

Mastering Business Analysis. Workshop with Tim Lister

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Business Analysis — what we are doing

We start with the topic of business analysis itself, and how the business analyst is the driving force to change the business from its current way of working to the **desired future state**. The desired future state is an improvement to the business — it comes about when the business problem has been solved, or the opportunity exploited, and the needed systems and processes are in place.

In this section we explore **business analysis** and how it fits into your development cycle. We also look at a framework for effective business analysis, and discuss the role of the business analyst in today's organisations.

Inception — establishing the value

Inception lays the foundation of the project by determining the desired future state of the business, and what value that will bring to the organisation. Inception identifies and prioritises the customer segments and, where necessary, produces a separate value proposition for different segments.

The right result can only come if the project is solving the right problem. By defining the **value proposition**, how that value is to be delivered, the customer/user segments to whom it is to be delivered to, and the impact it will have, the Inception activity ensures that the project will provide real and continuing value.

We also look at some conventional project models such as SWOT, ALUo, PESTLE and the BMG canvas.

Reconnaissance — finding the real problem, and what can be done about it

We start by looking at the current state of the work, its scope, its culture, its values, its people and the ethos of the work. By looking at these factors, the business analyst is able to ask, and answer, the crucial question, "Are we solving the right business problem?"

By getting to the **essence** of the problem, the business analyst can see whether there are unstated assumptions or hidden problems that can impact the outcome of the project.

For any business problem there are usually several possible solutions. Rather than rush headlong into the first one proposed, the savvy business analyst uses **safe-to-fail probes** to quickly determine the best option. This option becomes the subject of investigation.

Investigation — understanding the current and the new

This is where we come to understand the business problem we are charged to solve. We begin by determining the correct **scope** of the business problem, and then use **business activity models** — UML, BPMN, stored data models and others — to communicate with the stakeholders and uncover the real problem.

Additionally, any future solution will be used by humans, so we look at the culture of the potential users and identify characteristics that have an impact on the design of the solution.

Design the Future Work — finding the optimal solution

Now that we understand the real problem we have to craft a solution. The **designing business analyst** uses elements of the problem, the desired impact of the solution, the target customer segments, and the value proposition to form the solution.

Any valuable solution will be innovative. This section teaches **innovative thinking**, especially in the areas of providing better information, and making the solution more convenient for its users.

Getting Approval — the right solution is not enough, you have to convince others

The business analyst must be a communicator. Here we show you how to tell **persuasive stories, or narratives**, to communicate with your stakeholders and ensure they have a clear understanding, and thus approve your proposed solution.

We give you some solid guidance on putting together a persuasive narrative, and telling your story so that it has impact on your audience.

Ongoing Business Analysis — the knowledge needed by the project

Many projects suffer from documentation problems: either there is too much documentation which means that valuable development time is lost, or there is too little which results in miscommunications, incorrect solutions, and wasted time when the solution is maintained.

In this session we look at the **minimum viable knowledge** needed for the project. We discuss the information gathered by the business analyst, and the worth of this information.

The result is that your project can be confident that it has gathered sufficient knowledge to succeed, and no more than is absolutely needed.