

Baseline Proficiencies for Information Architecture Practitioners

Based on the DSIA Segmentation for UX Design Practice Verticals

Freshman IA Practitioner

Each grid reflects a minimum level of proficiency for the tactical IA role as recommended by DSIA Research Initiative

Business Context Analysis	User Experience Planning	Usability Engineering	Content Publishing	Information Architecture	Interaction Design	Visual & Information Design	Computer Science
Context Map	UX Brief	Synthesis	Medium	Navigation	Wireframe	Graphics	Front-end Code
Performance Measures	Personas	Primary Research	Editing	Information Organization	Interaction	Layout	Database Design
Product / Service Definitions	Engagement Definitions	Testing	Governance	Information Relationship	Patterns	Style Guide	Server Code
Business Intent	UXD Management	Logistics	Content Management	IA Management	Conventions	Art Direction	Infrastructure
Mission / Vision	Strategy	Research Design	Content Strategy	IA Strategy	Device Strategy	Creative Strategy	System Architecture
Business Modeling	Research	Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics

Junior IA Practitioner

Business Context Analysis	User Experience Planning	Usability Engineering	Content Publishing	Information Architecture	Interaction Design	Visual & Information Design	Computer Science
Context Map	UX Brief	Synthesis	Medium	Navigation	Wireframe	Graphics	Front-end Code
Performance Measures	Personas	Primary Research	Editing	Information Organization	Interaction	Layout	Database Design
Product / Service Definitions	Engagement Definitions	Testing	Governance	Information Relationship	Patterns	Style Guide	Server Code
Business Intent	UXD Management	Logistics	Content Management	IA Management	Conventions	Art Direction	Infrastructure
Mission / Vision	Strategy	Research Design	Content Strategy	IA Strategy	Device Strategy	Creative Strategy	System Architecture
Business Modeling	Research	Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics

Senior IA Practitioner

Business Context Analysis	User Experience Planning	Usability Engineering	Content Publishing	Information Architecture	Interaction Design	Visual & Information Design	Computer Science
Context Map	UX Brief	Synthesis	Medium	Navigation	Wireframe	Graphics	Front-end Code
Performance Measures	Personas	Primary Research	Editing	Information Organization	Interaction	Layout	Database Design
Product / Service Definitions	Engagement Definitions	Testing	Governance	Information Relationship	Patterns	Style Guide	Server Code
Business Intent	UXD Management	Logistics	Content Management	IA Management	Conventions	Art Direction	Infrastructure
Mission / Vision	Strategy	Research Design	Content Strategy	IA Strategy	Device Strategy	Creative Strategy	System Architecture
Business Modeling	Research	Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics	Research / Analytics

Worth Mentioning

Acquiring competency in the first and second tiers of each UX design practice vertical is a positive step toward professional maturation. It's an intimidating list to tackle! However, practicing user experience design is an effective alternative "boot camp" that prepares future experts with a valuable perspective that their team and clients will value.

As a freshman IA practitioner begins to approach junior level, his or her focus on developing greater proficiency should begin to aim toward understanding fundamental business strategies and interaction design.

Worth Mentioning

Developing a strong vocabulary in navigation techniques and information organization during the junior phase of practice is critical.

Junior information architects should become knowledgeable about or even moderately proficient in front-end coding for the Web and database modeling. Moderate technical knowledge in the lower tiers of the computer science vertical is also vital for information architects who want to move into a role in IA strategy or research. This knowledge is useful when discussing data models, designing research for information architecture, or leveraging technical solutions to accommodate an IA strategy for complex information environments.

Worth Mentioning

The most senior tactical IA practitioners will have sound approaches for probing business models and dealing with sophisticated projects; conversing with business and marketing executives comes easy; they are comfortable in discussing taxonomy, metadata compliance, and ontologies. Simplifying how people navigate and use information is their obsession.

As an IA practitioner advances into more IA-specific responsibilities, her skill in UX planning and usability engineering may become less of a daily requirement. However, she will maintain moderate proficiency in these skills in order to add cross-functional value by filling important strategic gaps when the UX design process calls for it.

Proficiency Descriptions

- **High Proficiency**
High to expert proficiency within this tier including frequent use of proven methods and models.
- **Moderate Proficiency**
Experience but with room for improvement
- **Knowledgeable**
Some direct or indirect exposure
- No Experience**

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The DSIA Research Initiative is a private think tank dedicated to advancing a formalized discipline of information architecture based on theory, research and practice.