

# Why Project Managers and Business Analysts Should Have Separate Roles

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THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THE MIND SETS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS AND BUSINESS ANALYSTS THAT MAKE THEM STRONGER AS SEPARATE ROLES - AND SEEING THESE ROLES AS SEPARATE SEEMS OLD-FASHIONED TO ORGANIZATIONS.

Over the past few years, project managers and business analysts have had to carve out their roles within their companies. Too many organizations thought they just needed one or the other, and some even tried to combine the two into one hybrid role.

However, there are marked differences between managing a project and analyzing business elements and requirements. Just because both roles have similar skill sets doesn't mean they're the same.

Here's an in-depth look at how BAs and PMs are different and why they continue to struggle to be viewed separately within organizations.

## **Project Managers and Business Analysts Have Significantly Different Roles**

The first thing that most project managers and business analysts want clarified is how their roles differ. Without this dividing line, both hiring managers and potential applicants can easily get confused about the positions they're filling.

Author [Laura Brandenburg](#) explains that project managers are responsible for delivering solutions to problems, while business analysts are responsible for discovering problems and determining potential solutions. However, these roles often combine. In small to medium-sized organizations, business analysts are asked to take the lead on implementing solutions, unwittingly becoming project managers.

There's more than just job confusion at stake when it comes to defining the role of BAs and PMs. Employee burnout, inefficient projects and reduced company output are all side effects of a confused project management or business analyst role.

"Project productivity is probably the most important reason why it is important to define the project roles clearly," [Esta Lessing](#) writes at Business Analysis Excellence. "If you don't have clear project roles and responsibilities in a larger scale environment you end up having people not knowing where to start or what they are responsible to deliver."

Your employees will either end up quitting because they're doing the jobs of two people or lean toward one role while ignoring the other.

## Many Organizations Confuse or Combine the Two Positions



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TO PERFORM EFFECTIVELY NO MATTER WHAT METHODOLOGY IS BEING USED.

One of the main sources of confusion between the two roles is the required skill set. BAs and PMs both use similar skills to complete various parts of their roles, which means they often take on extra work because they already have to know-how to complete it.

In an article at [Project Accelerator News](#), David Cotgreave explains the maxim “if you can measure it, you can manage it,” or the idea that project managers need data in order to succeed. He encourages PMs to identify key variables and to take steps to measure them. For Cotgreave, the key to success is purely in the numbers.

When [Canvas Infotech](#) reviewed Cotgreave’s advice, they found it to be a ringing endorsement for business analyst professionals. They argued that a project manager would have to enhance their skills to include data analytics and manipulation, while someone who already had those skills in a business analyst field would be able to easily slide into a new career path.

Both make strong points and emphasize the growing overlap between business analysts and project managers. If industry leaders struggle to determine who does what, then it’s no wonder that companies are left confused when deciding if they need two people for the job.

## Hybrid PM/BA Roles Place Additional Stress on Team Members

The confusion between BAs and PMs has led some organizations to create hybrid roles that clearly define the employee as both an analyst and project manager. [Tiauna Ross](#), a senior project manager at Stryker, advises against this. She writes that having a combined BA/PM role really only works for “small changes.”

Asking someone to have an expertise in both project management and business analysis is akin to hiring the same person to manage your

operations and accounting departments. While some skills overlap, those are two very different roles with very different tasks.

[Lindsay Lauck](#), content manager for Pluralsight, says companies need to set clear roles and responsibilities for their project managers. If their PMs spend a large part of their day analyzing options and reviewing data, then they need to hire a business analyst. Placing the role of data analyst on your PM takes away time for them to do their jobs effectively. They will start juggling both roles and struggle to do them well.

Even if your company contracts out a third-party business analyst, it will help your PM focus on their actual job.

## Professional BAs and PMs Switch Their Roles Occasionally

Certainly, BAs and PMs are aware of the similarities of their roles and actively consider career changes across the aisle.

[NetworkersTech](#) recently surveyed more than 1,600 professionals about switching careers or adding skills. Almost 60 percent said they would consider trying a new discipline, with project management chosen the most often. One project manager said he started out as a business analyst but was often asked to take on PM roles. It became so common that he finally expanded his skill set and became a full-time project manager.

Conversely, in an article for Project Times, consultant [Richard Lannon](#) says he has always needed business analyst skills throughout his career as a project manager. And when there is a business analyst in an organization, many project managers will work closely with them, using those BA skills to achieve their goals.

## Demand for Project Managers Exceeds Expectations



PROJECT MANAGER AND BUSINESS ANALYST ARE CAREERS THAT ARE STILL GROWING.

One reason why so many business analysts are thrown into project management roles is the expanding talent gap between the two. According to the [Project Management Institute's](#) Job Growth and Talent Gap Report, employers will need 87.7 million individuals working in project management roles by 2027.

Project management demand has blown past previous projections. Most industry experts believed there would be 52.4 million project management jobs by 2020 and there were 65.9 million in 2017. With an average wage of \$105,000, it's no surprise that more people are heading toward their field.

Many organizations are so desperate to hire project managers and fill these empty roles that they will move business analysts over and [crosstrain](#) them — or worse, hope the BAs figure out the work on their own.

## The Demand for Business Analysts is Just as Strong

While the growth of project management jobs is impressive, the rise of business analysts isn't something to ignore.

According to [Robert Half](#) staffing, the future for business analysts is strong. They estimate the national average starting salary for senior business analysts at companies with more than \$250 million in sales ranged between

\$81,750 and \$105,750 in 2016, a five percent increase on 2015. Those salaries are expected to continue to increase.

Despite these predictions, project manager [Yvonne Harrison](#) isn't sure. She says that there is very little stopping AI developers from creating tools that easily answer questions that business analysts need, so that a role that requires full-time work now could become a part-time or outsourced position in the near future.

“The only thing that may save the business analyst's role in the near future is that the role also falls into the pink-collar job classification,” Harrison writes. “Originally used to denote a group of service jobs predominantly performed by women in the 1970s, the term has slowly morphed into a way to classify jobs that require social skills and consists of interacting with people and customers.”

In this case, a business analyst's communication and social skills will become essential to sway leadership decisions within a company.

## Both BAs and PMs Need Soft Skills to Thrive



**SOFT SKILLS ARE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND BUSINESS ANALYSTS AND PROJECT MANAGERS.**

Harrison isn't the only one who points to [soft skills](#) as a connection between BAs and PMs. More managers and leadership teams are starting to understand the value of these two positions as guides and advocates for the work, not just technical developers and thinkers.

“While technical skills are important for systems development, it has become apparent that delivering a system is more about communication and people skills more than anything else,” [Gary Tan](#), founder of Project-Skills writes.

“Give me a state-of-the-art technology, but with little rapport and communication between developers and users – and I can almost guarantee project failure.”

[Dr. Emad Rahim](#), program director at Bellevue University, says that educators tend to focus on the technical side of project management when teaching instead of providing students with resources to build people skills and leadership training.

The PMs who lack these crucial soft skills often struggle in the field, making it easier for a business analyst with high emotional intelligence to sweep in and take their place.

## The Value of BAs and PMs in an Organization is Equal

Both project managers and business analysts have their own place within an organization, and one isn't more important than the other. Ignoring one role or expecting one person to do the tasks of both only hinders the growth of a company.

“I know in some organizations, the BA has been seen as subordinate to the PM,” [Joy Beatty](#), vice president of SeiLabs, writes. “I very much disagree with that organizational structure. They are peers. They are often in totally different organizations even. Either way, both roles really demand the respect of the other.”

Just because BAs and PMs can take on the tasks of others doesn't mean they can't or shouldn't stand on their own. Companies need both positions to succeed, and applicants need to make sure they're being hired for one role, not both.