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10 Key Business Analysis Trends to Guide You in 2010



Not to sound trite, but it’s true: the economy was the catch-all diagnosis of 2009. The overwhelming majority of businesses went into triage as a result, reacting to recessionary pressures that caused lost revenue, unemployment and budget cuts. The economic news was mostly negative, but the effect it had on business was to demonstrate an even greater need for quality requirement management and development.

This year, organizations will dust themselves up and dusting themselves off, becoming more savvy, and more proactive. Business analysts

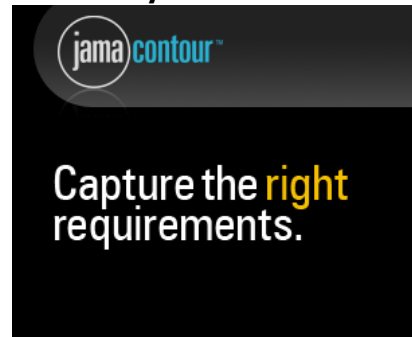
are positioned to help organizations meet the challenges of putting the business back in order by helping to answer the question: “How and where do we create efficiencies that will help mitigate the sting of another possible economic downturn?”

The signs of maturity in the business analysis discipline showed themselves in a myriad, sometimes subtle, ways last year. Further leaps toward maturity are reflected in the 10 BA trends for 2010. These trends represent lessons learned and an increased recognition of the business value that business analysis provides through guiding the enterprise in meeting its objectives.

1. Refocus on Strategic Enterprise Analysis

While organizations appreciate the imperative for being less reactive and more strategic, at best, probably a mere one percent in 2009 took a long-range view across the enterprise to guide decision-making and implementation. The other 99 percent were tactical and missed business opportunities critical to organizational goals and success.

This year a very close examination of where operational efficiencies improved from an enterprise perspective will prove to be a long-term strategic goal. BAs will be counted on to provide the critical thinking



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facilitation and interaction skills required to get past putting out brushfires in order to facilitate actionable strategies for execution across the enterprise.

2. The Rise of Communities of Practice over the Center of Excellence

Organizations are recognizing the importance of communities of practice and pursue them as a cost-effective alternative to more formal BA Centers of Excellence. Given that organizations are willing to invest in BA reflects both its maturity and its increasing value to the organization. Organizations will benefit greatly from these communities by enabling the sharing of war stories, lessons learned, best practices and structured discipline. Additionally the communities provide a platform for professional recognition.

3. Proving ROI of RMD

The need to show return on investment for RMD will be an important consideration this year and a continuing trend throughout the decade. Organizations will look to BAs to provide quality metrics and analysis to demonstrate that RMD is delivering benefit. BAs will be working to ensure RMD has impact that is helping to bring profitability to the enterprise. Helping to drive this trend is the recognized need by BAs to answer the scary question: "If we don't, could our services be outsourced?"

4. Increased Demand for CBAP? Certification

The increase in Certified Business Analysis Professional? (CBAP?) certification belongs not only among the tops trends for 2010, but also on the BA's professional development goal list in 2010. CBAP? certification is complementary to demonstrating the value of RMD. Organizations worldwide are now demanding CBAP? certification as a requirement in their RFPs. Hiring requirements, in turn, are reflecting that full-time employees and contractors must have achieved the certification.

Currently, approximately 800 CBAP? certifications have been earned by RMD professionals worldwide. As greater numbers of CBAP? certifications are earned, the business analyst will benefit from increased stature in the enterprise and create a more competitive marketplace for qualified BAs as well.

5. Greater Specificity with Niche Requirements Management and Development Tools

Traditional RMD tools will give way to smaller, more agile applications in 2010. This sign of maturity is bubbling up from under the surface and is spurred by BAs who are continually refining their approach to requirements gathering and development. The proliferation of very specific tools that support RMD techniques will likely perpetuate their acquisition by larger, enterprise-type business analysis requirements software vendors.

Today, RMD tools not only come with a heavy price tag, but in many cases mimic the cumbersome ways of things done in the "olden days." Being leaner and more nimble requires a streamlined set of tools that offer greater specificity to the job at hand. It's comparable to the difference between a boom box and an iPod.

6. RMD Experts will be Critical Members of Cloud Computing Project Teams

While service-oriented architecture (SOA) is still prevalent, RMD experts will be prized members of project teams as organizations seek to make better sense of cloud computing in 2010 and push implementations over the next five years. Industry giants like HP, IBM, Amazon, Salesforce.com, Intel, Sun Microsystems, Cisco and many others are spending billions to develop cloud computing architecture. RMD will be uniquely positioned to identify how the business will be affected by cloud computing, further driving its prominence in the organization.

7. Blended Teams Will Take Prominence Over Individual PM and RMD Contributions

The silos in which those performing project management functions and those performing requirements management and development functions operate will continue to break down as

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blended teams move from new idea to proven best practice. Like professional athletic teams, project management teams need a collective understanding and greater respect for the collaboration required to ensure that projects meet organizational needs and deliver promised ROI.

This will drive a reduction in the emphasis on individual contributions and criticality as project managers and BAs work toward a structured, disciplined results-focused team relationship. Some BAs and PMs will be reticent to move outside their own bubble, opening opportunities for leaders to emerge and help drive the teams forward.

8. RMD’s Increased Role as Organizations Embrace Adoption of Agile Methods

In 2010 there will be a significant increase in adoption of Agile methods, and RMD’s role in ensuring success. Encouragingly, organizations are embracing it, albeit with some struggle. Agile’s less cumbersome, more nimble approach is more cost-effective than non-iterative software development, an important consideration as economic impacts force organizations to further streamline and contain costs.

The Agile environment also fosters self-forming collaborative teams that break down the silos between PM and BA as already noted. RMD professionals’ ability to provide value in early validation and pre-planning will help drive increasing acceptance as their role helps deliver consistent success.

9. Greater Emphasis on Enterprise Analysis for Portfolio Level Decisions

2010 will see a much greater emphasis placed upon well-defined requirements management and development processes to improve the quality of output needed for accurate decision-making at the project portfolio management level. The ability of enterprise analysis to enable higher degrees of certainty in fiscal decision-making will be supported by the BA’s ability to provide robust, detailed, accurate information. As in 2009, portfolio management committees will rely on BAs and their RMD techniques for information they need to vet projects accordingly.

Recognition of Leadership Gap in RMD

As organizations have come to rely more on the interpersonal skills of the BA and the exacting requirements that provide quantifiable support for their enterprise solutions, the role of the business analyst has evolved. With the maturity of business analysis, the need for leaders and specific subject matter experts within the discipline of RMD has become acutely obvious.

For their part, organizations are developing an awareness of, and placing greater emphasis on, RMD-specific career tracks, professional development and certification to close the gap. However, challenges remain in educating human resources leaders about the range of potential BA career paths, opportunities and learning needs. HR professional will also invest in business skills to accelerate the development of BA leaders to help close the gap.

One for the BA’s Personal Wish List

One item for the BA’s personal wish list that hopefully will be among 2010’s top trends is positioning the business analysis function to report directly to the chief operating officer. This will facilitate the true role of business analysis as an objective discipline that is entrenched in neither the IT nor the business side of the organization. As a high-level operations function, business analysis could be leveraged throughout the organization. This will provide BAs with the holistic perspective of the enterprise, allowing them to increase efficiencies and optimize operations.

Business analysis has demonstrated its maturity and value to organizations under fire during the last turbulent year. In 2010, the strategic insights and tactical importance of exacting requirements will be in greater demand as organizations increasingly come to recognize and rely on the fiscal benefits of RMD. In turn, the business analysis profession will continue to

mature as it evolves with ongoing demands to look across the enterprise horizon and help guide key decisions and initiatives.



Author: Glenn R. Brûlé, CSM, Executive Director of Client Solutions, ESI International brings more than two decades of focused business analysis experience to every ESI client engagement. As one of ESI’s subject matter experts, Glenn works directly with clients to build and mature their business analysis capabilities by drawing from the broad range of learning resources ESI offers. A recognized expert in the creation and maturity of BA Centers of Excellence, Glenn has helped almost a dozen clients in the energy, financial services, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, insurance and automotive industries, as well as government agencies across the world. For more information visit www.esi-intl.com

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