

The Architecture Sketch.

The surface from which the architecture starts being designed.

This is the companion to the seven-day Architecture Sketch. The five domain cards and the three-prompt structure produce the surface sketch. This manual is what takes you past the surface — into the sketch-vs-plan distinction, the honest-projection rule, the first-move sizing, and the depth at which sketching becomes the operating layer of how you build, not a one-time exercise.

01 · Premise

What a sketch actually is.

A sketch is not a plan. A plan demands certainty before it allows movement: it requires you to know the destination, the route, the resources, the timeline. A sketch demands only that you draw what you can see now. Where the plan needs full information to begin, the sketch begins exactly where information ends — at the edge of what you can currently see.

This is structurally important. If you wait for plan-level certainty before sketching the un-costumed architecture, you wait forever. The information you need to plan with is information you don't have access to until you operate at a higher altitude — and you don't reach the higher altitude until you start drawing the sketch from where you are.

The sketch is the operating surface that makes the higher altitude available. Each version of the sketch reveals what the next version needs to be.

02 · Sketch vs. Plan

Five practical differences.

A plan is built once and executed; a sketch is built continuously and refined.

A plan demands certainty; a sketch admits uncertainty as part of its design.

A plan fails if reality doesn't match it; a sketch updates when reality reveals more.

A plan is a contract you make with the future; a sketch is a conversation you have with the future.

A plan is judged by execution; a sketch is judged by direction.

Module 03 produces a sketch, not a plan. Phase 1's Integration Document (Module 04) will reference the sketch but will also not turn it into a plan — that's a Phase 3 move, after Phase 2 has stress-tested the sketch in adversarial conditions.

Conservative, specific, no aspirational drift.

The 12-month projection in each domain is the part most likely to collapse into either fantasy or rigid plan. Two failure modes, both fatal to the work.

Fantasy collapse.

You write what you wish were true (*I'll have built a successful company by then*) rather than what is plausibly true if a small concrete first move compounds for 12 months. Fantasy collapse keeps the sketch unactionable because the projection bears no relationship to the move.

Rigid plan collapse.

You write a deterministic forecast (*I will have completed steps A, B, C in this exact order*) rather than the conservative compounded outcome. Rigid plan collapse keeps the sketch brittle because reality will diverge from the forecast and the runner will feel they have failed.

The honest projection is the conservative middle: if you take the small first move and hold it across 12 months, what is the plausible state of the domain? Not what you hope, not what you predict — what compounds.

Sketching at depth.

The sketch's five domains parallel the costume audit's. Each has a sketching depth question beneath the surface prompt.

Work / Vocation.

Surface: what you would do for income. Depth: what use-value you would generate that the world would pay for if the costume was off. Deeper: the work you would do for free, that you would also be paid well for if you let it be paid well.

Family / Inherited Relationships.

Surface: how you would architect ongoing family relationships. Depth: the truth-saying you would actually do. Deeper: the boundaries you would hold even if some relationships didn't survive them.

Intimate / Romantic.

Surface: what intimate life would look like. Depth: the wanting you would name plainly. Deeper: the version of yourself in love that doesn't perform for closeness.

Social / Public.

Surface: who you would spend time with. Depth: who you would stop performing for. Deeper: the version of you that would be in the room without needing the audience to make the room real.

Money.

Surface: what financial architecture you would build. Depth: the asking, the keeping, the deploying. Deeper: the prohibition you would refuse.

Small enough to take. Big enough to compound.

A first move that is too big collapses the sketch — you can't take it, the sketch becomes aspirational, the work stalls. A first move that is too small collapses the sketch in a different way — it doesn't compound to anything, the 12-month projection bears no relationship to the move, the work feels meaningless.

The right size: small enough that you can take it within 30 days from where you actually are now. Big enough that taking it changes what you can see in that domain. The smallest move that has the largest leverage is the move you sketch toward.

Continuous sketch-mode.

The sketch is not the architecture. It is the surface from which the architecture starts being designed. A sketch operated honestly compounds: the act of drawing it in writing, then taking the first move, then watching reality reveal the next layer, then sketching the next version — that is how the architecture actually gets built.

There is a level where you operate continuously in sketch-mode: every domain has a current sketch, every sketch has a current first move, every first move surfaces the next layer of the sketch. From that level, you are not waiting for clarity to act. You are acting to produce clarity. That is sovereignty in design.

For the second pass.

Work.

What use-value would you generate that the world would pay for if the costume was off? What is the smallest first move into that?

Family.

What boundary would you hold even if some relationships did not survive it? What is the first move toward that boundary from where you are now?

Intimate.

What is the version of yourself in love that does not perform? What is the first move toward operating that version this month?

Social.

Who would you stop performing for? What is the first move toward stopping?

Money.

What is the prohibition you would refuse? What is the first money move that breaks the prohibition without recklessness?

The sketch is the surface from which the architecture starts being designed.
