

Analysts Anonymous

Informed comment for the BA & Business Change community

Presented in conjunction with:

A note from the editor



In between the formal sessions delegates spent time renewing old acquaintances, establishing new contacts, or simply enjoying the fine catering. It would be good to see you at the next event, so keep an eye out for details.

Welcome to a special Summer edition of Analysts Anonymous, concentrating on the Certes Business Analysis Seminar held in London on May 18th. It was a great success, with three very different speakers providing a lot of food for thought for all present.

In the meantime let me know about anything you would like to see in future editions of this newsletter: aa-editor@writethetalk.com.

Anthony Madigan
Editor

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The bigger picture of IT- enabled business change

Dr Sharm Manwani of Henley Management College opened the Seminar by addressing the shift that business analysts make when taking a far broader view of the organisation.



Historically the IT roles and skillsets were quite straightforward: there was a technology group who picked the computers/hardware; operations who ran them; programmers who built applications, and analysts who asked the users what they wanted – not always in that order!.

Now we have SFIA (Skills profile For the Information Age) which includes a lot of business analysis and business change skills, an indication of how the understanding of what IT-related change is about has developed.

The Components of Business Change?

There are three well understood components:

- Getting people buy-in
- Undertaking business process review
- Implementing the technology

But there is often something missing: Information and how it flows.

Sharm referred to recent research on the reasons for failure in business change. Common to many of the unsuccessful programmes were shortcomings in communication, perseverance, flexibility, and the forming of coalitions: a lack of leadership rather than knowledge. This highlights the importance of the Business Sponsor. Sharm asked whether the Business Sponsors in the organisations represented in the room had been trained for the role. There was little

evidence that they had. You may want to consider the situation in your own organisation.

the areas that are important for moving on to the next phase.

What skills should a BA have?

To answer this question Sharm started with his view of the IT-enabled Business Change Lifecycle (Diagram 1)

Sharm asked whether any of the delegates take part in the alignment activity in their organisations. The response was mixed, and all were urged to identify the outputs of the Alignment phase by asking the right questions at the outset of the Definition activity.

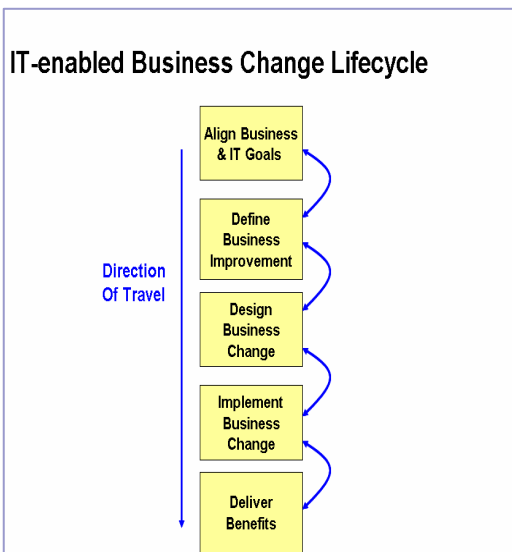


Diagram 1

Sharm drew our attention to a couple of aspects of the Lifecycle: the Alignment box could easily be a cloud as it is difficult to confine, but its position is the important thing. It is where the change starts and is therefore an important area for Business Analysts. Facilitation skills are important at this stage of the Lifecycle.

Defining Business Improvement and Designing Business Change depend heavily on the People/Process/IT/Information components discussed earlier. Notice that the cycle doesn't end with Implementation but with Benefits Delivery, a fact often overlooked. The iterative nature of the flow is also key: there is a lot of backwards and forwards movement between the steps in the cycle. There was an observation from a delegate to the effect that it is difficult to justify the time taken to follow this approach. Sharm agreed and stressed the importance of making sure that there are outputs from each stage. This limits unnecessary iteration and focuses on

BA Skills Profile

The discussion moved on to the skills profile Sharm believes is necessary for BAs. See Diagram 2 for a summary.

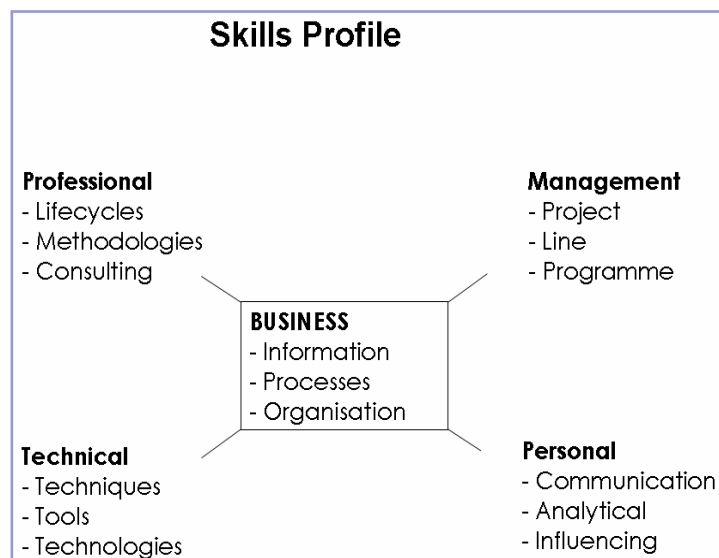


Diagram 2



Business skills and specifically the components of information, process and organisation are critical for success as a BA, for success in redesigning the organisation. How do these skills map to the Lifecycle? Here are a couple of examples:

Stages and Skills - Innovate

Align Business and IT Goals

- Focus business goals and iteratively align IT.
- Analyse opportunities to identify initiatives.

Define Business Improvement

- Define initiative scope & benefits.
- Generate options and evaluate against agreed criteria.

Business	Personal	Professional
- Information	- Communication	- Lifecycles
- Processes	- Analytical	- Methodologies
- Organisation	- Influencing	- Consulting



Contrast this with the skills necessary for delivery:

Stages and Skills - Deliver

Design Business Change

- Design an integrated set of process, people, data & ICT capabilities to deliver the initiative

Implement Business Change

- Develop and implement integrated solution engaging the receivers of change.

Professional	Technical	Management
- Lifecycles	- Techniques	- Project
- Methodologies	- Tools	- Line
- Consulting	- Technologies	- Programme

The skill set needed to be fully effective as a BA is broad, and the flexibility needed to apply the right skills at the right time is vital.

The message from Sharm was clear: the skillset needed to be fully effective as a BA is broad, and the flexibility needed to apply the right skills at the right time is vital. So how can these skills be acquired?

One port of call should be ISEB (www.iseb.org.uk). The ISEB Framework covers a wide range of IT qualifications, and Sharm highlighted the recent extension into change management through the Foundation in IT-enabled Business Change qualification.

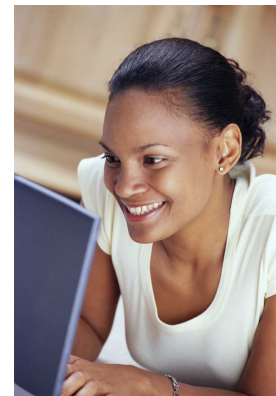
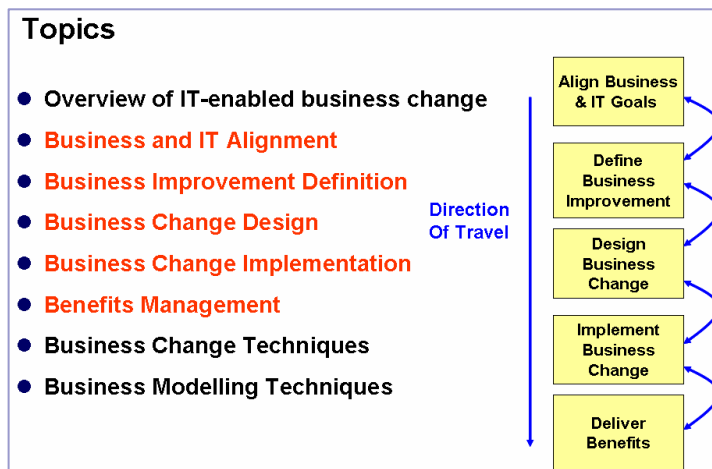
It considers the underlying concepts in the areas of business and requirements analysis and change management as well as the consultancy skills necessary to ensure maximum value is achieved from the implementation of IT-enabled solutions.

In his view this core knowledge is required for any business analyst professional. Full details of the qualification can be found on the ISEB website.

Sharm was a lead developer of the qualification and is currently writing a related book on IT-Enabled Business Change. You can contact him at sharm@manwani.co.uk for more information.

To bring the strands of the presentation together, the formal part of the session ended with a simple mapping of the topics covered in the ISEB qualification to the Lifecycle (Diagram 3). A pretty good fit by any measure:

Diagram 3



A brief question and answer session followed the presentation and the main points are summarised here.

Q. Project management and implementation feature a lot in what has been discussed. Aren't they separate skillsets to Business Analysis?

A. This depends on the size of the project as smaller change can be done by the BA. A bigger consideration is not who leads, but where is the BA involvement? BAs have a role to play in all of these phases.

Q. Not all organisations see BAs operating in all of these stages of the lifecycle, particularly where BAs are seen as IT resources. How can this be addressed?

A. One route for changing this assumption or preconception in the minds of senior management is through training and broadening the skills that can be applied. In fact many CIOs say that a barrier to being able to implement this approach to change is the lack of individuals who have the mix of skills to fulfil this role.

Q. You referred earlier to the SFIA framework. How does this map on to the Change Lifecycle?

A. See the table below where Sharm has mapped the SFIA skills to the lifecycle.

SFIA

Skill	0	1	2	3	4	5
Stakeholder relationship mgt	x					
Strategic Planning		x				
Innovation			x			
Business analysis			x			
Business process improvement				x		
Information Management				x		
Organisation design and implementation				x		
Programme management				x		
Business process testing					x	
Change implementation planning & mgt					x	
Benefits management						x

- 1 Align
- 2 Define
- 3 Design
- 4 Implement
- 5 Realise

Many CIOs say that a barrier to being able to implement this approach to change is the lack of individuals who have the mix of skills to fulfil this role.

All graphs in this article are the authors own.

Business Analysis is for softies *By Anne-Marie Hyslop*

Anne-Marie Hyslop of Matthews Craig Consulting considered how greater depth to soft skills can make for increased delivery.

The presentation centred on the case study of Anne-Marie's experience of establishing a BA function within Telewest. Anne Marie joined the company's IT organisation in 2001, a department 450 strong with 95 so-called BAs. It quickly became clear that most of these people weren't in BA roles at all.

Telewest was growing rapidly at the time and a lot of change was required. There was an eventual realisation that a more focused approach was needed in the change function. Anne-Marie's challenge was to build a team of Business Analysts that would have the skill and capability to work at the front end of the change process, influencing strategic direction whilst delivering projects at the latter stages of the project lifecycle.

The starting point was a new nucleus for the BA function, combining internal and external recruits with the right mix of skills and experience. The team soon started to grow. The next significant milestone was the creation of a central project management function outside of IT, broadening the scope of the BA group that was part of it, to all types of change.

Before long a new problem emerged. From being not widely understood and on the outside of a lot of change activity, the BA function found itself inundated with requests for help from the business. And not just analysis work, but benefits realisation and business cases. Anne-Marie began to have doubts that the team had the skills to engage with this work. Influenced by the ideas of an organisation called Success Intelligence and the concept of Emotional Intelligence, Anne-Marie realised that the challenges being experienced were people-related, exposing an area of underdevelopment in the team. On reflection this was not surprising given the heavy focus on delivery in the company.

Referring to Daniel Goleman's book Emotional Intelligence, which brought the idea to wider prominence, Anne-Marie talked about the experience of large US corporations who routinely recruit the top 2% of graduates each year. It has not been a very successful strategy because the brightest are sometimes not the most capable - they lack the Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to go with their IQ.

Emotional Intelligence

Simply, it is the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively. There are four main capabilities:

- Self-awareness (the building block for emotional intelligence)
- Self-management
- Social Awareness (the environment in which you work)
- Social Skill

There is an excellent quote from Aristotle that captures a lot of what Emotional Intelligence is about:

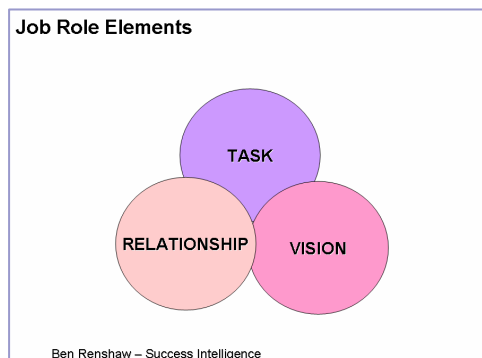
"Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy."

So to equip the team to handle the new demands being placed on it, work was needed to develop their levels of Emotional Intelligence. Anne-Marie believed that this is what would make very good BAs into excellent ones.

Job Role Elements

The next stage of the analysis of the team and its work was Job Role Elements, the split of time between task, relationship and vision. Consider Diagram 4: the size of each circle represents the proportion of overall time given over to each activity.

Diagram 4



Anne-Marie's challenge was to build a team of Business Analysts that would have the skill and capability to work at the front end of the change process, influencing strategic direction whilst delivering projects at the latter stages of the project lifecycle.



It is important to consider what the right balance should be for a role and to make sure that the people in the role are getting this balance right. Is Relationship activity too small for the consultative nature of a role? Is Task too dominant when some vision is required to avoid issues in the future?

The same analysis can be applied to teams and even whole companies. All of the delegates were asked to draw their current three circle diagram followed by the version they aspired to. Any differences were taken away as food for thought!

Anne-Marie explained how the balance of task, relationship and vision differed between BA levels, and how this was reflected in recruitment processes as well as performance management. Diagram 5 shows how the balance was defined, forming the basis of the assessment and development processes.

Diagram 5

Performance Management- objective themes

	Business Analyst	Senior Business Analyst	Principal Business Analyst
BA Capability	60%	50%	40%
Effective planning	20%	25%	30%
Relationship Management	20%	25%	30%

The benefits of this approach can be split into two areas:

Company	Individual
Recruitment and training of the right people	Career aspirations
Increased delivery	Focused development
Strong team motivation	Equipped to do the job
Meaningful performance management	Job satisfaction
Growth	Know what is required to progress
	Marketable

Finally, Anne-Marie considered BA career progression. The development of soft skills can lead to roles that would not previously have been associated with BAs, such as Business Architect and Business Consultant. The opportunities are greater if you are prepared to develop these additional competencies.

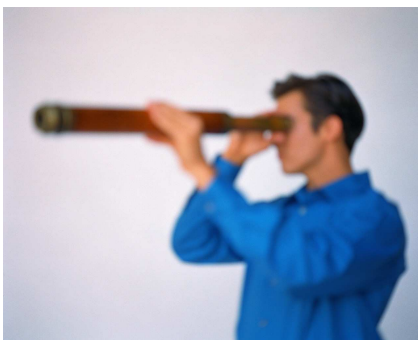
Questions:

Q. I find that the majority of people I recruit into BA roles are women. Are there differences between men and women in this space?

A. Women can be more receptive to drawing on softer skills, but old stereotypes apply less and less now.

Q. How are soft skills quantified for measurement and assessment?

A. Targets and objectives have to be defined specifically for each individual, citing opportunities for, and successes with, putting these skills into practice.



The problem of requirements *By Malcolm Eva*

Malcolm Eva of Eva Business Learning evaluated various techniques for eliciting business requirements in order to adopt the most suitable for a given situation.

Malcolm opened by comparing requirements with the three wishes that so often appear in folk tales. The first sounds like a good idea, but goes disastrously wrong. The second tries to put right what has just gone wrong ... and makes it worse. The third is just a desperate attempt to get things back to how they were before!

On a more serious note, various research studies over the last ten years indicate that requirements are far and away the main causes of systems problems. Comparing this finding with an analysis of the time spent at each of the stages of a change project tells the story of whether the priorities in change programmes are right.

A range of problems can be encountered during requirements elicitation - you will probably recognise these examples:

- Competing requirements - meeting the needs of stakeholders with opposing needs.
- Requirements that are out of scope - where users start to list all of the features and functionality they have ever wanted, relevant or not.
- Solutions as requirements

The circumstances in which requirements need to be gathered should influence the approach that is taken, and we were given an overview of these three common situations:

- Replacing or enhancing current systems (Bottom-up approach)
- New systems or infrastructure (Top-down)
- Time-constrained

Diagram 6 summarises the benefits and challenges of the first of these approaches to requirements gathering, so often used in Automation scenarios.



The circumstances in which requirements need to be gathered should influence the approach that is taken

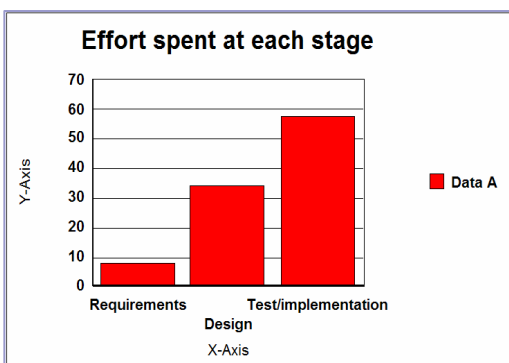
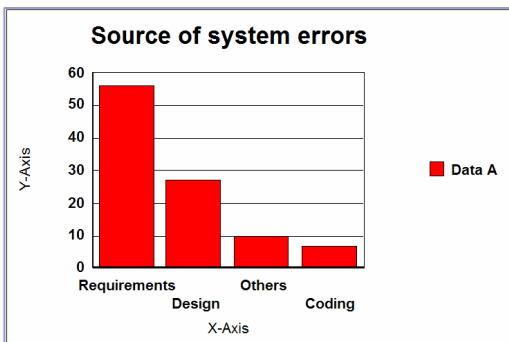
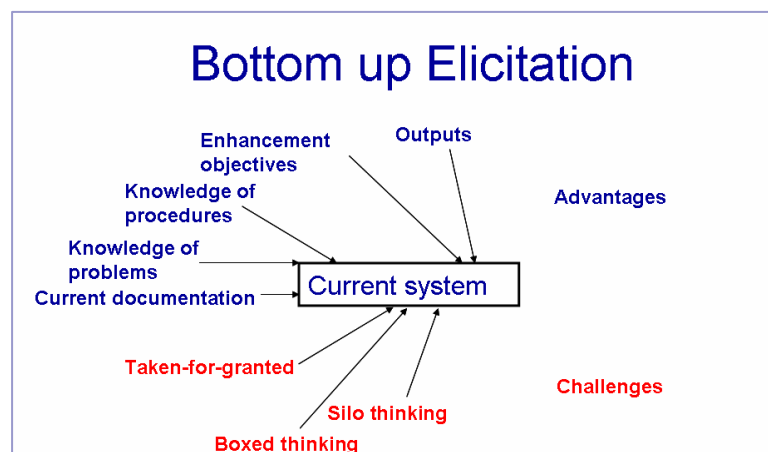


Diagram 6



Malcolm related a story that brought the "boxed thinking" challenge to life, where a woman's conviction that cooking beef required the ends of the joint to be removed first was traced back three generations to a grandmother's need to fit the meat into a small oven!

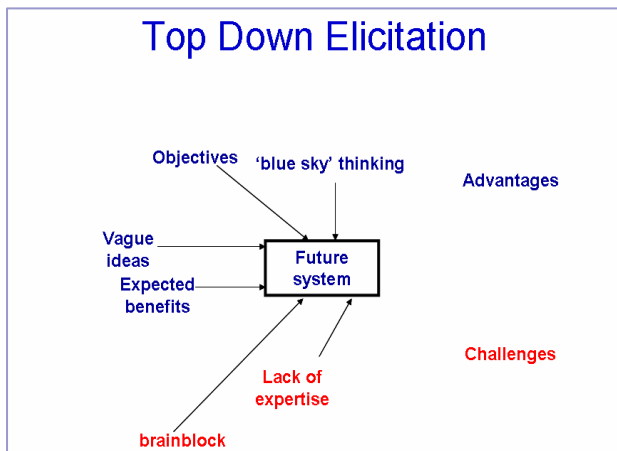
Effective methods to use here would include:

- Interview
- Observation
 - ⇒Shadowing
 - ⇒Apprenticing
- Sampling
- Data normalisation
- Task analysis
- 'As is' - 'To Be' models

At the other end of the scale is the top down scenario that often relates to Transformational change (Diagram 7):

Diagram 7

Techniques that can usefully be applied include:

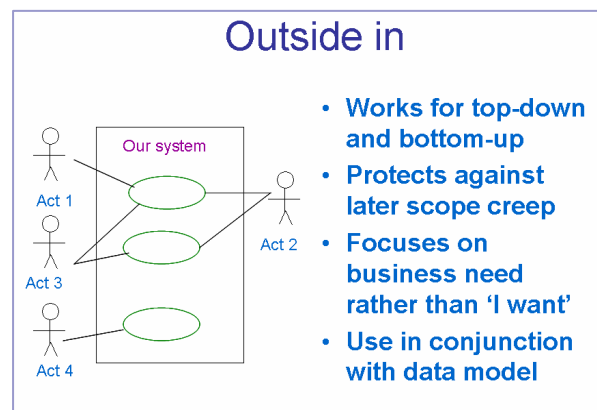


- Workshops
 - ⇒Brainstorm
 - ⇒Establish Critical Success Factors
 - ⇒Plot scenarios for key processes and trans-actions
- Prototype
- Focus Group

Malcolm expanded on some of these techniques, highlighting firstly the value of scenario planning to those who may not have experience of the new activity being implemented. Using structured "what if" questioning, requirements can be developed to address the potential issues. The importance of workshops was also stressed as was the value of the "divide and conquer" approach, splitting attendees into groups to get through work quickly.

Malcolm urged delegates to take care with brainstorming - in his view it can be a hit and miss approach for getting a comprehensive set of requirements. Prototyping on the other hand can really help to extract requirements, particularly where users may not otherwise be able to envisage what it is that is being delivered.

Diagram 8



The final situation described was the Outside In approach that helps both Top-Down and Bottom-Up approaches when time is constrained (Diagram 8). It involves the use of a context diagram (the Our System box in the Diagram) to capture the functions and processes being initiated (as use cases) for and by the main Actors (the end users).

Models

Finally, there was a brief discussion of modelling, with a simple opening question: why do it? According to Malcolm, models provide a meaningful narrative of the individual requirements; highlight gaps in understanding; and provide a completeness check. There is a choice to be made though about the type of model to be developed.

Diagram 9 sets out the main options, but we were urged to remember that it is very much a case of horses for courses when it comes to model choice.

Enterprise Architect was also recommended by a delegate, providing an informative end to an equally informative session.

Diagram 9

- **Process**

- Flow charts:
 - Use case description
 - Process maps (Swim Lanes)
 - Activity diagrams
- Data Flow Diagrams
- Functional decomposition

- **Data**

- Class Model
- Entity Relationship Diagrams

- **Business rules**

- Tables
- Decision tables
- Structured English



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In closing, Malcolm Eva listed some CARE tools (Computer-Aided Requirements Engineering) worth investigating to help with the management and manipulation of requirements and models.

Three in particular to consider are:

- DOORS
- Requisite Pro
- Analysts Pro

Business Analysis: It's not just about requirements *By James Cadle*

James Cadle is a Director of Assist Knowledge Development

As well as my consulting work I have, over the last decade, trained hundreds – possibly thousands – of business analysts. Often, during course introductions, I ask them what their role involves. One lady told me that she created process maps and, when I asked her what for, she just gave me a very blank look. Was it, I continued, to find opportunities for process improvement? Or perhaps because the company didn't

actually know how its processes worked? She didn't know and, in the ensuing discussion, it seemed that the creation of process maps was an end itself – like climbing a mountain 'because it's there'.

So that's one view of the BA role. A more common one is that it's about 'gathering requirements'. This one is also usually worth probing. What is meant by requirements? What, indeed, is meant by 'gathering'? Are these business or system requirements – and what is the difference?



Often, the answers here are pretty confused as well.

I must confess that I have a bit of a bee in my bonnet about the notion of 'gathering requirements'. It sounds to me a bit like collecting wild flowers, or model soldiers, or antiques or something. The thing about collecting is, essentially, that the thing collected is already in a finished state and the collector's role is merely to get hold of it and mount or display it somewhere. This is no doubt pretty harmless in itself but the same cannot be said of 'gathering' requirements.

The point is, of course, that requirements aren't just sitting there waiting for the collector to sweep them up. They need to be collected, then analysed, sifted, negotiated, argued over and honed until they are useful to business. Which is why I much prefer the term 'requirements engineering'. Engineering implies to me a structure, process, the application of rigour and methodologies and a product that has been fashioned with a view to it being useful in the real world.



Requirements 'gathering' sounds to me a pretty passive process, the BA just sitting there with a notebook while the business people describe in full detail what they want. But real requirements engineering is a lot more than that:

Quite often, what the business people say they need (actually, what they *want*) is not what they really need. 'I need a new super-whizzy customer relationship management system'. No you don't – you need some better-trained salespeople who can remember customers' names and buying preferences. 'I need a new process to control how this department sends informa-

tion to that department'. No you don't – you need to get the departments working better together and not trying to score points off each other all the time. 'I need a new communications system to improve the flow of information up and down by fifteen-layer organisation chart'. No you don't – you need to ask yourself why you have fifteen layers of management in the first place.

You see where I'm going here? Business analysis is actually a very active, creative role and the BA's value is in challenging everything – process, structures, people and their skills – and assisting business managers in optimising the performance of their organisations. In fact, I often think of the BA in terms of the well-known SWOT matrix:

- **Strengths:** The BA helps the organisation to build on its strengths.
- **Weaknesses:** The BA helps the organisation to identify these and overcome them.
- **Opportunities:** The BA helps the organisation to exploit these.
- **Threats:** The BA helps the organisation defend against these.

Now, gathering requirements is a good starting point for such work but the requirements are likely to exist in a hierarchy, like this:

Overall business requirements, for example 'to reduce the cost of raising and sending an invoice from £30 to £10'. Or 'to reduce the cycle time for launching a new product from 18 months to one year'.

More detailed business requirements, for example 'the call centre needs to handle 2,500 calls per day at an average call duration of 3 minutes'. Or 'the invoice needs to contain both shipping and delivery addresses, and these may be in different countries'.

Detailed IT system requirements, for example 'the system should allow for a surname with a maximum of 25 characters' or 'all dates in the system should take the format DD/MM/YYYY'.



One could argue, incidentally, that the last type of requirement is more properly the province of the traditional systems analyst than a pure business analyst but the two roles are often quite closely connected in an organisation; and in any case, the BA is closer to the business people and thus in a better position to sort out points of detail like this.

At the top of this hierarchy, the BA will need to display considerable curiosity in investigating the issue and a lot of creativity in finding solutions. Thinking about the issue of invoices costing £30 to raise and send, the first question to ask is why? If it is because there is a lot of manual work involved, the solution might involve seeing if all or part of the process could be automated in some way. Or it might be that the information that goes on the invoice has to be gathered from multiple sources and this could be centralised in some way. If some of the cost is due to the handling of physical invoices, maybe sending them electronically might do the trick.

The more detailed business requirements have perhaps less scope for creativity but that doesn't mean there are no opportunities for innovative solutions. For example, a careful analysis of the types of calls to be handled in our call centre might suggest that a proportion could be handled via pre-recorded messages or an on-line 'troubleshooting' service. So, the actual number of calls requiring a person to handle them might shrink to 1,500 which would allow for more time per call and a better customer experience.

I think the focus on gathering requirements – as distinct from studying business problems and devising business solutions – has three specific roots:

The first is the lack of a generally-agreed definition of what a business analyst is and what one does. Until very recently, there has been no book available (in English, anyway) that is actually about business analysis and which attempts to define the role. As a

result, some people who are called business analysts are really traditional systems analysts; others are process modellers (and nothing else); and others frankly don't know what their role is! In many organisations, there are not very clear job descriptions for the BA role and, where these have been created, they are often confusing and obscure. As a result of this, BAs, when trying to describe their role, often focus on something that seems tangible and which others might be able to understand – requirements gathering. This situation is beginning the change, with the development of SFIA – the Skills Framework for the Information Age – and especially of the SFIA+ framework from the British Computer Society, which has a reasonable, though perhaps somewhat IT-biased, definition of the BA role.

The second, which follows from the first, is that business managers often do not understand the resource they have available to them in the form of their BAs. Often, they think they are something vaguely to do with the IT department – as many BAs are in fact – and the BAs are the people who ask them what they want from their systems. Too often, BAs are not asked to look at a business *problem* – they are told to implement a pre-defined *solution*. Of course, business managers may well argue that they are paid to find solutions, so all they need is someone to implement them but this misses the point really. Business managers are busy people and, though they may well have identified the *general* business problem to be addressed, they do not have the time to investigate it in detail and evaluate different solutions.

The third, I am afraid, is to do with reticence or a lack of confidence on the part of many BAs. Many simply do not think they are entitled to challenge things in their organisation – why they are done that way, why they are done there, why they are done by this person, indeed why they are done at all? Really effective and worthwhile business change starts with someone asking challenging questions that require the



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organisation and the people working in it to justify why and how things are as they are – and this really ought to be the role of the business analyst.

So what can we do about any of this? Getting better definitions of the BA role would be a good starting point and getting business managers to understand and buy in to these would be even better. This will probably require a good deal of pro-activity by BAs in ‘selling’ themselves and what they can offer to their organisations. For my third point, I think BAs just need to be a bit bolder and to will themselves to challenge things. After all, what’s the worst that can happen? Probably, just a business manager telling you to ‘get back into your box’ or something similar.

So, to summarise. Business analysis is not just about requirements – it is about investigating and addressing business problems and issues. It is about finding creative solutions. And it is about meaningful and beneficial business change. Yes, requirements do have a part to play in this but only a part and the greater part of the BA role should be in challenging orthodoxy and in thinking ‘outside the box’ (to use a very clichéd expression). The BA role is more fun that way too!

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