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Two perspectives:
What the BA expects of the Business Sponsor; what the Business Sponsor expects of the BA

Summary:
This article proposes that Sponsors have different expectations of what role and function Business Analysts play in a change project compared to the role and function that Business Analysts ***need*** to perform. This mismatch of expectations results in Sponsor and Business Analyst frustrations. The solution that is proposed is that Business Analysts need to demonstrate through performance of their activities that their role and function is a logical consequence of change project life-cycles – that there is no rational alternative for successful projects.

Introduction:
In the heady days of project inception when it is held that all problems will be solved by the new project and that there will be greener grass on our side of the fence, the last thing on Sponsors' minds is the need for rigorous analysis. If it is acknowledged at all it is typically regarded as an ivory tower boffin activity divorced from the 'real world' (presumably 'real world' is defined as a place there is insufficient time and budget to do analysis and infinite time and budget to conduct post mortems on why projects fail and 'lessons learnt'). What is missing is the understanding that analysis is, quite literally, *needed*: the project *cannot* progress in a predictable way without thorough analysis as that is what analysis does: it enables predictions of consequences (benefits, requirements and delivered capabilities). Not to do that is to fly blind and hope for a soft landing – somewhere!
This state of affairs is compounded by Business Analysts who hold low status roles (relative to Sponsors), are poorly trained (often not at all), and who do not know what they should be doing (and, more importantly, why they should be doing it).
As a result, Sponsors are frustrated by what they perceive as Business Analysts holding up project progress, and Business Analysts are frustrated by Sponsors not allowing sufficient time and resource to allow them to do their job. Each side re-enforces their prejudices about the other and this vicious cycle prevents establishing trust and a coherent approach to project development.

Sponsor expectations:
Sponsors are defined as the person or people who have the authority to define what measures will be used to judge the success or failure of a change project. Rigour is required when analysing these measures as there are a number of traps that poorly analysed measures lead projects to. Some of these measures, and the potential impact, are considered in the table below.

Example of Measure	Class of measure
Project delivery on-time and to budget	The measure is wholly contained within the project. Therefore it is entirely achievable but worthless: deliver nothing and deliver it now is a successful delivery using these measures. Really, this is a constraint that the project has to adhere to.
Become a "centre of excellence" for some capability	This measure can't be measured. Therefore whether the project is a success or not can never be proven so whether it is judged successful or not is determined by other means such as office politics.

Example of Measure	Class of measure
Improve sales performance	This measure doesn't give a score that equals success. Therefore projects can spend as much as they like or as is available, deliver the tiniest improvement in sales and claim success or, conversely, deliver a huge increase in sales performance that does not satisfy the sponsor.
Change corporate culture	This measure uses a term (culture) that has no standard definition. Therefore the project can define it how it likes or (worse) it means all things to all people.
Increase customer satisfaction	This measure assumes that it is within project scope to effect the change. Therefore a customer who is dissatisfied because England were knocked out of the World Cup (again) is still registered as a dissatisfied customer.

What sponsors *need* to do in order to avoid these traps is define exactly what success looks like to them in specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) ways – they need to *analyse* the SMART measures of success. Why? Because unless they do

- they won't know what exactly it is they want to achieve
- they won't know if they got what they wanted

Business Analyst expectations:
There are at least two classes of Business Analysts – those who were put in to the role and told they are a Business Analyst, and those who have been trained or mentored to do Business Analysis.
The untrained BA is likely to adopt an approach of 'tell me what to do and I'll do it'. This results in them picking up all the tasks that don't have an owner, delivering on tasks without ever quite knowing why or what next to expect. They lack the analytical tools and techniques to understand the fundamental necessity for SMART measures of success and are not equipped to construct them even if given the opportunity.
The trained BA is likely to know what needs to be done. However, even BAs that know they need to construct SMART measures struggle with gaining access to the *relevant* sponsors because of low BA status – they are not worthy. And if they try to conduct such analysis once a project is underway, they are under pressure to get on with gathering the requirements. More senior people offer to 'underwrite the risk' of not doing the initial analysis of SMART measures. Typically, these guarantees are not worth the paper they are not written on, and BAs know this which leads to the frustration of having seen the same mistakes occur before but being powerless to prevent them occurring once again. So when the project does fail time and money is spent finger pointing, and the finger ends up pointing at Business Analysts blaming the requirements analysis (ref: Standish Group Chaos reports). As a consequence, the BA status is eroded yet further.

Solution:
BAs need to *demonstrate* the *consequences* of failing to analyse SMART measures. There are many ways of doing this (each with their own skills required to perform, advantages and disadvantages) and this article proposes one of the simplest ways

1. log (written, not verbal) an issue with the Project Manager: "Project SMART measures of success are inadequately understood."

The PM should then manage that issue – hopefully by resolving it. How? Ask the BA who raised it. Until this happens, the BA needs to ensure that at every project meeting the issue is reviewed.

2. While the issue is unresolved the BA also needs to log (written, not verbal) a risk incurred because of the issue: the project runs the risk that it will propose the wrong requirements. Why? Because until there are project SMART measures of success it is impossible to *prove* that each and every scoping statement and each and every functional, non-functional, process and data requirement contributes to delivering one or more project SMART measures of success. Likelihood of risk: HIGH. Impact of risk: HIGH.
   The PM should then manage that highly likely, high impact risk – hopefully by mitigating it. How? Ask the BA who raised it. Until this happens, the BA needs to ensure that at every project meeting the risk is reviewed.

Worst case outcome: The BA can now continue to work without rigorous SMART measures of success knowing that in all likelihood the project will deliver the wrong requirements – but knowing that they will not carry the blame and that is the best they can hope for which is the most damning indictment of a project it is possible to make.

Best case outcome: The BA is given the remit to analyse SMART measures of success which forces the entire project to *analyse and define* its reason for being. This adds value in so many ways it is simply not feasible to address them all in this one short article.