

# The Business of Business Analysis

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Published: March 22, 2017

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Business Analysis is becoming increasingly popular as a profession. So when someone says “I **am a Business Analyst**” what is that supposed to mean? **What really is the business of Business Analysis?**

This is a valid question asked by lots of people today about the Business Analysis profession. This question is not only for aspiring professionals into the BA world but also for some practicing professionals who constantly have to validate their value as a BA and those who utilize the BA service.

The irony is that this means a lot of different things to different people... some think of it as being exclusively an IT guru, others have likened it to being exclusive processes oriented that essentially "magically" solves all process mysteries and yet some talk about helping business solve problems.

The traditional definition has been a “liaison” between IT and the business. While this appears to be a tactical definition, Business Analysis transcend the role of an “interpreter”. Others see it as the savvy note taker essential in a meeting, someone who captures the essential key discussion points and summarizes it for the stakeholders’ consumption. Some also see it as a helpdesk or systems person who

exerts technical muscle and executes all the technical solutions and codes for the business.

The thing here is that all these are right to some extent!, but a smart response for a good Business Analyst is "***it depends!***"

In other instances, it is seen as someone that wears a lot of hats and bears the title "Business Analyst". So if you are not really sure what your role is, just simply call yourself a Business Analyst to save yourself the questioning look. Not only does it give you a title that you can be referred to, it also sounds pretty cool and somewhat intellectual for a task that can be somewhat mundane, hazy and unclassified... saying you a Business Analyst sure sounds serious than saying you are the person that does everything around and mostly what others don't want to do

But the question is really, who is a Business Analyst. Knowing who a Business Analyst is, helps in the somewhat identity crises that we can sometimes find ourselves in and that starts to help to shape who we are and what we do.

Like any industry, there are entry requirements and restricting entry into that industry is one of the ways industry preserve the integrity of the industry and foster competition. This is simply called the barriers to entry. The BA profession apparently seems to have a low barrier to entry so this exacerbates the already growing confusion and identity crisis.

The International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA), an organization that regulates the practice of Business Analysis Profession has evolved the definition of the Business Analysis over the years to its current definition based on the Business Analysis Book of Knowledge (BABOK) v.3.0 as "***The practice of enabling change in an organization by defining needs and recommending solutions that deliver value to stakeholders***".

This is a conceptual definition and it so true... but have you ever experienced saying this to someone and the next question is "So what do you really do?" This follow-up question after such a definition can sometimes throw one off guard. You wonder "I just defined what I do! So why are you asking again!

Well the reason for that most time in my experience, I have found that many people still grapple with that definition especially when having that conversation with the business. It is somewhat hazy in their heads who a Business Analyst and what value they can or hope to bring to their organization.

So how can we make this simple enough so that we communicate and not just speak (as both are different) and avoid the situation where we simply spew out the definition from the BABOK and connect in a meaningful way with our audience.

The key here is to communicate in simple terms as much as possible and not just speak.

One of the definitions I have found very impactful in demystifying the BA identity quagmire is a Business Analyst is “**someone who facilitates solutions that delivers meaningful business value**”

Solutions being one or more ways to resolve a need and achieve the desired end result. A solution is a combination of things that help to resolve a business problem or opportunity (a need). The solutions comprise a variety of paths including process, technology, training, change management, stakeholder management, issue resolution, strategy and enterprise architecture and the list can grow. This solution can sometimes be as simple as one path or a complex interplay of multiple solution paths.

So facilitating these solutions for the business demand that a Business Analyst understands the question he or she is trying to solve so as to be able to select the appropriate solution from the solution suites to answer the question at stake. You cannot deliver any value or a business value at that if you do not understand and clearly articulate the business problem, value drivers and measurement parameters (KPIs) to evaluate the value delivered.

So next time some ask...”so what do you do as a business analyst” don’t over complicate things, may I recommend you keep it simple by saying "you are a Business solution facilitator (BSF)", you facilitate solutions to business problems that deliver value to the business. This can be any business problem (that’s why a business analyst can function anywhere!) but you have to **first of all start with understanding the question you are trying to answer!**

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