Bridging the Gap

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# 6 Mistakes That Lead to Missing Requirements

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#BTGBA

# We’ll Help You Start Your BA Career

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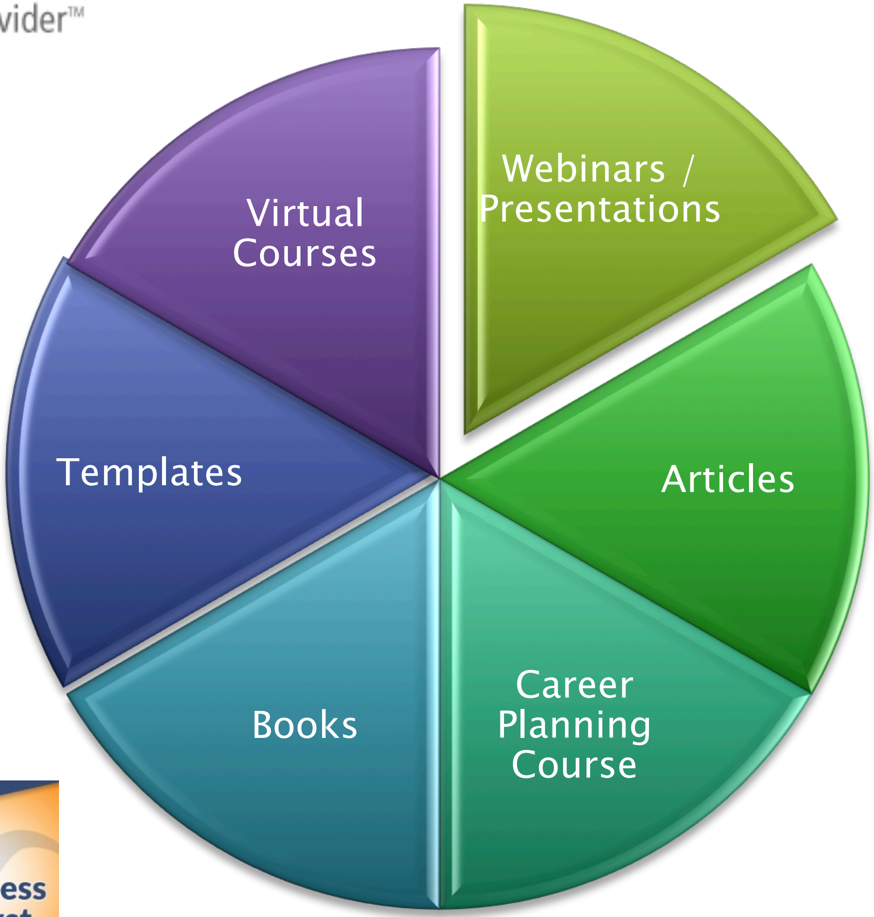

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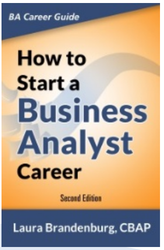
BA Career Guide

How to Start a Business Analyst Career

Second Edition

Laura Brandenburg, CBAP

Bridging the Gap

# Our Agenda Today

- Why well-written requirements is a critical skill to advance your business analysis career
- Top 3 mistakes BAs with a technical background make
  - Q&A
- Top 3 mistakes BAs with a non-technical background make
  - Q&A
- Final takeaways

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# WHY CARE?

## Software projects run better with well-written, complete requirements

↑ Productivity

Customer Satisfaction

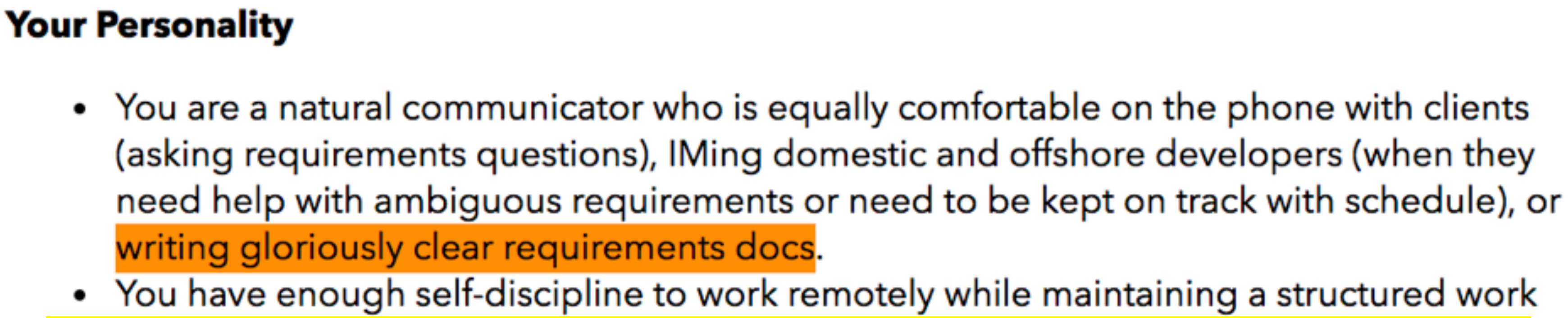
↓ Rework

Maintenance,
Enhancement,
& Support Costs

# WHY CARE?

## Employers value it

BA job description from indeed.com



**Your Personality**

- You are a natural communicator who is equally comfortable on the phone with clients (asking requirements questions), IMing domestic and offshore developers (when they need help with ambiguous requirements or need to be kept on track with schedule), or writing gloriously clear requirements docs.
- You have enough self-discipline to work remotely while maintaining a structured work

Most hiring managers know that requirements problems bring costs in terms of money or time wasted, customer dissatisfaction, or lost business opportunities, and those managers are always looking for business analysts who are capable of writing high-quality requirements.

# Top 3 mistakes made by BAs with a technical background

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# What is wrong with these requirements?

“A button in the homepage will enable customers to submit a support request.”

“The system must store all online transactions in a relational database.”

# What is wrong with these requirements?

"A button in the homepage will enable customers to submit a support request."

"The system must store all online transactions in a relational database."

# #1 – Imposing premature design constraints

🛑 A button in the homepage will enable customers to submit a support request.

→

✓ A customer can submit a support request from the homepage.

# #1 – Imposing premature design constraints

| 🛑 | | ✓ |
|---|---|---|
| A button in the homepage will enable customers to submit a support request. | → | A customer can submit a support request from the homepage. |
| The system must store all transactions in a relational database. | → | An administrator can retrieve the history of all transactions using the admin panel. |

It’s easy to understand why this type of mistake is more common among BAs with a technical background: those BAs are used thinking in terms of the solution that needs to be built, rather than in terms of the actual user need that the solution is meant to address.

If you have the habit of using terms like button, link, database, redirect, drop-down list in your requirements, stop! Unless you have a clear justification (such as the need to maintain consistency in the user interface when you’re enhancing an existing system), stay clear of words that describe design elements or implementation details to avoid this mistake: imposing premature design constraints.

# What is wrong with this user story?

As a store admin, I want to allow customers to browse products by category.

# What is wrong with this user story?

As a store admin, I want to allow customers to browse products by category  so that…???

# The structure of a user story

- As a [ PERSON IN A ROLE ]
- I can [ PERFORM SOME ACTIVITY ]
- so that [ SOME OUTCOME IS ACHIEVED ]

As a store admin, I want to allow customers to browse products by category so that…???

- As a [ PERSON IN A ROLE ]

  Problem #1: Ignoring the end user performing the activity

- I can [ PERFORM SOME ACTIVITY ]

  browse products by category

- so that [ AN OUTCOME IS ACHIEVED ]

  Problem #2: Failing to state the desired outcome

# #2: Ignoring the end user

As a store admin, I want to allow customers to browse product categories.

Who is the actor browsing product categories?
It’s not the store admin.

As a customer, I can browse products by category

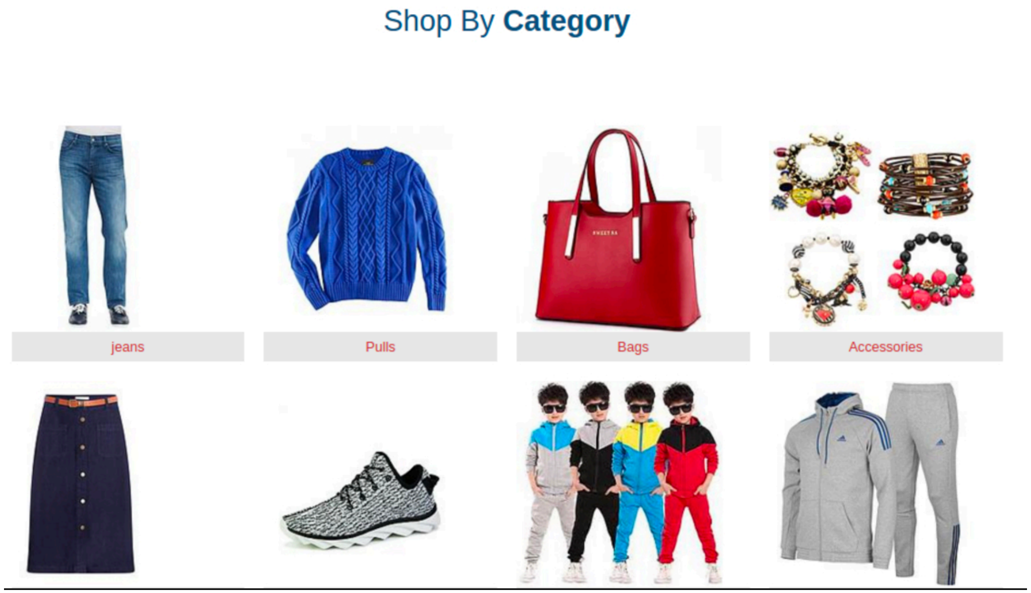
# #3: Failing to state the desired outcome

As a customer, I can browse products by category
so that…???

What’s the desired outcome?

As a webstore manager, I want to allow customers to browse products by category in the webstore.

**As a customer**, I can browse products by category **so I can quickly find what I'm looking for**.



# Neglecting desired outcomes cause missing requirements

- As a customer, I can enter a coupon code during checkout.

⬇

- The system will allow a coupon code to be entered during checkout

# Explicit outcomes help identify missing requirements

- As a customer, I can enter a coupon code during checkout so that I can get a discount on the total price of my purchase.

- The system will allow coupon code to be entered during checkout
- **The system will update the total price to reflect the discount when a valid coupon is entered**

## Top 3 mistakes made by BAs with a technical background

Mistake #1: Imposing premature design constraints

Mistake #2: Ignoring the end user

Mistake #3: Neglecting the desired outcome

# Top 3 mistakes made by BAs with a non-technical background

# Acceptance Criteria in User Stories

*User story*

As a [ PERSON IN A ROLE ]

I can [ PERFORM SOME ACTIVITY ]

so that  [ SOME OUTCOME IS ACHIEVED ]

*Acceptance Criteria*

Given [ INITIAL CONTEXT ]

When [ EVENT OCCURS ]

Then [ A RESPONSE IS PRODUCED  ]

# What is wrong with these acceptance criteria?

As a registered customer who forgot my password, I can reset it in order to regain access to my account.

<u>Acceptance Criteria:</u>

Given that I’m a new customer, I can create a new account and password to log in. Given that I forgot my password, I have an option to reset it.

# What is wrong with these acceptance criteria?

As a registered customer who forgot my password, I can reset it in order to regain access to my account.

**Acceptance Criteria:**

Given that I’m a new customer, I can create a new account and password to log in. Given that I forgot my password, I have an option to reset it.

# #1: Unfocused Acceptance Criteria

*Acceptance Criteria for "Reset password"*

~~Given that I'm a new customer, I can create a new account and a password to log in.~~

# *Acceptance Criteria for “Reset password”*

~~Given that I’m a new customer, I can create a new account and a password to log in.~~

Given that I am in the login screen, I see an option to reset my password. When I select this option, the system prompts me to enter my email address.

Given that I provided a registered email address, the system displays a confirmation notification and sends an email containing a new system-generated password and instructions on how to login and change the password.

## Top 3 mistakes made by BAs with a non-technical background

# #1: Unfocused Acceptance Criteria

# What is wrong with this set of requirements?

- BUYING A GIFT CARD
- The webstore will accept gift card as a payment method.
- A registered customer can buy one or more gift cards in each purchase made in the Web Store.

# #2: Requirements listed arbitrarily

- BUYING A GIFT CARD
- The webstore will accept gift card as a payment method.
- A registered customer can buy one or more gift cards in each purchase made in the Web Store.

# Group logically

- By goal
- Buy gift card
- Pay purchase with gift card
- View gift card balance

- By role & task
- Buyer
  - Browse gift card options
  - Purchase gift card
- Recipient
  - Pay purchase with a gift card
  - View gift card balance

## Top 3 mistakes made by BAs with a non-technical background

# #2: Requirements listed arbitrarily

# What is wrong with this requirement statement?

- A webstore administrator shall be able to view a list of coupon codes and create or edit a coupon.

# #3: Combining multiple activities in one requirement

- A webstore administrator shall be able to view a list of coupon codes and create or edit a coupon.

# Distinct capabilities deserve individual requirements to ensure completeness

- **In order to be able to use coupons to increase sales, a webstore administrator can:**
  - Create a coupon
  - Edit a coupon
  - Delete a coupon
  - View list of existing coupons

When you’re organizing requirements, make sure they’re grouped using a logical structure that reflects the way your audience thinks about the subject.

You can organize your requirements by goal, or by user role and task, and using any other relevant logical structure.

There isn’t a single best system for grouping requirements logically, and different projects and audiences may call for different structures, **but for the same reason supermarkets and department stores are organized into product groups, with departments or aisles containing related merchandise, you want to make sure your requirements are categorized in a way that helps people find the information they need, and fit the pieces together to create a larger picture.**

## Top 3 mistakes made by BAs with a non-technical background

Mistake #1: Unfocused acceptance criteria

Mistake #2: Requirements listed arbitrarily

Mistake #3: Combining multiple capabilities in one requirement

Non-technical BAs are more likely to create unfocused acceptance criteria and list requirements in a disorganized fashion, combining multiple capabilities in one requirement and causing requirements to overlap with other requirements. This may create conflicting requirements and cause missing requirements because it’s harder for reviewers **to fit the pieces together to create a larger picture.**

On the other hand, BAs with a technical background are more likely to become too solution oriented, using words like button and database that focus on implementation details and ignore WHO they are trying to serve, and WHY the problem they’re solving is worth solving.

So, regardless of our background, the lesson is, if we’re not careful we’re going to make mistakes. As the book *The Checklist Manifesto* showed us, we all need tools for remembering the right procedures, so download a complimentary checklist from bealprojects.com/checklist to keep you on the right track.

# Learn More from Adriana with Crafting Better Requirements

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Save $300 through April 25.

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# WEBINAR – SPECIAL BONUS when you join Crafting Better Requirements by April 25, 2017.

- Complimentary ebook covering how to ask the right questions to discover and validate requirements.

TESTED

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWING METHODS

FOR BUSINESS ANALYSTS

# Your Questions

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