

Business Analysis Managers Forum

May 2015 – BA Tooling Workshop Results





Introduction

Problem:

How can a specialist BA software tool* be useful to a BA? Why don't all BAs and BA practices use tooling?

Process:

At the May 2015 BA Managers Forum, a workshop lasting approx 30 was run, with about 25 people split into 3 groups to discuss the areas of:

- advantages of tooling
- disadvantages and concerns of tooling
- other considerations

Results reporting:

After the workshop the results of the advantages and disadvantages sessions were grouped into 3 areas:

- Specialist tooling effects on the BA **process**
- How **people** are affected by specialist BA tooling
- The specialist BA **tool** itself

- And other considerations

*That is specialist software tools designed for use by Business Analysts e.g. JIRA, Rational Requisite Pro / Requirements Composer, DOORS, etc., compared to the use of generic software such as MS Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Visio, etc



Summary of the results

The detailed results are on the following slides. The following are some key points observed:

- For many of the advantages of having a tool, there was the opposite as a disadvantage
- The presence of tooling didn't seem to be an obvious conclusion, but more a matter of opinion on how the practice wanted to be run
- About 50% (an anecdotal rather than a scientific measure) of practices had some BA tooling, but some weren't using what they had. It would be interesting in a future study to investigate more
- Integration of any tool with other teams that BAs handoff too (Architecture, Test, etc) seemed to be a point of interest
- The expected benefits of traceability and reuse of requirements or models didn't seem to be of as high importance as expected

Specialist BA Tooling - effects on the BA Process

Advantages	Disadvantages / Concerns
Save time/increase capacity with a specialist tool, possibly with automation	Increased time to use a specialist tool, hence getting the required output for stakeholders in a reasonable time
Save time, increase quality in re-use of requirements/models	Little confidence in quality of hence little reuse of existing requirements/models
Integration with other disciplines e.g. testing, architecture, etc if using the same or an integrated tool, hence saving data entry, traceability, etc	Lack of integration with other team's tools hence leading to rekeying of data and errors. But this would be true if using Word/Excel/Visio/etc.?
Forces structured thinking / can enforce a process	May be inflexible, rigid structure enforced which is not suitable for all projects
	Focus on tool (and tool skills) and distracts from concentrating on the quality and process
Different ways of expressing requirements, i.e. via business modelling. Business modelling may help capture more requirements and ensure through understanding of the problem through multiple perspectives	A specialist tool doesn't capture all information (possibly down to the quality or scope of the tool?)
Professional, consistent output across a BA team	Stakeholders ability to understand output, i.e. ability to understand BPMN or UML nomenclature, understand data diagrams, etc
	Adds sufficient benefit to a project's outcome?
Traceability of requirements to benefits, processes, data, use cases, test cases, etc.	
Requirements management easier, including team support	
Enforces a common terminology	
Enforces a common modelling language, structure and standards across the BA team	
Provides audit trail, version control, change control	



How people are affected by specialist BA tooling

Advantages	Disadvantages / Concerns
Improve employee engagement - right tools for the job	
Interest in new tool, can see benefits – motivator	Being forced to use tool, cannot see the benefits – de-motivator
Improve CVs / invest in people	
	Increased time to learn for new starters then become effective
	Initial and ongoing training time & costs
	Knowledge and skills leakage when a BA leaves (how does this differ to business knowledge leakage?)



The specialist BA tool itself

Advantages	Disadvantages / Concerns
Enables collaboration including remote teams	Issues with remote teams accessing, performance, etc.
Can demonstrate compliance with standards	Applying and policing standards; global standards v local standards
Measure outcome and performance	
Dashboards & MI / monitor and track / transparency	
Single source of information	
	Poor tool choice can inhibit not enhance
	Initial and ongoing cost of licences, training, etc.
	Overheads of maintenance of the tool / another supplier relationship to maintain, etc.
	Poorly designed, buggy software not effective
	Multiple tools used in an organisation (especially after mergers with other organisations, or very large organisations)



Other Considerations

What tools are used?

- MS Word & Excel (Generic)
- MS Visio (Generic)

- DOORS (CARE)
- Blueprint (CARE)
- Rational Requisite Pro / Requirements Composer (CARE)
- Sparx Enterprise Architect (CASE)
- JIRA (CARE)
- Rally (CARE)
- CalibreRM (CARE)
- Case Complete (CARE)
- iRise (CARE)
- Jama (CARE)
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CARE = Computer aided requirements engineering

CASE = Computer aided software engineering

For a longer list of software, see:

<http://makingofsoftware.com/resources/list-of-rm-tools>

Other considerations


- Does ease of use (or lack of) raise or lower productivity compared to MS Word/Excel ?
- Irony: an IT team that doesn't use IT?

- Build or buy?
- Is choosing a tool just like any other COTS procurement?
- Defining requirements for a requirements tool?
- Testing of the tool
- Support of the tool
- Etc..

- Training of new starters and team in tool and techniques ("A fool with a tool is still a fool!")
- Defining/choosing standards to be used, and then auditing
- How to get the information out of the tool to the intended audience in an appropriate form?
- Can the intended audience understand the business models, e.g. logical data models, BPMN nomenclature?
- How to record approvals, capture comments etc.?
- Repository of data
- Access to the tool

Appendices





Appendix A - Direct transcription of workshop notes - Advantages

Use of tools


- Enforces a process
- Professional
- Share
- Track and trace
- Audit trail/historic
- Align with Test, Architecture, etc.
- Common language
- Good for planning
- Change control
- Standards
- Collaborative ways of working
- Combined features in one tool
- Usability improved
- Measure outcome and performance
- Stability
- Transferable skills
- New interesting in new tool – motivator
- Employee engagement

Aids

- _Multi-dimension universe
- Can it come out (?)
- Integration
- Single source of information
- Common language
- Forcing structured thinking
- Allow process simulation
- Monitor /tracking
- Version control
- Helps with BA Brand
- Team development / training

Benefits

- Can give:
 - structure
 - tracability
 - resue
 - consistency
 - less training (?) (consistent tests)?
- Can enforce:
 - regulatory
- Automation possible
- Can demonstrate compliance
- New tools, new technology and integration
- Save time/increase capacity
- Remote working possible
- Version control
- Transparency
- One stop shop
- Identification of dependencies
- Improve CVs / Invest in people
- Dashboards/MI
- Visibility of what you are doing



Appendix B - Direct transcription of workshop notes - Disadvantages and concerns

Group 1

- Costs
- Increased timescales
- Training required
- Admin overhead
- Capability
- Constrains your thinking
- Islands of information (difficult to share)
- Stakeholders don't like the output (have to spend extra time formatting for review)
- Tool doesn't allow necessarily allow capture of all types of info required
- May have different tools for the same thing
- Difficulty to standardise
- Different tools for different stages in lifecycle – integration
- Reduced quality of work due to focus on how tool is used properly
- Morale issues if being forced to use tool
- Time taken for people to learn tool

Group 2

- Increased time to learn @ start
- No adoption/ inconsistent adoption
- Bogged down in using tool rather than analysis
- Cost business users
- Onboarding setup + new people/access online
- Compatibility issues/implementation issues
- People driven by tool skills than BA skills
- Maintenance overhead
- Knowledge on the tool leave (tool super users)
- Time required for configuration, e.g. document layout
- Global standards v local standards
- Security of software
- Do you need a tool/process?
- Company takeovers, not on the same tool
- No trust in existing content means people don't reuse

Group 3

- Can get in the way – need to know how to use
- Old fashioned/poor UI
- Geographically dispersed – performance issues
- Negative Impact on a?ture
- Bugs and their impact
- 3rd party supplier relationship
- Inefficiency transferring data from one too to another, and data inputting errors
- Bringing words/images/diagrams together
- Presentation for stakeholders
- Too much information

Appendix C - Direct transcription of workshop notes notes – Other considerations

