# Workshop Session B

This workshop saw attendees divide into three groups – each group rotating to cover three topics; prioritising BA workload, BA team structure development and creativity for BAs. The notes from the discussions are below.

## Group 1 Prioritising the BA workload.

How can you prioritise the BA Workload?

- Workload has to be aligned with the business strategy
- Steering boards are often used to align to business priorities
- The business case should always align with the business strategy making prioritisation an easier process.
- A programme/portfolio approach should be adopted rather than focusing on any one individual project
- Ultimately the business has the final say on priorities with the BA facilitating the decision making process
- This requires good collaboration between BAs, the business and project management
- There is a need to be inventive about delivering strategy e.g. BAs can work on multiple projects
- If projects are already prioritised against strategic objectives then it should make allocation of BA resources easier
- Organisations should know their top 5 initiatives and this should set priorities
- If every project requires a PM and a BA then can balance resource against a number of projects (i.e. If no PMs or BAs then can't have a project!)
- Get the business to accept that not everything can be delivered (easier said than done)

Having a business analysis practice is essential to prioritising BA workload because:

- The BAs have the knowledge of the skills make-up of the team
- They are able to use a knowledge matrix to allocate BAs according to skill levels
- BAs can acknowledge and build in career development considerations so balancing skill improvement with delivery requirements
- Mentoring considerations can also be built into BA allocation

Techniques/approaches to prioritising BA workload include:

- Allocate the BA services not individuals as BAs can deliver across multiple projects and don't get roped in to delivering non BA tasks that are considered just project tasks or could be done by other dedicated project resources (e.g. testing tasks)
- Use senior BAs to assess and agree the work before committing resource
- Use senior BAs to challenge the work if not deemed core BA activity (only a problem if BA resource is scarce)
- Use Lead BAs to work across multiple projects to support colleague BAs and maintain context
- Consider exit points for service completion so the BA doesn't get consumed as a full time project resource
- Identify a service catalogue and work with projects to agree which services are needed for that project (N.B. one size doesn't fit all projects). If possible, utilise BAs resources to consider how to tackle this (i.e. if you have bench resources then allocate them to this task)
- The BA approach needs to be discussed and prioritised and then BAs allocated accordingly
- Complete a capacity plan for the BA team
- Use a Kanban board to manage the flow of BA work
- Ring fence rapid response BAs – using the Kanban board to hold and manage the team for this

Some of the issues:

- BA's or BA managers are not always involved in planning activities
- Recruitment can be a problem as can't seem to fill BA jobs so there are gaps in resources
- If BA resources can be involved in the change strategy, rather than just projects, then the BAs can enable future resource planning.

Tools:

- Planview – used by several attendees but judged a bit clunky
- Excel - this is what most use to manage resources

## Group 2 BAs and Creativity:

Environmental considerations for creativity:

- BA managers must lead the way. If you don't embrace creativity staff cannot be expected to follow suit.
- A question for practice leads to answer - Do you make it "safe" for people to be creative?
- How does the organisation view failure? Learning experience to do better or attach blame?
- Is time allowed for creativity?
- Judgement is needed to establish the readiness for creativity and then which tools suit the organisation (see section on tools)
- There are different approaches to develop approaches and the right culture to enable creativity. Boundaries and audience need to be understood.
- Consider the management position. Does the manager have all the ideas or will they facilitate others developing ideas.

Personality Attributes:

- It comes naturally to some, not for others.
- Sometimes creativity needs to be encouraged to blossom. Being brave enough.
- Confidence plays a part, especially when trying new tools. Experts can help oil the wheels.
- Some managers interview for creativity and inquisitiveness first, accepting that technical skills can follow.
- Experience from the creative industries can be useful.

When to be creative?

- Identify who is providing the imagination? BAs can, but others may have a contribution to make
- BA skill may then be to create conditions for creativity and/or act a catalyst when needed.
- Appreciate when we have the "we've always done it this way" situation.
- Approach should be appropriate to circumstances e.g. highly creative when designing a new user experience, but minimal creativity on low tech upgrade.
- Creativity plays a bigger role at the start of projects vs end. Early BA engagement is then key.
- Creativity can be considered in presenting BA outputs e.g. requirements as document, picture or business case. Think of different audiences and how they best consume information.

Tools for creativity....

- We should have and know our BA creativity toolkit.
- Brainstorming, 5 Whys, customer in the room, Strategic Lego, puppet shows, customer in the room personas, purposeful questioning, 6 hats, SCAMPER (substitute, combine, adjust, multiply, put to other use, eliminate, reverse), rich pictures, creative design skills, WHAK pack idea tools, retrospectives, experimentation, mind maps, visualisation tools, graphic recording, prototyping, "low tech" around a flip chart is ok as well.
- Use of social media (e.g. yammer) to democratically allow EVERYONE to submit ideas, assessment can be open and the winners selected. This shows that anyone, anywhere can have ideas.
- Fun can play an important role as barriers come down.
- Some creativity theory from "Craig's creativity corner"...The level of creativity in any situation is a function of attitude towards knowledge, imagination and evaluation. C=fn (attitude, knowledge, imagination, evaluation)

Source : Ruth Knoller, U.S. Professor of creativity.

## Group 3 – Establishing team structure

The purpose of team structure:

- Provides a career path – development opportunity for all
- Enables the introduction of a junior/entry level role
- Enables internal moves and provides a pipeline
- Provides a base for measuring performance
- A basis for benchmarking external skill levels and finding common denominators. Removes the ambiguity on what is required from a "senior BA"
- Enables better resource planning around requirements at different levels of experience.
- Provides a platform for other roles within the organisation, common skill areas can act as building blocks to other roles.
- Basis of service catalogue – marketing the role internally – "this is what we do"
- Management BA level can be formalised and recognised
- Escalation of issues can be achieved through the career structure.
- Allows for the better matching and allocation of tasks and skills. Required tasks can be mapped to available skills within the team.
- Enables retention of staff – more motivated with career goals
- Clarity on team make-up/structure can dictate patterns of work e.g. senior BA can be available for early project definition

Practicalities of introducing a team structure:

- Wider HR framework/initiatives to be considered. There may already be a grading scheme in place or organisational values that need to be a part of any new structure
- Establishing team structure needs to be balanced with delivery requirements. A trade off may be needed.
- Current team members may resist being evaluated or calibrated against a new framework. Colleagues who rely on SME may lose out in a grading exercise that is based on core skill levels.
- Consideration needs to be given to any legacy role definitions or past evaluations
- Changes in role profile or job description may have legal ramifications and professional advice should be sought.
- There is a risk of over engineering team structure and/or tailoring a structure to suit incumbent employees.
- The benefits of any new career structure need to be clearly communicated. The above bullet points can serve as a rationale for developing career structure.

The Career Manager Tool:

- The AssistKD career manager tool provides a framework around which to formalise a BA practice.
- The tool enables you to map individual career progression within the BA profession and plan next steps in career development.
- A video providing background on the tool can be found at;

http://www.assistkd.com/knowledge-hub/the-assistkd-career-manager/


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