

Building your career as a Business Analyst

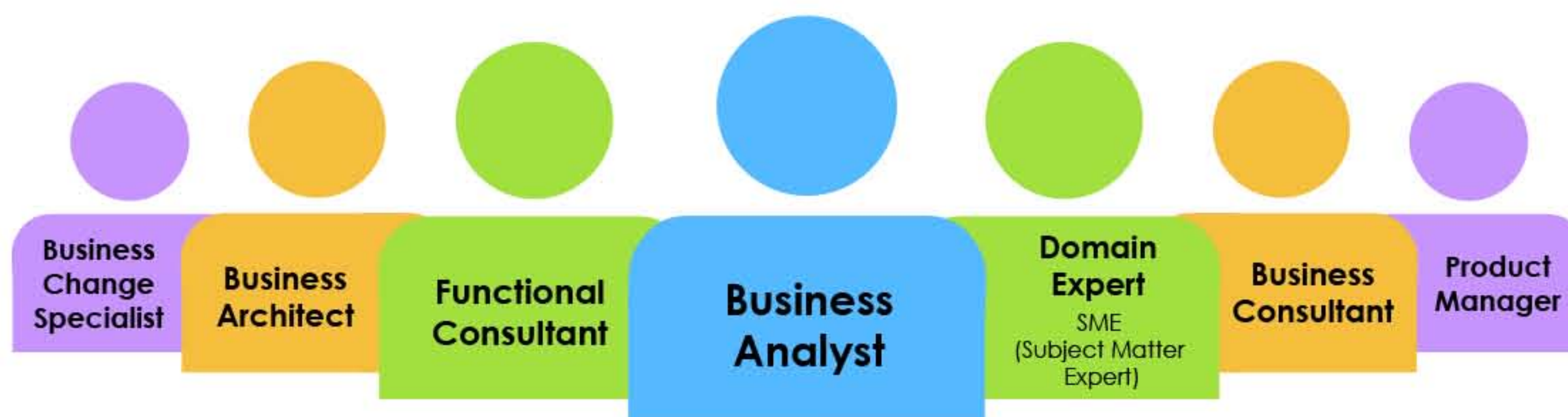
White Paper on Business Analysis



The definitive guide on roles, responsibilities and essential skills for the New-Age Business Analyst

Functional consultant, Product specialist, Business architect, Business consultant and Customer interface are just a few of the roles that you may have come across referring to a Business Analyst. These go on to prove that the business analyst (more popularly referred to as **BA**) today comes with many names and forms. However different these titles are, there still is a common set of roles, responsibilities and value provided by the modern day BAs.

Identity - The Many Avatars of a BA



In this age of digital, mobile, agile and social times, we are increasingly facing the challenges posed by changes, big and small. These changes are happening in diverse fields across the various aspects of business, technology, communication and entertainment. Business Analyst is no exception to this and it's no wonder that the role has undergone significant changes in the last few decades. This white paper strives to throw light on the key aspects of Business Analyst's role, responsibilities and their value-add to businesses.

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Evolution of the new-age BA

From a role that had been largely viewed as a supporting role, Business Analysts today moved up the value-delivery ladder. Over the last 5 decades or so, the role of business analyst has undergone some significant and not-so-significant set of changes. It has moved on from a pure business-focused role in the 70s to that of a systems-focused role.

Bringing the focus back on “business”

The advent of Internet sprang open a huge number of dotcoms, web based businesses. There had been an increased emphasis on specialisations and niche skills. People with technical skills couldn't excel at communication and business. It was also true with those from business skills not being able to create and implement solutions. This gave rise to the specific role definition considering the aptitude, attitude and value-add. The focus of the analysts slowly shifted back from systems to business, in a broader sense.



The New-age Business Analyst

Business analysts today need to be agile, tech-savvy and responsible professionals. Gone are the days when BAs are restricted to just writing those huge, long-winded requirements documents. The role of modern day BA is similar to that of a soldier in the armed forces - trained, skillful and all set to take on any assignment. The New-age BA is a suave, tech-savvy, leading-edge professional who is combat-hardened to face and manage the challenges posed by changes in business, technology, markets, products and services, besides the micro and macro-economic aspects.

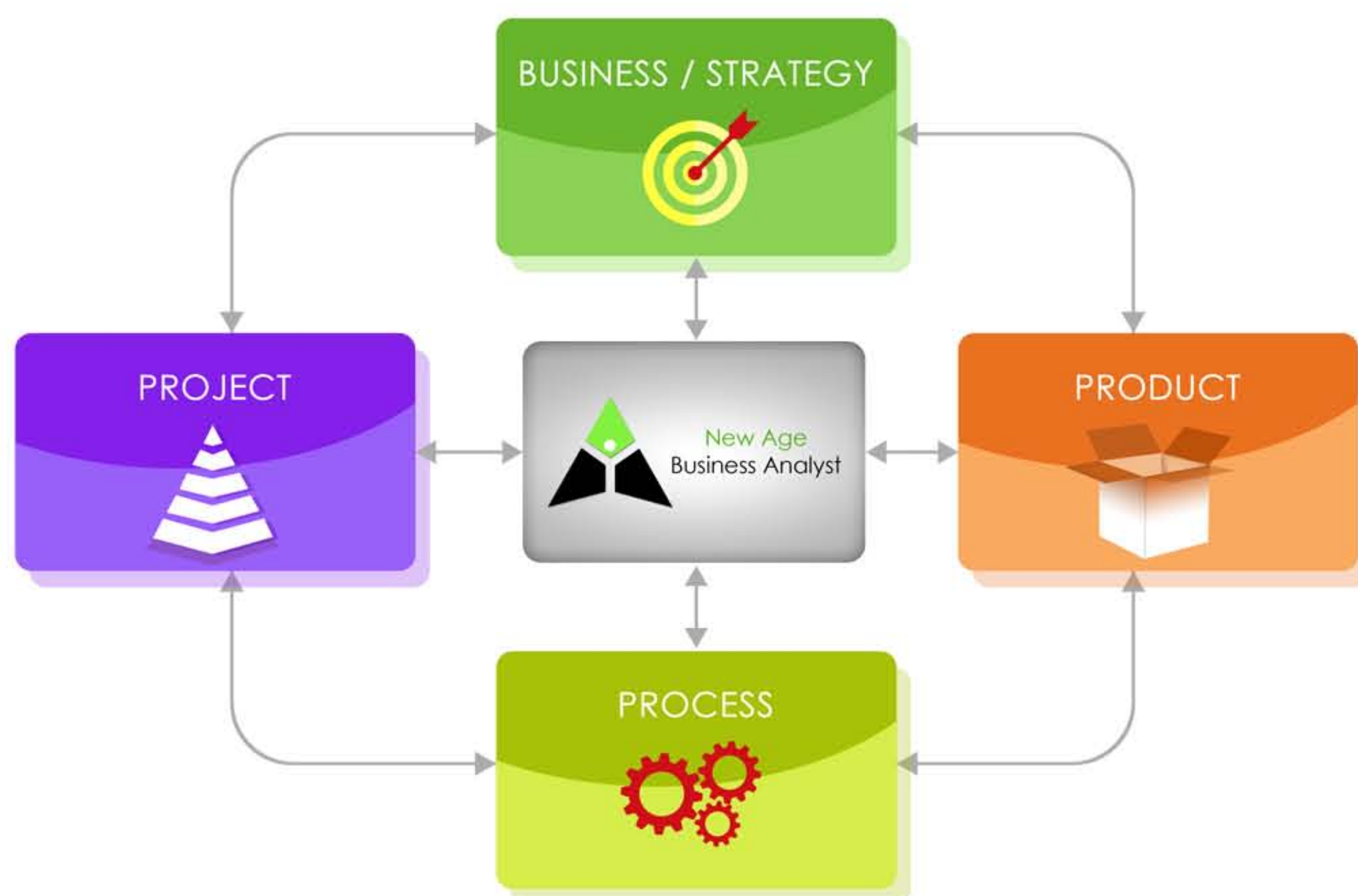
Defining the role of a New-age BA

Not ones to be pigeonholed into specific roles, the BAs today are agile, adaptive and versatile professionals. Once considered for their pure domain expertise in areas such as banking, retail and manufacturing, business analysts have moved on to provide value to businesses across the value chain in different levels and in different measures. Now the business cards of business analysts appear with different shades – these range from IT analysts to product specialists, security and risk specialists.

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Responsibilities of a Business Analyst

From pre-sales and sales support through to project kick-off and from design through development and testing, business analysts have a major say across the life cycles of the product/application/process. On a broad level, the role of business analyst can be looked at from four perspectives - Product, Project, Operations and Process.



What's in a name

The following are indicative of the various levels of responsibilities of the new-age business analysts:

- Support staff
- Team member
- Product Owner/Manager/Director
- Project manager
- Head of a business unit/CXO

What makes the New-age Business Analyst

Right aptitude, positive attitude, teamwork, good communication skills (writing, spoken and listening), a bit of creativity, ability to work in cross-disciplinary teams...these are only a few of the qualities that make up a great business analyst. Based on years of experience and expertise derived from playing the business analyst's role, we give below the skills, knowledge and expertise that contribute in shaping a modern day business analyst.



Business acumen

- Pre-sales, sales support – Estimation, Writing proposals
- Organisational behaviour and development
- Entrepreneurship and starting up businesses
- Micro and macro economic factors
- Structure, behaviour and dynamics of markets
- *Business development, account management, selling...*

People skills

- Strong personal, inter-personal, intra-group and inter-group dynamics
- Working with peers and team members in multi-disciplinary, cross-functional teams
- Interaction with stakeholders – internal and external
- Customers - Communication with customers and prospects
- Users – Interaction with end-users, understanding needs and validating products with users (i.e., user studies and user testing of product)
- *Cognitive psychology, behavioural and motivational tools...*

Analysis skills

- Problem identification, definition and communication
- Focus on problems and not on creation of solution
- Mile-deep and inch-wide approach
- Deployment of various tools, techniques and approaches
- *Root-cause, 5-WHYs, Pareto...*

Communication Skills

- Active listening and good observational skills
- Ability to read and interpret explicit and implicit expressions and signs of people
- Clarity of thought and sound logical thinking
- Spoken (individual and group) and written skills
- Strong at using mainstream and modern tools of communication
- *One-to-one, eMail, Telephone, presentation skills...*

Leadership/Management skills

- Vision, scope and roadmap
- Product ownership as opposed to requirements documentation
- Complete ownership on the life cycle and not just management or overseeing the product/process development
- Driven by passion and a positive attitude
- *Ability to take people (stakeholders, customers, team members) along with him*

Documentation skills

- Requirements and scope, specification
- Focus not just on functional but also on non-functional aspects
- Augmenting content with context
- Comfortable with text and multi-media (images, audio, video, animation)
- *Productivity tools like Microsoft Office, Microsoft OneNote, Evernote...*

Data and Analytics Skills

- Draw intelligence from information
- Derive actionable analytics from data
- Make coherent interpretations and conclusions
- Data visualisation tools like charts, graphs and data maps
- *Entity-relationship, logical data models, analytics*

Technical Knowledge

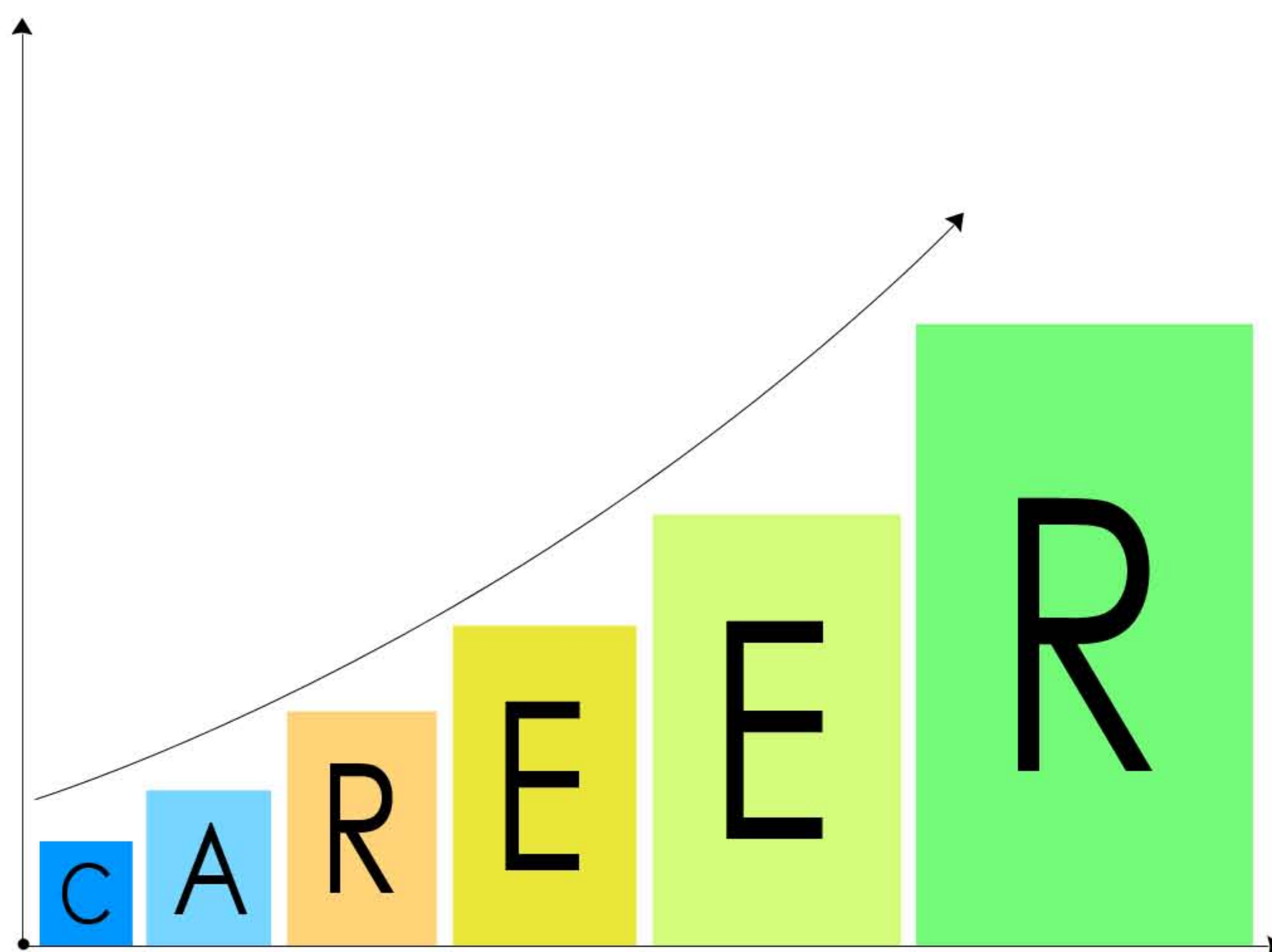
- Awareness about technologies relevant to the business and domain
- Knowledge of current trends and themes around platforms
- Application of technology to business context
- Ability to use relevant tools and methods
- *Enterprise, personal, mobile and cloud computing...*

Visualisation Skills

- Help with transition from problem space to solution space
- Modeling the problem space (and to some extent the proposed solution space)
- Drawing and sketching low-fidelity artefacts
- Create mock-ups, wireframes and sketch notes
- Mind-maps, flow charts, diagrams, notations (UML, BPMN)...

Summary

The modern day business analysts are equipped with different skills that lend them to adapt fairly quickly to the demanding situations. Besides having the right attitude, analytical aptitude and a flair for communication, the new-age BAs have much more to offer than mere document writing. This white paper provides the insights on the roles, responsibilities, perspectives and skills that make up the modern-day business analyst.



Texavi Innovative Solutions

The new age people for new age solutions!

Consulting | Training | Solutions

UK

Texavi Innovative Solutions (UK) Ltd
36 Glebe Road
Finchley
London N3 2AX

Mobile: +44 (0)7857 258341
Call: +44 (0)1375 768601
Email: connect@texavi.co.uk

INDIA

Texavi Innovative Solutions Pvt. Ltd.
B-1201, Building No.7
Kukreja Complex, L.B.S.Marg
Bhandup(west), Mumbai
India - 400078

Call: +91 (0) 98190 23011
Email: connect@texavi.com

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