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Business Analysis

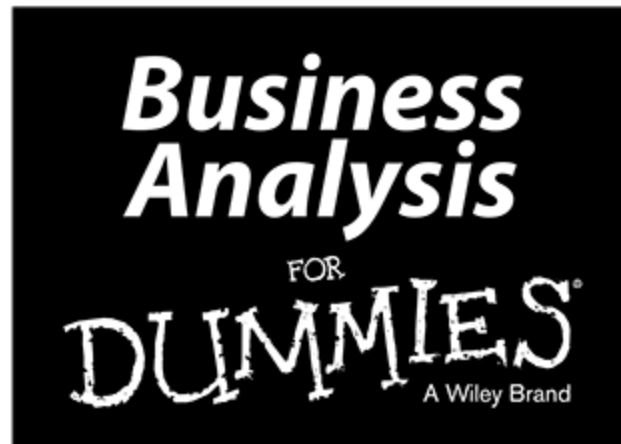
FOR
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Learn to:

- Make an impact in your organization with business analysis
- Ensure your team is delivering the right solution
- Use techniques to be an effective business analysis professional

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and Kupe Kupersmith**

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DUMMIES
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Business Analysis For Dummies®

Published by:

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

111 River Street Hoboken

NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

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New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2013937659

ISBN 978-1-118-51058-2 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-51061-2 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-51063-6 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-51064-3 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Business Analysis For Dummies®

Table of Contents

Visit

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is to view this book's cheat sheet.*

Introduction

[About This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Beyond the Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

Part I: Getting Started with Business Analysis

Chapter 1: Business Analysis in a Nutshell

[Defining Business Analysis](#)

[Knowing Your Role in the Basic Business Analysis Lifecycle](#)

[Looking at the Value of Business Analysis](#)

[Considering the Skills of a Successful BA](#)

[Outstanding communication](#)

[Detailed research, analysis, and recording](#)

[Time management and information organization](#)

[The ability to see the big picture](#)

[Customer-focused and value-driven perspective](#)

[A large BA toolkit](#)

[Flexibility](#)

[Getting to Know the IIBA BABOK](#)

[Pursuing Business Analysis Certification](#)

[Chapter 2: Breaking Down the Different Levels of Business Analysis](#)

[Checking out an Overview of the Levels](#)

[Going to the Top: The Enterprise Level](#)

[Doing business analysis activities at the enterprise level](#)

[Overcoming challenges at the enterprise level](#)

[Moving to the Organizational Level](#)

[Fulfilling duties at the organizational level](#)

[Dealing with organizational-level obstacles](#)

[Drilling Down to the Operational Level](#)

[Knowing your tasks at the operational level](#)

[Taking on operational-level challenges](#)

[Getting a Handle on the Project Level](#)

[Tackling activities at the project level](#)

[Rising above project-level hurdles](#)

[Chapter 3: Identifying and Working with Stakeholders](#)

Reviewing a Who's Who of Potential Project Participants

Starting at the top with management

Seeking subject matter experts

Adding project support personnel

Turning to technical personnel

Identifying the Stakeholders in Your Project

Find your stakeholders

Using the RACI matrix

Playing (and Communicating) Well with Others

Targeting your communication to the various stakeholders

Using active listening to your advantage

Overcoming common barriers to effective communications

Understanding and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages

Fostering Strong Relationships

Building trust and respect

Generating consensus/gaining buy-in

Part II: The BA Toolkit: Tools, Terms, and Techniques

Chapter 4: Talking about Tools of the Trade

Examining Communication Tools for Every Situation

Talking about your options

Choosing the right communication tool

Trying Collaboration Tools

Physical places

[Electronic places](#)

[Investigating Innovation and Idea Capture Tools](#)

[Looking at the technology spectrum](#)

[Considering specific features](#)

[Discovering Definition Tools](#)

[Textual definition tools](#)

[Modeling and diagramming tools](#)

[Prototyping and simulation tools](#)

[Reviewing Requirements Management Tools](#)

[Low- and mid-tech options](#)

[High-tech options](#)

[Picking the Right Tools for the Situation](#)

[Inventorying the situation you have now](#)

[Determining what situation you need later](#)

[Avoiding unnecessary tools and features](#)

[Money, money, money: Facing budget challenges](#)

[Preparing Team Members for Change](#)

[Chapter 5: Understanding What Requirements Truly Entail](#)

[Defining Needs](#)

[Business needs](#)

[Stakeholder needs](#)

[Defining Requirements](#)

[Business requirements](#)

[Stakeholder requirements](#)

[Solution requirements](#)

[Transition requirements](#)

[Technology requirements](#)

[Making Your Requirements Excellent](#)

[Complete](#)

[Correct](#)

[Unambiguous](#)

[Verifiable](#)

[Necessary](#)

[Feasible](#)

[Prioritized](#)

[Focusing on the Four Core Components](#)

[Data](#)

[Process \(use cases\)](#)

[External agents and actors](#)

[Business rules](#)

[Chapter 6: Hunting for the Right Information, Part 1: The Process](#)

[Elicit, Don't Gather: Developing the Right Questions](#)

[Identifying the type of question you want to ask](#)

[Identifying appropriate sources of information](#)

[Choosing an Approach](#)

[Using Clear, Consistent Language](#)

[Choosing terms consistently](#)

[Using language that's consistent with the company's language](#)

[Framing questions that clearly reveal core needs](#)

[Planning Your Elicitation Sessions](#)

Chapter 7: Hunting for the Right Information, Part 2: The Techniques

Starting with Document Analysis

Understanding the benefits of document analysis

Perusing examples of documents you can review

Looking Out for Observation

Knowing when to use observation

Choosing your observation method and completing the process

Conducting Interviews

Preparing for the interview

Interviewing the stakeholder

Documenting the interview

Distributing Surveys

Dressing for the occasion: Types of surveys

Maximizing the chances of getting a response

Compiling and using the data

Getting to Know Requirements Workshops

Identifying participants

Scheduling a workshop

Managing the session

Brainstorming

Considering Focus Groups

Doing Interface Analysis

Prototyping

Throwaway prototypes

Evolutionary prototype

[Simulation prototype](#)

[Reverse Engineering](#)

[Choosing Competitive Analysis](#)

[Chapter 8: Uncovering and Analyzing Needs](#)

[Investigating the Needs](#)

[Discovering a company's specific business needs](#)

[Searching out stakeholder needs](#)

[Uncovering the Root Cause](#)

[Evaluating the Problem](#)

[Choosing a good problem to solve](#)

[Figuring out whether the problem matters](#)

[Determining the impact of the problem](#)

[Establishing the costs and benefits](#)

[Creating the Problem Statement](#)

[Creating the Solution Position Statement](#)

[Knowing When You Have the Right Solution](#)

[Validating the value of the solution](#)

[Taking your audience into consideration](#)

[Setting Your Solution Up For Success: Getting Clear Objectives](#)

[Eliciting and articulating clear objectives](#)

[Getting clear with SMART objectives](#)

[Part III: Selling the Plan and Keeping It on Track](#)

[Chapter 9: Making the \(Business\) Case](#)

Before You Dive In: Breaking Down Business Case Basics

Looking at the benefits of writing a business case

Playing to the crowd: Knowing your audience

Following basic business case structure

Defining and Presenting the Opportunity

Executive summary

Mission statement

Description of the approach used

Justifying the Recommendation

Identifying and prioritizing alternative solutions

Including a cost/benefit analysis

The Devil Is in the Details: Providing Supporting Materials

Addressing supporting documentation

Noting your assumptions

Documenting risk

Presenting the Business Case

Chapter 10: Creating and Maintaining Scope

Making Sure You're Scoping the Right Solution

Recognizing Relevant Stakeholders

Uncovering stakeholders by asking project-specific questions

Discovering key stakeholders in different parts of the organization

Ensuring That the Scope Aligns with Key Business Drivers

Identifying Interfaces That Are Part of the Project

User interfaces

System interfaces

Hardware interfaces

Defining Scope with a Data Flow Diagram

Identifying parties and systems that will be impacted by the project

Identifying information (data) flows among the parties or systems

Gaining consensus on the scope for the project

Giving the project a descriptive name

Finalizing the scope diagram

Using Project Initiation Documentation to Clarify Scope

Stating the purpose of the project

Describing the project approach or methodology

Listing project objectives

Articulating problems and opportunities

Outlining risks

Specifying project assumptions and constraints

Documenting high-level processes

Identifying who's responsible for each deliverable

Indicating What Isn't Covered: Items Not in Scope

Getting Agreement on the Scope

Avoiding Scope Creep

Spotting scope creep

Formulating a change control process

Chapter 11: Creating Your Work Plan

Hashing Out Work Plan Basics

Considering the key components of a business analysis work plan

Using a framework to create your plan

Perusing the Project Characteristics

Identifying project type

Project size

Other things

Taking It to the People: The Stakeholder Communication Plan

Identifying the people

Getting to know the stakeholders

Getting stakeholders involved

Putting together the stakeholder communication plan

The Process: Figuring Out How Things Are Done

Waterfall

Agile development methodologies

Spiral model/Rational Unified Process (RUP)

RAD/prototyping

Compiling Your Work Plan

Part IV: Achieving Goals with Business Analysis

Chapter 12: Defining Solutions, Part 1: Taking a Closer Look at Your Requirements

Categorizing Your Requirements

Getting the process started

Choosing the right category

Documenting Your Requirements

Documenting business and stakeholder requirements

Documenting solution requirements, both functional and nonfunctional

[Documenting transition requirements](#)

[Documenting technical requirements](#)

[Ensuring Your Requirements Have Traceability](#)

[Chapter 13: Defining Solutions, Part 2: Choosing the Right Analysis Technique](#)

[Dealing with Data Flow Diagrams and External Interaction Textual Templates](#)

[Getting a handle on data flow diagrams](#)

[Examining the external interaction textual template](#)

[ERD Is the Word: Using Entity Relationship Diagrams](#)

[Getting familiar with the ERD](#)

[Presenting the data with entity relationship text templates](#)

[Rounding out the data: Entity text templates](#)

[Drilling Down a Process Decomposition Diagram](#)

[Step 1: Creating the process decomposition diagram](#)

[Step 2: Documenting the processes](#)

[Deciding on Decision Tables](#)

[Working with Workflow Diagrams](#)

[Decoding diagram symbols](#)

[Creating a workflow diagram](#)

[Seeing a diagram in action: An example](#)

[Making a Use Case Model](#)

[The graphic: Use case diagram](#)

[The text: Use case description](#)

[Prototyping](#)

[Familiarizing yourself with mockup basics](#)

[Creating mockups](#)

[Keeping It Brief with User Stories](#)

[Creating user stories](#)

[Confirming user stories](#)

[Chapter 14: Verifying and Validating Solutions](#)

[Getting a Handle on Testing Basics](#)

[Differentiating between verification and validation](#)

[Making testing an ongoing activity](#)

[Verification Testing: Confirming You Built the System Right](#)

[Smoke test](#)

[Unit test](#)

[Integration test](#)

[System test](#)

[Validation Testing: Making Sure You Built the Right System](#)

[Utilizing a usability test](#)

[Getting users involved with a user acceptance test](#)

[Receiving feedback with a post-implementation user assessment](#)

[Preparing for the Test](#)

[Creating test cases](#)

[Putting together the verification and validation plan](#)

[Conducting a Requirements Review](#)

[Conducting a step-by-step review of the artifact](#)

[Recruiting participants](#)

[Chapter 15: Transition: Moving from Planning to Implementing](#)

[Preparing for the Transition](#)

[Transition requirements: The basics](#)

[Reviewing the requirement components](#)

[Assessing organization readiness](#)

[Fostering stakeholders' motivation and competence](#)

[Rolling Out Your Strategy with the Right Approach](#)

[Trying parallel processing](#)

[Picking piloting](#)

[Selecting single cutover](#)

[Examining the Components of Your Rollout Plan](#)

[Turning Your Solution Over to Operations](#)

[Part V: The Part of Tens](#)

[Chapter 16: Ten Ways to Keep Your Business Analysis Skills Sharp](#)

[Participate in Social Media](#)

[Network with Peers](#)

[Get/Be a Mentor](#)

[Leverage Peer Reviews](#)

[Attend Formal Training](#)

[Present on Business Analysis Topics](#)

[Read Books \(Like This One!\)](#)

[Have Lunch with Business Partners](#)

[Rotate to Multiple Business Domains or Applications](#)

[Use Business Analysis Techniques at Home](#)

Chapter 17: Ten Ways to Prepare Yourself for a New Project

[Hit the Ground Running and Get Up to Speed](#)

[Clear Your Calendar and Your To-Do List](#)

[Take a Vacation!](#)

[Get Organized](#)

[Identify What's Been Done So Far](#)

[Color in the Solution](#)

[Define Everyone's Roles, Responsibilities, and Deadlines](#)

[Get to Know the Core Team](#)

[Extend a Hand to the Extended Team](#)

[Collaborate](#)

Chapter 18: Ten Experts Chime In

[The Three Pains Approach to Better Elicitation \(Hans Eckman\)](#)

[Context Diagram \(Ali Ibarguen\)](#)

[Affinity Diagram \(Jonathan Babcock\)](#)

[Process One Pager \(Robin Grace\)](#)

[Data Modeling \(David Morris\)](#)

[Facilitated Session \(Shelley Ruth\)](#)

[Root Cause Analysis \(Kathy Claycomb\)](#)

[Requirements Traceability \(Russ Pena\)](#)

[Functional Decomposition Diagram \(Greg Busby\)](#)

[It's All About the Communication! \(Kupe Kupersmith\)](#)

About the Author's

Author's Acknowledgments

Cheat Sheet

Introduction

Okay, so you bought this book looking for hints about performing business analysis. Or maybe you're still in the bookstore thinking about whether this book is going to be of any value to you as a business analyst. (Hint: It is.) You may be working as a business analyst now or wondering whether it's the right job for you.

As a career path, business analysis is a good option. Companies today need business analysis performed so they can solve problems, take advantage of opportunities, make sure they're chasing the most cost-effective solutions, and streamline efficiency. The good news is that the skills needed to address these concerns are learnable. With even basic knowledge, you can immediately help a company reach its goals. You can make a difference today in the success of your (or someone else's) business.

However, one of the challenges you face as a business analyst (BA) is that it isn't black and white; the standard BA answer to almost any question is, "It depends." Business analysis deals with a lot of variables and changing conditions, which means you have to practice a lot to get good at it. The more you experience, the better you get. *Business Analysis For Dummies* brings together a lot of experience in one place to help you get a head start and jump in right away.

About This Book

Part of business analysis is about setting general expectations for the project results and being educated in various techniques and principles, and this book is

right in line with that philosophy. No book about business analysis can possibly explain every situation and every approach you may find yourself in. You have to do a certain amount of figuring it out as you go along.

What this book does give you are tools and techniques you can use to set your expectations. We provide tips and starting points for communication with stakeholders and even explain what business analysis terms like *stakeholder* mean. This book is a reference tool you can turn to in order to understand what particular aspect of business analysis you're looking for. The beauty of it is that you don't have to read through the entire book cover to cover to get the information you want out of it. You can simply open to the table of contents, find what you're looking for, and head directly to that section without passing Go or collecting \$200.

Here's a taste of the useful reference material you can expect to find in *Business Analysis For Dummies*:

- ✓ How to determine whether someone is giving you a solution disguised as a requirement and how to find the root cause of the problem ([Chapter 6](#))
- ✓ Why you have to understand what is driving the business to undertake the project and know whether proceeding is a good decision ([Chapter 8](#))
- ✓ How to create multiple solutions for a problem (or take an advantage of an opportunity) and recommend which one the business should undertake ([Chapter 9](#))
- ✓ How to find and maintain the boundaries of a project so you know exactly what you are (and aren't) working on ([Chapter 10](#))

The great thing about this book is that we let you know exactly what information is vital and what's nonessential. We've packed the main body with all the stuff we think

you really need to know, but you can skip items like *sidebars* (shaded boxes) and Technical Stuff paragraphs. These bits are interesting, but you won't miss out on vital information if you choose to pass them by.

All web addresses appear in monofont. As you read, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending that the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

And one business analysis-specific note: We use *BA*, *business analyst*, and *business analysis professional* interchangeably to describe the person doing this type of work — just as these terms are used in real life. Know, though, that “business analyst” is a general descriptor rather than a professional title. Business analysis is performed at all levels of a company. Even mom-and-pop shops need to perform business analysis, but they don't necessarily hire an outside business analyst; someone on their staff performs the business analysis work. In this book, that person is as much a BA as someone who has “business analyst” printed on her business card.

Foolish Assumptions

Business analysis is full of assumptions (though BAs have their own definition of *assumption*). Seeing as how we're so accustomed to assumptions, we make a few about you as our readers:

- ✓ You need to perform business analysis to do your job, whether you have the title “business analyst” or not.

- ✓ You know how to read documents and search for information (the fact that you're reading this book to gain information confirms that assumption).
- ✓ You can (or need to learn how to) ask tough questions, communicate with people both electronically and face to face, and get up in front of a group to present an idea.
- ✓ You're constantly willing to increase your business analysis skills and to look at different ways to accomplish things.

Icons Used in This Book

Look for these familiar *For Dummies* icons to offer visual clues about the kinds of material you're about to read:



This icon points out good advice relating to the subject matter you're reading about. Skimming these paragraphs gives you some seriously good suggestions that can help you utilize resources efficiently and make your work just a little easier!



The decisions you make and information you present can have a profound impact on the business. For that reason, we highlight important business analysis concepts and principles with this icon. Consider these bits the extra-important paragraphs you'll want to come back to.



Read these paragraphs to avoid BA pitfalls that may result in poor customer satisfaction and solutions that just don't hit the mark.



This icon appears beside information that's interesting but that won't impair your understanding of business analysis if you skip it.



The Anecdote icon calls out our attempts to show you how a particular BA technique has been applied in the real world. We have had more than 50 years of experience among us, so we want to share our success (and horror) stories with you so you can benefit from (or just chuckle at) them.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some goodies you can access on the web. No matter how diligently you prepare, execute, and follow the business analysis guidelines we offer in this book, you'll probably come across a few situations that stump you.

Check out the free Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/businessanalysis for an overview of a project's lifecycle; 15 indicators that can point you to areas that are ripe for process improvement; and a checklist that helps you perform a business impact analysis, which lets you target the project worthy of your efforts and the business's resources.

Head to www.dummies.com/extras/businessanalysis to find pointers on conducting a requirements review, a process that gets you to the heart of an issue by asking one simple question, and advice for developing a good relationship with your project manager.

Where to Go from Here

The book is about as modular as you can get with business analysis, meaning you don't have to read one chapter to understand what happens in the next. If you're looking for a specific keyword you heard a manager use or a new technique you saw another BA use in a meeting, you can use the index or table of contents as your guide and skip right to the appropriate chapter to read about it.

We've organized this book so that you can jump in wherever you want, so if you want to skip to the end and read the short chapters in Part V first, go right ahead. You find lots of good information presented in easy-to-digest nuggets there, and who knows — these pearls of wisdom may inspire you to go back to find the more detailed, how-to info in the main chapters themselves.

If you're totally new to business analysis, start at Part I. [Chapter 3](#) is a good landing point if you want to brush up on the people side of the business. Want to find out about making a business case? Head to [Chapter 9](#). For help figuring out what the problems are to begin with, your starting point is [Chapter 6](#). If you need to cut right to the chase and implement solutions effectively, try Chapters [12](#) and [13](#).

The easiest way, though, to use the book is to just start turning pages and read the content! And because the true value is in how you apply it to real life, don't be shy

about making notes in the chapters, highlighting information, and putting flags on the pages. Whether you're using sticky notes or your e-reader's highlighter function, this book is one of the first tools in your BA toolkit; refer to it often!

Part I
**Getting Started with
Business Analysis**



Visit www.dummies.com for great Dummies content online.

In this part . . .

- ✓ Discover the value of business analysis and the impact it has on your organization.
- ✓ Pick up the key skills you need to be a business analysis professional.
- ✓ Get familiar with the different levels on which you perform business analysis and recognize the challenges associated with each.
- ✓ Meet the people you work with and understand how to best interact and communicate with them.

Chapter 1

Business Analysis in a Nutshell

In This Chapter

- ▶ Grasping what business analysis is and why it's valuable
 - ▶ Tracking a business analyst's role and skills
 - ▶ Introducing industry guidelines and certification options
-

In today's competitive world, companies must always be at their best, maintain an edge, and capitalize on opportunities for growth. Business analysis is a deliberate attempt to review operations to ensure that business is moving along as well as it can and that the company is taking advantage of opportunities.

Basically, *business analysis* is a set of tasks and activities that help companies determine their objectives for meeting certain opportunities or addressing challenges and then help them define solutions to meet those objectives. Sometimes, companies hire outside, independent business analysts (BAs) to come in and perform the analysis. Other times, they may call upon an employee to perform BA tasks internally regardless of whether he has a business analyst title. No matter which category you fit into, this book lays it all out for you.

In this chapter, we give you a very broad overview of what business analysis is, introduce you to the business analysis lifecycle, and explain what the job entails.

Defining Business Analysis

According to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK) version 2, business analysis is the “set of tasks and techniques used to work as a liaison among stakeholders in order to understand the structure, policies, and operations of an organization, and to recommend solutions that enable the organization to achieve its goals.”

Translation: Your goal as a BA is to understand how companies work and to enable companies to reach their potential by helping them articulate and meet goals, recognize and take advantage of opportunities, or identify and overcome challenges. All of which is a pretty tall order. But the task becomes more manageable — and understandable — if you think of it as having two distinct parts: the goal and the process.

- ✓ **The goal:** The *goal* addresses why you’re doing the analysis in the first place — perhaps to improve a company’s revenue and services or to reduce its costs. Think of the goal as the purpose of the project. In order to determine what the real goal is, you often have to employ the most frequently asked question in the world of business analysis: “Why?” Although we go into much deeper detail later in the book about discovering the goal of a project, the process really can be as simple as asking “why” until you’ve gotten to the root of the issue. (This fact is one reason we feel a 4-year-old is the best business analysis professional around.)
- ✓ **The process:** The *process* involves understanding the how — that is, understanding what the solution needs to do, what it should look like, and the people or systems that interact with it. The process requires you