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» **An Evolving Role: 10 Key Business Analysis Trends for 2009**

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If a single word can represent an entire year, then 2008 was the year of change the next American president ran an entire campaign on change, but, more speci business world as we know it will simply never be the same. We've all learned th company—no matter how thoroughly it is woven into the fabric of the economy—from the need for improved efficiency, due diligence and corporate responsibility

With change having such a profound influence on 2008, 2009 will likely be shape business world's ability to adapt to that change. And, of all the groups of profess working today, few will serve a more important role in that adaptation than busi analysts. Requirements management and development, which has for so long be unsung hero of the successful project lifecycle, is poised to begin receiving the p deserves.

Here are 10 key trends to look forward to in business analysis for 2009. They rej on-going evolution of requirements management and development and the ever value of the modern business analyst.

**1. Collaboration of Requirements Management and Development Pract Job Titles**

For a long time, the divisions between those performing project management fu those performing requirements management and development functions were v However, recently these divisions have begun to blur and more organizations ar cooperative effort between the two disciplines in the development of business sc clear example arises as we define a project's scope. In the past, at this point in l lifecycle, project managers were sequestered like juries in a high-profile legal tri though—and increasingly, going forward—a business analyst's market expertise, understanding of scope and budget, and relationship with stakeholders are rega enormous value to the cross-functional team. Collaborative effort will be paramo adapting to change.

**2. Strategic Enterprise Analysis**

The days of being short-sighted in business have come and gone. With new sou energy, pending sea changes in government and an increasingly competitive and market to worry about, organizations are less interested in next year's forecast e interested in the forecast for the next five years. By virtue of the critical-thinking and interaction skills required of successful requirements management and deve organizational leaders will become much more apt to turn to business analysts fo in looking across the enterprise horizon and helping to guide key decisions and i

**3. Service-Oriented Architecture**

Service-oriented architecture (SOA) is an information technology process that in existing systems to operate under a single platform for optimum efficiency. A pr example exists at the border between the United States and Canada. Here, a coi the license plate of every vehicle that passes through. That information is then c through an immense database that is accessed by any number of disparate orga



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**Hear from Analysts that have successfully been able to:**

- » Link corporate objectives to Requirements Definition and Management (RDM) investments
- » Use a consistent requirements framework
- » Evolve from scribes to facilitators

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from the FBI to local police departments to the departments of Homeland Security and Transportation. As companies continue to leverage SOA to streamline databases across platforms, business analysts will play a crucial role in bringing together the intricate web of business policies, rules and data to reside in one centralized location.

#### 4. Business Analysis Centers of Excellence and Requirements Management Offices

As requirements management and development continues to prove to be a valuable investment, more and more organizations are going to look to formalize their efforts into structured, repeatable best practices. This means the creation of Business Analysis Centers of Excellence or Requirement Management Offices. These organizations within organizations will create many professional opportunities for business analysts as the marketplace seeks their expertise on such topics as structured methodologies, metrics, governance, virtual teams, competency development, customer satisfaction and overall business alignment.

#### 5. Measuring Return on Investment

Organizations large and small have invested millions in initiatives designed to help improve efficiency—from new software products to environmental conservation efforts to the outsourcing of key business functions. With their efforts launched, organizations are now looking to ensure that they're actually realizing a return on these investments. This is yet another opportunity for the well-trained business analyst to shine. Let's say, for example, an organization is looking to improve profitability within its shipping department by 15 percent. Here, a business analyst would work with stakeholders to review requirements and compare every expense in the department against those requirements. Successful requirements management and development has the power to provide a 360-degree view of almost any project, revealing exactly how and why it ultimately succeeded or failed and demonstrate traceability back to the originally stated business need.

#### 6. Requirements Management and Development Leadership

As the role of the business analyst evolves, the next logical step in that evolution will be the need for leaders and specific subject matter experts within the discipline. As I mentioned in the fourth trend above, business analysis and requirements management and development initiatives are continuing to become staples within today's leading companies, with fully established best practices and competencies. In the coming year and beyond, this will lead to the emergence of formalized career paths as well as specialized areas of expertise under the business analysis umbrella, such as strategic analysts and change analysts.

#### 7. The Fine Art of High-Impact Communication/Facilitation

Speaking of evolution, there was a time when business analysts were placed firmly into the IT silo. However, in an increasingly agile, silo-less business world, business analysts are now being recognized for their interpersonal skills and their immensely valuable ability to facilitate consensus among diverse and often divergent groups of people. I recently found myself at the office of the controller of a large U.S. state. Gathered around his desk were senior executives from a number of different divisions, union heads, civil servants and IT personnel. Complicating matters further, the personalities in the room ranged from risk-averse to downright daring. By leveraging the listening and communications skills of the business analyst trade, I guided the group through a process called product boxing in which teams work together to create fictional logos, taglines and lists of benefits for their product or service. Despite the many political and personal disparities, the group was able to come to a consensus on the overall direction for a number of key statewide initiatives.

#### 8. Change Management

Change, no matter how necessary, is one of the most difficult challenges that today's organizations face. Under the best of circumstances, it can cause uncertainty, risk and even fear. Because business analysts are so adept at guiding organizations from the "as-is" to the "to-be" state, they are essentially change agents. And, as organizations continue to make change management a priority, business analysts are going to find themselves in the driver's seat. Take, for example, the integration of an expensive new internal software program at a major financial institution. To make the switch successful, organizational leaders will apply requirements management and development techniques to gain all kinds of necessary information, including:

- How the current software works today
- How the new software will work tomorrow
- What potential disruptions may arise to daily activities

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- How the initiative will affect employees and, if applicable, customers
- Who will and who will not embrace the change
- The risks associated with the impact of the change
- Whether the change represents an evolution, revolution or adaptation (Each is distinctly different, with different impacts on an organization.)

#### **9. Agile Software/Solution Development and the Role of the Business Analyst**

With budgets tightening, organizations are more interested than ever in finding ways, at the very beginning of projects, to become more streamlined and cost-effective. To accomplish this, many are turning to Agile Software/Solution Development. This is a process—currently all the rage in business—that promotes frequent inspection and adaptation, team work, accountability and the alignment of customer needs and business goals. As great as this process sounds, the problem lies in the fact that most organizations simply don't know how to do it correctly, thus defeating its purpose. In the coming year, the methodologies for Agile Software/Solution Development will need to become more structured and clearly defined, which is a tailor-made opportunity for business analysts.

#### **10. The Importance of Portfolio Management and the Role of the Business Analyst**

When you sit through a terrible movie or see a product in the marketplace that just doesn't make sense, do you ever ask: Who gave that the green light? Well, you're not alone; that question was asked in countless boardrooms around the world in 2008. As a way to vet potential projects and reduce the number of ill-conceived initiatives, organizations are increasingly turning to portfolio management committees. These committees are leveraging business analysts and requirements development and management techniques to get the robust, detailed, accurate information they need to do their jobs successfully and make informed decisions. Business analysts are vital not only to help projects succeed, but to ensure that doomed projects never even make it out of the starting gate.

#### **In Demand in 2009—and Beyond**

As you can see, there are many reasons for business analysts to be encouraged in the coming year. More than ever, their talents and abilities will be highly coveted and, in many cases, they'll be able to launch the careers they've always imagined. But, be warned, with such attributes as logic, forethought, diligence and structure in demand, you may find yourself tasked with helping to turn the worldwide economy around and saving capitalism as we know it. No pressure.



**Author:** Glenn Brûlé, Director of Client Solutions for [ESI International](#), has more than 18 years of experience in many facets of business, including project management, business analysis, software design and facilitation. He is former Chair of International Business Development for the IIBA, and is a frequent speaker at professional association meetings and conferences around the world, including

ProjectWorld/World Congress for Business Analysts and IIBA events. At ESI, he is responsible for supporting a global team of business consultants working with Fortune 1000 organizations. Glenn's background as an educator, communicator and business consultant has served him well through his many client engagements across various industries, including financial services, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, insurance and automotive, as well as government agencies.

Glenn has authored numerous articles on business analysis and was instrumental in the development of two ESI white papers: "Eight Things Your Business Analysts Need to Know – A Practical Approach to Building and Improving Competencies" and "Establishing and Maturing a Business Analysis Centre of Excellence – the Essential Guide."

#### **Comments**

Thanks for such a clear, concise round up of what we can expect in 2009 for a Business Analyst.

All the points were right on the money. As a Senior Business Analyst consulting for Large Fortune 100 company, I can certainly relate to the maniacal focus/emphasis that is placed on measuring ROI, streamlining Requirements Management and successfully executing Agile

Development/Processes.

Once again, thanks for sharing this article with us.

posted @ Monday, January 12, 2009 2:15 AM by Vasu

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Great article! I'd like to point out that the example that you give in item 3 for an SOA is incorrect. I am a member of one of the development teams for the Driver's license system you mention and it is not based on an SOA architecture - yet. However, we are moving in that direction precisely because of the ever-expanding number of interfaces that we have to deal with for this and all similar Border Crossing systems..

posted @ Monday, January 12, 2009 11:56 AM by Huet

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