Business Analyst to Business Architect

To Infinity . . . and Beyond!

White Paper

March 2010

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Introduction

In order to survive in the current, competitive business environment, organizations need to eke out the greatest efficiencies possible from their operations, all the while improving their responsiveness to their customers’ needs and other changing market dynamics.

As technological advances and globalization have become major impacting factors in recent years, some practitioners have responded with a move toward developing a deep knowledge and expertise in specific areas, becoming “specialists” in their fields. A specialist’s intimate detailed understanding and proficiency with tools of the trade are instrumental in achieving a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

However in many organizations, there are a limited number of slots for specialists. As organizations grow and change in response to any number of internal and external factors, some individuals are asked to perform roles, either temporarily or longer-term, that require them to develop skills outside their areas of expertise. Their “tool box” then becomes filled with a wide array of skills, experience and personal characteristics, beyond those of a traditional specialist. This is the case with Business Analysts, who, over the course of their careers are often assigned to play a variety of different roles on a number of projects.

Having solid skills in a number of areas and a broader perspective, a “generalist” approach, is also invaluable, especially when a rapid change of direction is necessary to compete in a highly volatile business environment in response to potential threats or to take advantage of opportunities with limited availability.

A new profession is emerging to fill this need—the Business Architect. A Business Architect essentially provides a “global, forward-looking view” of the organization, and works to ensure that the concerns and interests of all areas across the organization work in concert to achieve the overall goals for the benefit of all.

Organizations are creating positions for individuals who have proficiencies in multiple disciplines (business analysis, project management, change management, etc.) and significant experience in many functional areas (including: marketing, finance, operations, IT, etc.). The Business Architect has both depth and breadth of knowledge across the entire organization.

Given the fact that many Business Analysts have had the opportunity to work on cross-functional projects, some may be interested in exploring Business Architecture as a possible career path.
Business Analyst

Long before the formal title of Business Analyst existed, individuals were performing the role informally. It is only relatively recently that the market finally understands the value and necessity of the formal role.

So what, exactly, is a business analyst?

According to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®), a Business Analyst is:

“… any person who performs business analysis activities, no matter what their job title or organizational role may be. Business analysis practitioners include not only people with the job title of business analyst, but may also include business systems analysts, systems analysts, requirements engineers, process analysts, product managers, product owners, enterprise analysts, business architects, management consultants, or any other person who performs the tasks described in the BABOK® Guide, including those who also perform related disciplines such as project management, software development, quality assurance, and interaction design.”

In other words, regardless of title, if you are doing business analysis, you are a Business Analyst.

So what is business analysis?

Traditionally, it referred to the activities of eliciting, analyzing and documenting business process or new feature requirements for implementation by information systems technical staff. In effect, business analysis was perceived as little more than “note taking”.

Nowadays, businesses are acknowledging that the success of a project (and, for that matter, an organization) relies significantly on good, solid business analysis. Critical skills such as clear problem definition, the ability to reach a common vision amongst diverse business stakeholders, and the ability to cross the cultural divide between business and technical organizations and reach a collective understanding of the business problem and solution are invaluable in the current competitive marketplace, where timing and responsiveness are such important differentiating factors.

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1 A Guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK® Guide), Version 2.0
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Business Analyst Career Options

Certainly, the Business Analyst (BA) is a vital role in any organization, especially ones with a reliance on IT-supported processes. And while most BA job descriptions include the core critical skills listed above, many include a cadre of other skills, and the degree to which a BA uses, masters, or aspires to acquire those skills may help to identify a logical career path.

Within the business analysis field, a Business Analyst can be promoted to a Senior Business Analyst or a Lead Business Analyst, taking on larger projects and additional responsibilities and directing the efforts of other BAs. Also, many organizations employ Business Analysis Managers, responsible for running a department, setting standards and managing people. The International Institute for Business Analysis (IIBA) provides certification for business analysis practitioners who want to excel in the Business Analysis career track. (See Appendix A for more information on the IIBA.)

For a long time, it was thought that the only advancement opportunity available to a Business Analyst was to become a Project Manager (PM). While in fact some BA and PM skill sets overlap, many of the skills, experience and personal characteristics required to be successful in each of these roles are fundamentally different. But, this career path is limiting to many Business Analysts who have passion around the core problem solving and analysis skill set.

Besides project management, what are good career options for a Business Analyst? Certainly, Process Analysis, Functional Management, Account Management or Client Partner roles are all potential avenues for a BA to pursue, as all rely on key skills that an experienced BA would possess.

However, the BA may want to consider a newly emerging field—that of the Business Architect. In this role, a Business Analyst can apply his/her core business and analysis skills at a wider enterprise level and increase their visibility and career options within the organization.

Business Architect

What is a Business Architect?

With the help of Subject Matter Experts (SME), the Business Architect (BArch) converts high-level strategy and business needs of the organization into an integrated vision of the future and then redesigns business capabilities to deliver the goals of the vision. This provides a holistically complete, coordinated, and set of sequenced business models (the best of which become roadmaps for new profit and growth) that are broken down into initiatives for implementation.

The BArch researches the feasibility of new initiatives, assesses emerging opportunities, leads pilot studies, and addresses organizational readiness, sustainability, risks and challenges.
The BArch utilizes best practices and market knowledge to deliver innovative solutions to functional areas while maintaining global business objectives.

The BArch prepares and presents business cases for high-level initiatives to Executive Management for approval, funding, resource allocation and prioritization.

The BArch facilitates cross-organizational knowledge-sharing forums among Subject Matter Experts, sponsor and shareholders, and mentors new team members.

The BArch’s perspective is broad and forward-looking, focusing not only on the ultimate desired future state of the organization, but also the journey along the way which may offer additional risks, opportunities, or alternatives that must be considered to achieve optimal overall results.

The following is a chart that compares the competencies of the Business Analyst and the Business Architect. Using it, a Business Analyst can create a plan for enhancing current competencies to compete in the Business Architecture arena.
## Business Analyst/Business Architect Competency Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Business Analyst</th>
<th>Business Architect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Analytical Skills      | Multiple Perspectives  | Has the ability to understand various stakeholders’ perspectives with regard to a business project.  
Possesses the ability to balance and align focus based on the business objectives of all stakeholders at a project level.  
Understands the potential impact of different projects on each other, in terms of competing resources and deliverables. | Has the ability to understand, at the enterprise level, the organization’s business and stakeholders’ perspectives with regard to the entire organization.  
Possesses the ability to balance and align focus based on the business objectives of all stakeholders at an enterprise level.  
Understands the relationships between influencing factors and applicable dependencies and how they potentially impact the organization and each other, given different solution scenarios. |
| Analytical Skills      | Problem Solving        | Is able to identify practical solutions to business issues and problems.  
Can evaluate business solutions to determine ability to meet all stakeholder needs within project boundaries. | Is able to diagnose root causes of business issues, problems and potential opportunities and develop business architecture solutions.  
Can identify and resolve barriers, be they cultural, technical, operational, organizational, and/or governance. |
| Analytical Skills      | Business Knowledge     | Can quickly assimilate business knowledge.  
Is able to formulate probing questions to elicit business knowledge from the stakeholders.  
Has practical knowledge in the functional area being impacted by the project, or has the ability to quickly acquire a solid understanding.  
Understands how the project relates to the defined business direction. | Displays a broad understanding of the organization’s business and its overall architectural environment  
Has a thorough understanding of the business direction and strategy.  
Understands how core processes deliver value and meet the organization’s defined business objectives.  
Has a working knowledge of the organization’s business related functions.  
Understands business structures and enabling technologies and how they impact or will be impacted by business architecture engagements. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Skill(S), Experience (E), or Personal Characteristic (C)</th>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Business Analyst</th>
<th>Business Architect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Skills</td>
<td>(E)</td>
<td>Business Knowledge</td>
<td>Has the ability to understand the financial impact of the project on the organization's bottom-line.</td>
<td>General proficiency in other disciplines, including Sales/Marketing, Operations, IT strategy, Finance, HR, Project Management. Significant work experience within these disciplines is a plus.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understands how to define and quantify costs, savings and risks for a given project, feature or change request.</td>
<td>Has the ability to understand the financial implications and impact of different solution sets to the organization's bottom line.</td>
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<td>Has the ability to perform and present cost/benefit and risk analysis and identify potential trade-offs of competing solutions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provides relevant insights on alternative solutions' financial payoffs, milestones, break-even points, and revenue potential in the short and long term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Skills</td>
<td>(E)</td>
<td>Financial Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>Program/Project Process and Data Management</td>
<td>Can estimate Business Analyst tasks/activities.</td>
<td>Has the ability to coordinate and monitor multiple simultaneous initiatives to prevent or minimize potential negative impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is able to determine project areas where BA resources are needed and what BA activities need to be provided.</td>
<td>Has extensive knowledge of Business Architecture approach, concepts, tools and techniques and establishes enterprise-wide standards and best practices.</td>
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<td>Has a general understanding of Business Process Management concepts, tools and techniques.</td>
<td>Possesses a thorough understanding of Change Management concepts, tools and techniques.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is able to meet project schedule deadlines.</td>
<td>Possesses a general understanding of Data Management and Design.</td>
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<td>Maintains a focus on customer and business needs when doing projects.</td>
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<td>Is capable of successfully managing a small scope project to completion.</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>Social/Interpersonal</td>
<td>Works well with others, independently and as a team member and/or team leader.</td>
<td>Encourages creativity, innovation, and autonomy in others to support team effectiveness.</td>
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<td>Participates as a positive and participatory team member on the Business Analysis team.</td>
<td>Demonstrates the ability to recognize and enlist expertise to improve the overall objectives of the organization and enhance the success of specific initiatives.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates initiative in completing assignments.</td>
<td>Inspires others to support the organization's mission and core values.</td>
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<td>Takes pride in performing high quality work and exhibits commitment and enthusiasm in meeting project goals.</td>
<td>Promotes a learning environment across the enterprise.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exhibits professionalism, fairness, and integrity.</td>
<td>Sets an example of professionalism, inclusiveness, fairness, and integrity and encourages team building and collaboration among team members and across the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>Has the ability to identify potential conflicts and proactively work to mitigate them.</td>
<td>Provides a broad organization-wide view that reinforces the ultimate goals and need for collaborative efforts and cooperation between all participating stakeholders, regardless of their individual perspectives.</td>
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<td>Facilitates group sessions to a common vision.</td>
<td>Enables others to work together effectively across functional groups by establishing and maintaining an environment and culture of trust and shared vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
<td>Keep Pace with Technology Advances</td>
<td>Is able to understand technical solutions and architecture designs.</td>
<td>Possesses a general understanding of existing technology in the organizational environment and emerging technologies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has the ability to use standard requirements management and modeling tools.</td>
<td>Has a thorough knowledge of the organization’s Business Architecture and Enterprise Architecture standards and designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Interviewing Writing/Documentation Facilitation Presentation</td>
<td>Provides clear, concise, and accurate oral and written communication in a manner appropriate to the audience.</td>
<td>Has exceptional oral, written and presentation communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Skill(S), Experience (E), or Personal Characteristic (C)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>Interviewing, Writing/Documentation, Facilitation, Presentation</td>
<td>Has the ability to present and facilitate business issues and solutions to audiences of stakeholders with different and sometimes conflicting perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preparing for a Career in Business Architecture

Business Architects are generalists by definition, possessing a working knowledge of the terminology, tools, interests and concerns of each part of the organization and the interdependencies between them.

Business Analysts interested in pursuing this career path should work to develop the skills, experience and personal characteristics outlined on the competency matrix. While some of them, by their nature, are inherent or must be developed informally, formalized programs and organizations exist to use as resources. Courses to certify Business Architects are now available. The Business Architects Association (www.businessarchitects.org) is a professional not-for-profit organization that supports Business Architecture as a profession, sets policies and establishes standards, and certifies Business Architects.

The future may not be infinity, but it is beyond where you currently are . . . and may be in Business Architecture!
Author Profiles

**Jack Hilty** Jack Hilty is a Certified Business Architect CBA® and a Certified Business Process Professional CBPP® and has 25 years of enterprise-wide experience in providing overall leadership in the design and development of process-driven business models and systems. He specializes in business process management, change management, project management, business architecture and enterprise architecture. Jack is the Managing Principal at SentientPoint, Inc. ([www.sentientpoint.com](http://www.sentientpoint.com)) and teaches at Northwestern University School of Continuing Studies (Business Analyst Certification Program), the University of Chicago Graham School (Business Process Management & Advanced Project Management Certification) and DePaul University (Business Architecture). Jack holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Science from DePaul University and is the President of the Business Architects Association®.

**Cathy Brunsting** is a Senior Business Analyst at Geneca ([www.geneca.com](http://www.geneca.com)). She has over 25 years experience in all aspects of business analysis, systems development and project management, from project inception to customer acceptance. She is skilled in the analysis of business problems, as well as the design, implementation, testing, and on-going support of technical solutions. Her areas of expertise include Interactive Solutions, e-Business Solutions, Financial Systems, Gaming and Lottery Systems, Telecommunications (Operator Console, Voice Recognition, and Call Processing), Order Entry/Subscription Services, and Database Design. Cathy is also the President of the Chicagoland chapter of the International Institute of Business Analysis™ (IIBA).
Appendix A

International Institute for Business Analysis (IIBA)

The International Institute for Business Analysis (IIBA®) has created the Certified Business Analysis Professional™ (CBAP®) designation. To obtain this designation a Business Analyst must meet be able to demonstrate that s/he has met certain requirements, as follows:

- **Work Experience Requirement** – BAs must have 7,500 (about 5 years) of business analysis work experience within the past 10 years in tasks specifically related to the knowledge areas defined in the BABOK®.

- **Knowledge Areas Requirement** – BAs must demonstrate experience and expertise in business analysis work experience in at least four of the six knowledge areas as defined in the BABOK®.

- **Education Requirement** – BAs must have at least a high school level (or equivalent) education. NOTE: There is not reduction in work experience for any additional education.

- **Professional Development Requirement** – BAs must have at least 21 hours of professional development (i.e., training) in the last four years. The content of the professional development must be directly related to business analysis or its underlying competencies as defined by the BABOK®.

- **Reference Requirement** – BAs must obtain two references from a career manager, client (internal or external) or Certified Business Analysis Professional.

Business Analysts who are interested in obtaining the CBAP® designation must complete an application documenting the above requirements. If the application is approved, the BA is eligible to take the CBAP® exam which tests the applicant’s knowledge of business analysis, as defined by the BABOK®.

Additional information about the BABOK® and the CBAP® exam can be found at the IIBA™ website (www.theiiba.org).