

# Debunking the myths and misconceptions

## White Paper on Business Analysis



The essential handbook quashing the myths & providing facts about Business Analysts



All through the human evolution business, technology and design have played a significant role in our advancement and progress. They complement one another and work in tandem to identify the problems and create solutions to resolve the problem(s). Like all other disciplines involved in this **problem-solution** spaces, Business analysts have been working with other professionals in inter-disciplinary and multi-skilled teams. However, business analysts should focus on problem domain and help the team transition into solution space.

In the last few decades, business analysts had been part of various types of business, process and technology initiatives. These range from projects, and initiatives on IT, change management, business modelling and product development. Despite the valued contribution from the business analyst community, there still are several myths and misconceptions surrounding the BAs. These are prevalent even today despite the huge transformation in the inter-related areas of business, technology and communication.

Many organisations and professionals alike have several misplaced perceptions and misconceived notions around the roles, responsibilities and contribution. In this White Paper, we will debunk some of these classic albeit popular myths.

- Myth 1: Business analyst must be able to create and implement solutions
- Myth 2: Business Analyst and Project Manager are one and the same
- Myth 3: BAs are not required in the latter phases of the project
- Myth 4: All BAs must be strong domain experts
- Myth 5: BAs are product specialists, they don't need to have people skills
- Myth 6: We don't need a Business Analyst for this type of project or product
- Myth 7: BAs are only good at writing requirements documents



## ● Myth #1

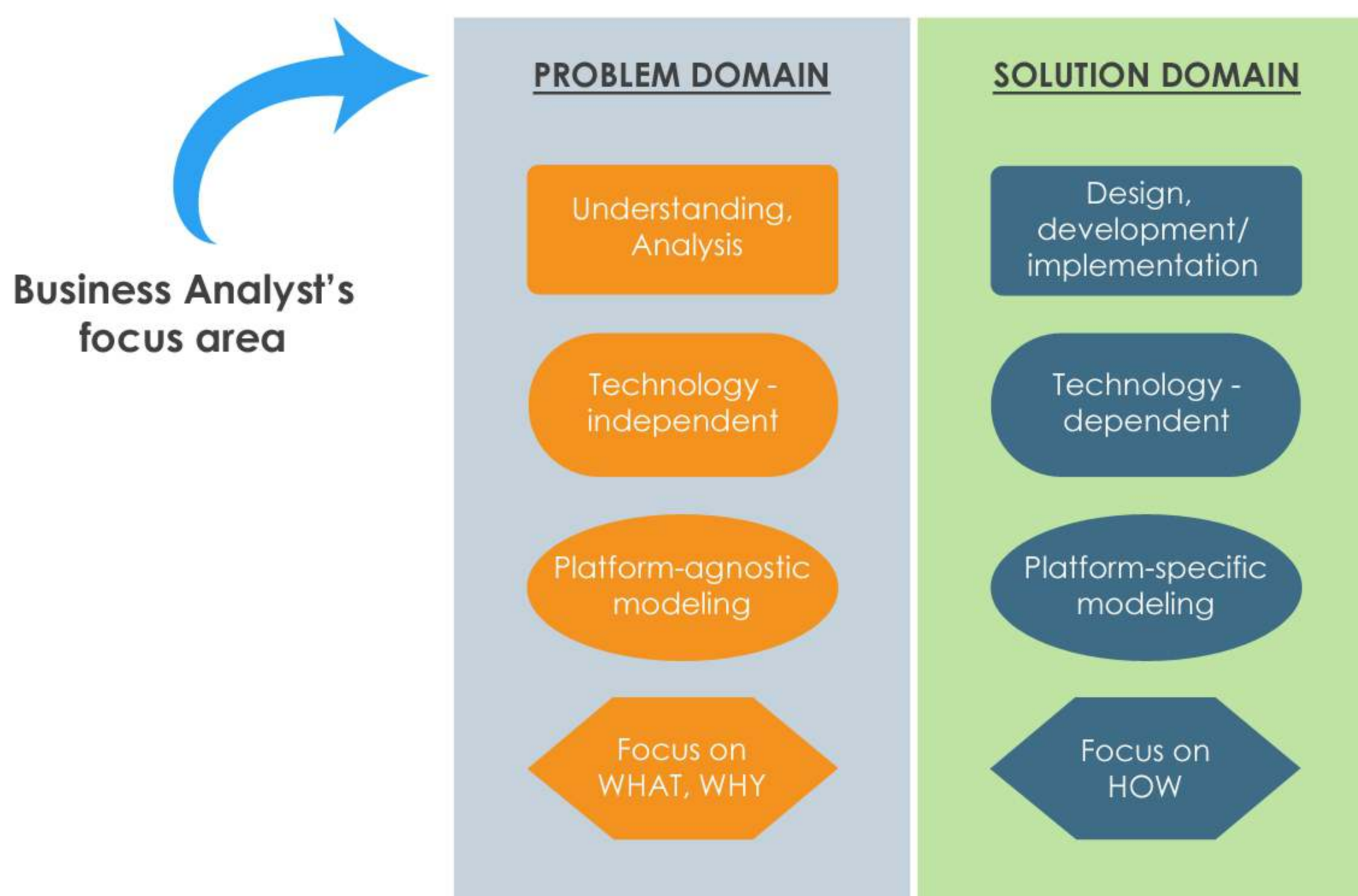
### Business analyst must be able to design, create and implement solutions

This is undoubtedly one of the most misconstrued perceptions about the business analyst's role and responsibilities. You can get to see this in almost every job description and mention of the business analyst's roles. Not just among the recruiting managers, but also with senior management and technology managers, there is this widespread belief. Besides creating the design, BAs are also expected to implement technology-driven solutions too.

## ✔ Fact

### Business Analyst focuses on the problem space and could at best, facilitate or recommend the solution(s)

Almost everything worth analysing in this world can be looked at from the perspective of Problem-Solution pair. The problem space comprises all the activities related to the problems. Business Analysts must focus on this domain. BAs identify the problems, prioritise, specify and communicate to the relevant stakeholders.





The Solution space consists of conceptualising, brain-storming and generating ideas for the proposed solution(s). It takes a different set of skills, aptitude and attitude from the team members to create and execute the solutions. BA does not necessarily need to create solutions. However they must be able to facilitate and help support the team in the implementation of solution.

## ● Myth #2:

### Business Analyst and Project Manager are one and the same

In every technology-driven project, there is certainly one role for sure and that is the Project Manager. Often times, project managers also double up as business analyst, which is not a problem, so long as the two are clearly demarcated as different roles. However, problems start to emerge when the roles and responsibilities of a BA are equated to those of a project manager or vice versa.

Description	Project Manager	Business Analyst
Scope of ownership	Project, programme, portfolio	Product, domain, business area, process
Focus areas	Solution [Implementation] space	[Mainly] Problem space
Involvement	Complete life-cycle of project	Mostly early stages of project and validation
Toolkit	Governance, processes, metrics	Data, analytics, business intelligence, research & tests
Mode of engagement	Mostly full-time/dedicated fully	Full-time/Consulting/ Contract/ Part-time
People relating to	Senior management, Client, Vendors, Team members	Team members, customers, users, product management
Artifacts and deliverables	Project plan, resource plan, task sheet, review reports	Requirements, user stories, wireframes, test reports
Speaks the language of...	Resources, effort, cost, time	Vision, features, scope, roadmap, users
Lives by the mantras	On budget, in time, with quality, customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction, User experience, minimal defects, managing change



## ✓ Fact

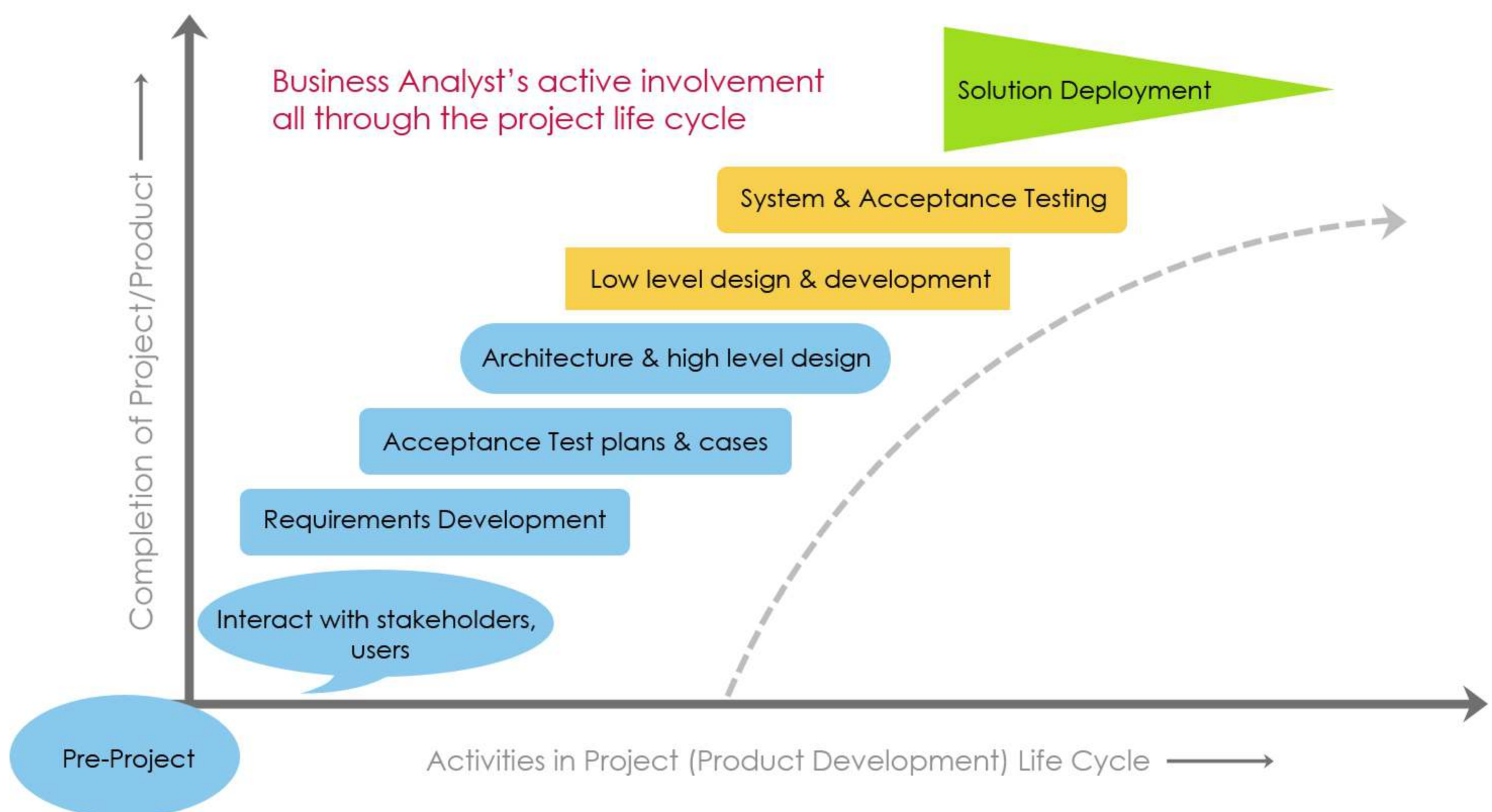
### Project Manager is the master of the project, whereas Business Analyst owns the product roadmap

Project Manager is most-certainly the owner of the project, being the key decision-maker about resources, timelines, removing constraints and hurdles to ensure smooth execution of the project. Business Analyst, on the other hand, is responsible for the product in terms of defining the features, functionality and manages the product roadmap. It can be looked at as the PM being the owner and captain of the project, while BA could be considered as equivalent to the Product Owner.

## ● Myth #3

### Business Analysts are not required in the later phases of the project

This is another popular misconception that you come across during the project kick-off and review meetings and resource planning sessions. Business analysts traditionally were confined to the initial stages of the project execution. They were actively allocated for the initial set of activities in the pre-project and initiation phases. The requirements phase, among all the phases of the project or the product's life cycle, remained to be the forte of BAs.





## ✔ Fact

**Business Analysts are very much part of the entire life cycle of the project, albeit the proportion of their involvement may vary across the phases**

BAs' contribution to the project starts much earlier than that of other team members. They are engaged early on so as to outline the vision, scope and roadmap for the product, process or business. Moreover analysts are required even in the pre-project (also called as pre-sales) phase. They are involved at this stage to help in the creation of proposals and tenders.

The contribution of business analyst goes well beyond the initial requirements phase. They support the team members during the design, development and implementation. Analysts create wireframes, mockups and sketches to help present their ideas of the proposed solution. This goes well with the current agile methodologies e.g., SCRUM, User Stories and Test Driven Development (TDD). Thanks to these practices, today, analysts are involved and engaged all through the life cycle of the project/product development.

## ❌ Myth #4

**All Business analysts must be strong domain experts**

From banking to manufacturing, and from retail to healthcare business analysts are deemed to be experts in their specific domains and verticals. It is true that initially, analysts used to be professionals who came with strong background of rich working experience in one or more domains. BAs are often referred to as SMEs(Subject Matter Experts), functional consultants and domain specialists, as they have experience and expertise in the specific functional, vertical area or industry domain.



## ✓ Fact

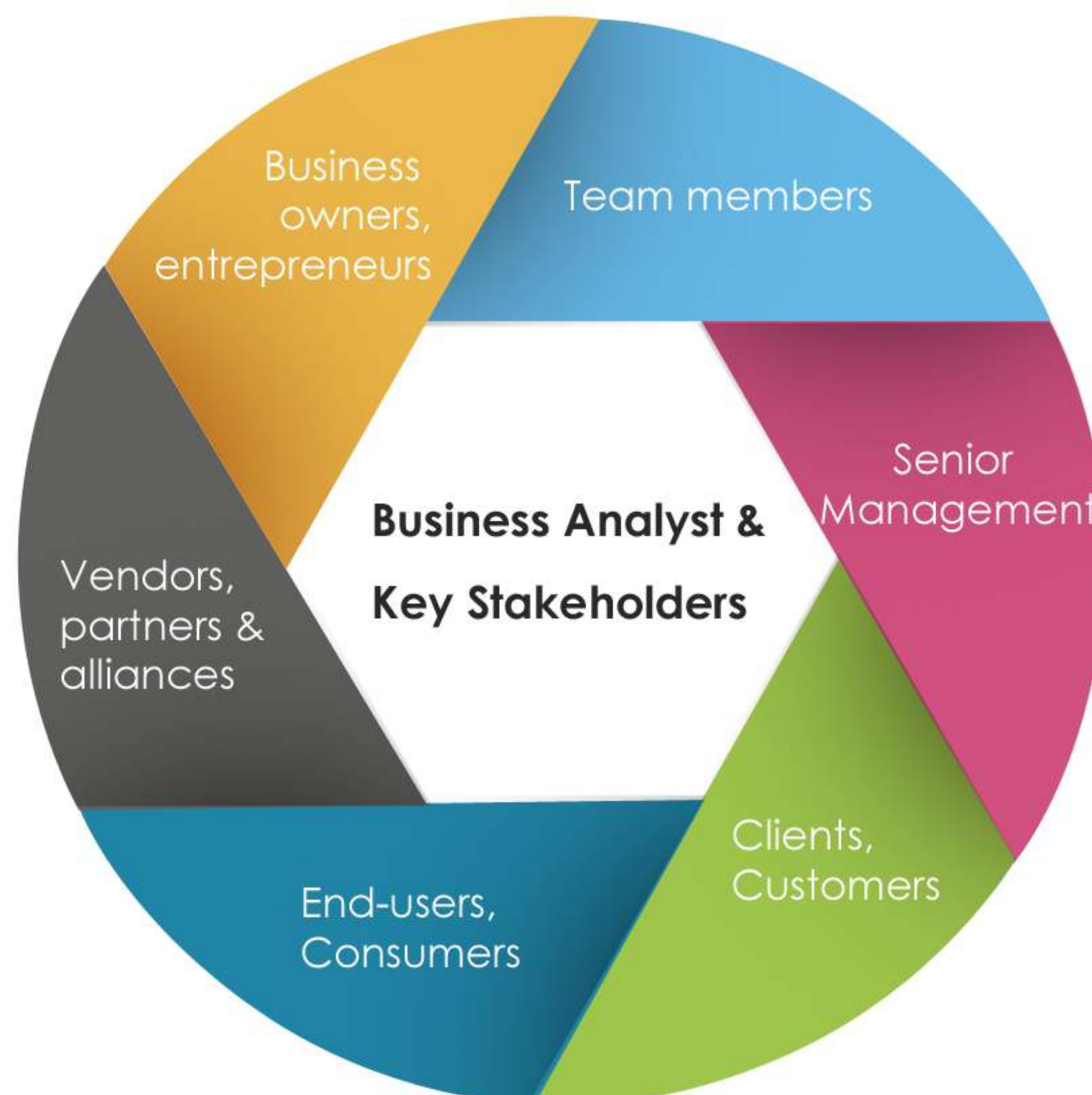
### Business Analysts need not always be domain specialists, especially the IT Business Analysts

With the onset of business system analysts, the core skill of analysts shifted from a mere business domain expertise to the systems perspective. BAs emerged as professionals who have at their core, strong analysis skills and not just domain expertise. Though it could be argued that domain/functional knowledge helps augment the analysis skills, it is not a mandatory requirement. Some times analysts do need to have the general and broad-based skills to address situations that require “inch deep, mile wide” approach.

## ● Myth #5

### BAs are product specialists, they don't need to have people skills

Nothing could be further from truth than this misplaced notion about the business analyst's expertise. This stems from the objections raised by people that analysts cannot be leaders or that they cannot run businesses. While in fact, people skills are so much needed for the BAs that it is almost like their second nature and perhaps the most important part of their work-flow.





## **Fact**

### **A core skill of a Business analyst is to engage, interact, communicate, lead and work with people at different levels**

People-interaction and working alongside people could be said to be part of an analyst's DNA. While working in teams, it is very much imperative that the analysts interact, engage and communicate with the team members continuously. Within the team, the interaction level ranges from a deep partnership to a consulting role with various roles such as architects, designers, developers, testers and managers.

Not just within the team but on a broader level too, analysts have to interact with several other stakeholders. These include people who may have a direct impact as well as those who have an indirect relationship with the project, product, process or business in question. The level of engagement varies from merely updating through to sharing reports and from moderating interviews to conducting workshops.

## **Myth #6:**

### **We don't need a Business Analyst for this type of project or product**

This is one of the oft-quoted objections you come across when it comes to allocating resources to a team. Whether it is in the outsourced project execution, an in-house project or development of a product, Business Analysts are often seen as mostly support role and are considered an overhead. However, they are as valuable to the project as a developer, designer, architect, tester, manager or other team member.



## ✓ Fact

### **Analysts are critical for the successful execution of any type of projects or products**

Whether the project is a green-field, new product development or enhancing the existing product, analysts play a key role in defining the roadmap. BAs contribute to a great extent in product maintenance, re-engineering projects because most the changes are to do with customer/user-facing features. Same is the case with process improvement and change management initiatives, where BAs study and understand the as-is and propose the improvements for to-be proposition.

## ● Myth #7:

### **BAs are only good at writing requirements documents**

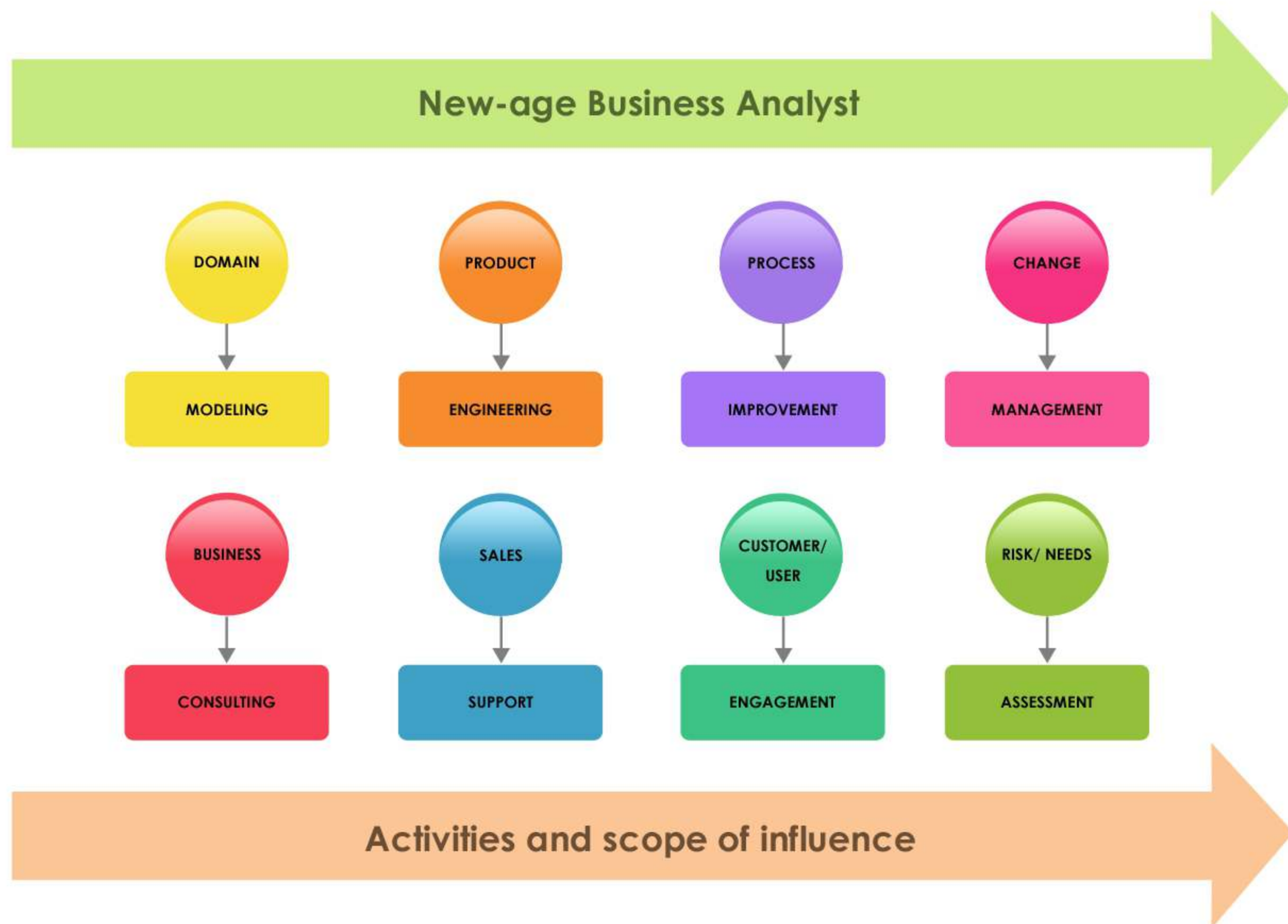
Initially, when the role of business analysts was conceived and conceptualised, the focus was primarily on the requirements elicitation, specification and communication. However, with the implementation of agile approaches, analysts have emerged as product specialists. The focus of BAs shifted from a problem space into transitioning into solution domain.

## ✓ Fact

### **Analysts play a key role in the strategic vision, product development, customer engagement and user experience areas**

BAs have strategic, pan-enterprise level perspective, as well as a product or process specific role. Also, analysts offer significant help in engaging with customers, key stakeholders and users, involving conducting interviews, studies, workshops. In the course of these investigations, analysts identify the needs, problems and opportunities and propose recommended solutions. So BAs now draw and design wireframes and mockups of the proposed solution, create models and prototypes.





In this White Paper, we have looked at some of the myths and misconceptions around the profession of business analysis, especially about the role, activities and contribution by business analysts. Not just quashing the myths, but this paper throws light on the facts and provides the right perspectives. For more information on this, please check out the web sites [www.texavi.co.uk](http://www.texavi.co.uk) and [www.texavi.com](http://www.texavi.com)

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