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Analysts Anonymous

Informed comment for the Business Analysis and Business Change Community

grow your own business analysts

Also in this edition:

- The indispensable BA and the surprising truth you work in sales
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What is in this edition…

Welcome
from the editor

It's the end of the year already – I hope it's been a good one for you. What better way to finish on a high note than with the latest edition of Analysts Anonymous.

We have several festive gifts for you, in the shape of informative articles on a range of topics. There's a summary of a talk at the BA Conference Europe in September which drew on Monty Python as inspiration for a look at one of the critical skills for all BAs. Another of the conference sessions looked at the need for BAs to have sales skills and we'll tell you what you need to know.

Our other two articles tackle recruitment from different perspectives. There's the candidate assessment process and the options that will help you make the right recruitment decisions (or know what to expect when you next go through the process yourself). And then there's a piece on the benefits of growing your own strong BAs by recruiting entry level candidates and developing them.

Enjoy the read, and have a Merry Christmas.

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Understanding
the business problem

*Football icon **David Beckham** was not available for this session at the Business Analysis Conference Europe. His namesake at Aviva was, however, and Ray Watson reports on his entertaining insight into the most critical of all skills for successful BAs.*

David opened with the purpose of his presentation:

- demonstrating that thinking about the problem is THE fundamental BA skill
- presenting some foundation techniques regarding questioning skills
- emphasising the importance of thinking for yourself.

With occasional use of examples taken from what must be one of the greatest movies of our time, Monty Python's 'Life of Brian', David's points were perfectly illustrated.

Thinking for yourself

Brian: No, no. Please, please, please listen. I've got one or two things to say.

The Crowd: Tell us! Tell us both of them!

Brian: Look, you've got it all wrong. You don't need to follow me. You don't need to follow anybody! You've got to think for yourselves! You're all individuals!

The Crowd: Yes! We are all individuals!

Brian: You're all different!

The Crowd: Yes! We're all different!

Man in the Crowd: I'm not …

The BA really needs to think about the nature of the problem in front of them to ensure they really do understand the business needs – ask questions, be an individual and be part of the team (work with the culture) without being swept along by the euphoria or a need to fall in line.
For example, the project title may read: “Put a new error code into the work management system”! However, if after examining the problem the requirement was amended to ‘changing the payment system to address the cause of the errors’, a totally different project and business case emerges.

As every BA knows, failing to understand the business problem can only result in failing to:

- deliver what is really needed
- realise the full benefit of the proposal
- deliver on time as you will inevitably encounter change requests
- deliver to quality as change requests squeeze time and budgets.

So understanding the problem is critical, but how? What comes first: the question or the answer? Or to put it another way (according to David), should a BA question first or listen?

But this then raises another concern. A tidal wave of questions may swamp the listener; they would be too busy bailing to give thought to the answers or to ask supplementary questions.

David suggests a gradual drip of questions interspersed with long periods of listening would probably gain more in terms of data and rapport.

So the BA must be able to listen first. But in order to be an effective listener, the BA must display:

1. **Genuineness** – be interested
2. **Attentiveness** – to the individual and what is being said.
3. **Respect** – essential to gain trust
4. **Understanding** – check questions & feedback scenarios as appropriate
5. **Concreteness** – confirming understanding and clarification from the customer

In addition to the standard open and closed questions and those to seek clarification or understanding, David offered a few tips:

- Always take emotion out of the question
- Use open questions to get more detail
- Use closed questions to close down the debate
- Always put the negative emphasis on yourself when things are not clear, e.g. “this might be me but could you explain that again?” [note: don’t use this too often else you will look daft!]
- Use the right level of rigour

Brian: Can I join your group…?

Reg: Nah, to be in OUR group you’ve got to really hate the Romans.

Brian: I do.

Reg: How much?

Brian: A lot.

Reg: … OK. You’re in.

Understanding the problem

David offered a list of sample questions to get the BA on the way to understanding the problem. These are:

- What evidence do we have that the need for a project exists?
- Have we identified the true problem or just a symptom?
- Can we describe the characteristics of the products affected?
- Can we describe the areas affected by the change?
- Can we describe what would need to change?
- Can we describe what it means for our customers?
- Can we describe the purpose of the project?

- Who are the customers?
- Why does the company need it?
- What are the stakeholder's business perspectives?
- What are the proposition's strengths and weaknesses?
- Are we repeating, layering, creating or being herded?
- What is the business case for this proposal?
- How much business are we guaranteed to get as a result of investing?
- What is the fundamental basis of the proposition?
- If we could only deliver one thing for this proposition, what would it be?
- How do you want the solution to perform?
- Who in the business is going to administer this proposition once it goes into production?
- Is there anything the solution should not do?
- What would happen if we did nothing?

Clearly this is a checklist for the BA to build on as some customers may see some questions as a direct challenge if asked without respect or consideration, i.e. don't overstep the mark!

Questioning

Youth: Excuse me.

Mandy: Yes?

Youth: Are you a virgin?

Mandy: I beg your pardon?

Youth: Well, if it's not a personal question, are you a virgin?

Mandy: 'If it's not a personal question'? How much more personal can you get? Now, p*ss off!'

Some hints from David on Questioning - the right way and the wrong way

The wrong way	**The right way**
Why ever do you think that would work? – implying: "it won't & you're a nut".	"I'd really like to hear your thoughts on how we will get this to work…" Positive, inclusive, ego-affirming
You can't be serious? – implying: "If you are you're a nut".	"Tell me more…" Neutral engaged question
Why do you think a customer would be wanting to do that? - implying: "you're a nut who doesn't understand his customers".	"How will this feel for the customer?" Neutral engaged question provoking thoughts re: feelings
Haven't we tried this before? – implying: "And failed. You're a nut".	"I can think of several previous projects that have addressed this outcome, I'm interested to know how this one will approach it?" Neutral engaged open question
How much will this cost? – implying: "You're an expensive nut"	"Can you talk me through the cost/benefit analysis?" Neutral engaged open question forcing discussion of benefits as well as costs.

NB: Any question can sound better or worse according to the intonation and non-verbal signals you display whilst asking it.

Clearly the questioning process cannot go on for ever so closing questions might include:

- Are we agreed on this position?
- Is there anything else?
- Are we OK to proceed?

Understanding the stakeholder perspective

A key aspect to understanding the business problem is to understand the stakeholder perspective. This may be influenced by many factors: geographical, social, political, economic, religious, language, customer, culture etc. The stakeholder world view may be hidden from you and may be part of the problem itself.

A phrase often used on MBA courses is "Think globally, act locally". One application of it is that a word or phrase in one country may not be appropriate in another.

Key to understanding your customer's perspective is to:

- Make sure you are talking to the right person
- Make sure you are talking to the right group of people

David suggested the use of the **CATWOE** techniques to ascertain the customer's business perspective:

Customer – the beneficiary of the business system.

Actors – the people who undertake the transformation.

Transformation – the main business activities that transform inputs into outputs.

Weltanschauung – the 'world view' of the stakeholder.

Owner – the person who can make fundamental decisions about the organisation's direction.

Environment – the 'givens' within which the business system operates and which it cannot really change.

An example

Reg: Why do you keep going on about women Stan? [An open question]

Stan: Because I want to be one. [Reveals the customer's previously un-suspected world view!]

Reg: You wanna be a woman?

Stan: I want to be a woman and I want to have babies

Reg: You wanna have babies?!?

Stan: It's every man's right to have babies if he wants them…

And that's not the end of the matter: what about the BA and their perspective? An understanding of one's own thinking is fundamental. Just because something has worked in the past does not guarantee it will now or is appropriate for now. Try to avoid dogma or falling into old habits. Be aware of how you are approaching a situation and how others may react to you or your approach.

While the BA is initially at a disadvantage, i.e. they know less about the problem than the customer, the target is to match the customer's level of understanding through enquiry and the right style of questioning. Working together, the BA's and customer's level of understanding is enhanced by reference to their own and each other's experiences.

Finally, remember, no matter how complex the project appears …

… always look on the bright side of life!

This was a thoroughly enjoyable and informative presentation on a critical skill that was well received by every member of the audience.

The BA Practice Manager

view of recruitment

Part Two – Candidate Selection

In the second part of our series on recruitment, we turn to candidate selection. Drawing on discussions between around 30 BA practice leads at a workshop earlier this year, this series is looking at the three key stages in the candidate engagement process: attraction, selection and retention. Here the focus is on the assessment process and its many components.

Key attributes for evaluation through the assessment process

The start point for our selection work must begin with a thorough understanding of who we intend to recruit.

We might consider:

- "Must have" and "must not have" skills or qualities
- Cultural fit, what is a required behaviour – what sort of person will thrive in this type of organisation?
- What role could they play in the team, what fit with the mix of current team members?
- Motivations for applying for the role?
- Flexibility and willingness to step outside a personal comfort zone
- Do they have a hunger for learning?
- Candidate potential. Is their scope to increase skill levels?

Selection is focused on identifying the most talented individuals at different levels of experience. Account should be taken of experience levels and adapting our approach to suit both junior and senior candidates.

We can work through the selection process as follows:

The CV

CVs were seen as poor indicators of technical ability and organisational fit. Very often the CV does not reflect the quality of the individual. While we might hope that the stronger candidates would develop a professional document, this is not always the case. Those with the slickest CVs were not always the strongest candidates, according to the group. Some candidates may employ third parties to help produce an enhanced CV.

Understanding historic career progression can still be a very useful means of establishing a candidate's potential for growth in the future. CVs that simply list a career history in chronological order give little information on the real contribution the individual made and reveal nothing of genuine career development. More information can be requested from an individual in the form of written clarification to check their involvement in a project and if they were able to see through a piece of work to successful conclusion. Some organisations no longer accept CVs, preferring application forms that elicit more specific information.

In general terms it is worth keeping an open mind on a CV/application form and being prepared to seek out more details before moving to any interview stage.

Video interview – the talking CV

Some candidates make use of a "talking cv" (http://www.talkingcv.com as an example). The video clip can be structured in response to a small number of questions posed by the hiring manager.

Qualifications

The general view of the group was that, while qualifications are important, they are not critical. Some organisations have strict policies on qualification thresholds. This may be a discussion point for interview and prompt a question around ongoing learning.

The telephone interview

The phone interview is used by a majority of those attending the workshop and is seen as an efficient first step to get a sense of the candidate's communication ability, suitability, aspirations and motivation. This is usually fairly short, often lasting around 30 minutes and obviously cannot cover all areas of interest in that time. It can then help focus later assessment efforts on the candidates who are of greatest interest.

Online assessments – intelligence, numeracy and personality tests

Around 20% of the workshop attendees make use of one or more online assessments. This is fairly reflective of the market. Online assessments can be used to benchmark baseline intelligence or provide clues in terms of a personality match. All online assessments come with a health warning and should be used as part of the overall selection process and not be the decisive factor. It was also mentioned that applicants learn how to negotiate online personality tests, possibly selecting answers they feel are more corporate and less of a reflection of their real personality. One attendee mentioned a specific BA capability assessment tool developed by SkillsEdge. HR policies may mandate psychometric tests and set minimum or specific criteria which can sometimes screen out good candidates.

Generic Question Banks and Grade tests

Where question banks are used, perhaps by HR, care should be taken that BA candidates aren't screened out unnecessarily by questions that are not relevant to the role. Grade tests, although not in common usage, can hold less relevance for predicting BA performance and form a cumbersome part of the selection process.

Interview questions

Competency questions can provide a baseline for phone and face-to-face interviews. Many candidates now rehearse answers for the more common questions and can then perform well at interview. A rehearsed answer may not be the best predictor of performance in role, however.
One of the most useful specific questions mentioned was to get the candidate to describe the role of a business analyst, as this is often misunderstood.

Use of vague or ambiguous questions can be a useful means of seeing if the candidate can take the initiative to clarify the required information. Surprise questions about the individual themselves can change the track of an interview and get a candidate to open up and respond differently. Situational questions (using relevant business scenarios) can help give a more specific understanding of how an employee might self-start in the business.

Case studies/exercises

The use of case studies or scenarios and playback are seen as valuable predictors of performance. Around 60% of those surveyed make use of some form of scenario, presentation or case study/role play. Development of relevant case studies can be time-consuming but can reveal a candidate's ability to review and analyse information and report back with recommendations or a course of action. Real business problems can be used to give additional purpose and relevance to the case study. There is then far more insight to an individual's thought processes and their ability to build a case for a course of action. Candidates may receive prior warning of the case study but rarely have sight of any information before the assessment day. The case study is also then a reflection of an individual's ability to work under some time pressure.

The presentation with Q&A

Producing a presentation prior to a final stage interview is a useful test of how seriously a candidate takes the role. Presenting on a topic relevant to the business analysis role provides an insight into both the individual's understanding of their role, depth of experience and their presentational skills. A Q&A can be used to tune into more of their thought processes and depth of understanding.

Written communication skills assessment

We may choose at some point in the selection process to request written material from a candidate. Some candidates are calm, articulate and poised at interview but cannot write to a high enough standard. Documents relating to past work may be too sensitive for wider distribution but excerpts or past presentations may be available for consideration.

Background checks and personal recommendations

All those surveyed undertake background checks to validate candidate experience. This typically takes the form of a reference. Verbal references were highlighted as an opportunity to gain a closer appreciation of candidate suitability and seen as an improvement on the one line usually given in a standard HR response. Linked-in is used again to check CV consistency, personal recommendations and identify any common contacts who could provide an independent view. Sources such as this are often useful to the manager, prior to final selection and offer, whereas formal HR based checks are often too late in the process to be useful.

Meeting the team

The last stage in an assessment day can be for a candidate to meet the team (BAs or wider project team, as appropriate). This is usually conducted on an informal basis and is a useful means of socialising a prospective new team member. The team will have an opportunity to interact with candidates and this may reveal more information in terms of social styles and behaviours. It's also an opportunity for the candidate to more clearly visualise what working for that organisation might be like.

The question of candidate compromise

The group discussion included the possibility of compromising on the candidate who is hired and whether this is acceptable in any circumstances. Time constraints and market shortage may force a reconsideration of the level or type of candidate who's hired. Some held the view that some missing professional skills can be taught and more junior staff can be developed. Most held the view that there should not be any compromise on basic interpersonal skills.

What can be done to avoid losing the best people through the selection process?

There can be a significant time commitment required for the candidate to undertake the extent of assessment described above, which may be off-putting to some. Opportunities should be taken throughout the process to sell the role and the company to the candidate and keep candidates engaged.

There is universal agreement that the recruitment process, whilst thorough, should be compact and well planned with a clear timeline to the offer stage. Candidates should be kept well informed throughout the process and once the process is complete, quick decisions should be made.

There are many facets to the process of recruiting BAs, and the amount of effort put in to the process will influence the quality of the result. Generic approaches may not identify the best candidates, and the more openness that's possible on both sides, the more likely it is that there'll be a good fit between organisation and candidate. Whatever the process, it should be clear and compact for the sake of everyone involved. In the next edition of Analysts Anonymous we turn our attention to the final part of the series: retention.

The Indisponsable BA

and the surprising truth that you work in sales

Ray Watson reports on the valuable sales skills that all BAs can usefully develop, as pitched by Adrian Reed of Blackmetric Business Solutions at September's BA Conference Europe.

No business can afford to carry unnecessary overheads, so the BA function, as with all other areas of the business, must demonstrate its value. Over many years a wide range of presentations and discussions have been focused on the importance and value of the BA to the business via case studies, business cases and rescuing failing projects, often saving massive costs and embarrassment.

Many presentations today focus on understanding the business, engaging stakeholders, process, tools, delivery – all focused on the 'doing', the practicalities of 'rolled up sleeves' and guiding analysis and projects from inception to delivery, often with other functions such as IT or change.

But if you are setting up a BA function or facility, setting yourself up as an independent BA or consultant, or seeking to influence other parts of your company to let the BA in, then Adrian's presentation is just what you need.

Adrian's presentation was not about hard selling or pressure selling, but about recognising and communicating with customers about their needs and the use of soft skills. His presentation covered two main themes:

- Why Sales? – illustrated with a short case study
- What and How? – with reference to some basic selling techniques.

Why sales? The UK Fire Control project

The UK government devised a plan to transform 46 regional Fire Control centres into nine call centres. The justification focussed on a number of considerations, including the desire for resilience and the observation that each centre had its own technology, processes and range of equipment.

After six years and £460m costs the project was cancelled, and a Government committee concluded that the project didn't achieve a single one of its objectives. Not only this, the committee concluded that the proposed solution was not appropriate to the needs of the country. Adrian's presentation proposed four project anti-patterns that appear to have been present in this case and appear to have contributed towards the project failure:

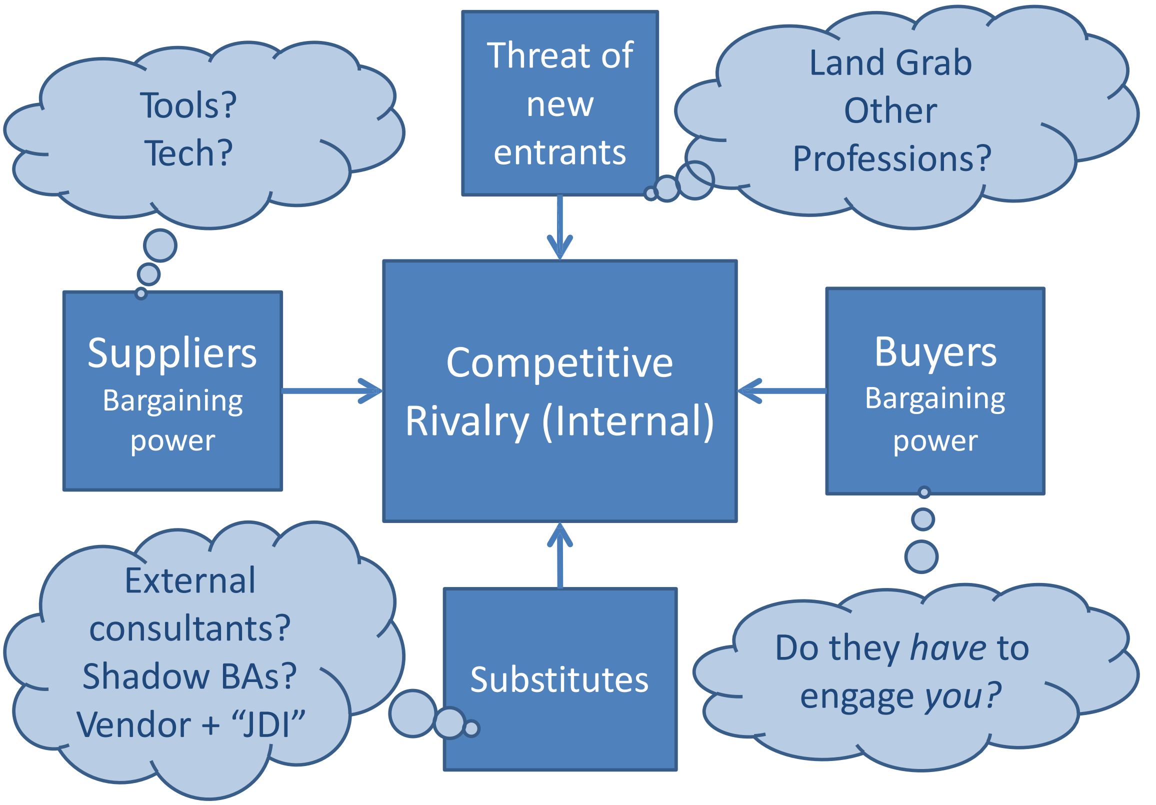
1. No clear statement of the problem as each stakeholder group had their own view of needs, e.g. IT v. response times v. fire fighter safety.
2. Early 'solutioneering' – someone had decided on the best course of action without proper analysis.
3. Key stakeholders were not engaged early enough, e.g. firefighters were not consulted for some years.
4. Inadequate assessment of the situation and data, e.g. there are few (if any) regularly occurring real-world scenarios where you would consider sending a fire engine from the south coast to the north east.

So the obvious question was where was the analysis? Given this was a public sector project, the freedom of information request process was the logical route. Adrian approached the relevant department and asked for a range of information and documentation. At first Adrian was presented with very little by way of response, but he persisted. After seven months some answers came, including the following:

Question	Answer
Request: All requirement artefacts	The department considered that the initial business case constituted the requirements for the project.
Request: Team structure, number of BAs on the project	No information was held by the department, which implies there wasn't a single resource request or resource plan which considered the level of BA resource that would be required.

It is difficult to know the detail of what happened for sure, and whilst we might draw our own conclusions from the FOI response that there was little Business Analysis involvement on this project, we'll never know for certain. **The curious fact is there certainly *are* extremely capable business analysts in the government sphere. The question has to be asked: were they engaged on this project, and if not *why* not.** Perhaps selling the need for BAs isn't optional. But the environment is complex, and getting that first foothold isn't straightforward.

Arian emphasised the need to recognise that the environment that we work in as Business Analysts has its challenges too, and we can employ many of the techniques that we'd use at a macro level to examine our own competitive positioning. For example, Porter's Five Forces might help us understand the competitive landscape we find ourselves in as BAs:



- Substitutes or alternatives do exist, e.g. external consultants – so the BA must be aware of these and if they are present, decide the necessary action to take, as well as how to work or collaborate with them.

- Suppliers as part of their bargaining power may provide dedicated BAs tied to specific IT suppliers or customers – the BA needs to understand these relationships and represent the business.

- Threat of new entrants, i.e. "land grab" by other parts of the business – the BA needs to collaborate with the business architects and project managers.

- Buyers may exercise their buying power by offering BA services so the business does not need to engage you – the BA needs to understand any such relationships and associated gaps or limitations.

What is selling and how do you do it?

The above also represents the threat to the BA - who might stakeholders go to instead of an established BA? But these are also potential customers to the BA and instead of seeing them as competitors or alternatives, collaboration with them could prove beneficial for all concerned. The BA needs to monitor and regularly analyse the landscape.

Everyone knows about bad selling techniques: competitive, hostile, short-term salespersons needs prioritised ahead of the customer's and focused on a solution rather than the problem itself. And not surprisingly, the better way to sell is the opposite of these, i.e. be collaborative, seek to influence, build long term relationships, take in the needs of all parties and seek to solve problems and their causes.

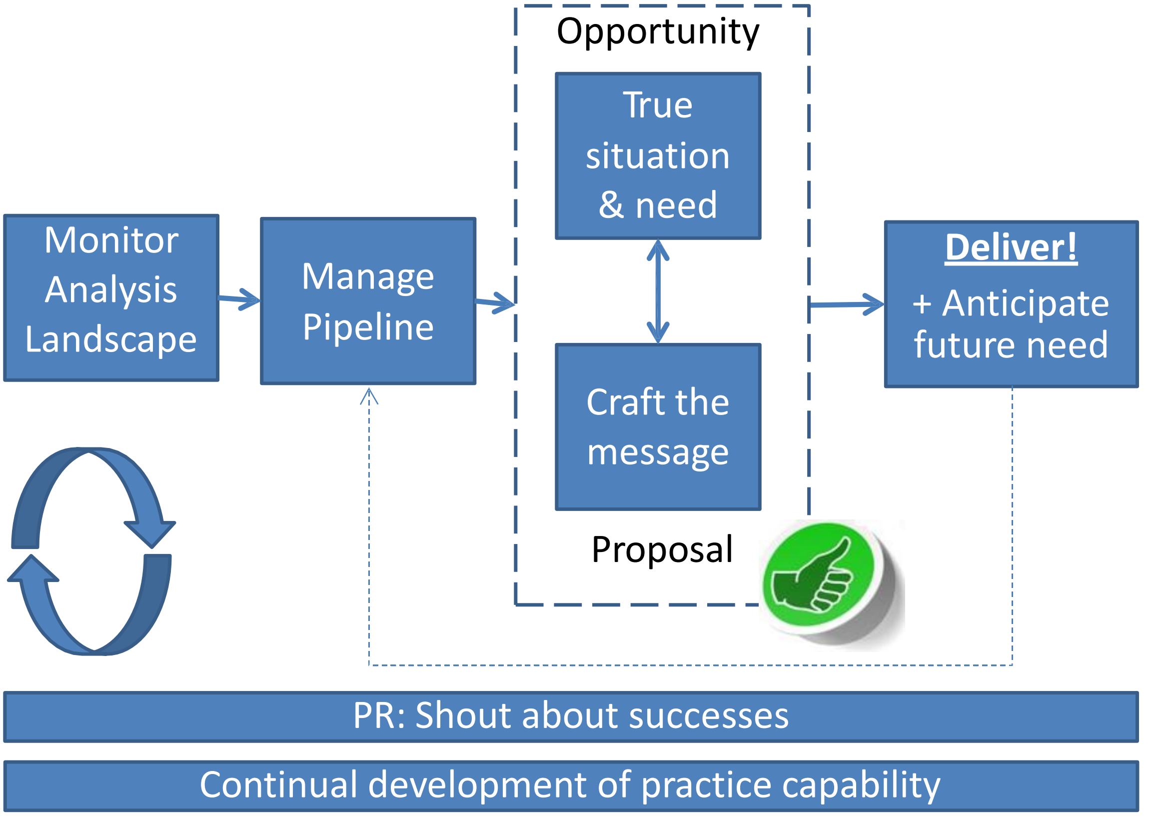
The prospects (the people who need to be convinced) of the value of BAs include:

- The User – who uses the end product, e.g. testers, business architects.
- The Customer – the sponsor (the economic customer) who pays for the service.
- The Owner – the business unit who will own and maintain the product or service.
- The Beneficiary – or end users, i.e. those who benefit from the product or service.

A key aspect of selling is to getting to know or understand your customer. What's happening in their market (is it in turmoil or at a stage in a regular cycle?) and are there internal factors which may be occupying a stakeholder's thoughts and time? Understanding your stakeholder's constraints puts you in a better place to offer help, support and potential solutions. By creating options as part of a solution package you may help the stakeholder to save face in an otherwise impossible situation.

Your approach must be tailored to the needs of your client. Now you are ready to the craft the message, to sell the proposal.

A simple tool that can help us here is a table of features and associated benefits supplemented by stories or examples of recent achievements. In the words of Henry Ford: “You can’t build a reputation on what you’re going to do.”



Now you are cooking, so keep everything under regular review. That means monitoring and analysing the landscape often. Manage the process and actuals against plans, keep a constant eye out for new opportunities and threats, and modify the message as appropriate.

Finally, remember to deliver to plan!

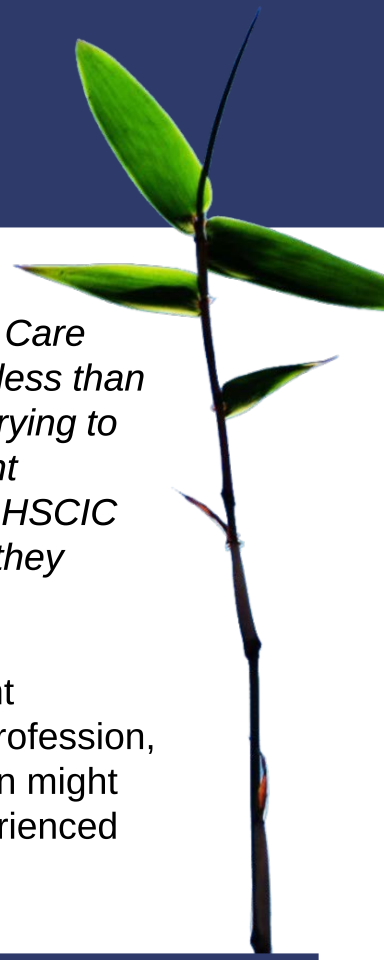
And above all - SHOUT ABOUT SUCCESS.

Most of this can be done via informal meetings with your stakeholders or clients over coffee. Doing it often makes if that much easier to do.

More information on this and other related matters can be found at www.blackmetric.co.uk or by contacting Adrian at Adrian.Reed@blackmetric.co.uk

Grow your own

Business Analysts



The business analysis team within the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) grew from 5 to 20 people in less than 2 years. They were spending a huge amount of time on trying to recruit BAs with experience but weren't attracting the right candidates. ***Christina Lovelock*** *and* ***Sally Wilford*** *from HSCIC spoke at the BA Conference Europe and described how they tackled the problem. Lawrence Darvill reports.*

Self-sufficiency can easily be under-rated, and at a recent conference talk on developing BAs who are new to the profession, I found myself reflecting on the fact that growing your own might well be the most rational solution to the shortage of experienced and suitably motivated BAs.

The HSCIC story

Any number of practice leads bemoan the shortage of suitably skilled BAs, but the team at the HSCIC made the brave decision to develop new practitioners. Their BAs provide internal consultancy services across the organisation with the focus on supporting NHS data flows and evidence to support decision-making.

High demand within projects and programmes for BA support had brought a shortage of BA resources – never a good place to be. After three failed rounds of recruitment the practice leader uttered the immortal words, "it would be quicker to train my own BAs". What at first was a throwaway comment became a new way forward.

The options they considered included apprenticeships and the NHS graduate scheme. The decision was made to focus on an entry level role for recent graduates and internal or external candidates with some relevant experience.

A different approach

This decision marked a departure from the norm and required a detailed business case and something of a leap of faith from those who signed off on the new approach. It's important to note that the bottom line for the business case was financial, with any new approach having to stack up in terms of productivity and the ability to cross charge internally. The early savings realised through lower early salaries and the removal of recruitment fees would only go so far, and new BAs would need to demonstrate their productivity within months rather than years.

The crucial focus of recruiting entry level BAs was to fall on transferable personal skills and the individuals' aptitude to take on a career within business analysis. Any relevant sector knowledge and or professional skills would be a bonus. The bulk if not all of their professional skills would be achieved through training, coaching and mentoring.

Following approval, the practice lead wasted no time in going to market and soon had 65 applications to sieve through. They had indeed opened up a very different market and provided a fresh crop of candidate options. The selection process was adjusted to reflect the focus on transferable personal skills and 11 people were selected for interview.

Three initial roles were filled. One successful candidate came with a study background in healthcare, some early work in project support, and systems analysis experience with a supplier of an electronic patient records system. This candidate would not have met the original specification for a senior BA but has an excellent grounding for a BA career. Importantly this candidate was well researched and informed on the role of the BA and was making a clear choice to pursue a career within the profession – a factor that should not be underestimated.

Induction and integration

Integrating and bringing the new BAs up to speed was the next and perhaps most important challenge. This phase of the initiative required careful management. The first step was to keep the existence of the new BAs quiet. This would allow control over their development and more selective involvement in project work.

The induction process was necessarily very different to what had been done before and included coverage of basic tools and techniques. Early exposure to project work was achieved through tailoring BA work packages for the new hires to cut their teeth on. The work package was a clearly defined BA task that formed part of a larger piece of BA delivery and had enough substance for the new BA to hone their skills and achieve early engagement with stakeholders.

Defining and allocating the work package required the more senior BAs to change their working pattern and make time to construct the package with line manager involvement. Senior BA buy-in was pivotal in making the staged approach to delivery work. An early case study illustrating what was achieved via the work package approach was used to gain wider buy-in.

Training

In parallel with their work package delivery, the new hires are working through the International Diploma in Business Analysis. The timing of study on different modules is designed so that trainees can quickly use skills introduced on their course in the workplace. Accreditation has been highlighted as instilling confidence in the new hires and demonstrated organisational commitment to their career development.

Formal training is complemented by practice events, development workshops, team meetings and bite size sessions from internal SMEs, peer reviews and support, and the availability of standard documents and templates on a SharePoint site.

Six months into the initiative and the new hires were making a gradual shift from a work package approach to more holistic involvement in projects. Their input was now more visible and their services chargeable.

Learning points

- The management role and focus has to adjust to manage more junior BAs and provide work packages with the right level of routine and challenging work.

- The wider BA team has to buy-in to the approach and support the development of entry level colleagues. In particular, buy-in from senior BAs to the work package approach is key – they may believe that it's quicker for them to do it themselves, but it doesn't help support growth.

- Consideration needs to be given to achieving the correct ratio of experienced and entry level recruits.

- There needs to be a carefully planned approach to candidate selection with the focus on personal skills and aptitude for the role. All new employees will expect some form of career ladder.

- Training needs to be planned carefully to support development and integrate with the exposure that will be gained on projects.

Benefits

The entry level role creates opportunity for highly motivated staff who are providing BA services within a year. Candidates are more committed and motivated than the available pool of more experienced BAs in the external market.

Given that no suitable experienced BAs were available, the process of securing new recruits:

- Improved response times to meet demand
- Supported peaks in workload
- Allowed services to be recharged within six months
- Improved cover for annual leave
- Improved the learning environment within the team
- Ensured that the organisational values of professionalism and innovation were realised in practice
- Demonstrated the organisation's commitment to business analysis by taking responsibility and providing an entry level point into the profession

Summary

If you are repeatedly trying to hire experienced BAs then recruiting at an entry level may help break this cycle. The business case needs to be prepared in detail but it can pay dividends within six months.