

Discover and analyze the needs

Business Analysis

Analysis Skills : 3

A good definition of a need is something that someone wants but does not have. The BA will be able to provide different solution proposals to help stakeholders express their business needs and make them a reality if it makes sense.

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Introduction

As said in the introduction, needs are things that we desire but do not possess. Nevertheless, we must distinguish between two different kinds of needs, those that are quite specific to a company and those that are the desires of the solution's users.

Satisfying a need is not always easy. Many needs are expressed very easily by stating that one really needs this to accomplish a task in order to get the end result. But satisfying a need may not be the best solution. By looking for the real need, it may be possible to get the end result directly without addressing the initial need.

SA (Strategy Analysis)

the **SA** is the section about the business needs analysis as seen by the **BABOK**.

It provides a better understanding of the business needs to better achieve its purpose.

A **PDF** attached to this publication, in the form of a data stream, summarizes all the tasks, their descriptions, tools, stakeholders involved, and mnemonic techniques. It has been produced for educational purposes.

Defining business needs (Business needs)

Business needs, are the main objects for which we will create a project. The needs of a company are not the desire of the boss. They are described on what the company is trying to achieve, to have the clearest vision possible.

To find the needs of a business, you need to ask questions. Here are some examples :

- Why do you want this ?
- Why do you think you're doing it this way ?
- What products do you want to offer ?
- What will customers benefit from the solution ?

It is also possible to discover business needs by analyzing the business itself. For example :

- What is the primary mission of the company ?
- What motivates the company to change? Is it monetizable ?
- What is the company trying to accomplish ?
- What is the company's short-term vision ?
- What is the problem the company is trying to solve ?
- Are there competitors in the market ?
- Are customers happy with the product or service the company offers ?
- What are the key deadlines ?
- Are there any legal, time, budget (cash-flow) or operational constraints ?
- Why do you think the current state of your processes is not sufficient or optimal ?
- Are you currently working at a loss ?
- Have you thought about the risks ?

- Are you ready to abandon a product, rather than maintain it at all costs ?
- Do you need to build a new plant ?
- Do you need to hire additional staff ?

> There is always the crucial question of whether the need is aligned with the core vision of the business. If the company sells cars, it's unlikely that the company's primary need is to find a supplier of petroleum products. Even if the car needs gasoline to run, the company's primary need is not to provide the fuel.

Finding the true needs of a business is a really critical task because it will drive the project requirements.

Solving the needs of a business

Once the problem is identified, its characteristics must be identified by asking certain questions such as :

- Are there any requirements that the company must fulfill ?
- Will the need improve the company overall ?
- Is the company financially sound ?
- Will the finances improve or stagnate ?
- Is the company ready for change ?
- Are there any surprising or contradictory things ?

Defining user needs (Stakeholders needs)

In contrast to business needs, user needs, or the **"Stakeholders needs"** are expressed for :

- Improve a work process.
- Ease the work.
- Save time on completion.
- Improve operational between different groups.
- Avoid redundancy of operations between different areas or departments of the company.

It is critical to ask yourself certain questions before going to elicit collaborators, such as :

- Identify key players, key departments.
- Is the product as expected ?
- Is the goal achieved ?
- Can it be improved ?
- Are there important steps in the production flow ?
- Are there work processes to follow? Are they being followed ?
- Are there any software programs? Which ones? Sont-ils adéquats ?
- Are there daily reports ?
- How do the different actors communicate with each other ?

Define the main problem (root cause)

The real problem or opportunity that the company is seeking to solve is called the**"root cause"**, or core problem. Even when the problem seems crystal clear, it is not easy to deduce that you have put your finger on the truth. In reality, stakeholders often tend to express symptoms, rather than the real cause. The best advice to avoid confusing symptoms with cause is to ask the question **"why?"** several times, until the problem seems like a cause.

> Wanting to buy clothes is a need, but the real nature of the problem is wanting to beat the cold. The solution could indeed be buying clothes, but it could also be buying a blanket or turning up the heat. Analyzing a need to tease out the core problem can take time and tact.

Elicit stakeholders

As said above, it's not so easy to tell the difference between what a collaborator wants and what they need. We can find the users' needs by asking different questions that often start with the word**"why"**, such as :

- Why are you making such a request ?
- Why are you asking this? What is the purpose of the request ?
- Why are you only asking now? Doesn't work, no longer works ?
- Have there been any recent changes in procedure, manufacturing flow, service ?
- What will you do if the request is implemented? Or if it is denied ?

Choosing the right issues (Prioritize)

Good problems are defined as a problem that is worth looking at to find a solution. There are various questions that can be asked, such as :

- Is it a problem that affects core business functions (**core business**) ?
- Does it occur often ?
- Does it affect the production line, logistics? Does it slow down production ?
- How many people are impacted by this problem ?
- Does the possible solution have a global impact on the company ?
- Are there already solutions to the problem ?
- What is the comfort level of the users? Is there urgency to correct the problem ?
- What is the motivation of employees to want to change things ?

Establish costs and benefits

Money is always the lifeblood of any business. And there is no shortage of it when listing various problems or opportunities. We can ask ourselves some questions that make sense, such as :

- Will the solution, once implemented, make a real difference ?
- Are we willing to pay for it ?

The move is not just calculated by setting it. You also need to budget for the time it takes to adapt to the new processes being put in place.

Create a Problem Statement

Once the company has decided that the problem is worth solving, it is necessary to create a problem statement with the following four elements :

- The main problem (root cause).
- The users impacted.
- The Impact and issues.
- The effects that the solution must imperatively contain.

Phrase exemple :

The problem of ***[problem statement]*** affects ***[users]***, which ***[relationship with user]***, which impacts ***[promblem statement, cost, ...]***. An ideal solution would be to***[important benefit that will solve the problem]***.

Problem Statement :

The problem of ***guests smoking in our rooms*** affects ***other guests***, who ***do not appreciate cigarette smoke and its smell, as well as our housekeeping staff, who spend more time cleaning the rooms***, which impacts ***overall guest satisfaction, reduces bookings and increases costs***. An ideal solution would be to***ban smoking in our rooms and reassess the effects in a few weeks***

Create the solution positioning of the statement.

A good reason to create a statement solution positioning is to explain the solution in other, simpler words so that all the points are summarized clearly and accurately.

It also serves to align all stakeholders with the goals.

Phrase exemple :

For ***[target audience]*** who ***[statement of need or opportunity]***, the ***[name of new product or service]*** ia a ***[solution or service category]***, which ***[statement of benefit – the compelling reason to use the solution or work with you]***.

Énoncé de la solution :

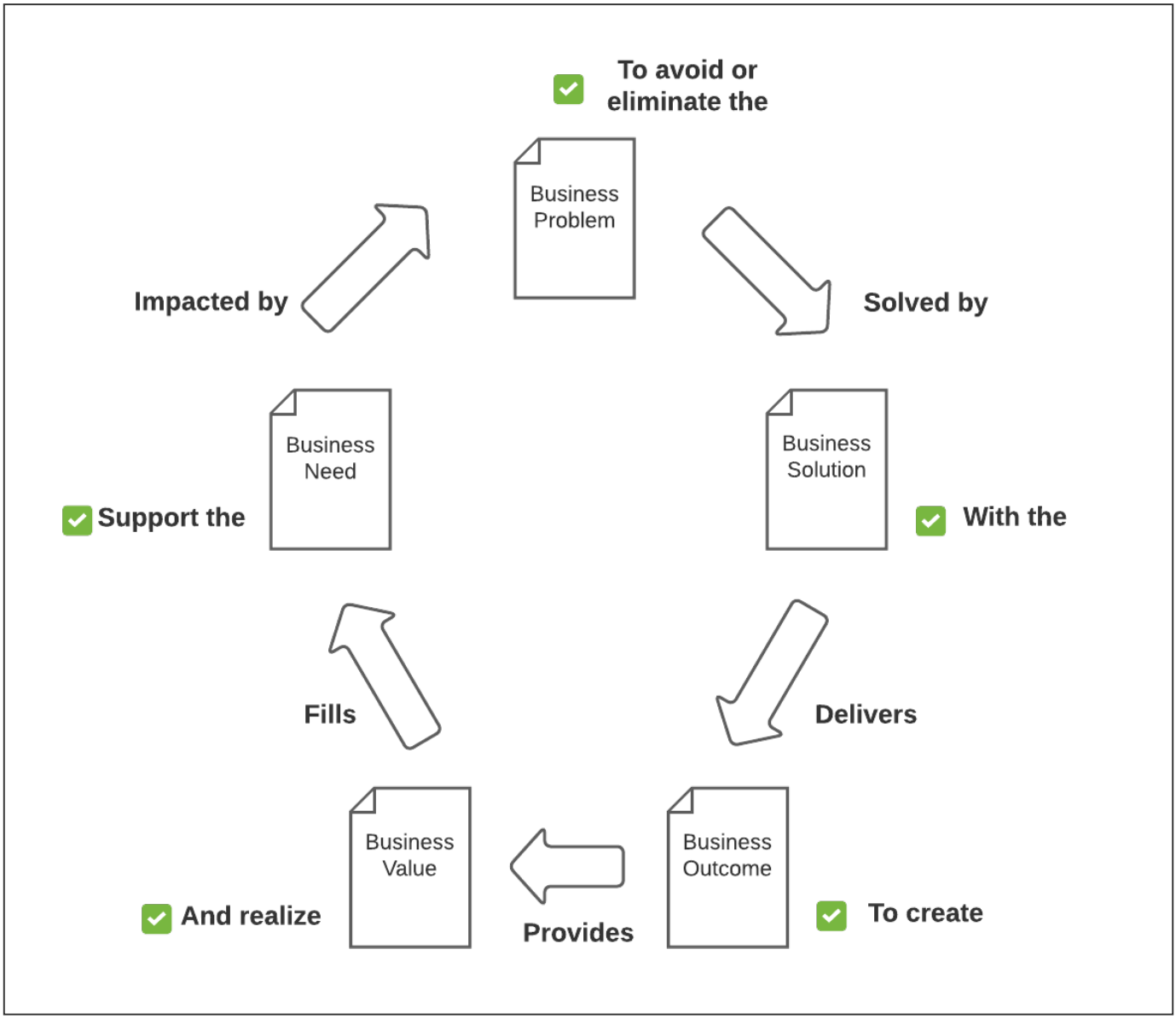
For ***our guests*** who ***do not appreciate smoke, the smell of smoke, or the damage caused by smokers***, the ***no-smoking policy*** is a ***new law that prohibits smoking in all of our rooms to improve the user experience and decrease our bookings***, which will ***eliminate the impact of smoking, provide a healthier environment, and improve our guests' satisfaction***.

Defining whether a solution is good

A solution is not made for the sake of it. It is created because it adds real value. Stakeholders must be able to see the impact, appreciate it, and be willing to pay for it.

Here are some questions that should be submitted to the problem statement.

- Does it support the business need? In other words, is the business need solved ?
- Really works ?
- Reduces or avoids the problem ?
- Gives the desired result ?
- Provides additional value that the audience might appreciate in order to meet their needs ?



Validate the value of a solution

Evaluating whether a solution is good

Once the problem has been identified, clarified, its criteria clearly defined, and the solution provides real added value, all that remains is for stakeholders to evaluate it.

Here are some questions to submit to them :

- What will change if we implement the solution ?
- What do you expect from the solution ?

- Do you think the solution will add value to you ?
- What do you think you'll achieve with the solution that you can't currently do ?
- Do you think the solution will work ? What does working mean to you ?

Be SMART

Any solution implemented should be **SMART**. **SMART** is an acronym that stands for :

- **Specific** : The objective of the solution is clear. It covers what is expected of it.
- **Measurable** : The solution is measurable against the expectations of the objective.
- **Attainable** : The solution is feasible and realistic.
- **Relevant** : The solution must be of service to the company.
- **Time-bound** : The solution must be achievable within a certain realistic time window.

Time for reflection

Once the problem or opportunity statement is written in simple words, that a solution stands out and can be recommended, that it adds value to the business, that it is financially attractive, and of course, that it covers the primary need, it is always good to take a step back and rest some questions.

Think before you buy a COTS (cost out of the shell)

- Does the price include all licenses, maintenance cost ?
- Will the product cover all my needs ?
- Is the product functional and intuitive ?
- Has it been sufficiently tested ?
- At the distribution and installation of this product at the technical level.
- At the training of the collaborators.
- At the hardware to be acquired to use this software. We often think of the server, but not the workstations that will have to be replaced.
- The cost per request. Some services are charged by data volume or by the number of pieces.

> Any excitement of the new gives way to frustration, disengagement, and then the recovery of confidence

Conclusion

Needs discovery is essential to properly identify the core business problem as well as those of the stakeholders. The analysis can take a lot of time to question them, but it is worth the effort. The elicitation is moreover one of the biggest tasks that falls to the business analyst.

The next chapter will give some good tips for delivering **the business case**.

And if you pass the ramp at the approval session, you can then move on to the next topic, which will revolve around **creating and maintaining the scope of a project**, also known as scoping the project.