

BA Manager Forum Workshop

Lisa Hudson - Team well-being and the Pressures of BA Life

The below notes have been produced following a workshop at the BA Manager Forum held in November 2018. Attendees were split into groups and asked to participate in a number of discussions and play their thoughts back to the other groups on the following topics:

Group Discussion 1: Identify Pressures

Attendees were asked to discuss the possible pressures that may be faced by Business Analysts.

Group Discussion 2: Identify Improvements

Attendees were asked to discuss how to combat the pressures of the BA role and encourage better ways of working.

Group Discussion 3: Team Improvements

Attendees were asked to consider how the workshop would influence their teams when back in the office.

Workshop Question: What we like about being Business Analysts?

Before the group discussions began, an initial ice breaker question was asked where all attendees were asked to shout out what they like about their BA roles. The results were written on flip chart paper. For information, the responses were as follows:

What we LIKE about being Business Analysts

- Variety
- Helping People
- Learning
- Interactions with Business
- Problem Solving
- Being central to Initiatives
- Bringing order out of chaos
- Customer focus
- See Outcomes
- Delivering / Adding Value
- Creative
- Challenging
- Inquisitive
- Deliverable to fruition
- Making a difference
- Holistic view

Group Discussion Feedback

** Please note – the feedback below may be repetitive as this has been copied directly from the thoughts of multiple groups.

Group Discussion 1: Identify Pressures

Please discuss the possible pressures that may be faced by Business Analysts

- Being brought into a project too late
- Availability of Stakeholders
- Lack of understanding of the BA role
- Unrealistic expectations
- Scope creep
- Requirement changes
- Relentless Agile work
- Guilt
- Learning curve – new projects
- Continuous improvement
- Multiple projects
- Getting stakeholder time to participate and sign off
- Expectation to know the business straight away
- Working on and understanding multiple projects
- Correcting mistakes and joining late
- Scope not being properly defined
- Continuous improvement and self-development versus projects
- Other people thinking that they are BAs!
- Others not understanding what we do
- Doing all the project pre-work before we start
- Over analysing as a community
- Technical expertise “know everything”
- Isolated
- Lack of role understanding
- Perception of role
- Difficult stakeholders
- Multiple projects
- Unrealistic expectations from the Business; solution led, scope creep, changing requirements, don’t see complexity, time, cost
- Unrealistic expectations from Developers; technical knowledge
- Stropky PMs
- Relentless work stream due to Agile practices
- Deadlines
- Getting up to speed
- Changes to the BA role; Agile -> Product Owner means less visibility
- Clash of roles and responsibilities; change managers
- Difficult culture of inducting new BAs; central repository
- Time
- Requirement ambiguity
- Availability of stakeholders
- Need to show the value of investing time in the engagement
- Strive for perfection (self-inflicted pain)
- Poorly defined scope
- Doing the right thing; proving value
- Sign off / approval
- Lack of understanding about the role
- Delivery going wrong due to requirements
- Balance project and the toolkit
- Conflicting priorities
- Difficult stakeholders
- Unrealistic deadlines

- Project progress – keep it alive, identifying issues to stop
- Over stretched workload
- Guilt in quiet times
- Stakeholder availability
- Stakeholder expectations
- Other BA expectations
- Timescales
- Single face of the project if failed
- Assignment of objectives
- Time limitations
- Scope creep / Change of requirements
- Quality versus quantity
- Unrealistic deadlines – imposed
- Stakeholders
- Being driven by the solution, lack of planning
- Retrospective requirements
- Unrealistic expectations
- Piggy in the middle
- Siloed role versus ill-defined role
- Role stretched across too many pieces of work
- Getting into the right mindset
- Having time to lead and manage effectively
- Having time to listen
- Lack of role definition
- Time – Quality
- Deadlines
- Unrealistic scope / scope change
- Lack of understanding of the BA role (BA/PM/Architect)
- Stakeholder expectations
- Solution clear versus unknown requirements
- Stakeholder availability and capability
- Perfectionism versus good enough (self-inflicted pressure)
- Culture -> Blame
- Personal life pressures – work / life pressure
- Lack of time to deliver (late engagement)
- Lack of time to deliver (artificial deadlines)
- Business brings solutions first
- Stakeholder availability
- Rate of change in Business and IT
- Long deliveries
- Loose BA role definition (Don't know or opinion = gap filling!)
- Negative feedback / culpability
- Constantly changing demand / scope creep
- JFDI / Loose Business Case
- Keeping people happy
- Changing priorities (across lots of pieces of work)
- Supporting everything you have ever worked on – fountain of knowledge
- Coming in too late; asking annoying questions
- Expectations of the role; What does a BA do?
- Business hires other roles; I want a BA!
- Jack of all trades but not a specialised role
- Diluting of the role
- PMs Assistant 😞
- Our worth is invisible
- Stakeholders tricky – changing their minds

Group Discussion 2: Identify Improvements

Please discuss ways to combat the pressures of the BA role and encourage better ways of working

- Isolation; Cuppa catch up, BA Practice, Forum, Hotdesk with SMEs -> Learning Curve
- Show Value; How is it better than your day job? -> Highlight your successes, objectives
- Requirements checklist
- Create knowledge base / dump
- Explain what we do as BAs
- Introduce BA role etc. with key stakeholders
- Terms of Reference (PID); sets guidelines, understanding, timescales, understanding of the role
- Kick off meeting! Clarity on roles and responsibilities
- Time blocked out to learn and get up to speed
- Create repositories and encourage re-use
- Develop BA approach and encourage empowerment
- Encourage cross BA working e.g. Lunch & Learn
- Spend time developing relationships with the business
- Test your own processes
- Identify 'common requirements' and encourage re-use
- QA process – encourage process reviews
- Speak to others in industry
- Set ground rules and expectations up front
- Define boundaries of role early in project
- Create map of core responsibilities and capabilities
- Have open conversation with Manager
- Encourage open and honest conversations
- Ensure you have sign off of deliverables
- Give permission to BA for personal development
- Develop a holistic view of priorities
- Part of a team for support
- Communication channels
- Lessons learned
- Someone to vent with
- Continual promotion of the BA role
- Speak up when there's a problem
- Consider how to sign off BA deliverables
- Consider how to maintain BA deliverables
- Productivity tools
- Vent frustrations
- Spread skills
- Clear role definition
- Communication channels
- Lessons learned / retrospective
- Email triage
- If it takes less than 5 minutes – 'do it now'
- Delegate
- Question priorities
- Know your stakeholders
- Build an effective community
- Keeping up skills
- Clear definition between work and home life
- Taking breaks and time off
- Do something for yourself outside of work
- BA playbook (Have a default go to response)
- Define the role around standardised ways of working
- Establish an environment of support and help with team
- Timebox work on projects
- Take control of the BA task planning process
- Force scope through change control

- Allocate BAs to activities appropriate to skills aspiration
- Planning ahead / time management
- Getting buy-in from others
- Defining the role clearly
- Prioritisation (work / life)
- Communicating with stakeholders clearly and regularly
- Explaining the value of the work being done
- Collaboration / Talking face to face
- Innovation time
- Meditate / Relaxation time
- Time out – walling meetings
- Expectation of the person and role – work 24/7
- Work smartly (location, hours, techniques)
- Plan thinking time
- Switch off distractions (phone, instant messaging etc.) when doing detailed work
- Setting leadership examples / techniques
- Space to release the emotions
- Team well-being – not always being nice, thinking long term
- Saying thank you
- Understanding the individual – home / pressures / priorities
- Shared experience of delivery – team collaboration
- BA team share the experience
- Outside looking in
- Flexibility regarding working from home
- Ownership of requirements – not the BA

Group Discussion 3: Team Improvements

Please consider how this workshop will influence your team when back in the office

Practical interventions to be made when back in the office	How can this be implemented? (Optional)	How can this be measured? (Optional)
Personal space and time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback • 1:1s • Outcome from personal time
Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use these exercises at the office • Knowledge exchanges (internal and external) • Stakeholder maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey BAs in the organisation
Discuss this topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get input from team • What to do more of / less of

Consider other roles in isolation (i.e. Line Management only and Technical Coach)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By focusing on team only (no resource planning or project deliverables) 	
Look at ways of promoting Business Analysis Service		
Reduce distractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce phone and Instant Messaging usage Go and see people! Walking meetings (fresh air and exercise) 	
Build informal networks and engage with corporate strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With awareness of corporate confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture increase in effectiveness / productivity
Recognise work / life balance and optimum working time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say not now, in a minute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block some time out that's not initially allocated
Block out time, do not disturb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be more assertive and protective of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update diaries and stick to it By getting (proving) more work getting done More organised and priorities maintained Unexpected work can be scheduled
Have a Board / Group that prioritises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get attendees together to do P1 planning, empower people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to deliver strategy Initiatives that close / outcomes delivered
Feature teams (BA mobility between projects / products / tech)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attrition reduces Employee satisfaction
Twinning to share knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage as good culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less 'under a red bus' comments Maturing BA capability