

## Training Program: Designing Information Rich Solutions

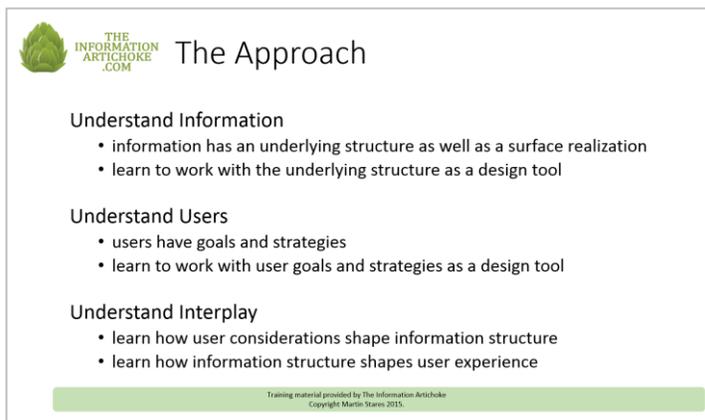
The training program “Designing Information Rich Systems” is aimed at professionals involved in the design of information rich systems.

Many people can put together a web site of a few pages or applications with a few function points, but lack guiding principles when asked to tackle solutions with hundreds of pages or dozens of function points.

This material provides guiding principles and practical tools to approach information rich solutions with confidence. It includes and integrates insights from information architecture and user centered design.

### Approach

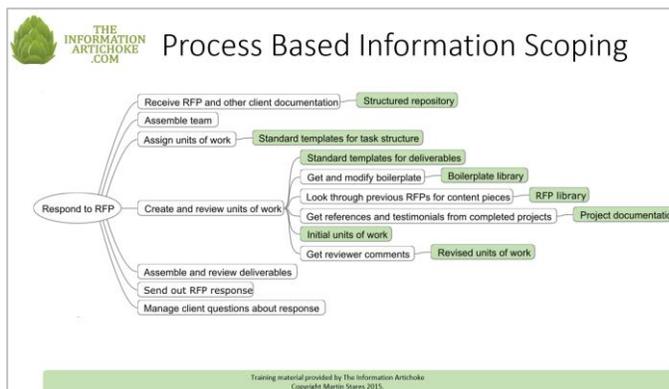
We all want to design information rich solutions with a high degree of user acceptance. Many attempt this without understanding the nature of information and the nature of users. We don't.



### Coverage

The approach is progressive, presenting principles and applying them through extended examples, showing the process unfolding from end to end.

1. Understand that users have goals of different types, and various strategies to meet them. Discuss how this affects the solution shape.
2. Scope out informally what kinds of information will be needed to meet these goals, and understand how different projects have different approaches to information scoping.



3. Formalize this into an information model that pins down the information components, their attributes, and the relationships between them. Learn the mechanics of information modelling, but especially how user goals and possible user interfaces shape the model.

**THE INFORMATION ARTICHOKE .COM** About Information Models

- Structured visual representation
  - explicit, unambiguous
- Consists of
  - information components – the things we are dealing with
  - attributes – what we capture about them
  - relationships – how the components interrelate

The diagram shows three entities:
 

- CONSULTING GROUP**: Information about the consulting group itself. Attributes: Name, Description. Relationship: "The Consulting Group has done one or more Projects".
- PROJECT**: A project we have done for a client. Attributes: Project Name, Description, Client, Testimonials. Relationship: "A Project uses one or more Practices".
- PRACTICE**: One of our named practices. Attributes: Name, Description, Team. Relationship: "A Practice has done one or more Projects, or even more at all".

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4. Use the information model to systematically explore and validate user access methods make sense.

**THE INFORMATION ARTICHOKE .COM** Information Model vs. User Goals

- User goal
  - "As a visitor to the consulting group site, I want to know the projects that a practice has undertaken, in order to see if they can help me"
- Information model works
  - User has an entry point ①
  - User has a flow that meets their needs ① ② ③

The diagram shows the same information model as above, but with green arrows and numbered circles (1, 2, 3) indicating a user flow:
 

- ① User enters the site.
- ② User views a Consulting Group.
- ③ User views a Practice.

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5. Recognize that a single information model can have multiple representations in the user interface. Understand that there are systematic relationships between the information model and UI elements, and see a directory of these relationships.

**THE INFORMATION ARTICHOKE .COM** Related Instances

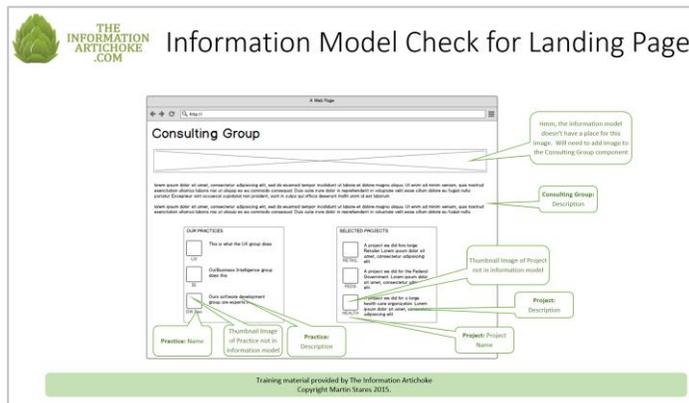
Aspect of Information Model	User Interface Possibilities
Instances of <b>same</b> component with common characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide path from one instance to others with common characteristics</li> <li>• Link to a page of related instances (<a href="#">More Energy Sector Projects</a>)</li> <li>• On-page listing of related instances, as simple or elaborated links (glosses, thumbnails)</li> <li>• There can be many relationships of this type on a given information set, so good information scent needed</li> </ul>

The diagram shows a **PROJECT** entity with attributes: Project Name, Description, Summary, Benefits, Testimonials, Industry, Geography. Annotations indicate:
 

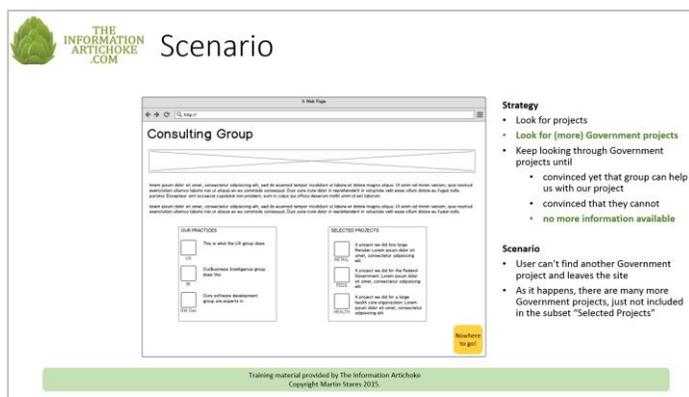
- "Multiple projects in each industry" pointing to the Industry attribute.
- "Multiple projects in each geography" pointing to the Geography attribute.

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6. Create wireframes supporting the user goals and access methods, and check back against the information model to ensure that nothing has slipped in.



7. Reintroduce user goal seeking strategies and assess the set of wireframes in terms of overall flow and goal fulfillment; uncover shortfalls and improve the user interaction as a result.



## About Me

I am a practising information architect and solutions consultant with more than 30 years' experience in delivering information-rich collaborative solutions. I bring to my engagements extensive knowledge of solutions design, with strong specializations in information architecture, metadata and taxonomies, user centered design, and findability. Solutions types include intranets, portals, mobile solutions, web content management, and a large portfolio of custom designed web applications.

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