

BUSINESS ANALYST PROCESS

This document defines the solution development process that a business analyst follows from identification of a problem in the business community to the implementation of a solution in that same business community. The process is fully described in the book Business Analysis: A Systems Approach to Solving Business Problems.

I. Define the Problem and Product Scope

- A.** Define the problem owner
 - The person or department that has authority to seek a solution to the problem; can identify or describe the real problem; can approve the problem definition; and can voice or approve the vision
- B.** Prepare an information gathering plan to determine the problem
 - What information is needed to define the real problem
 - Where can the information be found
 - How can the information be acquired
 - What is the order of acquisition of the information
- C.** Elicit information about the problem
 - Talk to the problem owner and managers and observe the problem domain to determine what the real problem is
- D.** Analyze the information
 - Make sure the stated problem is really a problem
 - Make sure the problem is aligned with the organization mission and strategies
- E.** Determine the real problem to be solved
 - Make sure the problem is the real one that needs to be solved and that it is the correct problem
 - Make sure the solution of the problem satisfies all issues presented by the customer (manage expectations)
- F.** Confirm with the problem owner (or executive decision maker)
 - Make sure that the real problem that has been defined is the one that management wants solved
 - When management needs justification to solve the problem (or when organizational policy dictates), perform the requisite analyses: ROI analysis, cost/benefit analysis and/or feasibility studies

- G.** Define the product scope
 - Obtain the vision of the solution and acceptance criteria from the problem owner
 - Determine the product stakeholders
 - Identify the business risk of not solving the problem and the potential impact to the organization when the problem is solved and any other identified business risks
 - Determine the justification for solving the problem
 - Identify any business or product constraints that may be imposed on the solution
 - Identify any functional goals or business objectives that must be achieved in solving this problem. Break the product into incremental deliveries based on functional goals where possible.

- H.** Create a formal or informal decision document
 - Combine the product scope with other required information and produce a business case and/or project charter or other document(s) that the organization may require to make a final decision to solve this problem

II. Define the Solution

- A.** Prepare an information gathering plan to determine the solution
 - What information is needed to define the solution
 - Where that information can be found
 - How the information can be acquired
 - What is the order of acquisition of the information
 - Classify user communities when they are large
 - Identify hidden, indirect, and disadvantaged users when possible

- B.** Elicit information about the problem domain
 - Understand completely why the problem exists and what the conditions are causing the problem
 - Use information gathering techniques such as Interviews, meetings, use case sessions, observation, etc.
 - Confirm with the process workers supplying the information that you have understood the information they provided completely and accurately

- C.** Analyze the information to determine potential solutions for the problem
 - Categorize and filter the information and requirements
 - Model or diagram the problem domain, business processes in the problem domain, and the applicable environment

Business Analyst Process

- Identify the conditions in the problem domain that are causing the problem
 - Analyze and model the solution
 - Data intensive systems might be modeled with an entity relationship diagram
 - You might model process-intensive systems with a data flow or activity diagram
 - Systems with high user interaction might be best rendered in use cases
 - Continually confirm your analysis with the affected product stakeholders that the part of the solution that affects them will work and is acceptable
- D.** Document the solution
- Record the results of your analysis so that you can verify with the product stakeholders wherever they are
 - Confirm with the stakeholders that the solution completely and accurately solves the problem
 - Get parts of the solution confirmed as you define them
 - Check technical and project feasibility with the solution team
- E.** Write the Solution Document
- Render the solution in a form that is understandable to the product stakeholders and business management and is in a form acceptable to the solution team
1. Validate the requirements with peers
 - Use peer review or inspection as the format to validate
 - Review the requirements document with the solution team
 2. Get Solution Document approved by executive decision maker

III. Keep Requirements up to Date throughout Software Development

- A.** Review systems requirements and/or design to identify changes to requirements or variations from defined solution
- When the solution varies from definition and business expectations without technological rationale suggest conforming to the business expectation of the solution
 - When the solution varies from definition and business expectations justifiably, change the solution document accordingly and confirm the change with the affected product stakeholders
- B.** Create process to review any changes to the evolving system that may affect requirements

IV. Prepare acceptance tests based on the defined acceptance criteria that will prove to business analyst and stakeholders that the problem has been solved

- A.** Write acceptance test scenarios, scripts or cases that prove the problem has been completely solved
 - Tests should be executable by users or users' representatives
 - Results should be understandable by users or product stakeholders
 - Final results should be understandable by problem owner or business management to prove problem was solved

- B.** Participate in the acceptance testing phase
 - Execute the tests and share the results with the stakeholders, and/ or
 - Supervise the users or users' representatives in the execution of the acceptance testing, and/or
 - Work with quality assurance or quality control to ensure tests prove that the problem is solved
 - Record changes, alterations, and modifications to the requirements as a result of software changes due to acceptance testing (there should be very few)
 - Record suggested or recommended changes for post release consideration

V. Enable the Transition of Solution into Production

- A.** Prepare the business community for the solution
 - Make sure process workers get appropriate training and documentation where necessary
 - Remove, reduce, or identify any final resistance to the solution in the business community so that the solution can be given a fair chance to succeed

- B.** Evaluate the solution in production
 - Observe the solution in use to ensure that the problem is solved completely
 - Record any suggestions for improvement or defects that are reported during the first period of use

VI. Start over again