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Enterprise Architecture or Business Architecture Certification Planned Obsolescence: The Impact of New Certification Releases

Planned obsolescence in Enterprise Architecture or Business Architecture certification takes on a unique and often contentious form when certifying bodies release a recent version of a credential, effectively making earlier versions less valuable or even obsolete, despite earlier assurances of permanence or lifetime validity. This scenario can have significant repercussions for certified professionals and organizations alike. One indicator of this phenomenon is a certification that is attached to a named and shown certification version number.

How Planned Obsolescence Manifests Through New Certification Releases

Many Enterprise Architecture or Business Architecture certifications have historically offered either “lifetime” validity or no explicit end date. However, when a recent version of the certification is launched, the certifying authority may:

- Update the syllabus and exam requirements to align with the latest release.
- Mandate that new certifications or renewals must be based on the updated version.
- Gradually phase out public recognition or support for the earlier certification, even if it was initially marketed as permanent.

This can occur even when the underlying principles stay largely unchanged, where the core remained stable, but claimed enhancements and guidance were added.

While individuals already certified under the earlier version remained officially certified, the new syllabus became mandatory for all future certifications and recertifications. Over time, this can create a belief that older certifications are less relevant, especially as employers and clients begin to expect the latest version.

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Implications for Professionals

- **Diminished Market Value:** Even if a certification is still technically valid, its perceived value may decline as hiring managers and clients shift focus to the latest version.
- **Pressure to Recertify:** Professionals may feel compelled to pursue the updated certification to keep competitiveness, despite the earlier version having no expiry.
- **Unexpected Costs:** Recertification often involves exam fees, training costs, and time investment, which can be substantial for architects.

Implications for Organizations

- **Compliance and Skills Gaps:** Organizations may find that staff certified in older versions are not aligned with the latest "believed" industry approaches, creating pressure to upskill or recertify.
- **Certification Tracking Complexity:** Human Resource and compliance teams must track which version of a certification staff hold, increasing administrative overhead, in the belief that added value has been provided by the newer version.
- **Technology and Process Alignment:** Organizations must ensure that their Enterprise Architecture or Business Architecture practices - and the certifications that underpin them - remain current to avoid falling behind or experiencing FOMO – Fear Of Missing Out.

Why Certifying Bodies Pursue This Approach

- **Revenue Generation:** New certification releases and recertification requirements create recurring revenue streams for training providers and certifying organizations. What seems to be a "good deal" initially turns out to be a continuous revenue stream for the training organizations, releasing organizations, and certifying bodies.

- **Ensuring Relevance:** Certifying bodies argue that updating certifications ensures professionals stay current and effective. If this is the case, what was missing in the earlier certification, and what was the effect of these missing elements on those that were dependent on that specific certification?
- **Market Differentiation:** Updated credentials help professionals and organizations signal their commitment to the latest believed practices.

Balancing Innovation and Stability

The release of new certification versions frustrates professionals who invested in credentials marketed as permanent. The challenge for certifying bodies is to strike a balance between keeping certifications relevant and honoring earlier commitments to permanence or lifetime validity.

Conclusion

Enterprise Architecture or Business Architecture certification planned obsolescence, driven by new releases and version numbers, is something that professionals and organizations must navigate prior to investing in a specific certification or certifying body. It introduces uncertainty, added costs, and frustration for those who expected their credentials to still be valid, as well as the underlying skills they received, indefinitely. As the field continues to evolve, greater transparency and clear communication from certifying bodies will be critical to keeping trust and supporting the professional development of Enterprise Architects and Business Architects. The Enterprise Architecture Center Of Excellence (EACOE) and the Business Architecture Center Of Excellence (BACOE) do not subscribe to certification planned obsolescence. Caveat emptor – let the buyer beware.

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