

Ten Bad-Ass BA Techniques

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Actually, 4 fundamental principles, 10 techniques.

Fundamental Principles

Principle #1. Leave your ego at the door

- You are a Business Analyst – you have a license to ask dumb questions; it is your responsibility and your job! So ask the dumb questions, admit you don't know, ask for input, show work at early stages, don't let your own ego-fears-pride get in the way of problem solving.
- Put your team in the spot light, put yourself behind the curtain.

Principle #2. Authority is 20% given & 80% taken – take it!

- Don't wait for permission, ask for forgiveness.
- Manage those meetings!

Principle #3 Acknowledge people

Sometimes you have to push people or ask them to do more than is normal to expect. You can thank them for their help but over time, your thanks may develop a hollow tone. Take the time to recognize people's efforts in a way that means something to the individual; creative ways of saying "thank you" are remembered for a long time and create a positive impression and a good relationship.

- Nominate them for an company-sponsored recognition award
- Send a message to their boss – what you needed, why the person's professional conduct and timely response saved your butt
- Send a message to the person
 - <http://jacquielawson.com> – best thank you cards in cyberspace
 - Include a .jpg of a plate of cookies, chocolate, samosas, or a video link to [talking cats](#), dancing birds

Principle #4. If you don't fail on occasion, you aren't trying hard enough.

Progress and innovation come from holding on to the idea despite the inevitable series of failures. If the consequences of your taking initiative results in a backfire

- Acknowledge verbally that you may have gone too far in your attempt to actively engage in moving the project along the path to success
- Ask the person if there is a better way for you to accomplish your goal. Smile, deflect any barbs that might come your way.
- Learn from the failure. Don't get defensive – nothing ventured, nothing gained!

Techniques

Remember, these are the “bad-ass” techniques. Use them with care especially if you are risk-adverse.

Managing Meetings

1. Use “roll call” to obtain explicit decisions
In meeting (telephone or in person) do not accept silence as a response! Instead of asking, “do we all agree?”, instruct people to express their concerns with this prompt, “If you disagree, speak up now.”
2. Provide a suggested agenda to focus activities at a standing meeting.
3. Use Actions-Decisions-Issues to record meetings.

Facilitating communication and understanding

4. Share bad news early
 - The sooner “management” or “leadership” knows there’s a problem, the sooner they can start working on it.
 - If you use the red-yellow-green flag paradigm: extend the paradigm, “Pale Yellow” means “warning, this could get worse”; “Orange” means “one step away from Red”.
5. Did they read the document?
 - For documents that are in a draft form, include an unexpected phrase in a strategic location in the document, e.g., “300 Pink Elephants” – people will comment on it if they see it. Take care to remove the phrase before the document becomes a deliverable.
6. Treat requirements templates as guidelines
 - Provide all the information that is asked for, or explain why you can’t.
 - Don’t ignore the gaps, missing or unknowns, identify them!
 - Add the sections or references you think are missing

Conducting Interviews

7. Send the list of topics you plan to cover in advance – no more than 5 general topics. If you have specific questions that will require research, provide those questions in advance.
8. Paraphrase as a way to keep a person talking without agreeing with what they are saying

Establishing trust-based relationships

9. Make a personal connection
 - Extend yourself beyond normal bounds to make a personal connection with the individual regardless of social group, ethnic background, gender.
 - Ignore what you may have heard about someone; do not allow another person’s negative assessment of a person to prejudice you – make your own assessment based on how the person conducts themselves with you.

Managing Requirements

10. Get the Success Criteria and Success Metrics

- Offer outrageously low or high metrics for targets to elicit more realistic expectation for “success”
- Accept the “solution” with grace; play the fool until the requirement (need) has success criteria and a way to measure it.

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