



» The Cream of the Crop: Cultivating CBAP Competencies for Your Rise to the Top

Statistics: ★★★★★ (630 Views) ([1 Comments](#))

Categories: [CBAP](#), [Career as a Business Systems Analyst](#), [IIBA & BABOK](#)

While the exact origin of the expression "the cream of the crop" isn't known, it's likely the reference was derived from 16th century French agriculture. La creme de la creme - or "the cream of the cream" - referred to the most valued bi-product of one of the most sought after commodities of the time. Cream of the crop has come, in more modern times, to mean the best, most robust or choicest of anything.

Certified Business Analyst Professionals™ (CBAPs) are similarly sought after as the best at what they do. And, in a highly competitive field, in highly competitive times, CBAPs need to demonstrate that they too can "rise to the top." As a counselor for clients who are evaluating and developing their CBAP® competencies, I like to provide a discussion of just exactly what these competencies are and what they entail.

Competency is the Demonstration of Knowledge, Skill, Ability and Attitude

The first of these, knowledge, is academic in nature. For example, I've read the text or attended the class; therefore, I've developed a knowledge base of a certain subject, like mathematics. In business analysis, it's what you'll need to know prior to taking on tasks and activities where requirements management and development are concerned.

Next, skill is a demonstration of the understanding of knowledge, and the capabilities or toolset that an individual can execute to in order demonstrate knowledge and fulfill the activities assigned. For example, you've read about the concept of addition and subtraction and so now you can perform simple mathematical equations.

Ability refers to the combination of knowledge and skill demonstrated over time and is directly related to "experience." The primary distinction between skill and ability, generally speaking, is the amount of time that has been spent practicing a particular activity. From learning to demonstration to practice, your degree of ability, or rather capability is what takes you from one-plus-one to tackling calculus and astrophysics. For business analysts, experience in small, medium and large project situations and scenarios is essential in building competency in each, and in fulfilling CBAP® certification requirements that specify that you demonstrate 7,500 hours of work experience in the previous ten years of your business analysis career.

To be prepared to write a CBAP® certification, you'll need to put in your time to become the cream of the crop. That means you'll need to be able, unequivocally, to demonstrate an outstanding degree of competency in each knowledge area as defined by the IIBA's **Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK®)**. Simply stated, knowledge, skill and ability must be learned, exercised and elevated to their highest levels using that focused, positive attitude of yours.

To help you best target your CBAP® preparation, some key knowledge and skills related to IIBA's **BABOK®** competencies are highlighted, along with expert insight for building your

capabilities in each area:

1. **Business Analysis Planning and Monitoring**

Knowledge

- Requirements development approaches, including plan versus change driven approaches
- Stakeholder characteristics to identify as resources for the contribution of the development of requirements
- Understanding of types of activities to be conducted during the development of requirements
- Understanding of the critical elements necessary to complement a communication plan
- Knowledge of what deliverables must be produced given the approach selected
- Knowledge of general techniques necessary to evaluate overall requirements management and development performance

Skills

- Ability to use financial calculation techniques to demonstrate future values, costs and benefits, internal rate of return, payback period and cost benefit analysis.
- Use of decision trees
- Ability to create process models (flow charts and activity diagrams) using the correct notation

Building Your Ability

Along with core knowledge and skills areas listed, experience with different types and sizes of projects in buy or build scenarios is critical in exercising your capabilities for the long run.

2. **Elicitation**

Knowledge

- Understanding of elements involved for the preparation of requirements elicitation:
 - Developing a plan
 - Scheduling of resources
 - Pre-interviews/surveys
 - Scope of objectives to be accomplished

- Knowledge of elements needed to conduct an elicitation activity
- Formatting of output from elicitation activities
- Validation of output

Skills

- Can conduct or develop stakeholder profiles and elicitation plan
- Can conduct any of the following elicitation techniques:
 - Brainstorming
 - Document analysis
 - Focus groups
 - Interface analysis
 - Interviews
 - Observation
 - Prototyping
 - Requirements workshops
 - Surveys

Building Your Ability

Though it's a smaller CBAP® topic, don't underestimate the investment in the knowledge, skills and time you'll need to gain real proficiency in this people-oriented area. To garner solid experience, participate in complex techniques with senior business analysts wherever possible.

3. Requirements Management and Communication

Knowledge

- Understanding that stakeholders must approve of requirements prior to being base-lined
- Understanding of how to ensure that requirements are base-lined
- Understanding of the process involved in any change requests
- Understanding of requirements traceability
- Knowledge of what is required to develop a requirements package

Skills

- Able to develop and maintain a requirements coverage matrix
- Issue identification and problem tracking
- Development of a business requirements document for either a buy or build situation
- Capable of facilitating a requirements workshop or a structured walkthrough

Building Your Ability

Core planning and implementation skills in this area will focus on managing the unforeseen and on building solid communication plans with project managers. Developing strong elicitation skills will act as a foundation for this topic (from #2), as will developing a keen grasp of stakeholder characteristics (from #1). Coaching by senior project managers as well as business analysts will help you to better understand both sides of the process and build your capabilities.

4. Enterprise Analysis

Knowledge

- Understanding of elements necessary to define a business need
- Knowledge of how to conduct gap analysis
- Understanding of how to determine best solution approach
- Scoping activities
- Definition of a business case

Skills

- Benchmarking
- Brainstorming
- Business rules analysis
- Focus groups
- Functional decomposition
- Root cause analysis
- Document analysis
- SWOT analysis

- Estimation
- Decision analysis
- Interface analysis
- Scope modeling
 - Context diagram
 - Use case diagram
 - Business processes
- Risk analysis
- Estimation
- KPIs
- Vendor assessment

Building Your Ability

You'll find that the solid development of knowledge and skills from previous areas will be put to the test as you work across the enterprise rather than across single business units. A confident, well-rounded background in other areas will help to give you the holistic approach you'll need to work at a high level.

5. **Requirements Analysis**

Knowledge

Knowledge of what is required for:

- Prioritization
- Organization/categorization
- Modeling techniques
- Assumptions and constraints
- Verification and validation techniques

Skills

Familiarity with the following techniques:

- Decision analysis
- Risk analysis
- MoSCoW analysis

- Timeboxing/budgeting
- Voting
- Problem tracking
- Risk analysis
- Acceptance criteria definition
- KPI definition
- Prototyping
- Structured walkthroughs

Building Your Ability

Well-developed elicitation skills plus standard notation for modeling techniques will be key factors in launching your success in this area. Because of its technical nature, a high degree of facilitation, prioritization and organization, and technical modeling skills are also relevant.

6. Solution Assessment and Validation

Knowledge

- Understanding of how to assess solutions
- Understanding of what requirements are necessary to be produced to take advantage of business opportunities
- Understanding what is required for an organization to adopt a solution and their readiness to accept it
- Understanding of how to move from requirements for current to future state
- Validation and assessment of solution performance

Skills

- Capable of developing evaluation criteria for either a buy or a build situation
- Decision analysis
- Business rules analysis
- Functional decomposition
- Process modeling
- Scenarios and use case modeling

- Dataflow diagrams
- Focus groups
- Organizational modeling
- Problem tracking
- Risk analysis
- Force field analysis
- Data modeling
- Root cause analysis
- Survey/questionnaires.

Building Your Ability

Another highly technical area, you'll need a clear understanding of traceability and knowledge of all modeling and facilitation techniques in order to excel.

Beyond **BABOK®** competencies, the performance of business analysis functions is also supported by a number of underlying competencies and personal attributes that can be enhanced. These are inherent skills, knowledge and characteristics that are relevant to business analysis and can go far to bolster your working skills. They include analytical thinking and problem solving, behavioral characteristics and qualities such as ethics and personal organization, business knowledge, communication skills, interaction skills, and knowledge of software applications.

As you prepare for CBAP® certification and continue to improve your skills with each project, decision and collaboration, keep in mind how every area of expertise you're building comes together toward the evolution of your professional development. Business analysts need to be effective users of their organization's tools and assets, and should understand the strengths and weaknesses of each one. And that includes being introspective and evaluating your own strengths and weaknesses in knowledge, skills and capabilities at intervals along the way. Taking these extra steps in thorough career preparation will give you the edge you need to rise to the top in the business analysis field, and carve out your reputation as *creme de la creme*.

Author: **ESI's** Glenn R. Brule, Executive Director of Client Solutions, supports a global team of business consultants working with Fortune 1000 organizations toward improved workplace performance. Vice President, Chapters for the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA), Brule' forms local chapters of the IIBA worldwide by working with volunteers from various industries, including financial services, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, insurance, automotive, and government agencies. He's also a widely published author and popular international public speaker in business analysis topics.

Rating

Comments

Good summary of the knowledge areas. 'Building Your Ability' comment is immensely useful.

posted @ Monday, September 07, 2009 10:43 AM by bala0302
