

Why BAs are important for Enterprise Programmes/Initiatives

Proposed answer: Business analysts develop through a chain of reasoning the precise definition of what needs to change, how much, in what way and what the business model (expressed in terms of valid intersections between locations, organisation structures, processes and business data) will be like after the change. If this statement is true then it follows that without the products of business Analysis, enterprise programmes and initiatives will have no knowledge of what changes they are making, why and what effect they are having. In the sense that a programme cannot proceed in a rational fashion without the activities that the business analyst performs, BAs must be considered important.

Justification for the proposed answer: The word ‘important’ can have many meanings – in this context it is not to do with the perceived or actual rank, authority or any other organisational status of the BA, instead the role is important in that without that role on a programme, that programme has significantly increased risks of failure to the point where the programme will be unable to identify even if it has been at all successful! The reasons for this are that business analysts produce products that *analyse* the reasons for change, the requirements for what the changes will result in and the impacts of change.

There is an old, tired and (I believe) inaccurate analogy between business analysts and architects. You can’t build a house with the architectural drawings, it is suggested, implying that business analysts draw up what in programmes corresponds to architectural drawings: technical documents that will be realised by builders following the plans. This is where the analogy breaks down as business analysts do not design solutions to be built by builders – they specify what requirements the solution (whatever it is – computerised or not) *must* satisfy regardless of the technical design that delivers those requirements to the business. A better analogy than architect would be that of a navigator: the business analyst draws a map showing where the business is and where it wants to get to: how the journey is to be made is not the navigator’s issue. Furthermore, the business analyst (in this analogy) can draw maps to different scales for use by different roles: the sponsors of the expedition do not need detail: they need to satisfy themselves that the starting point and destination are correct. However, the people leading the expedition do need more detail so that they can requisition the appropriate materials and supplies. The drivers of the vehicles need yet more detail informing them of the precise route and what terrain to expect along the way. The navigator is important in the sense that without one no-one knows where they are trying to get to or when they have got there!

It is not just in the planning stage that business analysts do work. Throughout the life of the change the following activities will – in all likelihood – fail without the role of the business analyst:

- *defining* the exact measures of success for the programme with the sponsor
- *defining* the scope and high level requirements for each project within the programme – and proving that each and every requirement is necessary in order to effect the changes that the agreed measures of success define. To do this the BA will need to use the business model – a representation of the components of the business that will be changed or otherwise impacted by the programme. The components are locations,

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organisation units, processes and business data. The intersections between these components are used in the definition of scope and high level requirements. For example, it can be stated that the scope of the programme encompasses a certain business' sales teams (organisation unit) operating out of their head office in Slough (location) who use the sales order process (process) for creation and maintenance of customer and order data (data). It could also be stated that a high level requirement is to allow staggered delivery schedules for one (high value and/or high no of units) order (sales order process and order data high level requirements).

- *defining* the process and data rules that are required in order to satisfy the high level requirements – for example the high level requirement to allow staggered delivery schedules for one order results in a number of business rules that will be enforced through a combination of process and data such as only orders with an order value greater than £1m or 100,000 units will be eligible for staggered delivery schedules.
- communicating the change to all who need to know – business analysts become, through their activities, the subject matter experts on the required changes and so systems analysts, developers, coders, testers, migrators , HR and business planners will all need to consult with the business analysts in order to be sure that business requirements are being delivered.
- working with the business and implementers to accept the changes.
- monitoring the benefits delivery post implementation to prove to the sponsor that the change was – in terms of the agreed definition of the measures of success – successful!

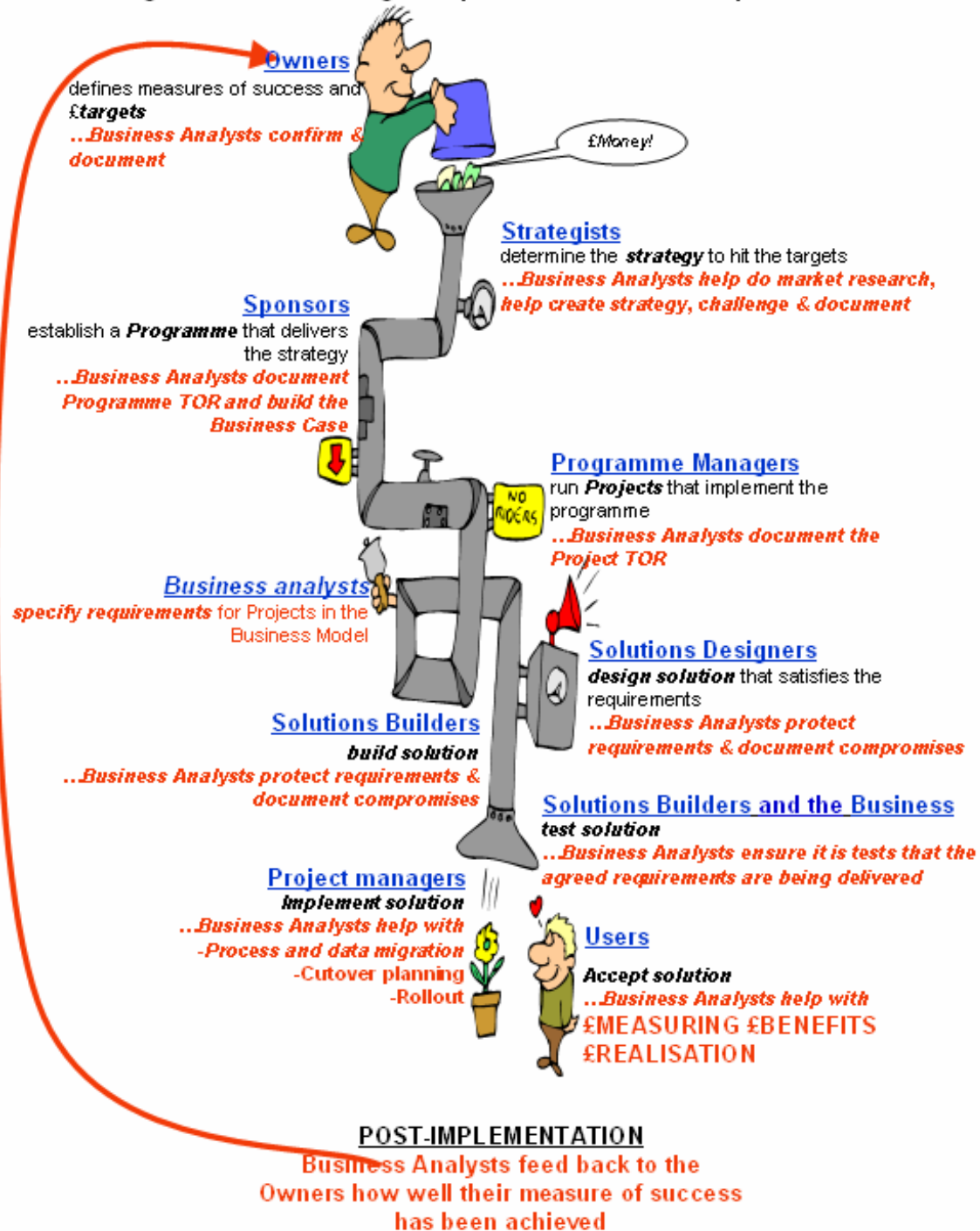
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The following diagram shows all these activities and others that the business analyst contribute towards:

Scope & Role of The Business Analyst

To manage 10 sets of stakeholders...

...following a chain of reasoning from problem definition to implemented solutions



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Conclusion: Business analysts – as a role – are involved with programmes and projects the whole way through the life-cycle. From the very start (where they must have knowledge – even if they were not directly involved with – the change owners definition of what constitutes a successful initiative) right through to the after the very end (when they must report back that the change was indeed worth the cost) the BA performs functions which, left undone, would *almost* certainly ensure the failure of the change.

If ‘importance’ is defined as being *necessary* to programme success, that makes BAs pretty important!