



Business Analysis Career Guide

A Career in Business Analysis

“I’ll often joke that when people ask ‘What is Business Analysis?’, I say: ‘You know all those times that people say ‘somebody should look into that?’ - I’m the person who looks into that.’”

- Jen Neuls, Senior Business Analyst at Zendesk



Business analysts are highly influential problem solvers who help navigate and manage change, and support the business in planning for the future. Business analysts help everyone in the company understand how to use technology to help the business become more agile, competitive and profitable. Career changers becoming business analysts come from a variety of backgrounds and gain the skills and tools needed through their study journey.

Because of their deep and broad skill sets, business analysts are in high demand. They often command salaries over and above the national average and have excellent career progression opportunities.

If you’re considering a career as a business analyst and want to know what the job involves, you’re in the right place.

Guide

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What is the role of a business analyst?

A business analyst is often referred to as a BA, but they're also known by other job titles, including:

- > **Business systems analyst**
- > **Management consultant**
- > **Business architect**
- > **Systems analyst**
- > **Requirements engineer**
- > **Enterprise analyst**

They're integral to linking IT (Information Technology) and IS (Information Systems) to the broader business, acting as a conduit to drive and improve technological efficiencies.

The primary role of a business analyst is to investigate and solve problems within the business and then help the company's leadership teams plan and manage change to drive improvements. Business analysis is an enriching career with real influence over the way a business operates.

BAs operate across the whole business to help every department to work together towards a common goal. They use a broad set of tools and techniques to fully understand the internal and external environments that the business operates within and solve problems or create products that help take advantage of opportunities.

BAs perform an advisory role, providing services as internal business consultants. As organisations mature, they rely more and more on BAs to support changing requirements to help them remain competitive.

What does a business analyst do?

A business analyst has a varied job description that will depend on the type of role they're performing and the type of company they're employed by.

However, typically, business analyst roles and responsibilities will include:

- ✓ **Eliciting business requirements to ensure they are appropriately delivered within a given project.**
- ✓ **Identifying gaps within the business to support commercial direction and future planning.**
- ✓ **Assessing internal capability and resources and identifying weaknesses and strengths.**
- ✓ **Analysing external factors that could affect the business, such as political and social situations, technology and legal requirements, and deciding if the company has to change to reflect these demands.**
- ✓ **Data modelling to analyse findings and make suggestions for operational, commercial and strategic improvements.**
- ✓ **Ensuring that IT and IS are used efficiently to support BAU (Business as Usual) activities as the company matures.**
- ✓ **Promoting good business change to help the company remain relevant and competitive.**
- ✓ **Shaping change projects and setting the pace—often before project managers become involved—to ensure the end goals meet the overall business objectives.**

What's the difference between a business analyst and a project manager?

A **project manager (PM) role purely exists to manage a project** from start to finish. Whereas the role of business analyst looks at the world around the project and helps the business understand:

1. **What needs to change in BAU during the project's lifecycle, and**
2. **What projects need to be run to change BAU to ensure the business remains competitive in the marketplace.**

Once the BA helps the business understand what needs to change and why, then the projects to initiate that change can commence under the guidance and direction of a project manager.



BAs and PMs need to work closely together to ensure that business change happens seamlessly and effectively. However, often BAs and PMs will upskill and cross-skill into each other's roles. Having a cross-skilled team helps the business to develop a stronger and more agile skills set.

What is a business analyst career path?


Business analysts will often follow a typical route of career progression that looks something like this:



However, because business analyst roles are as varied as the companies they work for, it's challenging to define a traditional, linear career path.

IT business analysts, architects and systems designers are currently on the Skilled Worker Shortage Occupation List in the UK, meaning there is a national shortage of these skilled workers.

BAs are in exceptionally high demand, so salary, benefits and compensations are at an all-time high.



According to Adzuna, a leading job search engine, the average annual salary projection for a business analyst is around £54,497, which is more than 57% above the national average salary. Starting salaries for a junior business analyst are, on average, about £35,000.

Adzuna also estimates that the number of job adverts for business analysts increased by more than 292% last year, and there are currently more than 9000 vacancies in the UK.

What is a business analyst career path?

Now more than ever is a great time to **consider a career in business analysis.**

As we've already discovered, business analysis as a discipline offers vast and holistic experience across the entire business environment. Once you have experience as a BA, there's a world of opportunity available to you. Although many people choose to stay in their role as BA and become progressively more senior (and therefore better compensated) and respected, others choose to branch out into related functions such as:

- > **Change management**
- > **Organisational change and development**
- > **Enterprise architecture**
- > **Business architecture**
- > **External business consultancy**
- > **Head of business analysis practice**
- > **Head of business change**
- > **Portfolio manager/director**

Many C-suite executives, including those in roles such as chief executive officer (CEO), chief operations officer (COO), chief technology officer (CTO) and chief information officer (CIO), have a background in business analysis.

As you can see, once you enter the world of business analysis, the possibilities for your career are endless.

What skills do you need to become a business analyst?

According to BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, there are six core skills that every business analyst needs.

Technical skills

Because many business analysts sit within an organisation's technology function and operate as a conduit between IT and the rest of the business, BAs must understand technology trends and innovations.

Critical thinking skills

Good BAs will demonstrate that they've considered every possible solution to a problem, no matter how simple or complex it may seem. A business analyst with critical thinking skills will always ask difficult questions and carefully consider the risks, rewards, weaknesses and opportunities of a potential outcome.

Research skills

Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, skills, and resource gaps within an organisation is vital to any business analysis role. Therefore, a good BA needs solid research skills to help the business identify and solve problems.



What skills do you need to become a business analyst?

People skills

Business analysts work across the whole business. They spend a lot of time with different stakeholders, colleagues, users and clients, many of whom may have their own agenda when it comes to identifying, recognising or solving a business issue.

BAs need to navigate many different personalities, egos and conflicts. And, in a post-Covid world where more of us are now working remotely, BAs need to build relationships across a remote, sometimes global, workforce.

Communication skills

People skills and communication skills go hand-in-hand. Business analysts need to balance active listening skills with clear and effective communication channels to help the business reach amicable conclusions that satisfy most people's needs.

Negotiation skills

Once you've thoroughly analysed the business problem and explored different solutions, you'll need to make your recommendations to the leadership team. Balancing individual wants with what the business actually needs will require a BA with solid negotiation skills.

Other skills that will help you perform well as a business analyst include:

- **The ability to assess the impact of change**
- **The ability to deliver effective presentations**
- **Data analysis skills**
- **Strong Microsoft Excel skills**
- **Solid analytical skills**

What qualifications do you need to be a business analyst?

The role of a business analyst isn't just for university graduates.

Business analysts can come from any walk of life and enter the profession at any stage in their career. If you want to change your career and are considering business analysis as an option, look for opportunities with your current employer to become involved in projects or help with improving business processes. Any experience in this area is a good experience and can be added to your CV.

However, entering a BA role without qualifications, although possible, is becoming more challenging, especially for those making the jump to business analysis without prior experience or education.

BAs with an undergraduate degree in subjects like computer science, business information systems, computing and systems development, or business management will find the journey to a career in business analysis a little easier as employers will look for a solid educational background on your CV.

What qualifications do you need to be a business analyst?

The best way to get started as a business analyst, though, is to gain qualifications in the discipline. The most recognised qualification for business analysts in the UK is the **International Diploma in Business Analysis**.

If you're just beginning your career as a business analyst, or you hope to make a move to a BA role soon, you'll want to develop a broad understanding of the basic principles and approaches. The International Diploma in Business Analysis offers everything you need.

To gain the diploma, you will need to:

- ✓ **Study one of the BCS knowledge-based specialist modules in either: Business Analysis Foundation, or Business Change, or Organisational Behaviour**
- ✓ **Study both the BCS core modules: Business Analysis Practice, and Requirements Engineering**
- ✓ **Study the BCS Practitioner module: Modelling Business Processes**
- ✓ **Successfully pass the exams for all modules**
- ✓ **Successfully pass the oral exam within 12 months of completing the four pre-requisite modules.**

Each module learned in the International Diploma acts as the base knowledge and skills to succeed in business analysis. It also offers an employer confidence in your abilities that you'll be able to perform the duties of a BA and hit the ground running.

What personality attributes do you need to become a business analyst?

Business analysts can come from any walk of life. They can come straight from university where they've studied a business or computing-related degree, or they can be career changers who have already identified that they have the right set of skills to perform well in a BA role.

Not only do good BAs have a common set of skills, but they also have common personality traits too. Some of these include:

Problem-solving

First and foremost, business analysts are problem solvers. They love to dive into a dilemma and use their skills to develop solutions that will help the business perform better. A good BA will enjoy understanding why something isn't working and then fixing it.

Curious mind

BAs are inquisitive. They are constantly asking questions and are on top of the latest trends within their industry. They have a good understanding of external factors that could impact business decisions, such as the political, social and environmental landscape.



What personality attributes do you need to become a business analyst?

Team player

As we mentioned in the skills section above, business analysts work across the whole business, so they need to be great communicators and enjoy working with people.

Being a team player is an essential personality trait for a BA, as they can encourage a shared sense of ownership for achieving the businesses long-term goals. They share a project's success and ensure that everyone is working together towards an expected outcome.

Confidence and authority

As the Dalai Lama once said, "With realisation of one's own potential, and self-confidence in one's ability, one can build a better world."

A good BA will have the confidence in their own abilities to use data and fact-based evidence to build better business solutions. Using their naturally friendly and authoritative personality, they'll garner trust from their colleagues, stakeholders and leadership teams to gain approval to implement the most appropriate business solutions.

Clarity and adaptability

Business analysts must be clear and concise in their communications whilst always conducting themselves with poise and professionalism. There can be no room for ambiguity as this can often lead to ill-feeling and conflict in other business areas. They naturally deal with changing priorities, budgets, goals and timelines and will accommodate a shifting business landscape to ensure their objectives are met.

Why choose a career as a business analyst?

Business analysts cover a broad spectrum of the business; there's always something to fix, add, change and improve. BAs are responsive. They work across multiple sectors and industries and are instrumental in leading change to help the business grow and remain competitive. They build strong networks and often know many people within their industry and beyond.

Not only are there excellent salaries and benefits on offer, but BAs also gain a tremendous amount of experience and respect. Often, when you become an experienced BA, you'll never have trouble finding a great job, even amid a recession or a pandemic.


All industries use BAs, and every business needs the skillset of a BA. A business analyst is a must-have role within every company, and in a post-Covid world, it's one of the most in-demand jobs in the UK.

More Information?

Please contact me

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