

Becoming a Business Analyst

What is Business Analysis?

“The practice of enabling **change** in an organizational **context** by defining **needs** and recommending **solutions** that delivers **value** to **stakeholders**”

When determining which Business Analyst career is best suited for you consider the following:

Work Experience: Business analysis is about identifying business needs and solving problems. A sales person who uses solution selling first identifies the potential customer needs and then determines which of the product set will help solve the customer’s problem.

Knowledge: One of the underlying competencies in *A Guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK® Guide)* from International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) is Business Knowledge. Do you understand the basics structure of business and its common functional areas such as human resources, finance and information technology? Do you have specific industry knowledge (e.g. banking, utilities, telecommunications, health care)?

Skills and Experience: There are many techniques used by a BA—see chapter 9 of the *BABOK® Guide*. You may have experience modeling data or processes, or experience planning and estimating work, presenting, creating business cases, creating and conducting training—this list represents just some of the skills that transfer to business analysis.

Road Map – Roles and Definitions

The role names listed in the IIBA® Career Road Map are not job titles but rather a representation of the various tasks, techniques and knowledge needed by an individual to be successful in the role. The roles could be combined into one position; for example, a business requirements analyst could also have deep expertise in process and therefore the business requirements analyst and process analyst roles can be considered as a career path. Another example: a Systems Analyst may be part of a software development project that utilizes the Agile method. Therefore the Systems Analyst has Agile expertise, and he/she could hold an Intermediate Systems Analyst and Intermediate Agile Analyst role, but his/her title could be Intermediate Systems Analyst.

Business Requirements Analyst

The business requirements analyst is tasked with helping the business meet its objectives and goals. He/she will understand how work is being conducted, and through analysis, determine solutions to the issues. The solution could include training, a process change, modifications to business rules, modifications to or implementation of new technology, or a combination of all four. The business requirements analyst will work with stakeholders to conduct a feasibility study and possibly a business case to justify an investment in change. The person conducting this work may not have the title business requirements analyst but the activities they engage in are business analysis.

At the beginning of the Business Requirements Analyst career, this business analyst looks for guidance from more senior Business Requirements Analysts to ensure his/her work is complete. They will assist in larger projects only with supervision.

Skills/Knowledge/Experience

- Undergraduate Degree or College Diploma
- Knowledge of the *BABOK® Guide*
- Good communications skills (oral and written)
- Good interpersonal and consultative skills
- Facilitation skills
- Analytical thinking and problem solving
- Detail oriented and committed to a high level of accuracy
- Organizational skills
- Knowledge of business structure
- Stakeholder analysis
- Business rules analysis
- Data analysis
- Organization modeling
- Requirements workshops/interviews/observation
- Decision analysis
- Costs benefit analysis
- Modeling processes using various notation (Use Cases, Activity Diagrams, Business Process Modeling Notation, Workflows, Swimlanes)
- Knowledge of technology structures: networks, database, communications, internet

Business Systems Analyst (BSA)

The BSA will utilize broad IT knowledge and their knowledge of the business to implement IT solutions which address business needs. He or she will identify, develop and implement effective technology solutions that address smaller less complex initiatives.

The BSA ensures the IT solution reflects the functionality necessary to address business goals and objects (e.g. reduction in costs, increased efficiencies). He/she traces business requirements through to test plans and cases, reducing time to fix issues and identify anomalies. The BSA ensures non-functional requirements meet service level agreements reducing impacts to business effectiveness. This business analyst will typically work directly with the IT department.

At the beginning of the Business Systems Analyst career, a person in this role looks for guidance from more senior BSAs to ensure his/her work is complete. They will assist in larger projects but only with supervision.

Skills/Knowledge/Experience

- Knowledge of the *BABOK® Guide*
- Degree or college diploma/certificate in business or information technology, or other undergraduate degree
- Models systems and data to a logical level, user interface design, and prototyping, decision tables/trees, data flows
- Modeling notation (UML, Structured, BPMN)
- Writing unambiguous, verified requirements to a testable level (functional and non-functional requirements)
- Knowledge of software development lifecycle (SDLC)
- Knowledge of technology system interfaces and data integration; networks, operating systems
- Good communications skills (oral and written)
- Good interpersonal and consultative skills
- Facilitation
- Analytical thinking and problem solving
- Detail oriented and committed to a high level of accuracy
- Organizational skills

Systems Analyst

A Systems Analyst performs business analysis tasks through specialization in understanding the business usage of information technology (IT) and helping technology add value to the business. He or she understands and is comfortable with a variety of technical architectures and platforms, and understands IT capabilities and which applications in an organization deliver various capabilities. The Systems Analyst may specialize in a specific set of technologies or applications an organization uses and the specifics of how the applications are used within an organization. This role will typically liaise with the Business Requirements Analyst or Business Systems Analyst.

At the beginning of the Systems Analyst career, someone in this role looks for guidance from more senior systems analyst to ensure his/her work is complete. This role will assist in larger projects but only with supervision.

Skills/Knowledge/Experience

- Degree in Information Systems
- Knowledge of the *BABOK® Guide*
- Models systems and to a physical level, user interface design, and prototyping, decision tables/trees, data flows
- Modeling notation (UML, Structured, BPMN)
- Writing unambiguous, verified functional requirements to a testable level
- Knowledge of software development lifecycle (SDLC)
- Knowledge of technology system interfaces, application architecture and data integration; networks, operating systems, commercial-off-the-shelf software, web architecture
- Data extraction, transformation and loading (ELT) database management systems (DBMS), output (report) design and data queries (SQL)

Functional Analyst

The Functional Business Analyst performs business analysis tasks through specializing in a specific technology product and its features and functions capabilities. They are not specialists in an organization's processes or use of technology, but a specific technology independent of an organization. This analyst consults (internal or external) on the specific workings, features and functions of specific software, commonly COTS (commercial off the shelf) or ERP (enterprise resource management) software.

The functional business analyst has deep knowledge of the technology product and has experience in a variety of implementation contexts in varying organizations, and sometimes industries. He or she helps organizations and stakeholders define the usage and integration with other systems and implement the features and functions of the technology product to meet business requirements.

At the beginning of the Functional Analyst's career, he/she will look for guidance from more senior functional analysts to ensure his/her work is complete. This role will assist in larger projects but only with supervision.

Skills/Knowledge/Experience

- Undergraduate degree or diploma
- Knowledge of the *BABOK® Guide*
- Subject matter expertise (SME) in the area served by the software (e.g. finance, human resources, supply chain)
- Experience in requirements elicitation, fit/gap analysis, and preparation of functional design documents
- Experience identifying opportunities for process and system improvements either in existing designs or by adopting new functionalities in the software
- Provide SME content documentation for training material
- Ability to work well with diverse groups of people with a clear vision of business needs
- Ability to participate on multi-disciplinary work teams to achieve successful execution of complex implementation projects
- Facilitating organizational change management strategies/plans, approaches and tactics with different business units
- Modeling: process, data, systems (UML, BPMN)
- Business rules analysis
- Measures and Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
- Organizational readiness assessment

Service Request Analyst

A Service Request Analyst performs business analysis tasks by specializing in supporting stakeholders of a specific system application, maintaining the system, and handling user inquiries, user issues, and enhancements to the system. This analyst has a deep understanding of a specific application or set of applications he or she supports, how users use the application, and what other systems integrate with the application.

The Service Request Analyst may be involved in projects where the system that he or she supports is being updated, integrated or enhanced as part of a solution. A Service Request Analyst may know the technology and business usage of an application so well that he or she struggles to identify and articulate the true capabilities the solution requires or provides that are agnostic of the technology or business operations.

Most of the work this role performs is related to service requests, user inquiries and issues, enhancement requests and production issues. The complexity and context remains within a simple scope of work. This profile is referred to as many different titles in varying organizations and cultures.

Skills/Knowledge/Experience

- Relevant college or university degree or equivalent work experience
- Knowledge of the *BABOK® Guide*
- Subject matter expertise (SME) in the area served by the software (e.g. finance, human resources, supply chain)
- System evaluation studies utilizing data analysis to identify quality/performance improvements to system
- Experience identifying opportunities for process and system improvements either in existing designs or by adopting new functionalities in the software
- System enhancement requests elicitation, analysis, documentation and implementation

Agile Analyst

In the agile world, software requirements are developed through continual exploration of the business need. Requirements are elicited and refined through an iterative process of planning, defining acceptance criteria, prioritizing, developing, and reviewing the results. Throughout the iterative planning and analysis of requirements, business analysis practitioners must constantly ensure that the features requested by the users align with the product's business goals, especially as the business goals evolve and change over time.

Agile business analysis is about ensuring the right information is available to the development team in the right level of detail, at the right time, so they can build the right product.

Irrespective of job titles, business analysis is about ensuring the project is able to deliver the maximum value for customers and adapting to the evolving business needs.

When new to the Agile Analyst role, a business analyst looks for guidance from more senior Agile Analysts to ensure his/her work is complete. This role will assist in larger projects but only with supervision.

Skills/Knowledge/Experience

- Undergrad degree in Business Administration , Computer Science or equivalent experience
- Knowledge of the IIBA BABOK and IIBA Agile Extension
- User Stories
- Time boxing and Estimating
- Modeling: data, processes
- Prototyping
- Knowledge of Scrum and/or XP, Lean and Kanban Software Development
- Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM)
- Feature Driven Development (FDD)