



Project manager and business analyst

are they one or two roles?

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Abstract

A question many organizations are increasingly asking is whether or not one person can be both a project manager (PM) and a business analyst (BA) on the same project. This paper explores the pros and cons of separating these two important project roles and discusses some of the key issues that need to be considered when making the decision to combine or separate them. The paper explains how the objectives of these two roles are different, but not mutually exclusive. It describes areas where the two roles seem to overlap and explains how to clarify responsibilities to minimize potential conflict. Finally, it looks at the relationship between the PM and BA and how they can work together to ensure a successful project.

So, Can the Same Person Function as a Project Manager and Business Analyst on the Same Project?

The answer, of course, is yes, they can. Another related question, though, is whether or not they should. There are many situations in which one person can and does perform both functions. One person could play multiple roles, including those of the BA and the PM; for example, in the following situations: if the organization does not recognize the importance of either role, if it doesn't have enough money and resources for both roles, if the project is known to be "small," or when the team has worked together and is a high-performance team. Functioning in both roles on one project can work, but can be risky, and we'll explain this shortly. Let's first explore the circumstances that might favor having one person play both roles on the same project.

Exhibit 1 summarizes the factors when combining roles and offers some thoughts and considerations for doing so.

Factors Favoring Combined Roles	Notes
Project is small	Small can be in terms of hours, cost, scope, or other criteria.
Project is low-risk	There may be factors other than scope, time, and cost, such as business, technical, legal, or compliance impacts that pose a risk for the project.
Organizational process assets do not support the separation of roles	Some organizations have proprietary processes, templates, and assigned roles/responsibilities that require that the roles be combined.
Organizational culture does not support the separation of roles	Some organizations may not have formal standards or guidelines about the roles, but the project team members generally fulfill multiple roles. Attitudes toward separating the roles might be negative, and having two roles is viewed as bureaucratic.
Few cross-functional business areas are affected	When projects are self-contained, with few businesses impacted, it is easier to collect requirements and manage the project, so combining the role is less risky.
Small, high-performance team where each member fulfills multiple roles (small projects only)	When the project and project teams are small and when they have developed the synergies of a high performance team, team members can sometimes effectively work as both a project manager and business analyst on the same project.
Project's resources are limited and budget does not provide for separate roles	Some projects have limited budgets, which force the roles to be combined.
Measure of success	Typically, organizations that combine the roles focus on a lower-cost solution that might have defects, but that will enable the organization to compete in the marketplace or realize savings sooner than later.

Exhibit 1: Factors When Combining Roles

On the other hand, we might ask under which circumstances it would make more sense to separate the roles of the BA and PM. Here are some considerations that favor separating the roles:

Focus on Project versus Product

The PM typically focuses on the project—creating baselines and managing project constraints, communicating and resolving project issues, and getting the resources working on project activities. The BA typically focuses on the end product (solution). On sizeable projects, each role is a full-time effort and cannot be accomplished effectively when the roles are combined. Trying to do both will usually mean increasing the risk and compromising the quality of both the project and the end product. Although the PM may do some work related to the product and the BA may do work related to the project, there is still a need for both roles on most projects.

Client Example

One of our clients recently completed a study on separating the two roles, which had previously been combined. This assessment was undertaken in part because during different phases of the project, the PM role was neglected and during other phases the BA role was neglected. They concluded that on most projects both roles were needed and recommended the separation.

Different Objectives

Because there is an inherent difference of objectives between the two roles, it is usually beneficial to have both on the same project. As stated in the Project Management Institute's (PMI) *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)*—Fourth Edition, Section 1.6, the objective of the PM role is to meet the project objectives. As stated in the International Institute of Business Analysis' (IIBA) *A Guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK® Guide)* 2.0, Section 1.2, the BA's role is to help organizations reach their goals. This is a subtle but important difference. Organizations usually initiate projects to help them meet their goals. In order to help the organization reach its goals, the BA may recommend solutions that potentially do not align with the project objectives. This tension is actually healthy, because both objectives are important to the organization. Without a separation of roles, this tension would not occur, ultimately to the detriment of the organization. Because there are different focuses and different objectives, there is often a pull in opposite directions, especially when both roles report to different organizational functions. Project managers want to deliver the end product on time and within budget. Business analysts want to ensure that customers can actually use the end product once it has been implemented.

Who's right?

Imagine an internal conversation that the combined PM/BA might have: the PM voice, sitting on one shoulder, says "But this has to be complete by January 15th, so we need to take these shortcuts." The BA voice, sitting on the other shoulder, says "But we need to take time to do this right. If we put this into production now, it will cause defects, rework, workarounds..." The PM voice replies "if we don't meet the date, we'll destroy all their trust in us." The BA voice says, "If we don't get this right, we'll destroy all their trust in us." When we wear multiple hats, which voice do we listen to?

Input and Handoffs

On projects of any size, successful PMs have learned that getting input from a variety of different roles is critical. The BA is one of the important roles supplying project information to the PM. The BA provides the PM with many inputs, including plans for how the business analysis work will be completed, how formal the work will be, what documents, if any, will be produced, what approach will be taken, and how the work will be tracked and reported.

Typical business analysis project work includes:

- How the business analysis work will be completed
- How formal the work will be
- What documents will be produced

Exhibit 2 summarizes the factors that favor separating the PM and BA roles and offers some notes and considerations for keeping the roles separated.

Factors Favoring Separate Roles	Notes
Many components to the final solution, product, or service	The greater the number of components, the greater the need for a resource dedicated to understanding the solution requirements, interrelationship of the components, version control, and configuration management.
Many system and business interfaces will be impacted by the project, or the project has legal/compliance/regulatory implications	The greater the number of interfaces, the more complex the project and the greater the need to separate the roles. When the project has legal or regulatory implications, it has a higher risk with non-compliance, which favors separation of roles.
Many stakeholders will be impacted	Some projects will impact many stakeholders even though the changes do not affect numerous business functions. For example, only one business unit's business process may change as a result of the project, but that business unit might have several hundreds of employees. The BA is in the best position to assess the gaps between the "as-is" and "to-be" and work with stakeholders to accept the change.
Stakeholders disagree on the requirements and priority of the requirements	When there is conflict about the requirements, it is important not only that attention be devoted to resolving this disagreement, but that a dedicated BA who understands the end product, dependencies, and impacts is available to help resolve it.
Project will have many versions or releases	Projects that will have numerous versions or are completed in releases require a BA who understands how to allocate requirements across those releases.
Requirements are unclear, incomplete, or changing	Use of an iterative/agile approach, such as the Scrum framework, may be appropriate. The BA can support the PM (Scrum Master) by ensuring that the requirements are defined in detail just prior to the current iteration (sprint).
Measure of success	Typically, organizations that separate the roles focus on the quality of the solution, the comfort levels of the end-users, and the organization's ability to effectively absorb the changes resulting from implementing the project.

Exhibit 2: Factors that favor separating the PM and BA roles

So, although it may not be necessary to have both a PM role and a BA role on every project, it is less risky to do so on most.

Where do the Roles Overlap?

Avoiding Conflict Between the PM and BA

At a recent conference, one of the authors sat next to a project manager who observed, "My organization hired a new consulting company to do business analysis work. They've completely taken over; now they do a lot of the work that I used to do, such as meeting with the sponsor to uncover the business problems, determining what we're going to do on the project...I can't believe it! I feel like I'm being treated like a second-class citizen!" Although this complaint pointed out some organizational issues, it also got us thinking about the potential overlap of the PM and BA roles.

When we first approach the subject of overlap between project management and business analysis work, we may see a clear delineation in the roles. As noted earlier, the BA is responsible for the product and the PM for the project. However, the closer we examine the roles, the more overlap we find. Once we look further it appears that there are significant overlaps. For example, collecting requirements, planning the business analysis work, the request for proposal (RFP) processes, scope management, and defining the business need all are areas of potential overlap.

It seems to us that although there are areas of potential overlap, there are some significant areas that require unique business analysis skills. The table below shows some of the areas of overlap, the uniqueness of the BA skill set, and how the two roles can work together to minimize conflict.

Because of the need to use a common set of terms, this discussion is based on the knowledge areas (KAs) found in the *BABOK® Guide*. A mnemonic to help remember the *BABOK® Guide* knowledge areas (KAs) is PEACEUS. Think of all the "pieces" needed for a successful product or service.

As shown in Exhibit 3, **PEACEUS** stands for the knowledge areas as indicated by bold letters below:

	Knowledge Area	Overlap	Specific BA Skills	Working Together
P	Business analysis P lanning and M onitoring Identifying stakeholders, defining activities, planning and estimating activities, developing metrics, monitoring the work, all for the business analysis work	Planning and estimating, including defining scope, activities, estimates, communication plan, quality metrics, tracking, and reporting	Determining impacts to the business analysis work for waterfall and agile approaches.	The work on the scope, activities, and estimates for the business analysis work is done by the BA and given to the PM for inclusion in the project management plan. BA tracks the work and reports status and variances to PM.
E	E licitation Prepare for elicitation, conduct elicitation activities, document and confirm requirements	Both PMs and BAs need to elicit. BAs concentrate on eliciting requirements, PMs on other aspects of the project.	If the objective of the elicitation event is to prototype a new set of web pages, create use cases, or elicit data requirements, etc., specific BA skills are needed.	The PM needs to ensure that requirements are collected. The BA provides the results of the elicitation activities, including issues that have arisen.
A	Requirements A nalysis Prioritize, organize, specify, model, verify, validate requirements, document assumptions and constraints	Validation and verification are parts of quality management, so there is potential for overlap.	Most of requirements analysis requires unique business analysis skills. For quality management, the BA concentrates on quality relating to the product.	The BA supports the PM by ensuring that the acceptance criteria for requirements are established during quality planning. Also, the BA helps the PM manage scope by validating that every requirement belongs in the project by comparing it with the business needs and objectives.
C	Requirements management and C ommunication Manage product scope, manage traceability, maintain reuse, package and communicate requirements	There are many overlapping areas.	Although baselining, documenting, and tracing requirements are discussed in the <i>PMBOK® Guide</i> Section 5.1, it takes unique business analyst skills to effectively complete these activities. Also, managing requirements for re-use requires a unique skill set.	By establishing the requirements baseline, the BA helps the PM create and manage the scope baseline. Also, the BA creates requirements documentation, helping the PM with an important output to collect requirements (<i>PMBOK® Guide</i> Section 5.1.3).
E	E nterprise analysis Define business need, assess capability gaps, determine solution approach, define solution scope, define business case	Defining the solution scope involves decomposing deliverables into a work breakdown structure (WBS).	Both roles create WBSs. However, the BA needs unique skills that require looking at the business needs across projects to determine what is most appropriate for the business beyond what each project requires for a solution. PMs, by definition, are focused on the project at hand.	The BA helps the sponsor define the business need, which is input into the project charter. The PM uses this business need as input to the scope statement.

U	Underlying competencies Includes such things as ethics, trustworthiness, analytical and systems thinking, learning and teaching, business and industry knowledge, communications and interaction skills, teamwork	All project professionals, both PMs and BAs, need these competencies.		
S	Solution assessment and validation Assess proposed solution, allocate requirements, assess organizational readiness, define temporary requirements, validate solution, evaluate solution performance	When part or all of the solution is supplied commercially, there might be overlap with the development of the RFP. Another possible area is assessing organizational readiness.	With the exceptions noted, this knowledge area requires a unique set of skills to determine if “the solution meets the business need and facilitate its implementation” (<i>BABOK® Guide</i> , introduction to Chapter 7).	The BA can help the PM by developing detailed requirements to be included in any RFPs. In addition, the BA can help the business stakeholders understand their current situation, how it will change with implementation of the project, and work with them to buy into the changes, which will help ensure a successful project.

Exhibit 3: PEACEUS knowledge areas

Who Should Define the Business Need?

Ask a BA who should define the business need and you may hear that it is the BA's role to do so. After all, the business need defines the business problem or opportunity, which BAs have to understand in order to recommend appropriate solutions. BAs know that all requirements should link to the business need, so it is important to spend the necessary time to truly understand it.

Ask PMs the same question and chances are they will say the same thing—that they are the ones who should determine the business problem or opportunity. They know that their project will not succeed if it does not help support organizational goals and if it does not solve real business problems. The business need becomes the project's foundation. Just as requirements link to the need, so does each project objective and deliverable. Because PMs are accountable for meeting the project's objectives, many PMs want a part in defining the business need.

Who's right? Who should define the business need? Does it really matter? We think it does matter, because the person who articulates the business need usually ends up owning the project. We do not believe it is in the best interest of the organization for either the BA or the PM to take ownership of the project. That is, they both need to be accountable for delivery of the end solution and for ensuring that that solution meets the business need, but not for the need itself.

Business Need

- Describes the business pain or gain
- Becomes the basis for the business case for the project
- Helps with prioritization, which is often based on the business need

Before we look at who should define the business need, let's describe what a business need really is and its interrelationship with the project and the requirements. In order to meet its goals, an organization usually undertakes many projects, and the projects that have the greatest chance for success are those that help the organization reach its vision, strategic direction, and business objectives. Ideally projects are prioritized based on business need (problem/opportunity) and the business case (costs vs. benefits), because the need describes the pain and the benefits describe the relief. So, before a project can really begin, the business need and business case are defined, either formally or informally.

Defining the business need occurs before the project is sanctioned by the project charter, that important document ideally written by the sponsor, often with the help of a PM. The information in the project charter, including a high-level description of the end product or solution, is input into the requirements processes, which in turn produce the requirements that are input into the definition of scope at a level of detail sufficient for the planning processes. Of course, the requirements get further elaborated during the one or many phases of business analysis work, but each needs to help solve the original business problem or contribute to the business opportunity. The following diagram (Exhibit 4) shows the highlights of the preceding points.

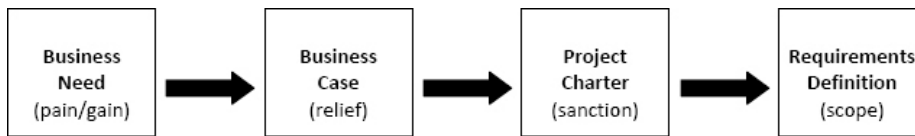


Exhibit 4: Business Need to Requirements Definition

So, who should define the business need? The PMs, because they need to meet the project objectives or the BAs, because they have to define the solution requirements? We're going to suggest that the person or group requesting the project should define the business need, and that person or group needs to be high enough in the organization to sell the idea, to get the organization enthusiastic enough about the endeavor to fund and prioritize it, and to rally the necessary business resources. We believe this responsibility is best handled by a sponsor, steering committee, regulatory or compliance body, or a fairly high-level subject matter expert (SME). Project managers and business analysts are most effective when they are neutral facilitators, not owners. Both roles ensure that the need is clearly articulated, but because the person who articulates the business need usually ends up owning the project and the end product, it should be someone representing the business.

Although it is the business organization that defines the business need, I believe that the BA is in the best position to work with that person or group to help them articulate the real need and the extent of the need. BAs can help describe how bad the pain is or how great the opportunity. I think there is a vital difference between defining the need and helping the requestor define the need. That difference is one of advising versus deciding. And what about the PM? Although the PM can use the business need to help the sponsor with the project charter, the bulk of the project management work begins once the project has been approved and sanctioned and authority has been given to the PM.

Who Should Define the Scope?

As with the business need, both project managers and business analysts would probably say that it is their responsibility to define scope, and they would both be right because there are various types of scope. Below are different scope types that need to be defined on projects.

Solution scope.

This scope is defined prior to project initiation. The solution, as its name implies, is what is needed to solve the business problem or business opportunity across the enterprise and across projects. We can think of it as the future state. Just as large projects often succeed when we break them into smaller projects, solutions to large business problems and opportunities can be broken into several components of the solution. A solution often involves many components, such as a new or changed process, a technical component often involving automation; thus, hardware software, network components, recommendations, and implementation of various organizational change aspects such as a new reporting structure. The scope of the solution belongs in the business analyst's domain.

Types of Scope

Solution scope is defined prior to project initiation and comprises what is needed to solve the business problem or business opportunity. This belongs in the BA domain.

Product scope is the scope of the portion of the solution that is implemented as a result of the project and also belongs in the BA domain.

Scope of business analysis work or the deliverables and work products produced during the business analysis effort. This belongs in the BA domain.

Project scope is defined during project planning and comprises what the project will produce and the work needed to produce it and belongs in the PM domain.

Product scope.

We can think of the product scope as the scope of the portion of the solution that is implemented as a result of the project. Defining the product scope is part of business analysis and becomes the responsibility of the BA, who creates the deliverable work breakdown structure (WBS) relating to the end product. Let's keep in mind that the product scope can have several components as well. For example, one of the authors worked on a new system that involved new hardware, new software, and new processes. It was the responsibility of the BA to decompose each of these components into many sub-deliverables.

BA Work.

There is the scope of the business analysis work itself. As with the entire project, each business analysis effort is unique. We need to think about which business analysis deliverables will be produced (e.g., requirements documentation, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, an "as-is" business process map, and so forth). The work products or deliverables that will be included in the business analysis phase(s) help determine the scope of the entire project.

Project scope.

The WBS comprising the product and business analysis deliverables is incorporated into the project WBS, because the product deliverables are a subset of all the deliverables for the entire project. The project manager is ultimately accountable for getting agreement on and the managing project scope. The BA is responsible for ensuring that the product scope falls within the constraints of the project.

Who Should Estimate the Business Analysis Effort?

Although in theory the project manager could define all the activities and develop estimates for the entire project, it may not be practical. Many wise project managers have learned that their lives become easier when they get input from the resources actually completing the work. To that end, the BA is in the best position to create the product scope (see product scope above), to define all the activities and tasks needed to produce the business analysis work products, and to estimate the number of hours required for the business analysis phase(s).

Is the PM/BA Relationship Different on Agile Projects?

In a nutshell—we don't think it is. The relationship remains the same, but the timing is different. Regardless of the project approach, methodology used, or requirements processes followed, the PM must meet the project objectives, and the BA helps the organization reach its goals, which means the product requirements must be well-defined but they need to be defined just in time for the next iteration. For example, elicitation using such techniques as requirements workshops, prototyping, and interviews might still be needed on any given project, and it is the BA's role to elicit requirements using those techniques. However, the requirements elicited not only need to be complete just prior to the beginning of the upcoming iteration, but they cannot be elicited too far ahead of the iteration. The question may arise about the pre-project work that BAs do. In an agile environment, defining the business need and business case still need to be completed by the BA. Once the project begins, the BA can work with the product owner to ensure that the vision is articulated to the delivery team and that requirements are defined just in time to be used by the delivery team in the upcoming iteration.

Final Thoughts on Working Together

When I (Elizabeth) became a PM, I was extremely fortunate to work with strong BAs who took the initiative in defining their own roles. Below, I list what worked for us and why. On one large project, the BA and I worked together on an initiative that had both business and technical complexities. We were introducing many new business processes as well as new technology. The project affected many business units within the organization, and the risk was high. Below are a few of the factors that I believe contributed to a smooth relationship between me (PM) and the BA, and ultimately to a very successful project:

We each worked with our strengths. As the PM, my strengths were focused on delivering the product (new software) when we had promised it, within the approved budget, and with frequent communication with the sponsor. The BA's strength was an incredible ability to understand the real business need—why the project was being undertaken, what was happening currently, and what we needed to recommend to the sponsor, which was different from what the sponsor had requested. Without her, I would have accepted the solution originally requested by the sponsor, a solution which would not have solved the underlying business problem.

We kept the good of the organization in front of us at all times. There simply were no territorial disputes, because it wasn't about our team. It was about delivering a product that worked—on time and within budget. One of the team members observed that she felt like we were giving birth. The good news was, though, that we didn't have to suffer through any teenage years!

I was focused on the date and budget, so my natural tendency was to want to complete the project quickly, rather than correctly. Fortunately, I had the good sense to listen to the BA and slow down when needed. Was this easy for me? Not at all! Am I glad I did? You betcha! In the end, the PM-BA "partnership" of both getting the project done on time and done correctly was a key to our success.

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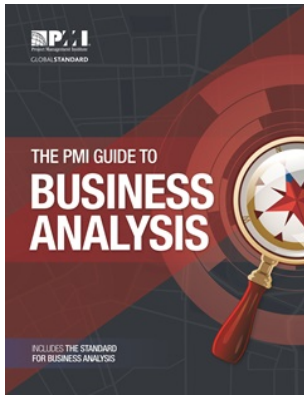
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