

## **BA Manager Forum November 2015 Workshop A– Grow Your Own.**

This workshop opened discussion on the challenges faced, elements of a business case and character of a development programme for developing entry-level business analysts. Engaging entry level staff can be a practical means to break the cycle of the continued and sometimes fruitless search for established Bas.

The group considered engaging at entry level both in terms of first job seekers and those who may move internally within the organisation.

### **Challenges faced/Considerations to be made**

There is still work to do with organisations to fully understand the Ba practice offering and its benefits

Having the right senior Bas in place to support entry level colleagues to make any scheme work.

Multiple Ba teams in a larger organisation may mean selection is required as to the best area for piloting any entry-level scheme.

Determining the criteria for entry-level and the suitability of new people. More focus will be placed on personal skills/attributes and/or business knowledge.

Define the entry-level role – clarity on make-up, objectives and scope agreed with all stakeholders

Immature level of BA practice may not be conducive to providing effective support at an entry-level

Achieving the right balance between entry-level and experience in the team – determine a workable ratio.

How to structure programme work that can yield work packages suitable for entry level Bas to cut their teeth on.

Maintaining objective assessment criteria with clear goals set

Reputational risks for the team and role if someone is unable to deliver to expectations – possible loss of credibility at entry-level. Stakeholder reluctance for less experienced Bas on their programmes.

Setting expectations – entry-level introduction may be against a backcloth of experienced contractor take-up.

Consider timing – when to risk landing entry BA's in front of "customers".

Consider pipeline of work. May be difficult to predict volume of work and so when is it best to hire at entry-level with the right lead times. Could hire only to find not enough work.

Financial constraints need to be accounted for with full costs of engaging at entry-level considered e.g. overhead of supporting at entry-level.

Finding suitable BAs at entry level – looking externally and internally may still not yield the right people. Potential high levels of competition for these resources. Consider who else is recruiting at this level in the local area and the comparable salaries offered

Different entry points – consider pure-entry level, limited experience or internal movers who have past work experience and possible SME

Varying skill sets may be attracted and any development programme may need to flex to accommodate same

Internal movers may be deployed on areas of subject matter expertise where their SME knowledge will have greater currency. They can then concentrate on developing BA toolkit.

Internal movers may present challenges working at a grade that is out of step with their skills albeit in the short term

£cost and inability to charge out the new resource for a period of time. Viewpoints differ from 9 to 18 months before being able to cross charge at a “normal” rate

If considering internal movers are you able to “steal” the best people from other areas of the organisation?

Hiring at entry level and large scale investment of time and money may be in contrast to the investment in existing staff which may create issues.

Developing means of evaluating the effectiveness at entry-level. Need clear objectives prepared.

Possible lack of self-awareness at entry-level

Defining entry-level may prompt consideration of wider capability, skills profiling & formalising career steps not yet in place. May require a larger piece of work to formalise practice structure. Consider grade levelling vs huge range within one or two levels

From objectives set, be clear on when an individual moves past entry level stage. Need to define next level of roles including; expectations, capabilities and competencies.

For smaller organisations or smaller Ba teams there is potentially less senior leadership buy-in to entry-level

Team management challenge of the mix of Bas new, existing, growing etc.

Wording of any advert or communications - ensure this relates to meeting business challenges and is not overly IT/technically focused

Consider setting aside a separate budget for entry level development that breaks the cycle in the longer term

Perception of no need for junior Bas.

People leaving after training – may require different employment contract with payback on training built in.

Ba pool resources not moving on – high retention rate could mean no room/headcount for new Bas to join

Recognition that a multi- year investment is required so steps across different accounting periods – a longer term commitment.

Challenge of determining success criteria and forming suitable measures.

## **Business Case – Reasons, objectives, scope, costs, time/schedule and success criteria**

To create and enhance commercial value. Having Bas available to enable effective change delivery.

Resource pool driver – having capacity to draw on resources without always requiring external support

Cost of hire in terms of recruitment fees and time exhausted by management on engaging entry level cp. established resource. Compare time taken to recruit more established resources. Consider waiting 12-18 months to hire at an established level cp. entry level and time invested in development.

Develop own capability and shape to organisational needs rather than buying bad habits. On-boarding candidates who are adaptable and willing. Ability to build a consistent skillset/knowledge/experience. Organisation and cultural fit and fresh thinking.

Driver to support project and BAU needs and the value of interchangeable resources – also transferable to test teams

Alleviating pressure/workload for existing staff.

The costs of doing nothing.

Staff retention as workload is eased and established Bas see career progression in developing entry level colleagues.

Succession/contingency planning for team members – longer term view. Consistency of service delivery and reduced contractor costs. Consider team ages and likely retirements.

Time saved – in-house recruiters can complete more of the on-boarding work as the focus is on general skills/aptitude.

Recruitment fee savings.

Lower salary – consider return on investment. Ratio of salary to performance particularly if established/contract Bas are mediocre.

Employee engagement and commitment to career development.

Geographical. Likelihood of resource availability in your area and reduced risk of leavers due to travel issues.

Increased loyalty of staff and longer term corporate memory. Over reliance on contractors can bring issues of knowledge retention.

Capitalise on existing business knowledge/notion of trust if hiring a current employee (internal move)

Entry level vs outsourcing/contractors – easy win as far cheaper in pure cost terms (even including formal training)

Provision for next generation – social impact and responsibilities as an organisation. A strong Ba talent pool can move into other areas of the organisation. Retain internal knowledge.

Talent management. Potential to engage leaders of the future. Ba role an excellent grounding. Already seeing Bas in Director level/CIO roles

Work packages can be seen as a chance to free up senior people to do more complex/strategic work so adding more value.

Creating a culture of developing people from within – self-sufficiency.

## Elements of a Development Programme

Keep any development programme low key – remove pressure from new starters so no major promotion of the scheme required.

Must have clear vision, goals, and objectives and be time bound. Clear expectations of individuals so that they know what is expected of them and when – tied to measurement and reward structure. SMART objectives.

Use a modular development programme based on an industry standard e.g. BCS.

Decide on the balance between formal/informal learning including on the job

Good includes peer review in a safe environment before being exposed to senior stakeholders

Good includes encouraging entry Bas to present to their peer group and take feedback

Maintain awareness to identify stars of the future and build in facilities to develop future leaders (reflects this aspect of the business case)

Flexibility to explore different business areas e.g. for 6 months and build wider awareness of the organisation.

Include a degree of self-determination – self assess against given competencies

Include work packages. Tailored/considered project allocation.

Include office etiquette for first role employees. Basics training; excel, SharePoint or tools in use e.g. rational/clearquest.

Build in realistic time commitments (training, coaching etc.)

Constructing a formal programme vs ad hoc. Mix of classroom training reinforced by on the job practise and training.

Track results from entry level colleagues (case study benefits realised)

Avoid a tick list approach but rather acknowledge the right behaviours

Include soft skills awareness and coaching

Include buddy/shadowing – see the organisation in action – practical experience

Courses should be timed so that context is provided before attending training but not left too late so that bad habits are founded

Include an understanding of project management and wider project delivery roles

Include different approaches - Agile/waterfall.

Include use of tools, methodologies and governance

Business knowledge/products of the organisation

Most programmes may be multi-year

Leverage industry best practice IIBA, BCS etc

Use real use cases in interviews to find the right types of skills required to be a good BA e.g. collaborative, analytical, organised, good communicator etc.

Find the right project environment to nurture development

End.