

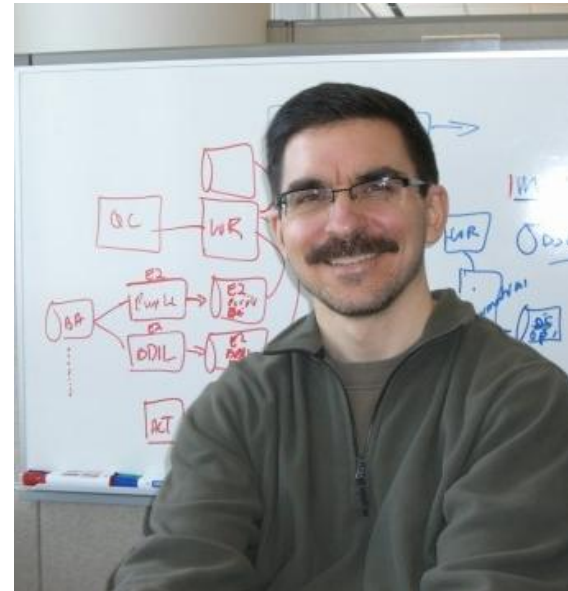
Architect as Anthropologist: Leveraging Cultural Knowledge to Foster Collaboration

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The Speaker

- Masters Degrees and on-going coursework in cultural studies, anthropology, human factors in technology, and information security
- PhD coursework in cultural studies, history of business and technology
- Extensive cross cultural and foreign language experience
- Focuses on major organizational change initiatives
- Actively uses the concepts in “the field”
- Fifteen years of solution experience



Introduction and Goals

Introduction:

- Anthropology provides a set of tools that can be applied to any social setting, including business and technology.
- Architects often assume the role of leading discussions between their business and technology partners with different (sub)cultures.
- Architects need to understand those elements of culture that drive or impede cross-cultural collaboration.

Goals:

- Identify the elements of culture that the architect can observe.
- Understand the use of participant observation to learn about culture.
- Understand how cultural knowledge can be used to foster collaboration within and among groups through case studies.

Outline

- Culture as Social Process
- Cultural Concepts
- Anthropological Techniques
- Cultural Frameworks
- Case Study 1: Decision Making
- Case Study 2: Loss of Control
- Case Study 3: New to Technology
- Putting Collaboration into Practice

Culture as Social Process

In order to leverage culture to foster collaboration, we need to set the context:

- **Culture varies** by country, region, company, division, department, workgroup, and family—all of which influence individuals and their behaviors.
- **Culture is learned** through a process of enculturation (or socialization)—new ideas need to be socialized for fit.
- **Culture is reinforced** both positively and negatively.
- **Culture communicates** context (low and high, verbally and non-verbally).
- **Culture is defined by both presence** as well as the **absence** of particular behaviors.
- **Culture is present** where humans live and work together for any period of time.
- **Culture is the key** to understanding and fostering collaboration.

Cultural Concepts

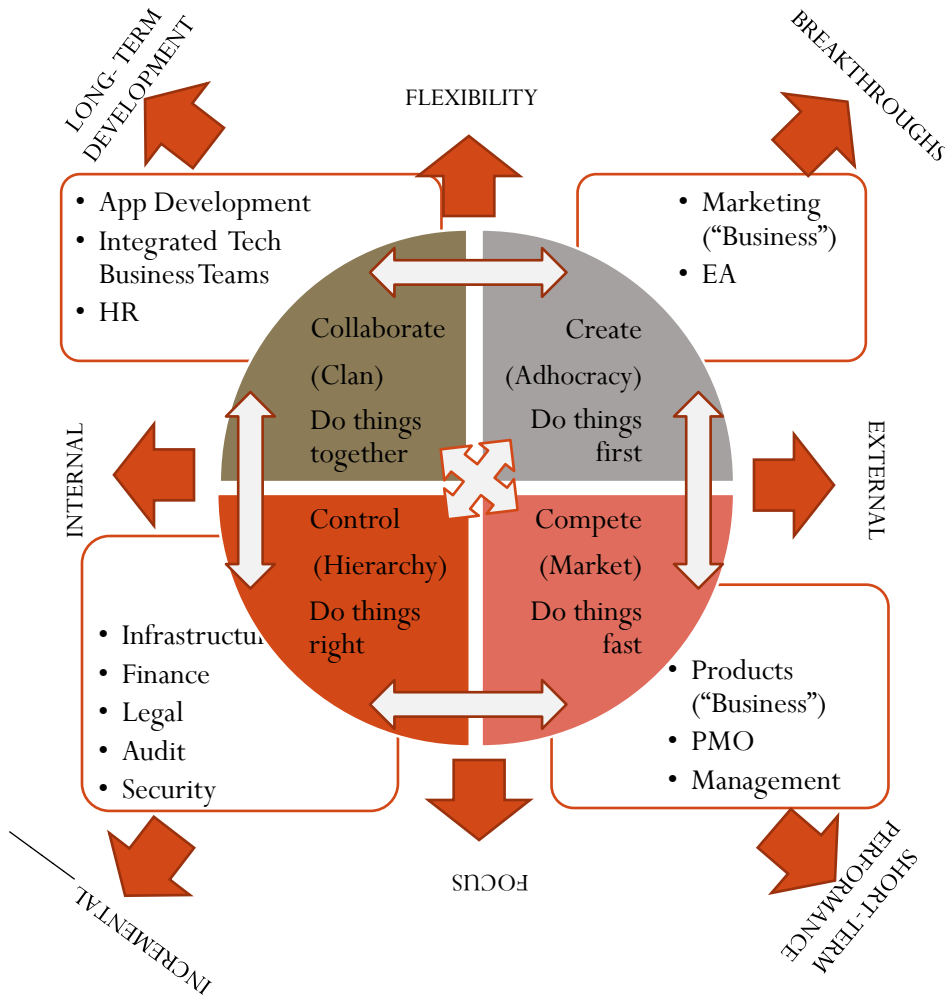
Fostering collaboration successfully requires an understanding the role these concepts play and how culture is manifested:

- **Social Capital** (time, knowledge, facilitation, support) = *builds goodwill*
- **Values** (stated and unstated) = *motivates behavior*
- **Language** (business/IT terminology, acronyms, references to shared experience, “a ‘Joe’ type”) = *leads to communication (or not)*
- **Hierarchies** and **decision making** (titles, formal and informal) = *who’s in charge*
- **Kinship** (hired by the boss, longevity, mergers, founder, family) = *allegiances*
- **Rituals** (town hall, new hire orientation, performance reviews, drinking after work) = *acceptable socialization events*
- **Rites** (trials by fire, promotion paths) = *important or proving events/initiation*
- **Symbols** and metaphors (logos, company as “family”) = *internal/external image*
- **Narratives** (stories, myths, fantasies) = *how events are retold from group’s point of view*
- **Customs** and **norms** (ideal, believed, actual) = *how one should behave, how one believes one behaves, and how one does behave*
- **Taboos** (“concept non grata,” voicing dissent) = *what not to do or say*

Applying Anthropological Techniques

- **Cultural Anthropology** is the study of human culture using participant observation (vs. books).
- “**Applied anthropology** refers to the application of the method and theory of anthropology to the analysis and solution of practical problems.” Wikipedia
- Develop confidence in working with cultures unlike your own as a **participant observer** to see how things work “on their ground.”
- Use an approach of **cultural relativism** (no right or wrong culture—no judgment about how things are done).
- Understand situations from the perspective of your own culture (**emic** perspective) to know your starting point(s).
- Seek to understand situations from perspective of the “others” culture (**etic** perspective) to know their starting point(s).
- Use **formal research** for background (in language, business, products, and technology).
- Use **quantitative** data to understand **what** to focus on in qualitative interviews.
- Use the **ethnographic** (or **qualitative**) interview and **relationship building** techniques with multiple individuals to understand **how** the cultural concepts fit together.
- The goal is to learn how cultural “insiders” think to work within and across cultures.

Cultures in Organizations: A Framework



Adapted from (Cameron and Quinn 2011)

- Several models of organizational culture exist
- Competing Values (Cameron and Quinn 2011) is a useful starting point
- Organizations may have a dominant culture and most are a composite of several types
- Cases use just a dominant type, but leveraged shared values
- Organizations may have a mix of subcultures
- Departments listed are indicative (differ within an organization, may be teams, divisions, companies)
- Differences in values may create tension (arrows)
- Shared values and artifacts create opportunities for collaboration
- Values are manifested in cultural artifacts

Case Study 1: Making Decisions

Cultural Concept	Technology/Business Team (TB)	Enterprise Architecture (EA)
Culture Type	Clan Culture	Hierarchy Culture
Ritual	Face to face decision meetings, focus on dialog	Decisions happen “offline” and in writing
Values	Business and technology sit at same table	Technology decides, business may overrule
Hierarchies	High-level opinion leaders sway decisions, group follows	Levels of approval, lower level decisions not overturned
Collaboration Opportunity	TB Team controlled funding and implementation and rejected EA’s “recommendation.”	
Anthropological Techniques Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified points of conflict/ overlap between culture (values listed above) • Leveraged <i>emic</i> perspective from six nine months of participant observation and educated on <i>etic</i> perspective • Educated EA on workings of TB’s rituals and hierarchies and myths 	
Results	EA persuaded key decision makers of business value offline, represented to TB, and obtained a favorable decision.	

Case Study 2: Loss of Control

Cultural Concept	Technology Team (TT)	Release Management (RM)
Culture Type	Clan/Market Culture	Hierarchy Culture
Rituals	Monthly releases	Quarterly, highly structured releases
Rites	Risk taking makes short or long careers based on results	Creating value makes short or long careers, consequences for not following process
Norms (believed)	Control enables speed and agility, trust lower levels	Centralized process is the key to control and results
Collaboration Opportunity	RM was charged with implementing an enterprise tool that would require TT to give up full control and use the enterprise tool.	
Anthropological Techniques Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified points of conflict between culture (values listed above) • Used participant observation with team members to develop deeper <i>emic</i> perspective and leveraged quantitative profiles of decision makers 	
Results	Aligned with managers across both groups using shared values and cultural relativism to frame (versus conflict approach).	

Case Study 3: New to Technology

Cultural Concept	Business Team (BT)	Technology Team (TT)
Culture Type	Clan/Market Culture	Hierarchy Culture
Rituals	Do it yourself	Repeatable project process
Rites	Earn your right to sit at the table by adding value	Assumed place at the table because part of the same group
Hierarchies	Consensus	Formal levels of approval
Norm (believed)	Business process knowledge is critical	Technology knowledge is critical
Collaboration Opportunity	BT initiated a project that required TT to build an enterprise technology solutions as well as use of project process.	
Anthropological Techniques Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned business language through formal research and participant observation (clarifying requirements) to earn a seat at the table for TT • Presented solutions with options that TT could provide to gain consensus • Coached TT to frame solutions based on business process norms • Leveraged kinship of reporting structure to frame common goals 	
Results	Fostered a collaborative working relationship between BT and TT that was self-nurturing.	

Putting Anthropology Concepts into Practice

- Learn to identify the predominant culture in your company, your own group, and those of key business partners.
- Cultivate relationships
- Use participant observation (staff meetings, work area visits) and ethnographic techniques (“How does your group...?” “What is your perspective on...?”) to learn more about how your business and technology partners work in their environment.
- Understand the values behind shared cultural concepts to identify common ground.
- Understand the values behind **un**-shared cultural concepts that create differences and may pose obstacles to collaboration.
- Do no harm—the focus is on collaboration.

Recommended Reading

- Robert Quinn and Kim Cameron , *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework*, 6th Ed., Jossey-Bass, 2011.
- Everett M. Roberts, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th Ed., Free Press, 2003.
- Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th Ed., 2010.
- Fred Valdez, Palma Buttles, and Judah Mogilensky, 2009, “The Role of Organizational Culture in Process Improvement, SEPG North America 2009.