

AM I AN INFORMATION ARCHITECT?

Many people have asked themselves this question. We often find ourselves alone at the office wondering why we can't fit into any specific department or, after so many evaluations, feel like we're just not doing what it is that we really want to.

The questions below may help you. Once you have completed the form we will recommend some steps that you can take to further your interests, find support and join a community of like-minded people.

1. When looking at a web site, do menus that hold no meaning to you whatsoever leave you in a bad mood? Yes No
2. Do you feel that something elusive has been overlooked when your team sketches an entire website on a white board in a one-hour meeting and then promptly leaves to go and build it? Yes No
3. Do you sound like a stuck record, always recommending the above meeting (your team members sigh and roll their eyes)? Yes No
4. Upon moving to a more strategic department did you feel that you were getting closer to what you needed to do, but missed the hands-on stuff? Did you carry on drawing connected circles, boxes and arrows on sketch pads? Yes No
5. Do you find yourself running between the designers, the programmers, the writers and the account executive trying to hold a unified vision together (your creative director had a one-hour slot free between meetings with the designers, but you didn't cover everything)? Yes No
6. As frustrating as it was in point 5, did you actually enjoy it? Yes No
7. Your project manager eventually became insecure about you running around between the teams and pulling things together? Yes No
8. You *are* the project manager. But beyond Microsoft Project you're drawing web pages in Word and joining boxes and arrows? Yes No

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9. You enjoy drawing web pages in Word more than working in Project. You feel shy and lacking words to explain your ideas to the designers (who are rolling their eyes again)? Yes No
10. You're the only one loving the meeting where you slave for three hours trying to make a product table work in a 300 pixel width space? You swapped the column and row content three times and worked on it some more at home because the solution just didn't seem right? Yes No
11. Do you leave a web site fuming when the words that are used to describe sections have nothing to do with the content that is found there? Yes No
12. After your 50th web site project do you find yourself concocting a grand unifying theory for web sites in your company, which has nothing to do with the visual design or the programming? Yes No
13. Are you the one asking the secretary and the security people to test your web sites during lunch? Yes No
14. Do you feel that the important stuff in the web site you're building is somehow *between* the pages as well as on the pages? Yes No
15. Do you feel that there isn't a department or job title that suits you? You just don't seem to fit, so you begin work on the grand unifying theory mentioned in point 12 during lunch? Yes No
16. When deadlock over a design is reached in meetings are you the only one recommending point 13? Yes No
17. The 'Polar Bear' book has been recommended to you several times, but you could never find it on Amazon and you keep deleting the mails from the people who recommend it? Yes No



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So, are you an information architect?

By now you should have a good idea whether or not you may be an information architect - and help is at hand. Many people have started their careers as IAs in just this way. They have gone on to enjoy many happy years getting paid to do just what they wanted to do, becoming more formalised and proficient along the way.

Many more happy hours await you, trying to explain to your family and friends just what the hell information architecture is.

Here's how we can help:

The Information Architecture Institute website has a number of useful resources (<http://iainstitute.org/>):

- Events calendar, newsletter & email discussion list
- IA Library & educational resources
- Job board
- Tools
- Member directory
- Resources for starting a local community
- Mentoring program
- Progress grants
- Volunteer opportunities

Getting started: available in our library

- Introduction to Information Architecture
e.g. Becoming an Information Architect - Sacha Cohen
- Information Architecture Tutorial
- Information Architecture Glossary
- The Elements of User Experience (PDF)
- What an Information Architect Does (PDF)

There is enormous satisfaction to be gained just from participating in a community. We would love your voice to be added to ours.