

# How CBAP Helps You Become a Better Consultant

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## How CBAP® Helps You Become a Better Consultant

My introduction to business analysis and process improvement was over twenty years ago when, as an electronics engineer in a GE plant, I received training in the Workout™ process improvement methodology. Since then, my knowledge and understanding has steadily increased as I learn how to analyze and improve business processes in the simplest and most sustainable way.

When I found the IIBA® (<http://www.theiiba.org>) a couple of years ago, I realized that the skills, experience and knowledge required by a Certified Business Analysis Professional (CBAP®) broadly described the point I had reached in my career. After joining the IIBA® and reading the *BABOK*® I was introduced to a consolidated set of tools, techniques and methodologies that would support my consultancy work.

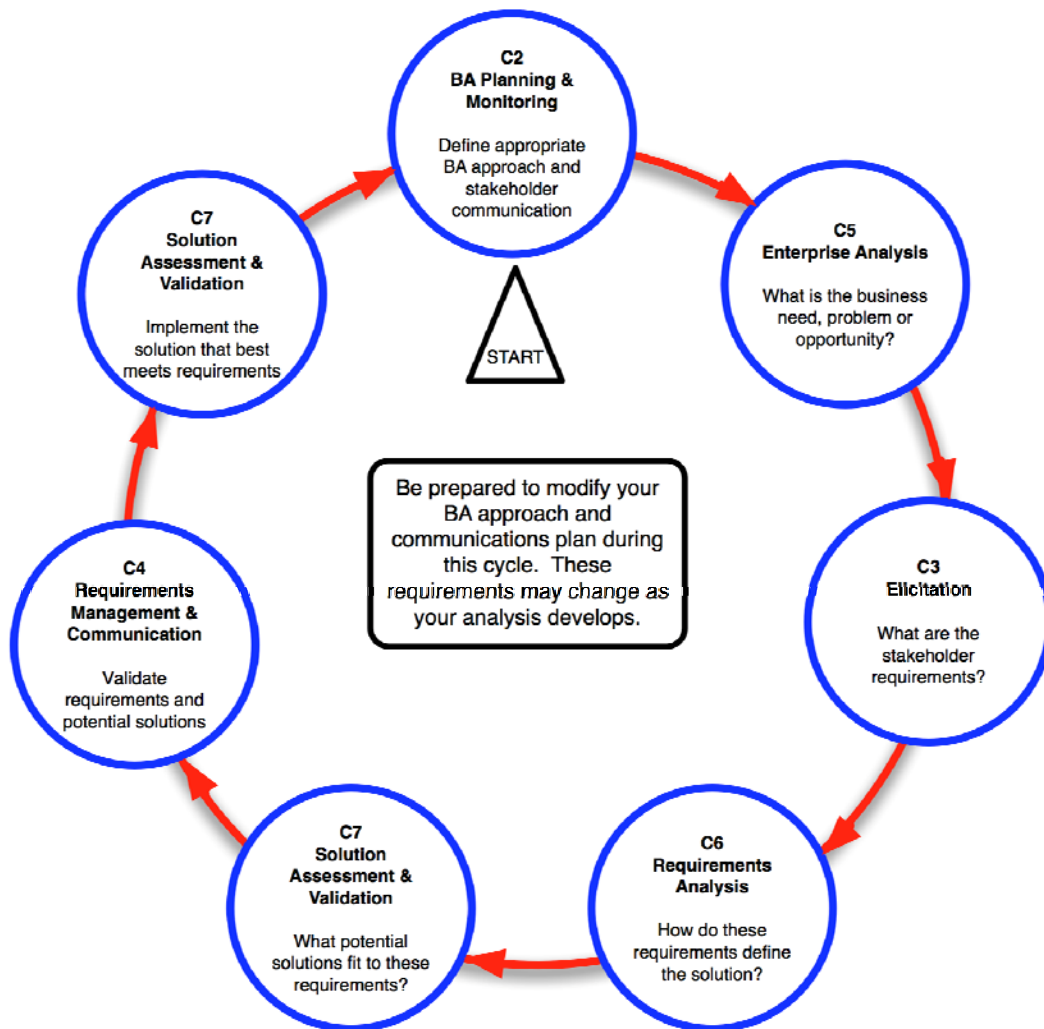
As a freelance process improvement consultant it is important that I get to the heart of client's problems and quickly provide effective solutions. It often means I have to sort out a mess of tangled processes and practices that have evolved and mutated over several years. How things actually work may be a long way from how managers believe them to be, which means that some detective work and analysis is required to uncover the true state of affairs before starting any process improvement work.

The common thread for all is that a client knows that its processes are inadequate and costly. Typically, these poor processes are characterized by discontinuities, duplications, poor communication, lack of ownership and accountability together with working in silos.

Resolving these is generally an iterative process, in a cycle of analyzing a business, defining their problems and then designing and implementing the appropriate solutions. To do this I have to draw on my experience and knowledge of business analysis and process improvement tools, techniques and methodologies.

The example below shows how I recently used the *BABOK*® in a Business Process Improvement Project. Note that the steps do not follow the *BABOK*® chapter headings. Although the *BABOK*® has section numbers, this is merely a requirement of structuring a book on paper. In practice the activities are not sequential and many of these may take place both simultaneously and iteratively.

This example of how I used the *BABOK*® is not intended as a step by step guide. The *BABOK*® is a framework that may be used in many different ways to achieve the right results.



## Conclusion - What is the value of CBAP® to consultants?

It has been difficult to find an answer to this question. As of March 2011, there are just over 1200 designated CBAPs worldwide with less than 20 of these in the UK. Lack of awareness is compounded by confusion with the British Computer Society's own exam based Business Analyst qualification and some belief that a BA is there to support IT, rather than someone who can provide a bridge of understanding and interpretation between business needs and potential solutions.

However, in the current tough economic conditions, it is vital that organizations can quickly identify and implement better ways of working to reduce waste. With their focus on the entire business, CBAPs are uniquely positioned and qualified to make this happen, especially as their qualification is awarded both on the basis of their proven ability and experience as well as by passing an exam.

The CBAP® qualification has provided independent recognition of my experience and knowledge of business analysis. From the additional tools, techniques and methodologies that I have learned and refreshed my knowledge of, it has also made me a more effective consultant, confident that my work with clients is based on internationally recognized best practice.

The journey to CBAP® qualification has been well worth taking and I recommend it to consultants who want to update and develop their skills and knowledge. I've described this journey in my blog at <http://cbap.posterous.com/>.

As more people gain this qualification it will help to raise the profile of the professional business analyst as someone who sees issues in broader terms and solutions as more than just trotting out another expensive IT solution. The requirement to revalidate certification every three years also shows that the CBAP® qualified consultant is committed to keeping their skills current.

For recruiters, the CBAP® qualification shows that the holder has met both the knowledge and experience requirements to be consistently effective across a whole range of organization types.

#### About Watermark Learning

Watermark Learning helps improve project success with focused business analysis and project management training and mentoring. We foster results through our unique blend of industry best practices, a practical approach, and an engaging delivery. We convey retainable real-world skills, to motivate and enhance staff performance, adding up to enduring results.

Watermark Learning offers public, private, and online training. With our academic partner, Auburn University, we also provide Masters Certificate Programs to help organizations be more productive, and assist individuals in their professional growth. Watermark is a PMI Global Registered Education Provider, and an IIBA Endorsed Education Provider.

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