



# Building a business analysis capability

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The BA Achievement Award is organised by



## **Achievement summary**

### **What was delivered and what was the result?**

Leading the business analysis capability for the UK largest charity (Cancer Research UK). Defining, growing and maturing the strategic vision To provide a world-class business analysis capability to design and govern the ways of working, thinking, creating and supporting the organisation when conducting the practice of business analysis.

### **Achievement details**

#### **Please explain the details of the initiative and the approach that was taken.**

I lead the business analysis function and implemented and matured a business analysis capability. Working across a diverse and complex technology portfolio it is essential to use tools and techniques from core BA methodologies and apply a pragmatic and holistic approach to BA activities.

Successes include:

- Addressed lack of formalised methodology through the development of standardised BA Lifecycle and supporting templates, agreeing on these with other Technology Capability Leads to ensure end to end alignment and Lean ways of working.
- Reduced attrition rates by 20% by creating a clear BA career path and supporting training & development strategy.
- Supported and championed the first BA BCS apprenticeship and transitioned both BA apprentices into the organisation
- Embedding a culture of learning lessons from previous initiatives to ensure we do not repeat problems and continue to grow as a team.
- Working as a coach or mentor to individual Business Analysts to enable them to overcome challenges and obstacles in order to develop their career & achieve their professional certifications e.g. BCS.
- Setting objectives and performance metrics for the capability in line with the yearly performance cycle. Working with line managers to highlight development areas and contribute to related meetings or forums.
- Leading on recruitment for the analysis function; identifying new internal talent coming through and skills gaps that we need to fill through external recruitment. Ensuring we are using multiple channels and quality content to attract candidates to the roles.

## **Key achievement**

### **Why do you think this initiative should receive the award?**

The foundational phase of building a business analysis has enabled the organisation to make key decisions quicker and recognise, formalise and implement its business analysis activities to help beat cancer sooner.

## **Pitch & Jury Q&A**

### **Introduction**

My name is Jason Warner - I'm the capability lead business analyst for Cancer Research UK - which is the largest Non-profit/Charity in the UK which has the ambition to accelerate progress and see three quarters of people surviving the disease within the next 20 years.

I started as a process analyst and went through a logical career path of business analyst, senior and now capability lead for business analysis.

My submission is for the creation of a business analysis capability within the organisation.

The vision was clear 'Be the capability I needed as a Business Analyst' but also to provide a world-class business analysis capability to design and govern the ways of working, thinking, creating and supporting the organisation when conducting the practice of business analysis.

Working across a diverse and complex portfolio and using tools and techniques from core BA methodologies, we are connected to the problem statement and the value from business case to implementation to help the organisation make key decisions and recognise, formalise and implement change to help beat cancer sooner.

This isn't about 1 key project or initiative but building the foundations of a business analysis team where key BA concepts were used to develop the business analysis capability in some slightly strange analysis vortex!

**Question 1: You have listed an impressive list of accomplishments now that the BA capability is there. I assume that was a team effort. With whom did you work together and how will you make sure that your accomplishments will last?**

Definitely a team effort, the obvious group to start with is directly with the BA community which is composed of Apprentice BAs, Practitioner BAs and Senior BAs. It was also important to collaborate with other delivery and engineering disciplines,

such as Project Managers, Senior Delivery Managers, Developers and Quality Assurance teams to make sure our ways of working and standards could stay fully aligned. We also closely worked with Architecture, User Experience and Product Management teams which allowed us to stay connected to these disciplines but also share knowledge which improved communication and efficiency.

Finally, it was important to work closely with leadership teams not only to help develop performance indicators and gain buy-in but also to show the benefits of having such a capability in place. To ensure longevity, the biggest shift was in mindset and culture - whilst leadership is important for direction and decisions, empowerment and ownership to the whole group will ensure long term engagement and championship. With regular scheduled reviews of all aspects, I would hope these accomplishments don't only last but are built on and evolve with the future.

**Question 2: Building and having a BA Capability is a dream of many amongst us. Only a few will have it as complete as you describe it. Equally important is embedding it in the organisation. How did you achieve this? I always call this the organisational BA reflex.**

I love the term organisational BA reflex and embedding into the organisation, and the approach I took was what we learn as BAs with any form of change - taking people on the journey and selling the story 'What's in it for me', showing the clear benefits, especially if there is any resistance!

Even as a group of BAs, this needed to clearly be articulated, for example they could expect to benefit by:

- Getting help and advice for projects;
- Clearer and improved business analysis standards, tools, processes and skills – introducing new ways of working;
- Support with business analysis skills development as well as attracting, developing and retaining talent.

Capability objectives were also embedded into the business analyst team which supported engagement and development.

For the wider organisation embedding was achieved through providing strong visibility, great communications and most of all staying consistent: Using practical applications like drop-in sessions, knowledge sharing sessions, roadshows, newsletters and utilising technology social platforms were the main contenders.

With having professionalised the BA Capability, did that also lead to more BAs being allocated in the organisation? Maybe there were people that previously had other roles, that are now BAs?

We have definitely grown in size and reputation, and attract fantastic talent both internally and externally - I was unaware of how attractive a well-built capability would be to potential candidates especially when I can talk about our clear progression framework and great BA onboarding structure. We now have a team of 20 (up from 11 when I first started) and have attracted and successfully transitioned talented individuals across the organisation into a BA role.

One of my highlights within the role was being able to champion the organisation's first Apprentice BA roles to provide a really great talent pipeline. The recruitment was incredibly unique, our problem was how to evaluate less senior candidates and have them be able to perform to their best abilities without necessarily having the experience to talk about business analysis. The output from this challenge was to create a recruitment process in the form of an escape room (an escape room is an interactive activity whereby participants have to work as a team to obtain clues and solve puzzles to achieve a made-up goal - and thereby escaping the room!). We used this approach to evaluate individuals who may not have the traditional BA experience but have the behaviours, qualities and transferrable skills that we look for (communication and facilitation, analytical thinking, problem-solving, working in a team etc). This process successfully recruited two internal applicants who are now qualified and active business analysts for the charity and the BA recruitment escape room has been adopted into several other areas of the business.