

THE BUSINESS ANALYST SUCCESS PATH – GUIDE

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PURPOSE

This guide is designed specifically for our Circle of Success membership program. The purpose of this guide is to provide additional resources and insights to help you move along the Business Analyst Success Path, more quickly and easily.

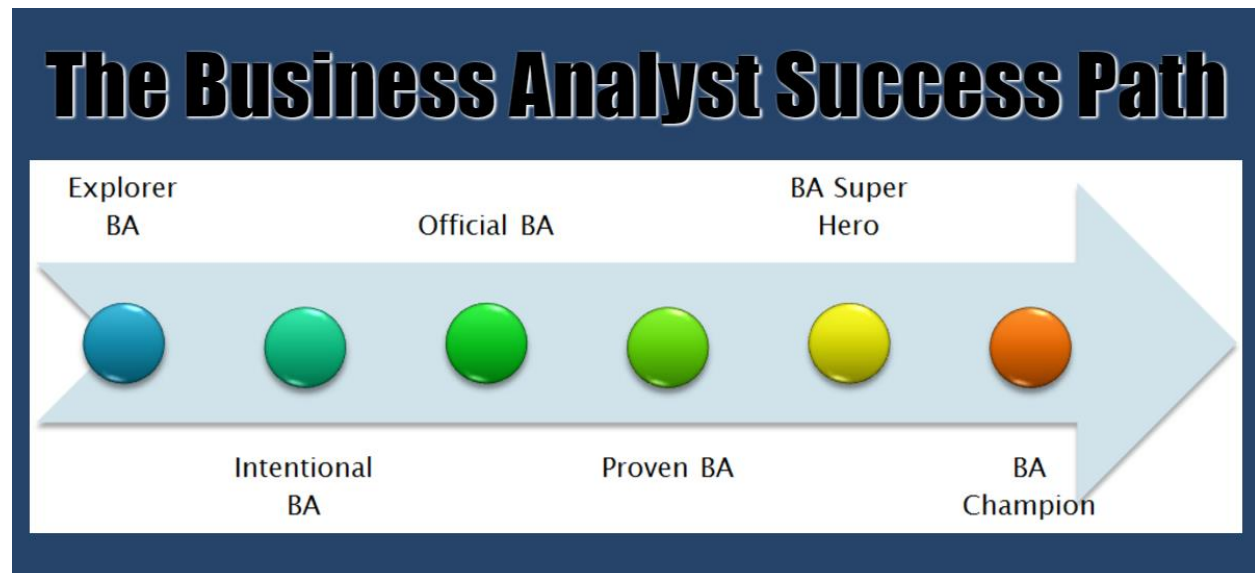
This guide is your starting point! As you apply these learnings and take the actions described here, reach out for support in our Slack community. We are here to help you navigate any challenges or discouragements that surface along the way. We are also here to celebrate your success – big and small – so be sure to share your wins and progress, on the daily if you are so inspired!

STRUCTURE

One note – while many of the resources are available freely on the Bridging the Gap and other trust-worthy websites, we’ve also included references to books by myself and others and our online training programs. The Circle of Success is all about coaching and success principles – helping you discover and take the actions

you need to be taking for more success, discovering what you truly want out of your BA career, and reframing the limiting beliefs that hold you back.

We offer in-depth training on specific business analyst skills, in our deep-dive BA training programs.



EXPLORER BA



At this stage you are exploring business analysis to see if it's a good fit for you personally and professionally. People who enjoy their work, succeed more easily.

So the first question is whether or not BA is a good career choice for you.

Action Steps

1) Assess Your Fit for the BA Job Role

Use these resources to help you assess your fit for the BA job role.

- [BA Litmus Test](#)
- [42 Reasons to Be a Business Analyst](#)

2) Explore Business Analyst Job Postings

One really important area to be aware of at this stage is that there are a wide variety of business analyst job roles – not all jobs with the title of “business analyst” actually have the responsibilities. And not all business analyst job roles have a title.

The easiest way to learn the variations, especially of the roles in your local area, is to review active job postings.

- Evaluate a broad selection of job postings, as many as 10 or more, with the business analyst job titles. What are the common skills across all or more jobs? What are the unique skills?
- Can you find at least 3 job postings that are actually business analyst roles, but don't have the title?

Here are some articles that explore the different nuances of business analyst jobs.

- [36 Business Analyst Job Titles](#)
- [The Business Analyst Role](#)
- [Why Do We See Technical Skills in Business Analyst Jobs?](#)
- [How Industry Expertise Impacts Your BA Job Search](#)

As you explore these different options, post your questions and concerns in the Circle of Success Slack channel for advice from your coaches and fellow community members.

Circle of Success Teachings

- **Goals That Guide You + BA Career Inventory** – clarify what you really want out of your BA career.
- **Peeling the Onion: Uncovering and Rewriting the Limiting Beliefs That Hold You Back** – when we are lacking clarity about a key decision, like what career to pursue, often it's our limiting beliefs that are getting in the way of committing to what we really want.

Additional Resources

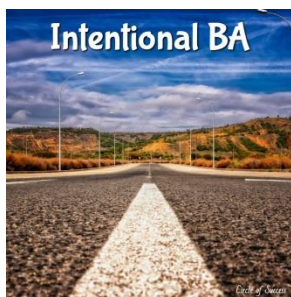
[How to Start a Business Analyst Career](#), by Laura Brandenburg

Milestones

You are ready to move to the next stage when...

- ✓ You've considered your career choice and decided that "YES" you want to be a business analyst.

INTENTIONAL BA



BA job role?

At this stage, you are actively and consciously pursuing a business analyst career.

The business analysis profession has what's considered a "chicken and egg" dilemma. Most BA job roles require experience, so how can you get the experience without the

It's simple really and the action steps in this stage will help you develop your BA mindset and assess your transferable skills so you can create your first "official" BA opportunity.

Action Steps

1) Identify Transferable Business Analyst Skills

As you start cultivating your BA mindset by consciously and intentionally applying the BA techniques in your current work, you'll be better able to assess your transferable skills.

Most often, mid-career professionals with some career experience have some transferable skills. For example:

- A sales person or customer service professional tends to have great communication and relationship-building skills, and can ask questions to understand the problem the customer wants to solve with their solution.

- A software developer tends to understand what good requirements look like, and how to analyze the functional software capabilities of a system. They also have good exposure to IT projects.
- A quality assurance engineer understands what high-quality, testable requirements look like.
- A business subject matter expert understands how the business functions and what delivers value to the business.

No matter your career or professional background, you have some transferable skills. These are your positions of strength in pursuing a BA career.

- [Click here to read through our repository of career transition stories](#)
- [Click here to read the key BA skills](#)

Complete the BA Skills Assessment to clearly identify these skills. (See the Success Library to download.)

2) Perform BA Techniques

Action creates clarity – and action creates opportunity. You start a business analyst career not by waiting for your first “official” role to come to you, but by doing business analysis in your current work.

Here are some resources to help you start applying BA skills in your current work

- [How to Start Your Business Analyst Career Even if You Have No Experience](#)
- [How to Analyze a Business Process](#) (this is often the first place to start)

At this stage, you also want to be reflecting on each experience. Are you finding BA work fun and fulfilling? What do you enjoy the most? What do you enjoy the least?

And, as challenges come up, leverage our community for support. We can help you take the next step with more confidence, so you achieve the success you need to get to the next stage.

3) Seek Out Opportunities to Be a BA

As you get clear on your transferable skills and expand those skills with on-the-job experience, you'll want to start actively seeking out BA job opportunities. These can be project assignments, an internal or lateral move, or even a new role in a new organization.

Explore these success stories for inspiration as you seek out new opportunities.

- [Roshni Dominic Starts a Part-time BA Role at the British Red Cross](#) (through an internal project assignment)
- [Thomas Clarke Goes From Research Assistant to Business Analyst](#) (internal promotion to a BA role)
- [Amelia McHenry: From Technical Writer to Lead Business Analyst](#) (new role, new company)

And leverage these resources as you seek out new opportunities.

- [The Business Analyst Job Search Process: 5 Steps to Getting Hired](#)
- [How to Find Business Analyst Volunteer Positions](#)
- [How to Get Noticed for On-the-Job Opportunities](#)

Circle of Success Teachings

- **The Self-Confidence Formula: How to Take Action through the Fear** – to help you step into the mindset of a BA and own it with confidence.
- **Abundance Mindset: How to Feel Great about Receiving More** – to help you see the opportunities to do business analysis all around you.

Additional Resources

[How to Start a Business Analyst Career](#), by Laura Brandenburg

All of our on-demand training programs support BAs and non-BAs alike in applying BA skills in their current work, or volunteer opportunities.

[Click here to explore online BA training programs from Bridging the Gap](#)

Milestones

You are ready to move to the next stage when...

- ✓ You are assigned to your first project as a business analyst.

OFFICIAL BA



At this stage, you are officially assigned to your first project as a business analyst. This could be big or small – from a week-long mini-project to a multi-year mega project. But it's a project and you are a business analyst (even if you don't have the title).

You could find this opportunity by being hired into a new role, or promoted into a role in your current company. Or it may be a new project assignment without a promotion or even a volunteer/pro bono project assignment.

Now, because BA roles vary significantly, you may not do everything a BA does, but you will do most of it in a structured way.

Action Steps

1) Manage Expectations

One of the most important actions you need to take in this phase is to manage expectations – of yourself and for your manager, stakeholders, and any team members.

Business analyst roles vary widely and it's incredibly likely that this particular role won't match up with what you've experienced elsewhere or learned about the profession. Just by being here in the Circle of Success and doing a little research, you might be more aware of what a BA does than those who hired you.

Here are some articles that will help you get started and manage expectations:

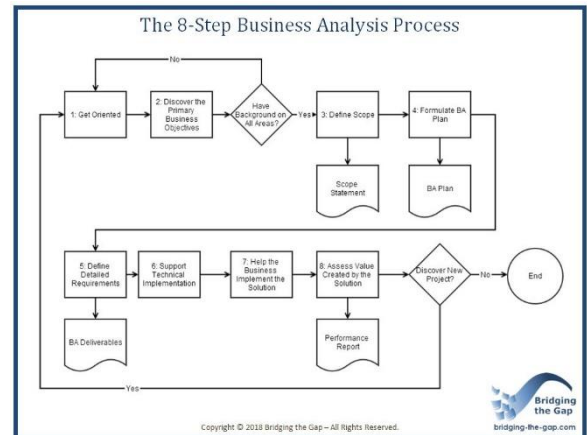
- [Starting a New Business Analyst Job](#) – follow the suggested articles for specific guidance on each step, from your first day, to your first week, to your first month.
- [4 Surprising Reasons Your First BA Job Doesn't Turn Out Like You Expect](#)
- [4 Ways to Set Clearer Expectations](#)

2) Apply the Business Analysis Process Framework

As you manage expectations, you also want to be providing leadership and guidance on what a business analyst is actually supposed to do.

Leveraging and applying the Bridging the Gap 8 Step Business Analysis Process Framework is a great place to start.

- [8-Step Business Analysis Process Framework](#)



It's important to avoid re-inventing the wheel here. While it might seem like your project or organization is unique, time and again we've seen the same basic steps, techniques, and principles help business analysts across the world in all kinds of industries and types of projects be successful.

3) Seek To Apply the Full-Range of BA Responsibilities

In order to apply the full range of business analysis responsibilities, you may need to seek out new projects, new roles, and new assignments. Be on the lookout for opportunities to move into an expanded business analysis role and contribute more value to your organization.

Here are some articles to help you stay open to responsibilities.

- [How to Get Your Organization to Create a BA Role \(Just for You!\)](#)
- [How to Find Business Analyst Volunteer Positions](#)
- [Keep Climbing That Career Mountain \(And Don't Forget to Enjoy the View\)](#)

You may also need to let go of old roles so you can focus on building your business analysis skills and experience.

Circle of Success Teachings

- **The Self-Confidence Formula: How to Take Action through the Fear** – the fear doesn't go away just because you've become "official." In fact, it might increase temporarily as this role becomes your new normal. Check back to this teaching to continue to cultivate the mindset of the BA you want to be.
- **Overcoming Perfectionism: 3 Steps to Making Progress without the Stress, Blame, and Overwhelm** – It's incredibly important not to let perfect be the enemy of good at this stage. However your first BA role turns out, celebrate the win and use it as a jumping off point to what you really want.
- **Surviving (and Thriving!) in a Hybrid Role: How to Create a Career Path When You Wear Multiple Hats** – to help you let go of old roles that keep you from doing your best as a business analyst.

Additional Resources

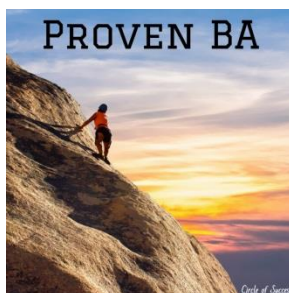
If you are unfamiliar with the business analysis process, you may benefit from the [BA Essentials Master Class](#).

Milestones

You are ready to move to the next stage when...

- ✓ You've successfully completed 1 or more projects, applying most of the BA process framework and techniques from at least 2 different areas.

PROVEN BA



At this stage, you have a solid track record as a business analyst. You continue to refine your skills and experience with additional projects, and gain exposure to new skills. You enhance your value to the organization by refining your role to focus on what you are best at and can excel at.

Action Steps

1) Expand Your Toolbox

Expand your toolbox for comfort with all 8 steps in the BA process framework and all 3 areas of The BA Blueprint. Also start exploring additional techniques from the *BABOK® Guide* and covering the breadth of the knowledge areas.

Here are some articles that will help you get started expanding your toolbox:

- [53 Techniques for Discovering All the Requirements](#)
- [22 Visual Models Used by Business Analysts](#)
- [65 Business Analyst Techniques](#)

2) Seek BA Work in New Environments

A critical aspect of going from proven to super hero is that you become comfortable working in new domains, with new stakeholders, and in new environments.

These opportunities can come from lateral moves within your own company where you switch departments or from a new role in a new company.

Here are some articles that will help you change environments:

- [How Can a Business Analyst Move From One Domain to Another?](#)
- [How to Learn About a New Business Domain](#)
- [What a Confidence Business Analyst Looks Like – Interview with Diana Sofariu](#)
- [The Danger in Being an Expert](#)

3) Develop a Clear Understanding of Your Value

By this point in your career, you've realized that success doesn't just happen – you create your success. You've proven yourself to be incredibly successful and competent as a business analyst.

But you still might feel under-valued and under-appreciated in your role. And this can lead to feeling stuck. Learning to clearly articulate your value to a broad range

of stakeholders – from executives to developers to operations, etc. – will open up even more opportunities to expand your impact and your role.

Here are some articles that will help you understand and communicate your value:

- [How Business Analysts Create Value](#)
- [The Ripple Effect of Your Work as a Business Analyst](#)
- [What To Do When You Are In Between Projects: 10 Ideas That Add Value to Your Organization](#)

Circle of Success Teachings

- **Bonus Chat Session with Tracie Edwards** – specifically on the value of lateral moves to expand her experience.
- **Surviving (and Thriving!) in a Hybrid Role: How to Create a Career Path When You Wear Multiple Hats** – to help you let go of old roles that keep you from doing your best as a business analyst.
- **Abundance Mindset: How to Feel Great about Receiving More** – to reinforce the link between the business analysis work you do, the cash value you receive, and the use case you create for your organization.
- **Coming Soon – Impression of Increase: How to Position Your Impact and Earn More Respect** – to help you identify the impact of your work and clearly articulate this using a variety of communication mechanisms.

Additional Resources

To broaden your exposure to a variety of business analysis techniques, consider The Business Analyst Blueprint® training program, or any individual module that represents a new set of techniques to you.

[Click here to explore online BA training programs from Bridging the Gap](#)

Milestones

You are ready to move to the next stage when...

- ✓ You've successfully completed BA work in at least 3 different environments.

BA SUPER HERO



At this stage, you are confident you can succeed in any project situation – because you have succeeded and “proven” yourself *to yourself* in at least 3 different situations. At this level, you'll find that people request you to be assigned to your project and they trust you and your work.

If you got to this stage without formal training, well done! That means that your work is your genius work. However, this can also stop you at this step. Because the next level means confidence that you can succeed, but also that you can help others succeed.

Action Steps

1) Define Your Next Level Career Goal

First, you'll want to define your next-level career goal. Now, you actually don't have to take this step. If you are happy where you are at as a Super Hero, you can stay at this level for a long, long time. With expertise in different areas and high-level contributions, you could even continue to receive promotions and salary increases within this stage.

But eventually, when you keep growing, you'll see you can expand your impact when you step above and beyond being an individual contributor and into a champion role.

Here are some articles to help you decide what the next step looks like for you.

- [Senior Business Analyst – 6 Areas of Responsibility](#)
- [What Is the Difference Between a Senior BA, Lead BA, and Project Manager?](#)

Often, getting to the next level means letting go of project work, getting it all done, and doing it all yourself.

2) Train and Mentor Other Business Analysts

You need to learn to clone yourself, so you aren't the only one who can handle all the important projects. And to do that, you start trying to figure out why you are so successful and training and mentoring others to achieve similar kinds of successes.

One truth I've learned through developing online training programs is that the best way to learn is to actually teach. So don't wait until you've figured out why you are successful to start teaching others. Simply start. Share what you know and invite questions. As you answer these questions and help people with new challenges, your awareness of your keys to success will expand.

Look for mentees on your team, in other departments, or at local chapter meetings. There are always more people looking for mentors than can find them – so if you are not finding someone to mentor, there is an opportunity you aren't seeing. You could even reach out to your online network or inside our Circle of Success community.

Here are some articles that will help you get started mentoring and training others.

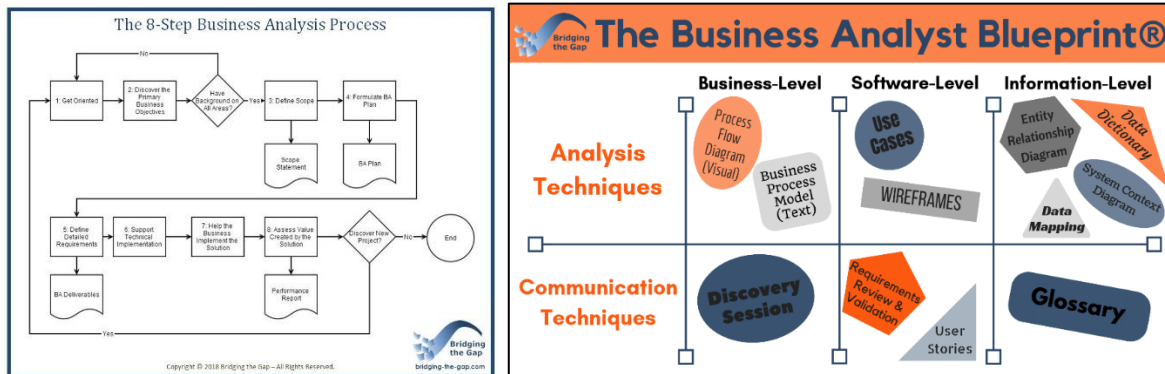
- [How to Help New Business Analysts Capitalize on their Transferable Business Analysts Skills](#)
- [Innovation in Learning – Leveraging the Real World in Training to Create Success](#) – a sneak peek behind the curtain of the Bridging the Gap learning model, so you can apply it in your own training and mentoring work.
- [From Senior BA to BA Lead: Annette Richards](#) – Annette shares how she built and trained a team of junior business analysts, going from Super Hero to Champion.

- [4 Things I Would Have Liked To Have Known Before I Started My BA Career](#)
– likely you know these, and can teach them to others!

3) Establish a Consistent and Repeatable Process Framework

Beyond helping individuals be successful, is to create a consistent and repeatable process framework that enables your organization to deliver more value through industry-standard best practices in business analysis.

Again, you can leverage our 8-Step Business Analysis Process Framework and the 3 aspects of requirements analysis covered in The Business Analyst Blueprint®, or you can develop your own models.



Here are some additional resources to help you establish a consistent and repeatable process:

- [How to Structure a Business Analyst Team](#)
- [8 Steps to Being Effective as a Business Analyst](#)
- [How to Manage a Project Portfolio](#)

Additional Resources

- [Kenji Fujita's Success Story: Getting Out from the Never-Ending To-Do List](#)
- [The Trajectory of a Senior Business Analyst: Interview with Disha Trivedi, CBAP](#) – Disha is also a Bridging the Gap instructor and shares how that came to be in this interview.

Circle of Success Teachings

- **Goals That Guide You + BA Career Inventory** – clarify what you really want out of the next level in your career.

- **Peeling the Onion: Uncovering and Rewriting the Limiting Beliefs That Hold You Back** – when we are lacking clarity about what’s next, or making a significant shift like this, often it’s our limiting beliefs that are getting in the way of committing to what we really want.
- **Einstein Time: How to Almost Magically Create More Time in Your Day** – to help you identify what’s most important and make space in your day for more impact.

Milestones

You are ready to move to the next stage when...

- ✓ You have developed a structured BA role or process framework for your organization and mentored at least one other BA in that process.

BA CHAMPION



BA Champion

You are the expert in the work of BA and a champion for the role. You understand business analysis deeply. You’ve established a process framework in your organization and you’ve trained others to use it and apply it consistently.

You can jump in and help with any project. And you can advise others on how to best approach project challenges even when you aren’t the BA and “in the details” of the project.

You are ready for more, and in this phase you’ve opened a lot of doors. You have your core BA skills, you’ve established a framework that trains others and ensures their success at a difficult role, and you have great communication skills. Now, what do you want your bigger contribution to be? The possibilities are endless!

Action Steps

Your Action Steps at this level will depend on the path you take. And there is really a menu of options here that you can choose from and combine.

- **Management** – Elevate the awareness and value of the BA role in your organization. Create opportunities for other BAs to move along the Success Path through community building and development and creating an organizational career path.
- **Strategic BA Work** – This is work beyond the project level and can take the form of Business Architecture, Project Leadership, or Strategy Analysis.
- **Thought Leadership** – this can take the form of starting a blog, speaking, publishing a book, starting a company, or training.
- **Consulting** – Consulting opportunities can be either internal or external. You can be a project-based consultant at any level. At this level, you could be a consultant in the BA practice to assess and map out a maturity plan for a BA practice or PMO. Or you might be brought in to fix and clean-up failing projects – leaving a team behind you to execute.

Additional Resources – Management

- [How to Structure a Business Analyst Team](#)
- [From Senior BA to BA Lead: Annette Richards](#) – Annette shares how she built and trained a team of junior business analysts, going from Super Hero to Champion.
- [Why Business Analysts Can Be Difficult to Manage](#)

Additional Resources – Strategic BA Work

- [How to Handle Organizational Change and Get What You Want Out of Your BA Career](#)
- [The Project Where I Didn't Get My Way](#)

Additional Resources – Thought Leadership

- [10 Lessons from 10 Years in Business](#) – An inside look into the building of Bridging the Gap

- [Leading the Way in Sustainability – Interview with Lisa Curl of Dominion Energy](#)

Additional Resources – Consulting

- [10 Lessons from 10 Years in Business](#) – An inside look into the building of Bridging the Gap
- [Successful Business Analysis Consulting – Interview with Karl Wieggers](#)
- [Becoming a Great BA: Consulting Lessons from Ellen Gottesdiener](#)

Circle of Success Teachings

- **Goals That Guide You + BA Career Inventory** – You have so many options and opportunities now. Revisiting your goals will help you clarify what you really want out of the next level in your career.
- **Peeling the Onion: Uncovering and Rewriting the Limiting Beliefs That Hold You Back** – When we are lacking clarity about what’s next, or making a significant shift like this, often it’s our limiting beliefs that are getting in the way of committing to what we really want.
- **Abundance Mindset: How to Feel Great About Receiving More** – To help you feel great about going to a level you may have never even dreamed of, and achieving great, lasting success in your life and career.
- **Bonus Chat Session – July 2, 2019** – Paula Bell and Laura Brandenburg discuss how Paula landed a keynote speaking engagement as a business analysis development day in South Africa.

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