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HOW TO BE A CONSULTANT

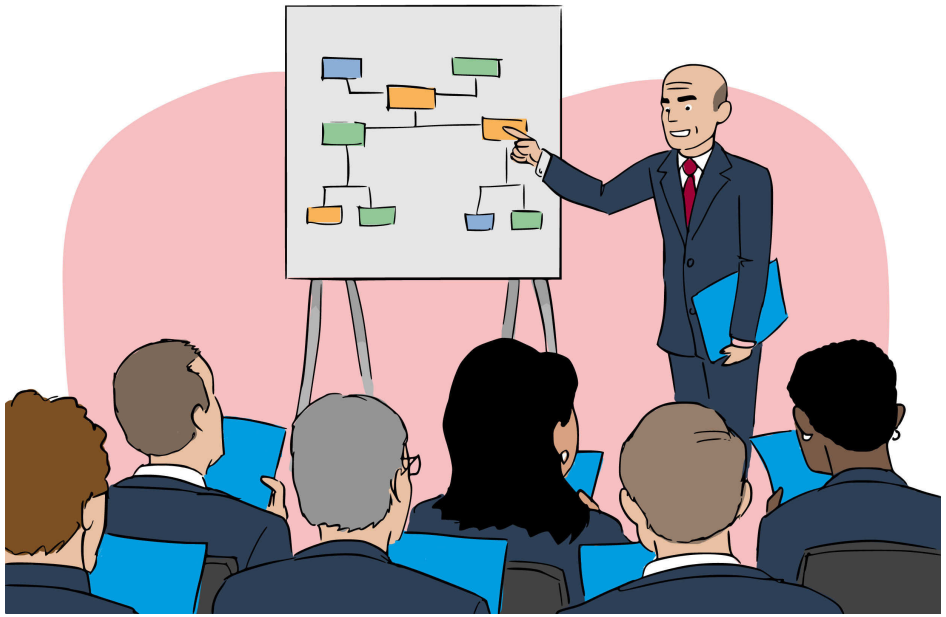
a programme for new and aspiring consultants

Solution Design & Buy-in

by Yemi Adeniran MBA, CIPM, CITP, MBCS

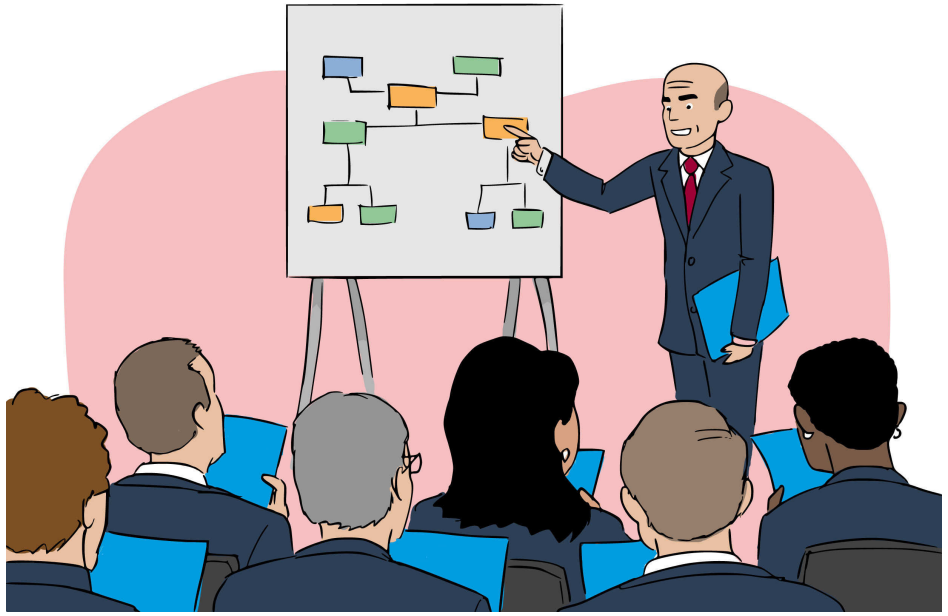
29th September 2021

Solution Design & buy-in



- What a **Solution Design** means?
- Why is it important ?
- How do you secure **buy-in**?

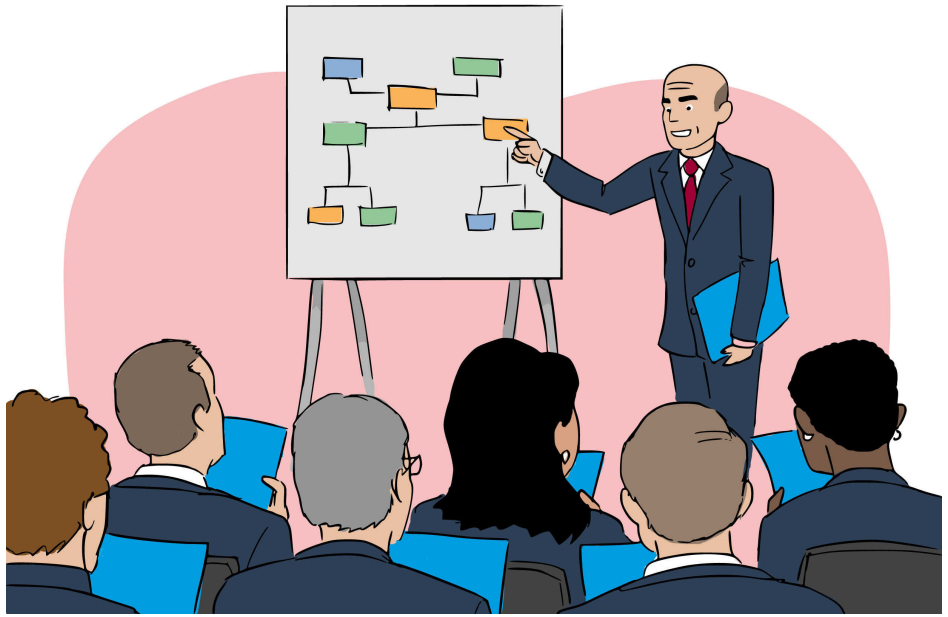
Overview



- Every successful IT project requires a good **solution design**. But what is it and why should you bother with one?.

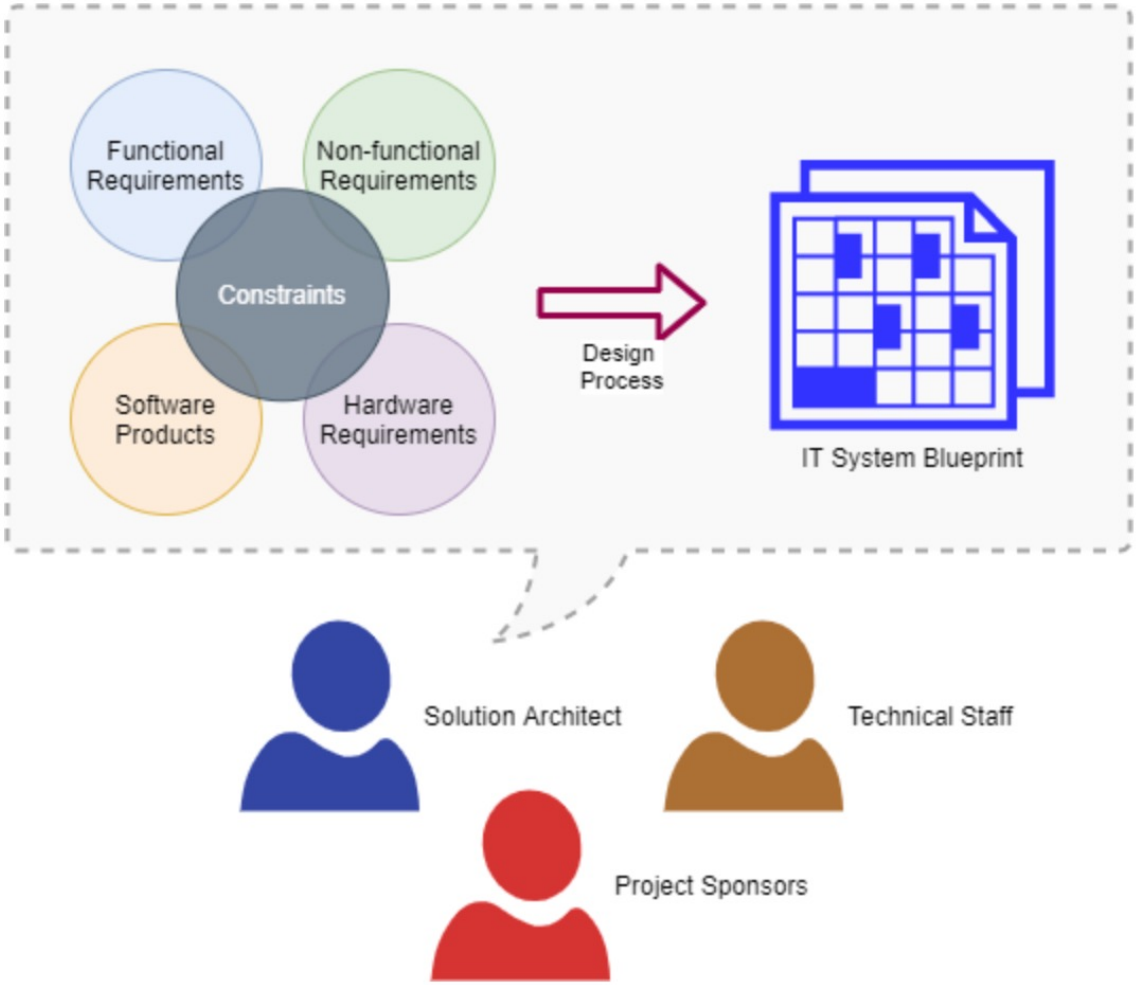
- Investing time and effort in designing a solution is important but you need to ensure you secure **buy-in** from the business.

Definition



- A **solution design** is the process of creating a blueprint for an IT system.
- This blueprint combines software and hardware components and will be designed to work under various constraints.

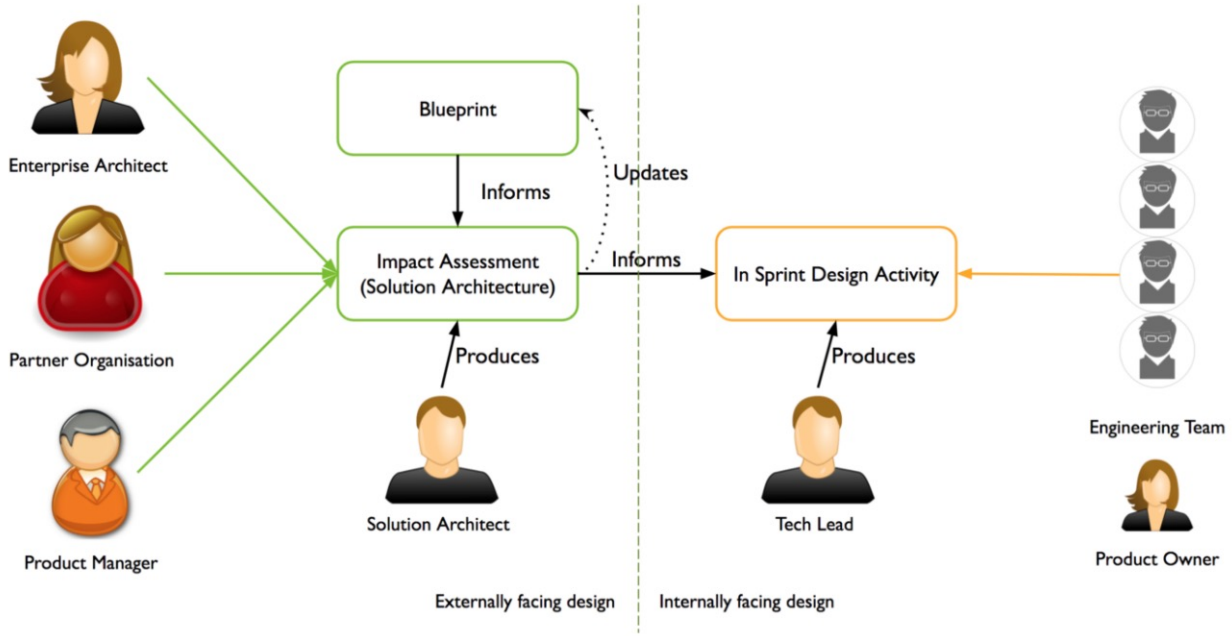
Let's break it down..



- Solution Architect
- Developers
- Other Technical Staff
- Project sponsors

Source: softwaredominos.com

Agile Design Artefacts

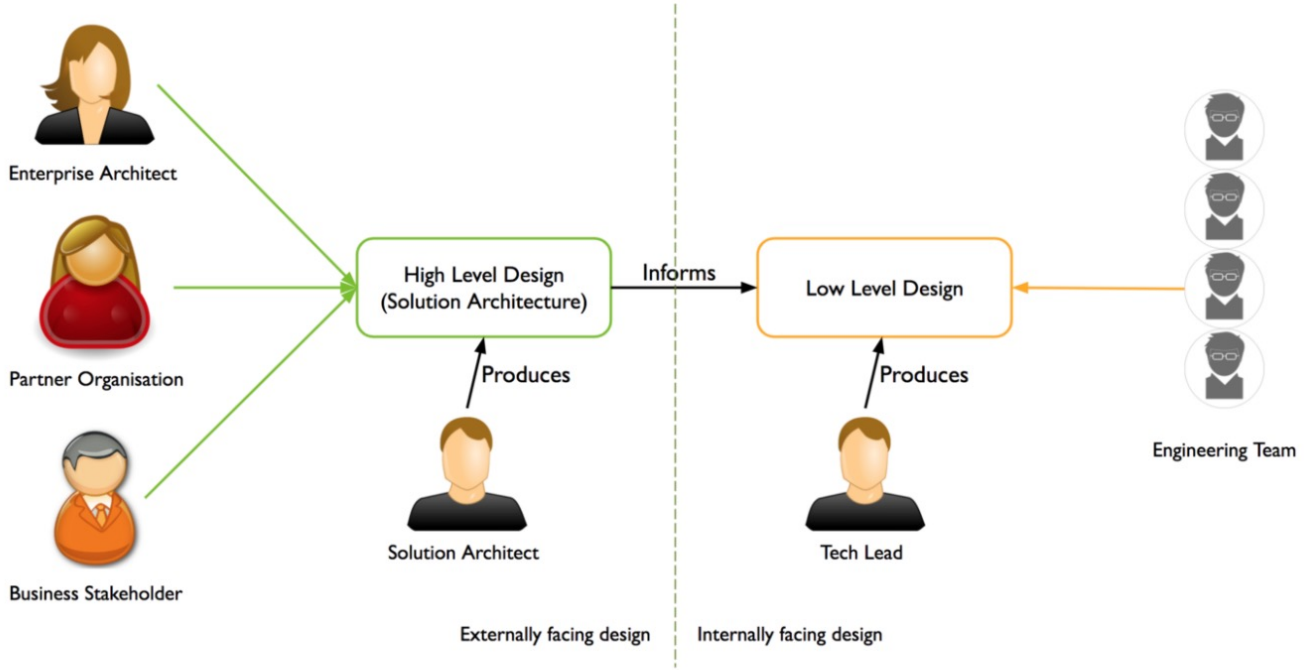


Agile Design Artefacts

- Solution Architect
- Developers
- Other Technical Staff
- Product Owner

Source: softwaredominos.com

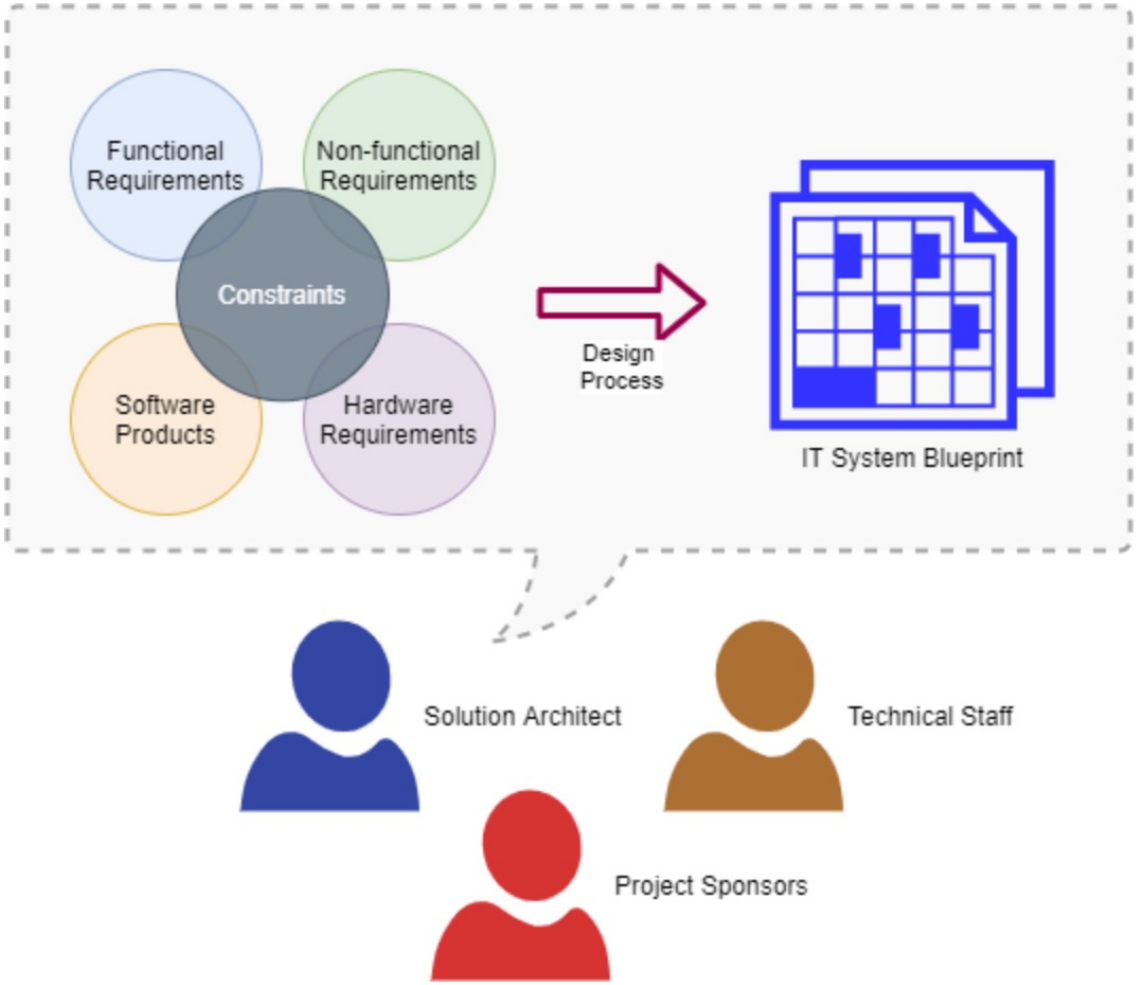
Waterfall Design Artefacts



Waterfall Design Artefacts

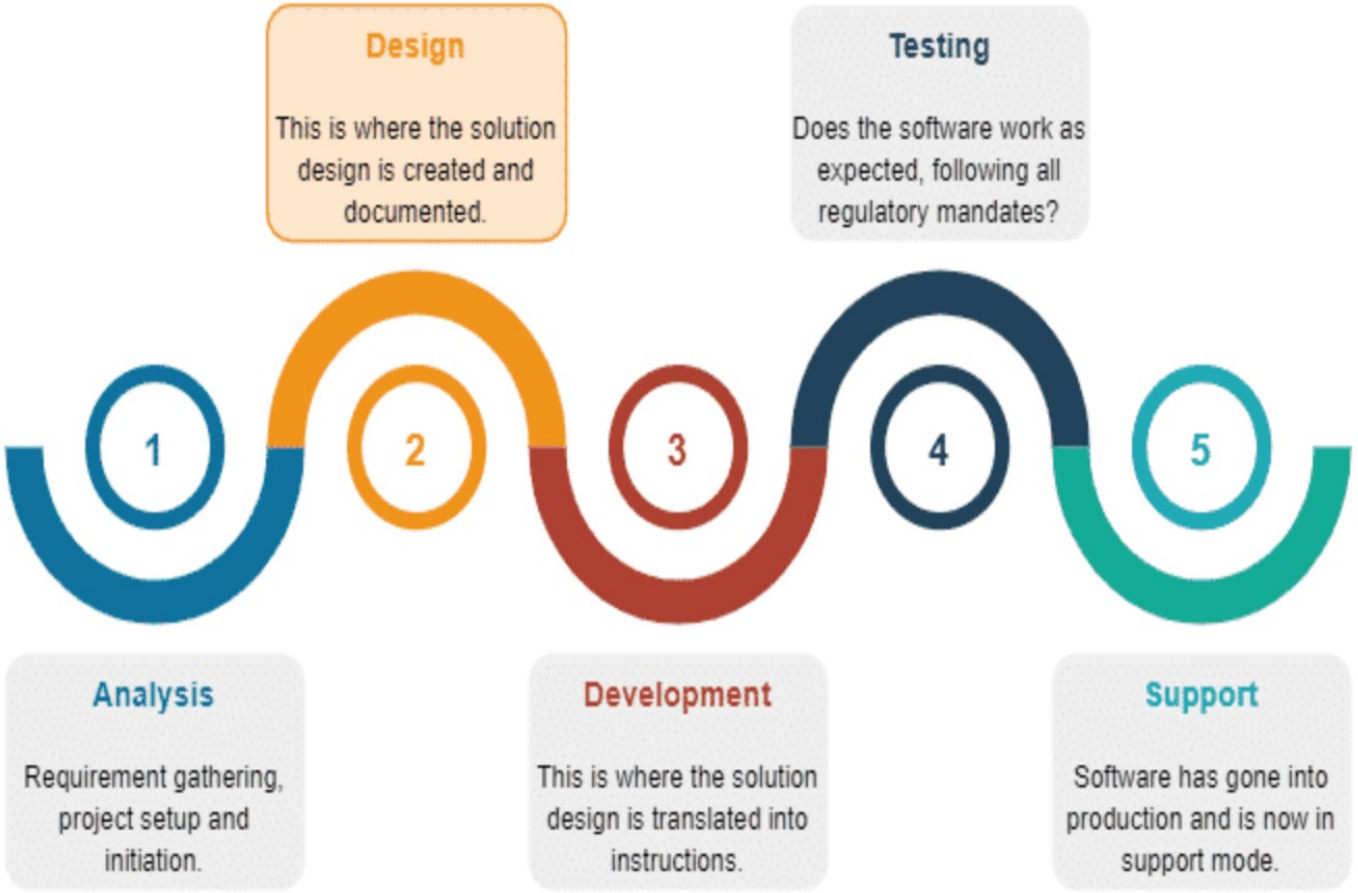
- Solution Architect
- Developers
- Other Technical Staff
- Business Stakeholder

Types of Solution Design



- High Level Solution Design (HLD)
- Low Level Solution Design (LLD)
- Each serves a different purpose and occur at a different stage of the Software Development Life Cycle

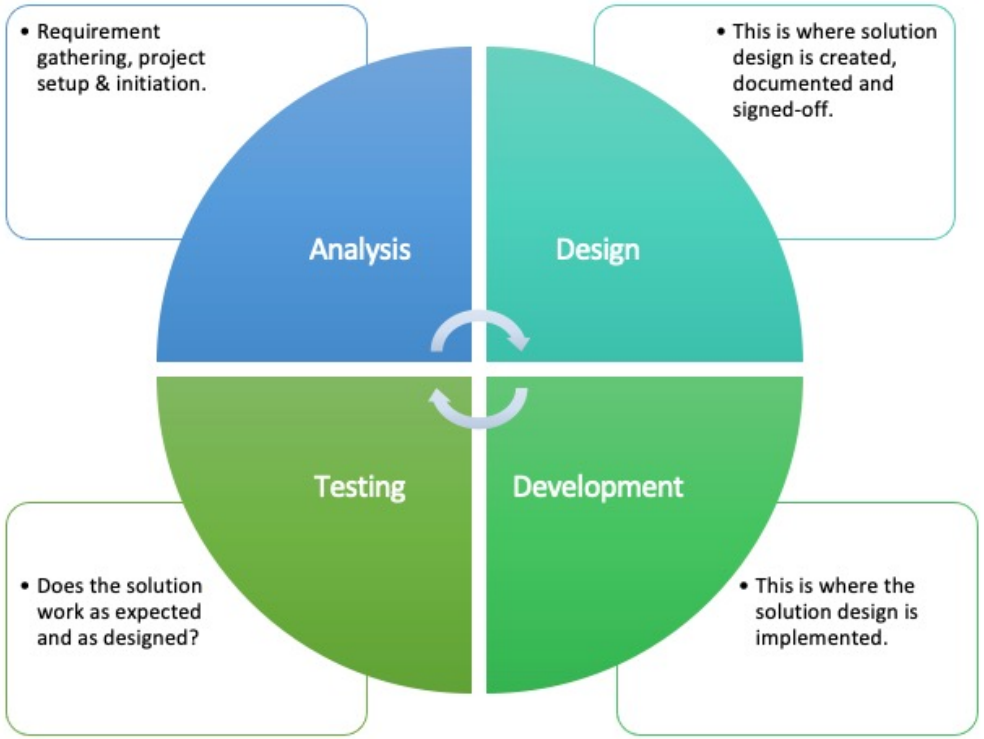
Stages of a Solution Design



- The first stage is the Analysis: In this stage, the project is setup, the requirements are gathered, and the scope is defined.
- During this stage, a solution architect creates the High-Level Solution Design (HLD) for the project. The HLD is an architectural plan for the IT system and is usually submitted alongside the Statement of Work (SOW).

Source: softwaredominos.com

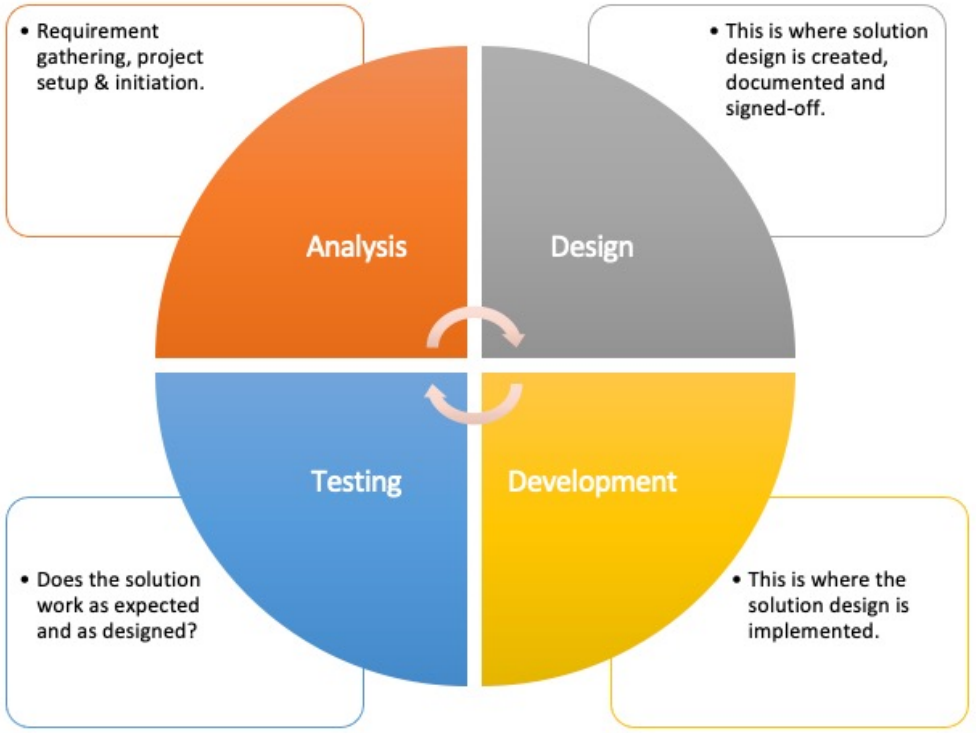
Design Phase



Low-Level Solution Design is as follows:

- Before doing any development, a Low-Level Solution Design (LLD) must be completed.
- Developers will use it to understand the development tasks.
- Testers will generate their test cases based on the features described in the LLD.
- Customers or end users will validate the end result based on the details provided in the document.

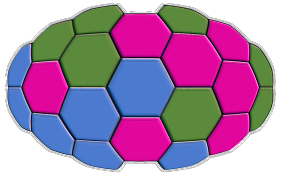
Development Phase



Development commences:

- The Solution Design is translated into instructions for developers to commence coding.
- Testing follows to check if the software works and to find flaws or vulnerabilities.

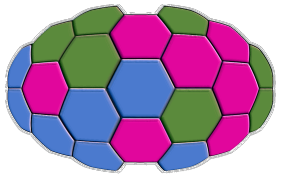
Most common elements of a solution design documentation



- Functional description and overview
- Design considerations
- Assumptions
- Dependencies
- Constraints
- Requirements
- Objectives
- Methodologies
- User stories
- System Architecture
- User interface design
- Testing
- Risks Evaluation
- A glossary
- Breakdown of milestones

Getting buy-in for your solution design

Business value & ROI



- Show clear business value

Regularly highlight success stories and share evidence of business value and return on investment (roi).

Socialize the solution with key stakeholders across the organization. Make sure you know your audience and speak their language — avoid tech jargon and design-speak.

Seek out champions

- Seek out champions

Seek out champions for the system across the organization, by partnering up with others who are trying to achieve similar goals and outcomes. Include cross-functional representation and users in the decision-making process (e.g. the designers, developers, writers, and product folks who use the system).

- Keep others involved

Resist the urge to go off on a design island.

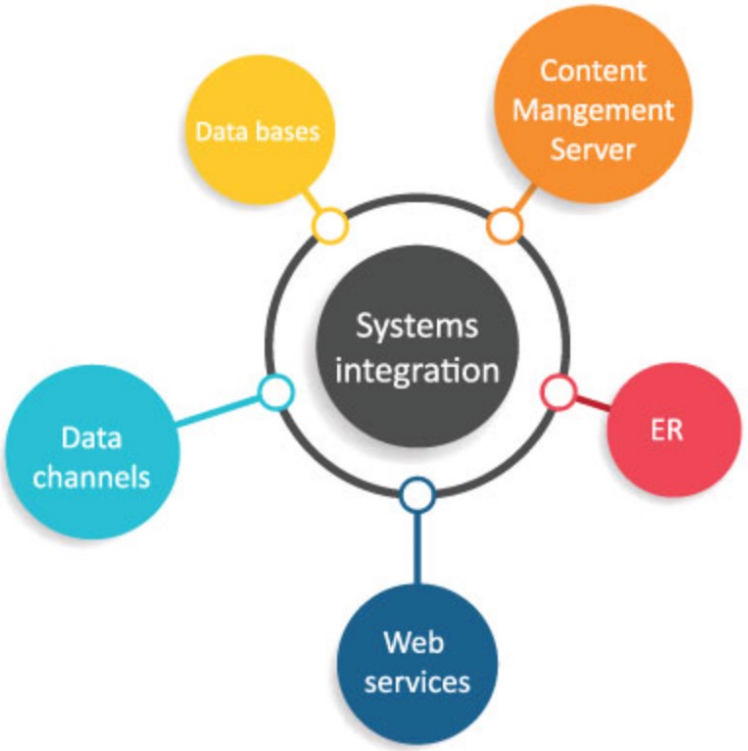
The quickest way to lose momentum and advocacy is by going away, making stuff and handing it to people.

Communicate regularly

- Communicate early and regularly

People don’t like surprises. Be transparent with your backlog, make sure your stakeholders are aware of upcoming changes and releases, well in advance. The quickest way to make people hate your system is by pushing breaking changes that create work to fix.

Ease of Integration

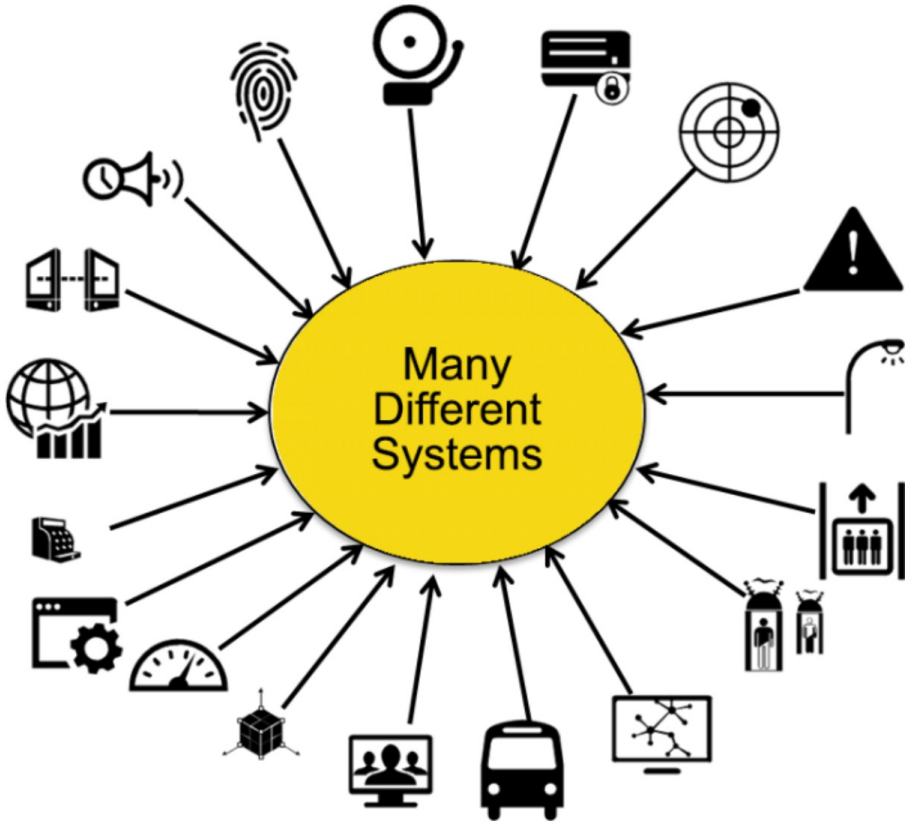


- Show ease of integration with existing platforms

Know how your system supports and enables existing products, platforms, systems and tools. Use diagrams to show how the system integrates and fits within the broader business landscape. Make sure it's clear how the system fits within your organization's ecosystem.

Know your numbers. Have hard data to show how much it costs to run your system and how much value is being generated because of it.

Know the Competing Priorities



- Top down, bottom up

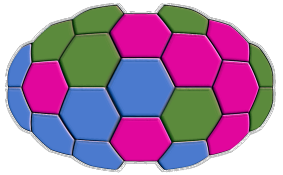
Typically management may push back on adopting or using a system because it may compete with other key priorities for their team.

Get buy-in from the top of your organization and show what's possible to the boots-on-the-ground to help get management approval.

In Summary

- ✓ Make sure you have a clear design that's easy for everyone to understand. Have a response for: "**what's the point"**, "**why do it this way**", etc.
- ✓ Have an elevator pitch for the **business value** of your design.
- ✓ Have an accountable **product owner** who keeps everyone focused on achieving the design goal.
- ✓ Ensure your design milestones are **align with the priorities of your organization**.
- ✓ **Don't try to boil the ocean**. Roll out incrementally to existing systems. Your design should focus on releasing one component at a time and measure the impact to efficiency, effectiveness and quality.

Conclusion



Your design must show **business value**. Make sure to spend as much time **socializing, educating and evangelizing** your design.

Focus on people over process — encourage **buy-in by driving value**, instead of enforcing rules. Lead with a carrot, not a stick.

Encourage usage and adoption of the system by making business processes easier, not mandating rules.

Q & A

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