

The need for software and business analyst duality



By [Alexander Mehlhorn](#)

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Today's complex and competitive business landscape is calling for a shift in the role of the software developer as we currently understand it. Increasingly, businesses are looking towards a particular hybrid of software developer and business analyst - someone who can scope and design software architecture while simultaneously considering business and stakeholder needs.

Traditionally, business analysts tended to be acquainted with the commercial side, but not necessarily the IT side, of a business. However, as businesses streamline, and global competition increases, the need for IT knowledge and experience in a business analyst is becoming more and more apparent: in fact, the best performing business analysts are those born out of a company's own software development team.

Speak the language of developers

Simply put, a business analyst should speak the same language as developers, because one of the biggest of their duties is relaying information between stakeholders, developers and programmers. Somebody with a developer background will most likely know how to best translate a client's needs into a set of instructions that other developers and programmers can understand.

A working knowledge of the developmental side of a project also means knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes, and this can help to identify potential problems and shortcomings, while providing solutions and alternatives, as opposed to simply following a brief or building architecture that hasn't been considered from multiple angles and perspectives.

A large amount of information is channelled through an analyst, so the one who can make sure both sides of the fence (client and development) are hearing each other loud and clear will be able to deliver a far more effective project in far less time than the one who can't.

Acting as the middleman is not an easy role: excellent communication skills are vital in knowing how to speak to people and how to ask the right questions in order to help clients determine exactly what they need. Such communication skills must also extend to writing documentation for developers, so the process is always understood and clearly articulated.

The ability to structure, coordinate, and lead teams is also of extreme importance, and strong leadership skills need to be demonstrated.

According to Carey Schwaber, a senior analyst of application development at Forrester Research, anyone who believes

that software projects succeed or fail based on the quality of the requirements, must believe that software projects succeed or fail on the basis of business analysts, too.

Now more than ever, it is imperative to have someone in your organisation who can fulfil a dual role and cross-over the developer/analyst divide to act on behalf of both the software development organisation and its client.

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