
Business Analysis Fundamentals

Course Outline

I. The Business Analysis Profession

It's only in recent years that business analysis has begun to be recognized as a profession in its own right. While people have been performing the Business Analyst role in organizations for several decades, differing definitions of the role abound. We'll start the workshop by exploring some of them, as well as gaining a clear understanding of where the industry appears to be heading and some emerging common standards for the profession.

- A. Understanding the Business Analyst role and function
- B. The role and competencies of the Business Analyst
- C. Distinguishing novice and expert Business Analysts
- D. The profession of business analysis

Practice Session

Because Business Analysts work with people throughout their organizations, it's imperative they have good teamwork and communication skills. We'll begin with an activity to explore differences in behavioral styles, and we'll also model a few techniques for laying a solid foundation for teamwork.

II. Communication in the Business Analysis Context

Many tasks that are integral for successful business analysis involve significant communication. In this section of the workshop, you will hone your ability to connect with project stakeholders at all levels using effective verbal and nonverbal techniques. You'll also identify and practice overcoming sources of misunderstanding, which is vital for requirements validation.

- A. The three most important communication skills
- B. The five biggest challenges Business Analysts confront
- C. Soliciting information
- D. Clarifying information
- E. Communication and miscommunication
- F. Validating information

Practice Session

Working in small groups, you and your peers will practice choosing appropriate techniques to solicit information from stakeholders at various levels in an organization. Following a demonstration of how miscommunication occurs, you'll enhance your ability to connect with stakeholders and foster effective communication by clarifying stakeholders' contributions and validating information.

III. Business Analysis and Problem Solving

Projects often arise to solve specific business problems. Understanding the underlying problem, though sometimes overlooked, is key to being able to develop the correct requirements so that the best solution can be developed. During this section, you will explore and practice problem analysis and its application.

- A. Why problem solving is key to business analysis
- B. Analyzing symptoms and causes
- C. Identifying and defining the problem
- D. Developing solutions
- E. Understanding the people side of problem solving

Practice Session

Guided by your instructor, you will work with a team to analyze the symptoms of a problem, define it, and determine root causes. You'll practice team problem-solving techniques and determine, based on your team's performance, ways to further enhance your communication and team collaboration skills.

IV. Leadership for Business Analysis

It's not uncommon for Business Analysts to wonder why they need leadership skills. After all, most projects have a sponsor, a project manager, and at least one manager from the business. But leadership isn't a job title, it's a role, and one that's central to the effective analysis of business problems. This course module explores the importance of leadership, key leadership skills for Business Analysts, and the situational application of those skills in business analysis functions.

- A. Understanding what leadership is and why Business Analysts need it
- B. Influencing and negotiating with stakeholders
- C. Continuous learning
- D. Adapting to change
- E. Managing stress

Practice Session

Following review and discussion of leadership and its application to business analysis functions, you and your team will compete in a learning exercise to demonstrate and reinforce your knowledge of these vital skills.

V. Business and IT Knowledge and the Business Analyst

The role of a Business Analyst has often been compared to that of a bridge providing a connection between two points, in this case the Information Technology organization and the lines of business that comprise the project domain. We'll present a model that shows how the IT and business domains should be focused and leveraged throughout the project lifecycle.

- A. The business domain: what it is and what's relevant to business analysis
- B. The IT domain: what it is and what's relevant to business analysis
- C. The systems development lifecycle and the focus on IT and business domains

Practice Session

Working with your team, you'll quickly test and improve your understanding of how the business and IT domains integrate in the Business Analyst role and how they fit with the systems development lifecycle.

VI. Enterprise Analysis

One of the most overlooked functions of a Business Analysts is the enterprise assessment, which can also yield some of the most valuable findings of a project. Enterprise assessments are a key best practice in business analysis, and they can be surprisingly straightforward. During this portion of the workshop, we'll explore some practical techniques that produce keen, relevant, and useful insights for the business organization.

- A. Enterprise analysis defined
- B. The role of the Business Analyst in enterprise assessment
- C. Describing the business environment
- D. Describing the requirements scope
- E. Assessing feasibility
- F. Pre-project versus in-project enterprise analysis

Practice Session

Your instructor will introduce a hypothetical but realistic case project company, and you and your team will put your analysis skills to the test as you conduct a guided assessment. You'll define and document the business environment, clearly describe the scope of the business, and perform a straightforward identification of business opportunities. Finally, you'll assess the feasibility of a set of projects and present recommendations on the project(s) of greatest value to the business.

VII. Project Initiation and Analysis: The Business Analyst's Key Contributions

What most people think of as business analysis is central to project initiation and the analysis phase. Because of the depth of skill these activities require, most Business Analysts demand separate training to develop true mastery. This course module therefore provides an overview and introduction to three crucial business analysis activities by demonstrating common tools for identifying and documenting project scope, for modeling current and desired states, and for eliciting key requirements.

- A. Defining and documenting project scope
- B. Decomposing the application domain
- C. Analyzing and documenting key processes
- D. Eliciting functional requirements
- E. Modeling the desired state

Practice Session

After reviewing a project charter for an identified business opportunity, you'll work with peers and your instructor to determine and document the project scope with a context diagram. You'll then review a current state model of one key business process, and, based on identified functional requirements, you will then work with your team to develop a model for a possible new process design.

VIII. Requirements Communication

Once functional requirements have been discovered and documented, they have to be validated with business customers, users and management. Communicating these requirements involves much more than information sharing; at its best, it's a process of negotiation, validation and consensus building. We'll examine the inherent communication challenges and help you confidently choose the best ways to achieve your communication goals and gain the stakeholder buy-in required for successful requirements management throughout the project lifecycle.

- A. Requirements communication defined
- B. Determining the appropriate requirements presentation format
- C. Creating the requirements package
- D. Presenting the requirements
- E. Conducting a formal requirements review
- F. Obtaining consensus and signoff of requirements

Practice Session

Working with a set of identified functional requirements, you and your peers will determine which communication approaches will best meet the needs of various stakeholders. You'll practice categorizing and organizing requirements for maximum value, and you'll explore how to develop and present clear, concise requirements documentation appropriate for your projects.

IX. Adding Value as a Business Analyst

With the underlying fundamentals covered so far, you can survive as a Business Analyst. But to add maximum value—and truly to thrive in your work—you need to be equipped to handle complex project challenges. During this final course module, we'll explore six critical issues facing Business Analysts today and equip you with practical, proven strategies for sophisticated application of business analysis fundamentals to overcome them...and a specific plan of action to do so!

- A. Managing role conflicts
- B. Resolving holes and duplications
- C. Solving the right problems
- D. Being a catalyst for change: everyday evangelism for Business Analysts
- E. Moving on to requirements engineering
- F. The path of least resistance

Practice Session

In a facilitated discussion, you and the other participants in the workshop will share your own experiences, gain tips and tricks from your instructor, and begin to identify immediate opportunities for you personally to apply what you've learned when you return to your workplace.

