive pay system.

## Raise Productivity in HR

A well-designed job architecture streamlines many HR processes. For example, in recruiting, the clarity of job descriptions and requirements helps HR to identify the right candidates for a role and ensures that new hires align with the organization's needs.

However, the benefits of HR go far beyond this. You can identify previously unnoticed gaps in HR programs such as career progression or strategic workforce planning. Identifying and eliminating disparities in current practices eliminates the need to manage exceptional cases and saves precious time.

You will also be able to better control people costs, find the optimal balance between global standardization and local adjustments in your HR programs, and ensure compliance through transparency of the qualification and training needs for each job. The time and resources saved through higher process efficiency can be spent on tasks with higher value creation.

## Maximize HR Software Output

Effective utilization of HR software depends on high-quality data. Good data is essential for achieving the full potential value of cloud-based HCM software such as SAP SuccessFactors, Workday, or Oracle, as well as for process-specific software solutions.



A consistent structure for job organization is a fundamental element of any cloud HCM system. It must be uploaded during implementation and cannot be managed within the Cloud HCM software itself. High-quality data about employees alone is not enough to realize the full benefits of HR software. The data needs to be structurally consistent.

Creating a job architecture before the implementation of HCM software (or at least outside of it) is highly recommended. It will accelerate the implementation process and improve the software’s functionalities, resulting in a better return on investment for your software investment.

Once low-quality data is fed into the HCM software, it is difficult to detect the missing value. In essence, you cannot see what is not there. It is essential to keep emphasizing that a well-designed job architecture can save costs by maximizing the output of your HR software.

### Maintain Control in Times of Structural Change

Any organization deals with change, such as growth, mergers or acquisitions, carve-outs, the emergence of project-based work, or rapid technological developments. A job architecture helps you to stay in control.

In times of growth, for example, it is easier to add new jobs to the existing job families without impacting the compensation structure. During a merger, it allows you to consolidate two different structures into a single, consistent framework, which creates the desired synergies and minimizes the impact on employees. It also helps with ongoing technological change by improving Strategic Workforce Planning and enabling greater agility.

### Facilitate Agility

It may seem counterintuitive, but the structure of a job architecture makes an organization more flexible and quicker in reacting to changing business needs. During the design process, clutter is eliminated and a lean structure is created. Although there are traditional features such as pay grades or job titles, anything that impedes agility is eliminated. Jobs that may be required in the future can even be integrated into today's structure and pay system.

### Enhance Strategic Workforce Planning

When creating your job architecture, you may find duplicate roles and overlapping responsibilities. You can eliminate what is not needed and streamline your structure. However,

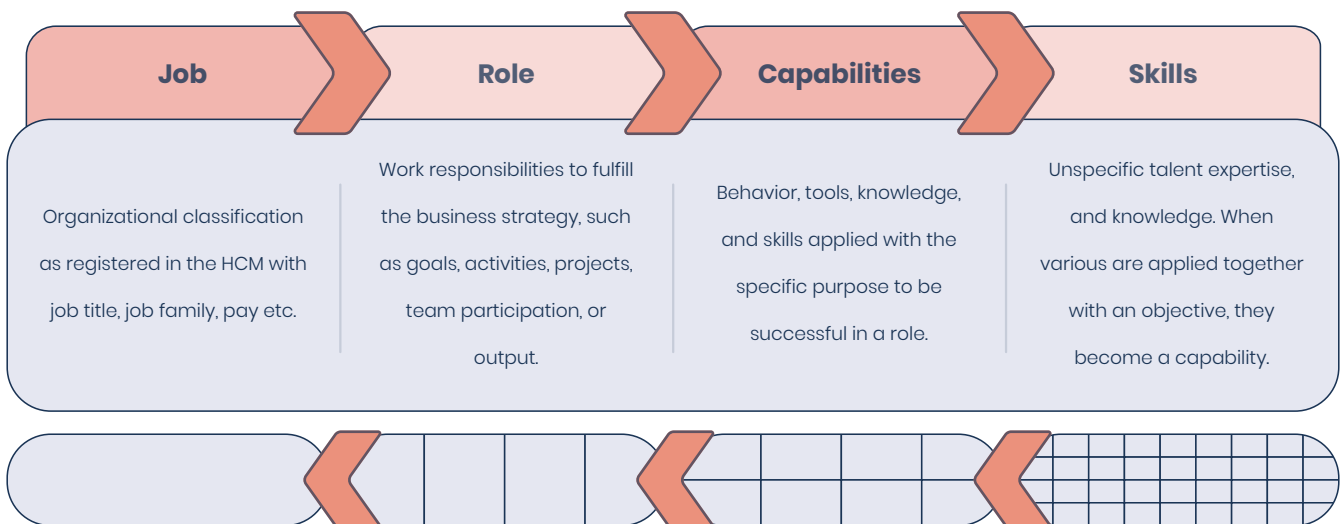


Figure 3: The Relation between Job Architecture and Skill Management.

you can also create recurring value by improving your Strategic Workforce Planning. By having high visibility of job requirements, individual qualifications, and skills, you can identify gaps (and overlaps) between employees today and the roles of the future. This gives you the time to identify or train the people that you need and adapt your HR programs.

## Set up Skill Management

You can manage a job architecture without looking at skills, but you cannot apply skills-based practices without a job architecture. Whatever the specific goals of a skill project are, at one point of the journey the desired skills must be matched with employees. One side of the matching occurs on a personal level with people, while the other side occurs on the organizational level, with a structure that is expressed in jobs, roles, or careers. The matching of both will only give a realistic result if both sides are accurate.

An up-to-date job architecture provides one of the two sides: it organizes jobs as a collection of tasks, responsibilities, and skills. The latter being the capabilities, qualifications, and knowledge needed to succeed in a job. By tying skills to all jobs within your job architecture, you create a common ontology, a coherent currency of content, that you can use for registering individual skills. Aligning the job architecture with a skills taxonomy and both together with the organization's objectives has a considerable impact on the organization's ability to adapt to new demands.

## How to Maximize the Output of Your HCM Software

When organizations want to improve their HR processes, they often turn to Human Capital Management Software (HCM) or HR Information Systems (HRIS) like SAP SuccessFactors, Workday, or Oracle. These systems require job architecture data to function properly, and that's where things can get tricky. The software supplier will ask you to upload your job architecture, which means you need to have it ready in a short amount of time.

If the job architecture data isn't accurate and up-to-date, it can cause serious delays during implementation and lead to poor HR decisions. In fact, if the data is bad, you may not even realize it until you've already implemented the software. That's why it's so important to have a well-designed job architecture in place before you start the implementation process or at least during the implementation process.

With a clean and organized job architecture, you can take full advantage of what your HR software offers. This means that you'll be able to make better HR decisions, streamline your processes, and get the most out of your investment. Ideally, the job architecture should be consolidated and mapped to the software before implementation. This will help ensure that everything matches up and that you can start using the system to its full potential right away.

### How to get the most out of your HCM investment?



Make sure that the job data model is aligned with the structure and data fields of your HR software. This includes converting naming conventions and structures such as job families and sub-job families to match those used in the software. Keep in mind that this can be a time-consuming process.



Ensure that your job profiles are accurate, up-to-date, and consolidated. They should accurately represent the value chain of your organization.



Define your grades well, consolidate them, and map them to all positions. This will ensure that your evaluation scheme is globally rolled out, regardless of the chosen standard.

# Challenges in Job Architecture Design

Building a job architecture is achievable for any organization. However, in practice, it initially looks like a complex undertaking as it involves identifying existing structural inefficiencies and designing a more efficient and modern structure. Don't let this discourage you, though! Thankfully, there are tools available that simplify this task for you. These tools assist with the design and implementation of the job architecture. To help you focus on the relevant issues of internal organization and select the best tools for your needs, here is an overview of what to look out for.

## Organizational challenges

**Creating alignment with organizational goals:** Align the job architecture with the organization's overall goals and objectives. Involve all relevant stakeholders in the process to create alignment from the beginning.

**Purpose and Function:** Develop a clear understanding of the job architecture's purpose and how it fits into the organization's overall structure. Communicate transparently throughout the process and provide ample training and resources to aid understanding and adoption.

## Technical challenges

**Limited quality of existing data:** Address the issue by establishing clear rules for collecting the job data. Watch out specifically for the following:

- Poor job data transparency: Job descriptions may not

exist, be unstructured or inconsistent, or be stored in inaccessible locations. This impedes a common understanding and language to talk about jobs and skills.

- Outdated job catalogs: Out-of-date job descriptions (especially tasks and skills) will not reflect the competencies needed to succeed and neither your development framework. It reduces career flexibility, talent mobility, and the results of learning activities.
- Heterogeneous job grading: Existing job grading structures may vary across regions or legal entities. The criteria used for job grading may not reflect the expectations of a modern workforce. This can cause significant effort for re-grading and impedes flexibility.

**Customization:** Determine the appropriate job families, levels, and skills for your organization's unique needs. All people involved need to agree on a meaningful way to cluster jobs (into job families, sub-job families, or otherwise), how to write job descriptions, and how to level the jobs.

**Consistency:** If you're looking to create a fair and consistent job evaluation process for your company, then utilize high-quality data and grading criteria across all departments and locations.

**Agility and scalability:** Any company is working towards organizational growth and should be prepared for future changes. Be consistent, complete, and correct in your job descriptions and definitions. But don't get too detailed because it limits your capacity for quick reactions.

**Compliance:** External rules may relate to specific qualifications required for a job, salary regulations, or similar. Internal standards could refer to approval processes, DE&I policies, or employee branding standards. To consider all necessary policies, communicate with all people involved.

**Data security:** Protecting employee data is crucial, and it's essential to determine who has access to what information and what level of rights they hold during the design process (e.g., view, edit, approve). This should be reflected in the job architecture tool you choose, whether it's specialized software or Excel. While you want to limit who can download the data, you still need to provide access to accurate data when it's necessary for making operational or strategic decisions. Balancing data security with access ensures that the right people have the information they need to propel the organization forward.

**Time and resources:** Once the data is prepared and the job catalog finalized, the next step is to assign employees to their respective roles. This process can be time-consuming, prone to errors, and filled with repetitive tasks, making it essential to get it right. To make this process efficient and reduce the risk of inaccuracies, choose a tool that is user-friendly and allows for bulk assignments while also providing in-depth analysis for more nuanced decision-making.

**Integration into your HR-software landscape:** A job architecture serves as the infrastructure backbone for many HR processes, making it necessary to ensure that the data is integrated seamlessly into all your HR systems. It enables consistent decision-making and allows you to leverage all benefits of your job architecture. Discuss the integration as a prerequisite for the successful implementation before you compile the final data sets.

**Periodic reviews:** Regular reviews help maintain the effectiveness of your job architecture. An outdated job architecture may hinder transformation initiatives and lead to poor quality HR decisions (i.e., inefficient compensation strategy or unattractive career paths). Store your job

architecture in a place that allows easy access, updates, and integration with your HR backbone. It ensures that you can make necessary changes and keep your job architecture up to date, enabling you to fully leverage its benefits.

## Cultural challenges

**Change Management:** Managing employee expectations and potential resistance to change is crucial. For example, replacing legacy practices that employees may be used to, but hinder your organization's ability to adapt to changing business environments and new ways of working, such as project-based roles or increased internal talent mobility. You can overcome this challenge with effective communication and the support of management. By explaining the need for change and its potential positive impacts, employees can be encouraged to embrace the change, fostering an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation.

**Training and Resources:** All staff members must understand what the new job architecture brings to the organization and how it will impact their role. Provide adequate training and resources to managers and employees on the new job architecture and its implications.

**Pay Equity:** Address potential pay equity concerns resulting from job restructuring. Creating a leaner structure means getting rid of exceptions as much as possible, both positive and negative. Minimize issues by creating a consistent and comprehensible grading structure. During the grading process, compare current and future grades. Ensure that any potential pay equity concern will be addressed fairly and promptly.

While the challenges of building a job architecture may seem daunting, they are all part of HR's daily business already and should not discourage you. In the next chapter, we will explore job architecture design and provide you with the knowledge you need to effectively address these challenges in the process and ensure that your organization reaps all the benefits from a job architecture.

# Design: How to Create a Job Architecture

## Job Architecture Design – Project Preparation

To illustrate the importance of flawless preparation, we return to the parable of a healthy lifestyle. Just as a healthy lifestyle requires reflection and a bit of planning to identify the bits and pieces that work for you individually, so too does a successful job architecture project.

You will need to decide what your actual goal is (general well-being?), see if there is something you can build upon (any particular sport or food that you enjoy?), get support (does your partner go along?), and you need to decide on a personal path forward (what will I change?).

These are the same things you should think about to set up your job architecture design project for success. For your organization, you would think about your company's goals, the existing structure and data you can build upon, your colleagues from other departments, and an action plan for the team.

### Define Your Objectives

The first step is to define what you want to achieve with a job architecture, your goals, and your objectives. Clarify the specific business needs that the job architecture is supposed to address. For example, improving organizational efficiency, enhancing employee engagement, or ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. The objectives are individual to each organization. Here are some guiding questions that will help you to define your goals. Answering these questions

will help ensure that the job architecture is accurately aligned with the organization's needs and drive actionable results.

01 What are the drivers for your job architecture project?

02 What are the current and future business needs of your organization that the job architecture will address?

03 How will the job architecture support your organization's overall strategic goals?

04 How will the job architecture influence employee engagement, retention, and career development?

05 How will the job architecture impact compensation and benefits programs?

06 How will the job architecture help organizational design and reporting structures?

07 How would a job architecture support diversity, equity, and inclusion?

08 What are the timelines and resources required to complete the project?

## Define The Scope

Once you have established the goals and objectives, you should determine the project scope and if there is anything you can work with. It includes identifying the existing job families and levels of the job architecture and the data sources used to inform your job architecture. This may include job descriptions, performance evaluations, compensation data, and other relevant information. The following questions will help you determine the scope and resources available:

01 Is there an existing job architecture? When was it reviewed the last time?

09 What are the current and anticipated job market trends and compensation levels?

02 Are the roles and responsibilities of each job stored somewhere, complete, and up to date?

10 Do you have to count on new regulatory and compliance requirements?

03 Can you identify gaps and overlaps within the current jobs? How can they be addressed?

11 Is your job architecture integrated with all other HR processes?

04 What is the current state of the organizational structure? Can you identify any inefficiencies, redundancies, or future requirements?

12 With which HR software will it be integrated apart from your HCM software, i.e., the recruiting software or an evaluation system?

05 Which data sources can you use for job descriptions, qualifications, and grades?

13 How can a new job architecture be maintained and periodically reviewed?

06 What are the key skills required for success in each role today? Are they likely to change in the future?

14 Is there a timeline and/or a budget for the project?

07 Does the current job leveling system effectively support career progression and compensation decisions, or does it need improvement?

15 Who are the key stakeholders involved in the job architecture project, and what are their expectations?

08 Are there any crucial jobs or job families for the organization's value chain, and should be prioritized?

16 What metrics will you use to measure the success of the job architecture project?

17 Can you identify potential challenges and decide how to address them upfront?

## Involve The Right People

Making job architecture work for everyone involves collaboration. Involve key stakeholders from different levels and functions within the organization - such as senior executives, HR, and job experts - from the very beginning to ensure that their needs and concerns are taken into account. This will help create a job architecture that reflects the needs of the entire organization and works for everyone.

- **Steering Committee:** Consider creating a steering group to obtain commitment and buy-in from all levels. This will ensure that the project has clear goals and can be delivered within budget, that the necessary changes can really be implemented, and that you have a top-down endorsement for internal communication.
- **HR - Talent Management:** They are one of your main partners because a job architecture develops immediate impact on nearly all talent management initiatives, such as defining meaningful career paths that are motivating for employees and in line with the organization's goals. They would also link the job architecture with the recruiting strategy (hiring needs, the system used, job postings to be derived...).
- **HR - Compensation & Benefits:** It is also essential to have the team responsible for compensation and benefits on board. It is their responsibility to provide the HR Business Partners and the entire team with input about the existing structure (job families, sub-job families, grades...). They would also closely monitor the impact of a new job architecture on the current pay structures. In addition, this team can drive the process of selecting software for job architecture design because they are well-equipped to define the correct requirements.
- **IT:** Together with HR, IT can anticipate the impact of the job architecture on the HR backend system, be it HCM or HRIS, and any other software. They usually are the driving force because a job architecture is part of the implementation process of backend systems such as SuccessFactors, Workday, or Oracle, and they need a job

architecture before the go-live dates. They should also participate in the selection of a job-architecture tool to assure that it works seamlessly with the software systems they manage.

- **Internal Communication:** It is essential to inform all employees on time, update them regularly, and provide an open channel to address their concerns and questions. Internal Communication will help you to develop an adequate communication plan.
- **Legal Department:** First, you might need advice on updating existing work contracts within the new job architecture framework. Second, many organizations might need to involve unions or employee representatives. Especially when it comes to changes in grades and pay programs. Do not underestimate their potential resistance and start communicating early.
- **Procurement:** The larger an organization, the more likely it will need to acquire specialized software to create the job catalog and organize the mapping process. Up to 2.000 employees can be managed in an Excel file. From 2.000 employees on, the process efficiency and risk of making errors will rise dramatically.
- **Subject Matter Experts on Job Architecture:** In practice, many organizations lack the experience and know-how required to design a job architecture from a content perspective. Hiring external subject matter experts can improve the efficiency of the process. Their role would be providing expert advice about the specific job structure to adopt, defining the most efficient process, and delivering content about the necessary job descriptions and skills.

## Choose The Best Process

Finally, you should choose the best process to build the job catalog for your organization. For example, you might choose a top-down approach (where the job architecture is developed by senior leaders and then cascaded down to lower levels), or you prefer a bottom-up approach, where employees and managers are driving the process. The



following questions will help you to decide on the best approach for your project:

- **Standardized or Customized job model:** Do market standards work for you, or do you need customized solutions? This relates to standard job catalogs, standard value chains, and standard grading mechanisms.
- **Closed-shop vs. Open-stage approach:** How many stakeholders need to be involved in the design of the job catalog? You may decide to involve only a dedicated HR Core team, or is it more appropriate to integrate a large base of managers and representatives from the workforce to create the model?
- **Utilization of AI:** ChatGPT and related AI tools are nowadays attractive for generating job profiles “the easy way”. Indeed, these tools might help any project team to create job content rapidly. However: Think twice about how the results fit the needs of the job model. Though overall providing efficient support, AI tools generate content that is different anytime you use the tool, even when entering the same prompt... And if you use them, do not forget to check whether the results are compatible with your value chain.
- **MS Excel/Teams vs. dedicated Job Architecture Software:** Well, of course, we are convinced about the numerous advantages of using specially designed software for building and administrating the job catalog and also for the job mapping process. Working with many stakeholders globally on the same data source is no problem for a cloud solution but a challenge for non-specialized services.
- **Home-grown or Consulted approach:** First, building a job model is no rocket science. HR is well equipped and qualified to create a decent and fit-for-purpose job model. But as always: Employing professionals who are specialized and experienced in this topic brings considerable speed while at the same time mitigating risks of failures and pitfalls lying along the way. If you

want to make sure that you can meet the requirements of the business in terms of time, then you should consider having experienced resources employed in the team.

In conclusion, designing and implementing a job architecture requires planning and consideration of the goals, scope, stakeholders, and methodology. Taking your time to find the right approach for yourself will greatly enhance your success.

## Project Readiness Checklist

- Have the general business goals and the specific objectives for HR ready. Be clear about what they mean for your job architecture.
- Gain clarity about the scope of your project.
- Ensure executive-level support.
- Assess the need for external support, depending on complexity and urgency.
- Decide on the use of specialized software. If yes, clarify your requirements.
- Secure the budget.
- Determine a realistic time frame and include organizational resources in your project plan.
- Form a small but diverse working group.
- Make sure you can communicate the benefits to employees.

## Best Practice: Job Architecture Design Process

### Step 1 - Conduct a Job Analysis

The first step is to analyze the current roles, identifying tasks, responsibilities, skills, knowledge, and experience required for each position. This is teamwork because there is usually not one person in an organization that has the overview and depth of knowledge to do this for hundreds of roles. In practice, HR Business Partners and Line Managers are best positioned to deliver high-quality content. They can use interviews, surveys, or simple observation to acquire the data and help you build a comprehensive overview of all jobs in your organization.

### Step 2 - Develop a Job Framework

A job framework outlines the key elements of the new job architecture. The framework should include job families and sub-job families (groups of jobs that are similar in terms of function, tasks, and skill requirements), job levels (complexity, responsibility, and authority), and job titles (a

clear way for employees to understand their role and communicate it to others). Apply the level of granularity that suits your needs (see table).

You will need consistent criteria and language to differentiate all elements, make them comparable, and still describe them correctly. This will require alignment and discussion with all stakeholders. Adopt best practices and change them to meet your specific needs. Don't forget that the framework needs to be aligned with the overall business needs and goals.

### Step 3 – Create Job Descriptions

Develop job descriptions that give an accurate, detailed, up-to-date picture of the tasks, responsibilities, and requirements of each position. You can use the information gathered during the job analysis. The descriptions should all have the same structure and language to make them comparable and consistent. They should include the skills needed to be successful in a role (capabilities, qualifications, knowledge). Make them precise but not too detailed because it would limit flexibility and require constant maintenance.

Create a centralized repository where you can make changes over time, add new jobs, and eliminate extinguished roles, with everyone involved having the necessary access rights to make it easily manageable.

#### Step 4 – Evaluate Pay Structures

The evaluation of existing pay structures serves to determine how far they align with the new job architecture. The objective is to create a system that is fair, competitive by market standards, and aligned with the new job architecture that in turn supports your business goals.

You will need data about salaries, benefits, and all other forms of compensation for each (sub) job family, and role. You will also need to assign a level to each job (similar jobs in terms of complexity, responsibility, and scope) and create a globally consistent grading system (similar jobs in terms of education, skills, and experience). This is also a task that involves intense teamwork. A new structure will expose (positive and negative) outliers and it's a group effort to decide how to deal with these situations. Understandably, every case that receives a lower level or grade in the new structure will be a case that encounters resistance.

#### Step 5 – Define Career Paths

You define career paths by organizing jobs in progressive steps. Every job family and sub-job family should have their career path, outlining the requirements in terms of skills and experience for promotion and advancement. But you should also think about including career paths in between functions to promote internal mobility and create better growth opportunities. The consistency used in Step 2 for the framework and Step 3 for the job descriptions provides you with the ability to carve out development paths among the many roles.

#### Step 6 – Communicate Changes

Communicate the changes in the job architecture to all employees. Focus on the reasons for the changes and the benefits for employees. This will help create buy-in and ensure a smooth transition. It's a crucial step that can make

or break the success in the implementation phase. The early involvement of Internal Communication will be of great help.

#### Step 7 - Implement Job Architecture

Implement the new job architecture, including the new job descriptions, career paths, and pay structures. Ensure that the changes are being integrated into all relevant HR processes such as performance management and compensation processes.

It's also crucial to implement the new job architecture in your software systems, especially in HCM or HRIS software. This will not only help your job architecture come to live but also help to take full advantage of your software.

#### Step 8 – Monitor and Evaluate

Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the new job architecture over time. Just as in our parable of comparing the implementation of a job architecture to embarking on a healthy lifestyle, the benefits will develop and grow over time.

Adjust as needed to ensure that it continues to support the business needs and goals.

## The Four Types of Job Catalogs



### Highly Standardized Job Catalog

A Highly Standardized Job Catalog groups various operational functions into a single generic approach, such as "administrative clerk" or "technical clerk." This cost-effective approach allows for quick creation but offers limited job descriptions, focusing mainly on how tasks are performed rather than what they entail. As a result, a Highly Standardized Job Catalog is ideal for quickly and transparently classifying jobs but may not fully capture job content.

### Standardized Job Catalog

A Standardized Job Catalog includes several operational functions (sub-job families) that represent the value chain of a company. Typically, an industrial company needs 80 to 130 sub-job families, while a service company needs about 40 to 70. The content of each job covers both the "what" and "how" relevant to evaluation, with the "what" largely predetermined by market standards. While Standard Job Catalogs are quick and inexpensive to create, they may only fit an organization's specific value chain to a small extent. Standard Job Catalogs are a good choice when a generic content mapping of individual jobs is needed, in addition to job classification. Many benchmark providers offer Standard Job Catalogs on their online platforms.

### Partly Standardized Job Catalog

A Partly Standardized Job Catalog combines both standardized and customized approaches. It contains functions that are specifically designed to describe the core value chain of a company. While the most critical functions are defined explicitly, others can be adapted from market standards. This catalog captures the uniqueness of an organization while avoiding the need to create all jobs from scratch. Partly Standardized Job Catalogs are widely used, especially after significant structural changes like reorganizations or unification of HR systems.

### Company-Specific Job Catalog

A Company-Specific Job Catalog is a highly customized approach that captures both the functions of (sub-) job families and individual jobs in a way that describes the specific value creation for the organization. This level of detail allows for a precise description of both the "how" and the "what" of a job, but the creation process can be relatively costly. Company-Specific Job Catalogs are the best choice when a company's business model is unique and cannot be easily derived from existing typical service processes.

## Pros & Cons: Standardized vs. Customized Approach

### Standardized Approach

#### Pros

**Quick & inexpensive:** The major argument for using a standardized job catalog is cost. This method indeed requires few resources and implementation time, making it ideal for a company needing to achieve quick transparency with little effort.

**Comparable with other standards:** Since the structure and content are standardized, they can easily be compared. Companies will get meaningful insights from comparing their compensation and evaluation schemes.

**Availability:** There are many tools to edit and integrate standard catalogs.

VS

#### Cons

**Maintaining quality:** Quality is challenging because you don't have control over necessary updates (new jobs being added, obsolete jobs not being removed, new skills not being considered...). You might find yourself working with obsolete content and having more difficulty making good decisions.

**Releases:** New releases should be known and planned because changes in market standards would need to be integrated into your own structure (e.g., removing jobs, adding skills...). This will be difficult.

### Customized Approach

#### Pros

**Value chain & process based:** A customized approach ensures that your functions and jobs represent your individual value chain accurately.

**Suitable for talent management:** Since the content is based on actual value for the organization, the job catalog is a good foundation for all talent management practices (measure performance against goals and job descriptions, skill management based on consistent skill taxonomy...).

**Company culture being captured:** By using your individual structure and wording, you ensure that your job descriptions reflect your company culture and brand.

**Prepared for agility:** Having the choice about the structure of your job architecture enables you to define it in a way that maximizes flexibility (nº of job families, depth of job descriptions, grading scheme...).

VS

#### Cons

**Costly & time consuming:** It requires a deeper understanding of the company's value chain and takes more time and effort to define and assign the jobs. Software managing the design is recommended.

# Tools to Build Job Architectures

The job architecture software market is limited, and many organizations opt for Excel as their primary tool due to its accessibility and familiarity, as well as its convenient matrix structure and cost-effectiveness. Excel is commonly used by HR Business Partners, Compensation teams, and Line Managers to create job clusters and levels, but its limitations become apparent as organizations grow, particularly beyond 2,000 employees, leading to exponential challenges in managing job architecture effectively.

## Limitations of Working With Excel to Design Job Architectures

### Limited overview

Excel becomes limited when working with a large amount of data as it can be difficult to maintain a clear overview of the information, especially when it comes to visualizing and analyzing relationships between different data points. This results in errors, inconsistencies, and time-consuming manual work.

### Limited collaboration features

Excel does not have advanced collaboration features, making it difficult for multiple team members to work on the same file. It's difficult to know which file version is the latest, what has been modified, or who works in the same file simultaneously.

### Limited efficiency

In addition to the lack of workflow, Excel also lacks important

features such as easy job comparisons for building a consistent structure or compensation system, bulk actions for assigning or grading large groups of employees, quick identification of individual jobs for deeper analysis, historical tracking, and defining different access rights. These limitations can lead to frustration, errors, and a longer time required to complete the job architecture process.

### Limited security

Excel does not offer advanced security features and is vulnerable to unauthorized access or accidental deletion of data. Document exchange via Email poses a security issue.

### Limited IT integration

Excel is a decentralized data source. It does not feed into an integrated infrastructure, it cannot be aggregated, analyzed, and used to take consistent strategic decisions.

### Limited compliance

Excel does not offer any option to ensure that process steps are respected. In industries that are particularly strict (e.g., pharma), this can result in legal consequences.

### Limited reporting

Excel does not offer advanced reporting features, making it difficult to generate comprehensive reports for analysis and decision-making.

## THE LEVEL-OF-WORK MATRIX©

A value-based approach to job architecture design.

Your job architecture is a crucial aspect of talent management, but it can be challenging to navigate. While technology can certainly help speed up the process, there are also tools available for creating the necessary content to accelerate the process.

One such tool is the Level-of-Work Matrix®, which categorizes jobs based on complexity and management levels. It offers a shared understanding of job complexity within an organization, with 12 vertical levels that distinguish different layers of work complexity and horizontal levels that describe the impact on the value chain. This provides a straightforward approach for assigning jobs in a benchmark reference system, making it easier to structure your workforce.

- Easy to grasp.
- Applicable to both classic & agile work environments.
- Provides a valuable and insightful categorization without being complex.
- Enables the use of business terms to describe work instead of HR jargon.
- Compatible with any market standard evaluation schemes and benchmark references.

			Research & Create	Develop & Evaluate	Plan & Balance	Build & Design	Run & Support	Operate & Execute						
			Functions: ~80 generic functions covering the value chain											
Target Oriented	Expert	S12	■	■	■									
		S11	■	■	■	■	■	■						
	Professional	S10	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
		S9	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Process Oriented	Specialist	S8		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
		S7				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Coordinator	S6						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
		S5						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sequence Oriented	Operator	S4						■	■	■	■	■	■	
		S3								■	■	■	■	
	Worker	S2									■	■	■	
		S1										■	■	■

# Summary

At the heart of your organizational success lies a well-designed job architecture. It's the backbone that supports your HR processes and enables you to optimize talent management, streamline HR workflows, maximize the value of software investments, and embrace skills-based practices. With the latest developments in AI, a job architecture also empowers you to redesign individual jobs and scale the process to departments and across the entire organization with unprecedented transparency.

To achieve these benefits, it's crucial to align your job architecture with organizational goals, work with high-quality data, and maintain transparent communication throughout the process. By preparing thoroughly and assembling a complete team, you can ensure that every step of the design process runs smoothly.

While smaller organizations may resort to Excel for job architecture design, larger organizations should resist the temptation. Excel's limitations can break the timeline or the job architecture itself.

Once your job architecture is in place and integrated into your HR software backbone, you'll begin to see the benefits. It's like adopting a healthy lifestyle: slow at first, but soon creating tangible, mutually reinforcing impacts that extend beyond HR and enhance the work and engagement of everyone in your organization.

Are you ready to unleash the full potential of your organization and your people?  
Let's get started.





COLMEIA is Portuguese for beehive. The beehives we take care of are the workforces of large organizations. We provide cloud solutions for job architectures, job catalogs, job mapping, organization design, and strategic workforce planning.

For more information and product demos please get in touch:

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