

Avoiding conflict between the PM and BA, Part 2 Planning Business Analysis Work

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Industry Brief

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When I first read the *BABOK® Guide*, my initial reaction was, “What are they thinking?!” With my PM hat perched squarely on my head, my reaction was “but... but this is PM work!” In my mind I imagined all kinds of conflict occurring as the BA took on more and more of the PM role. After all, as PM I had done such traditional project management tasks as creating work breakdown structures, activity lists, the estimating, the scheduling, and now a body of knowledge was saying that the BA was supposed to do this work? I could see heads butting already.

When I joined the BABOK committee about a year later and raised these concerns, I was asked an insightful question: “Elizabeth,” one of the committee members asked, “as a PM did you come up with all the deliverables, tasks, and estimates for everyone on the project?” Ah, BAs sure do ask good questions! I remembered that as a PM I had gone to many team members, in particular technical SMEs, the developers, our full-time business SME on the project, and others to get their deliverables, tasks, estimates, and availability. But it had never occurred to me to involve the BA. With that one question the light bulb came on. The image of locked horns disappeared. In its place I saw a PM (me) with the weight of too much project planning on her shoulders suddenly stand up straight and unencumbered. How much easier my life as a PM would have been if *for the business analysis work*, I had taken the information from the BA and rolled it into the overall project. What a relief it would have been to get the business analysis input from the person who knew the most about business analysis!

With the light bulb came a few related insights:

1. Planning doesn't mean doing all the work yourself, so PMs don't have to complete all the planning processes listed in the *PMBOK® Guide* themselves. PMs need to ensure that all the work appropriate to the project is done, but that does not mean that the work in Section 5.1, Collect Requirements, for example, must be completed by the PM.
2. BAs are closer to the business analysis effort, so input from BAs is apt to be more complete and correct. When competent BAs are on the project, PMs do not need to micromanage business analysis. There's enough for PMs to do, so getting out of the way during business analysis will likely reduce the PM's stress. PMs, so focused on delivering on time and within budget, need to realize that PMs and BAs working collaboratively get more done, so the project has a better chance of completing sooner.

3. On large projects, both the PM and BA have full-time work doing project management and business analysis respectively. If either is saddled with doing the work of the other, both will be overburdened, increasing everyone's pressure and stress levels. Under such circumstances, resolving the inevitable territorial conflict will be that much more difficult and take that much more time, delaying the project even further.

So my advice, PMs, is to let the BAs do business analysis work, which includes business analysis planning. My advice, BAs, if confronted with a PM who wants to plan for the entire project, is to keep asking those insightful questions!

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