

# Is There A Personality Profile For The PM and BA?

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## Is There a Personality Profile for the PM and BA?

During a presentation on the topic of the BA and PM roles last week, someone asked me a question about personality types. She asked if there were, generally speaking, certain personality traits for PMs vs. BAs. I asked the crowd what they thought. Here are some of the responses.

- **Big-picture and details.** A BA said that she thought BAs have a broader perspective. They are more “big-picture,” and PMs are more detailed, she asserted. I asked the PMs in the audience what they thought and they said, as we might suspect, that PMs were more big-picture and that BAs were more detailed.
- **Intuitive/logical.** Another BA suggested that BAs are more intuitive. Again, I asked the PMs what they thought and they thought PMs were.
- **Introvert/extrovert.** Another suggested that BAs are more extroverted while PMs are more introverted. The PMs disagreed. For those not familiar with these terms, in general extroverts tend to be energized by people and introverts by thought and imagination. Extroverts tend to like to socialize and introverts tend to like their own private space. Extroverts tend to make quick decisions and introverts usually need more “think” time. Extroverts tend to speak and then think and introverts vice versa.
- **Thoughtful vs. action-oriented.** Someone suggested that PMs are more action-oriented while BAs more thoughtful, for which there was more agreement than on any other point.

I believe that both BAs and PMs share all these traits and more. Both need to see the forest and trees, both need intuition and logic, both BAs and PMs need to act and to consider, and both need to interact with others and be alone. However, I think they use these traits at different points in the project and for different reasons.

**Big picture/details** Both the BA and PM roles require us to understand both the big-picture and keep track of the details. As they progressively elaborate requirements from the highest-level business need to the detailed functional and non-functional requirements, as they trace requirements, as they elicit and model requirements, and as they ensure that the ultimate solution solves the business problem, BAs have to keep both the big-picture and the details in mind.

A few ways in which PMs need the big-picture perspective include working with the sponsor on the Project Charter and project objectives, making presentations to senior management to justify funding requests, and ensuring that all the details of the project trace to the project objectives. As PMs detail the project management plan, including the baselines, the communications plan, the estimates and schedules, the resource plans, as well as when executing and monitoring the plans, they need to keep track of a multitude of details.

**Intuition and logic.** If, indeed, intuition is “keen and quick insight” (dictionary.com) or “understanding without apparent effort” (Wikipedia), then we could argue that both BAs and PMs need it. If logic is “reason or sound judgment” (dictionary.com) or a “tool for distinguishing between true and false” (cited in Wikipedia), then both BAs and PMs need logic as well.

Back in the proverbial dark ages, I had a consultant tell me that I was “very logical, for a woman,” and I took that as the greatest of compliments. A few years later, when “female intuition” was still considered a negative attribute for serious women in business, I proudly noted how intuitive I was to my boss. I remember that he quickly retorted that I wasn’t intuitive, but rather that my experience gave me what appeared to be intuition about such things as what to recommend, estimates, people’s

behaviors and motives, etc. I agree that the more experience we have, the more easily we can navigate uncharted territories. However, I have found that some of us need less data for our decisions and some more. I'm not sure, though, which role uses more intuition and which more logic.

**Introvert/extravert.** I would be hard-pressed to categorize either PMs or BAs as either type. There are times on a project when we need to interact intensely with others and times when we need our alone time. For the BA, each of the *BABOK® Guide 2.0* knowledge areas has tasks and techniques that favor one or the other, but both are needed to complete all tasks. For example in Elicitation, the task to conduct elicitation activities requires more extraversion, while documenting the results requires more introversion. In the *PMBOK® Guide* developing the team requires more extraversion and creating the various management plans requires more introversion. In an online article in Forbes on November 30, 2009, Jennifer B. Kahnweiler convincingly argues that introverts make the best leaders (<http://www.forbes.com/2009/11/30/introverts-good-leaders-leadership-managing-personality.html>). Perhaps the most effective project professionals are “ambiverts,” hovering close to the center on a continuum from introversion to extraversion.

**Thoughtful/action-oriented.** Although there are times on a project when we need to act and times when we need to listen and to step back and consider alternatives, generally speaking the BA is more thoughtful and the PM more action-oriented. The PM is more focused on delivery of the end product on time and within budget, so there is more of a tendency to act and act quickly. In general, BAs need to ensure that the end product actually works the way stakeholders want it to work, so there is more need to analyze alternatives and impacts and ensure stakeholders come to consensus on the requirements, which will take more time, consideration, and patience.

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