

The 8 principles of information architecture

1. Performance
2. Product
3. Presentation
4. People
5. Politics
6. Process
7. Perspective
8. Possibility

- We must know who will be barriers to information gathering or to our “visions of structure.”
- We must know if there are any additional political events driving the creation of a site.
- We must navigate choppy political waters
- Websites are at the heart of how an organization wants to be viewed. Different views = conflict.
- We must be aware that websites frequently expose organizational problems:
  - Structure
  - Process
  - Policy
  - Incentive
  - Internal communication

**6 Process—How will we build this communication product?**

Workworld information architecture lies at the center of planning, managing, thinking, and building. The process we follow often depends on our organization’s structures.

**7 Perspective—How will this seem from the user’s point of view?**

You must be prepared to understand and respond to the user’s perspective. You need to understand how the user will “see” your labels and categories. Your conversation with the customer about the customer’s work (rather than about the system design) will create a shared understanding and commitment.

**8 Possibility—What are the ways we can respect and help users, while maintaining our focus on the site’s mission?**

You can, as an information architect, think about the possibility of making information work for your users. It's possible to present technical information so users can see the structure, make sense of documents, and act on them. It’s possible to structure sites to improve understanding.

The 8 principles of information architecture

1. Performance
2. Product
3. Presentation
4. **People**
5. **Politics**
6. Process
7. Perspective
8. Possibility

- Information architecture space must be structured so people can navigate it.
  - This depends on the tasks that people want to accomplish.
  - This depends on how people process information.
  - This depends on applying rules for good navigation.

**4 People—Who will provide content and expertise?**

- Content Pitfalls
  - “Christmas Puppy” (content not maintained—just like the experience of getting a puppy at Christmas, but dreading the walking responsibilities by New Year’s Day)
  - “John Hancock” (finding original “signers” or discovering they don’t want you to change their inflated prose)
  - “No Brainer” (we have some content—let’s just stick it on the web)
  - “Easy Way Out” (staying on the path of least resistance)
- Expertise Pitfalls
  - “BOFSATT” (Bunch Of Folks Sitting Around the Table Talking—we’re experts enough to know)
  - “Old Skills Work Fine” (nothing changes)
  - “Disease of Familiarity” (familiarity breeds confusion)
  - “Nodding Head” (afraid to admit they don’t know)
  - “Accurate = Understandable” (technical correctness may not be easily understood)

**5 Politics—How does our organization keep us from meeting the needs of the site’s users?**

- We must recognize business needs may not equal user needs
- We must understand organizations
- We must know who has decision-making responsibilities.

The 8 principles of  
information architecture

1. Performance
2. **Product**
3. **Presentation**
4. People
5. Politics
6. Process
7. Perspective
8. Possibility

- Information architecture works.  
(It helps individuals.)
  - Improving the information used by workers raises their measured performance substantially—never less than a 20% improvement, and sometimes as high as 600%.  
—Thomas Gilbert, Human Competence
- Information architecture works.  
(It helps organizations.)
  - Muddled documents cost dollars.
  - More efficient tools can increase user satisfaction.
  - Improved functionality can better meet the needs of the current workflow, producing fewer errors and re-work.
  - An easier to understand document can reduce training time required for new users, or for introducing new features (intranets especially).

**2 Product—What forms best suit the needs of the site’s users?**

- Information architecture serves as the basis for good communication.
  - Good information architecture is universal—it’s not committed to any particular delivery system (not just the web, but print and other media as well).
  - Information architecture is not confined to any specific subject matter area.
  - When we build Internet and intranet sites, we’re building communication products.

**3 Presentation—How can we visually structure information so the site’s users can accomplish their tasks?**

- Information architecture depends on visual relationships.
- Information architecture provides meaning to a mass of unrelated needs, words, and pictures.
- It is the information architect’s job to select and fit this material together and make it “tell a story.”

## Eight principles of information architecture

We have the opportunity to structure information so people can find it, use it and appreciate the experience.

Thom Haller, Info.Design

### Identify questions information architects must ask

Not all users have the same needs or think alike. Therefore, an information architect must probe each user group to really get into their heads. Our challenge is to effectively balance the needs and goals of multiple (and distinct) audiences and customize solutions to fit your organization.

To build sites that support your user, ask eight questions—the eight Ps of information architecture.

- 1. Performance**—What do users need or want to do on the site and how do we measure successful performance?
- 2. Product**—What forms best suit the needs of the site’s users?
- 3. Presentation**—How can we visually structure information so the site’s users can accomplish their tasks?
- 4. People**—Who will provide content and expertise?
- 5. Politics**—How does our organization keep us from meeting the needs of the site’s users?
- 6. Process**—How will we build this communication product?
- 7. Perspective**—How will this seem from the user’s point of view?
- 8. Possibility**—What are the ways we can respect and help users, while maintaining our focus on the site’s mission?

The 8 principles of information architecture

- 1. Performance**
- 2. Product**
- 3. Presentation**
- 4. People**
- 5. Politics**
- 6. Process**
- 7. Perspective**
- 8. Possibility**

### **1 Performance**—What do users need or want to do on the site and how do we measure successful performance?

- Information architecture focuses on human accomplishment.
- Information architecture supports achievements performers and organizations value.
- It helps people use print and electronic “documents” to serve their interests and meet their needs.