Project Design Phase-I

Solution Architecture

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Project Name	Smart Fashion Recommender Application
Maximum Marks	4 marks

A simple method to create useful solution architecture diagrams

Being a solutions architect for the past 15 years, I truly understand the value of a useful solution architecture diagram as an effective visual aid to define and describe an architecture of a system delivered in the context of a specific solution.

In my opinion, a persuasive solution architecture diagram must be able to convey the business values to key stakeholders and the technical details to developers. Therefore, it should not be too technical so that business stakeholders can understand; however, it should still provide a practical high-level solution blueprint for later development. In other words, you should try to strike the right balance between technicality and business context when creating a solution architecture diagram.

Having seen and created quite a few solution architecture diagrams in my line of work, I have formulated a simple method to create solution architecture diagrams as outlined in this article. By no means, I would claim that I devised this method. I just synthesized my observations and improvisions into a set of conventions to form a repeatable process that others can follow.

Which tool should I use to create a solution architecture diagram?

There are several proper diagramming tools out there, both online and offline, Visio, LucidChart, Gliffy, Creately, just to name a few. However, I would recommend using Microsoft PowerPoint as your primary tool for the following reasons:

- **Reusability**: If you create a useful diagram, others would want to re-use it in the same project for different purposes or in other projects. Sharing your solution architecture in PowerPoint format will make it a whole lot easier for others to edit as PowerPoint is a universal productive software that everyone would have.

- **Conciseness**: Instead of having unlimited canvas to draw, you will need to confine your diagram within a single slide with PowerPoint. As such, you will need to choose the right granular level for the solution architecture hence forcing you to focus on the essence of your solution.

- **Flexibility**: PowerPoint gives you the flexibility to use whatever shapes you want, whatever images you need. I typically use PowerPoint standard shapes together with icons/logos downloaded from the Internet. These images can comfortably fit into a diagram if they have a transparent background which can be done quickly with the magic wand function in Paint.NET .