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Bad-Ass BA Caution!

Articles

Written by *Cecilie Hoffman*



Weasel Words Will Send You to the Requirements Dog House

The holy grail of writing requirements is for the requirement to be validated before the application released. Quality Assurance analysts inherit the work of Business Analysts. QA analysts are look something they can measure. All too often we business analysts are guilty of allowing what I call to nest in our requirements. Just as catching a wriggly weasel is hard, so is trying to validate a re

has no boundaries.

Weasel words are qualitative descriptors that are typical of that most difficult of categories of requirements, User Re User requirements are often given to us with a wave of the hand, "Oh, you know what I mean. I just want it to be go compared to what?" you ask, knowing in your heart this is going to be an uphill climb. "Well, better than what we ha talk next week, okay? Bye!" With that farewell, the customer has just weaseled out of giving you something quantifie the QA analyst looks at your BRD or Functional Requirements document, you will be in the Requirements Dog Hou

Cultural Note: "In the dog house" is an idiomatic expression for being in trouble. Dog houses are a small shelter sep main dwelling. In the middle 1900s, if a wife knew her husband was out drinking, she might lock him out, forcing hirr in the dog house.

Here is a list of my favorite weasel words. I'm sure you have some to add.

average	optimize
best-of-breed	optionally
best-in-class	preferably
easy	probably
efficient	rapid
etcetera	reasonable
fast	robust
flexible	simple
improved	state-of-the-art
intuitive	sufficient
maximize	user-friendly
minimize	usually

These words may creep in from the original benefits statement. There's more to creating a requirement than just res benefits statement into the Trigger Actor Action Condition syntax and removing the weasel words from the text. We indicate that the customer's thinking in a particular area is fuzzy; there will be a lot of work to help them articulate th and true needs. As business analysts, we must ask,

- "Maximize? Do we have a baseline to maximize from? How much do we need to maximize before the improve satisfactory? Are we looking for a 25% improvement or a 65% improvement?"
- "When we say, 'state of the art,' do we mean that we want an application that is in the Leadership quadrant of Magic Quadrant?"
- "When we say, 'flexible,' what attributes do we anticipate needing to change?"
- "When we say, 'usually,' that implies that sometimes 'such and such' will not be true. Could you tell more about circumstances when it is true and when it is not true?"
- "Rapid? Fast?" what part of the user-system interaction are we talking about? Could we focus on the time it tal to process the transaction request and respond back to the user? Fast meaning sub-second response?"

Customers don't understand that weasel words weaken the BRD. Weasel words deprive the system designer of cle boundaries. Weasel words make test script writing a nightmare for the QA analysts. And, when conducting User Ac Testing, the BA may wish she could run to the dog house to avoid the customer's disappointment.

So, how do you catch weasels words and address them properly? Try conducting a peer review of your BRD or Fur Requirements document with your friendly QA analyst or another BA. Neither needs to know the domain of the docu them your list of weasel words and promise them a doughnut for every one they find.

Cecilie Hoffman is a Senior Principal IT Business Analyst with the Business Analysis Center of Excellence, Syman Corporation. Cecilie's professional passion is to educate technical and business teams about the role of the busines to empower the business analysts themselves with tools, methods, strategies and confidence. Cecilie is a founding Silicon Valley chapter of the IIBA. She writes a blog on her personal passion motorcycle riding at balsamfir.com. Sh reached at Cecilie_Hoffman@Symantec.com .

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written by slyoung1, April 07, 2009

You know, I receive this at work and am considering unscribing because this series of articles contains completely inappropriate language for our email system. I realize you think it's cute. What it really is is a recipe to force people reading the BA Times in order to avoid the email police.

...

written by djas08, April 07, 2009

What do you mean, inappropriate? I thought this was a bad-ass article!

...

written by arw1969, April 07, 2009

While I don't believe this is a recipe for anything, I do agree that 'Bad-Ass' seems inappropriate, not mention unprof work with a number of Business Analysts, and I would not associate 'Bad Ass' with the likes of any of them. Inconsi snappers? Yes. Bad Asses? Never.

...

written by lhdupard, April 07, 2009

"Bad Ass" may be a little uncharacteristic of us, but I am not so highly offended as to miss the good content of the articles. This particular one was on point. I like the suggestion of peer reviews.

...

written by kabelle, April 07, 2009

It would have been more appropriate to use a headline using the word "weasel" instead of "bad-ass." I think "appropriate" usage could be defined as lacking in street English, yet still maintaining a colloquial style. This * professional eZine.

...

written by ultrafuchsia, April 07, 2009

While the series name is a bit rich, it is in keeping with the point this series makes. Once you understand the rules, may have to break them to get things done or get people's attention.

I do, indeed, have to be bad-ass at times and drop the tact and politeness, and then I have to be ready to handle th don't do it all the time, but when needed, it can be remarkably effective.

(Incidentally, culturally speaking, Silicon Valley (where the author works) is a bit immature. I remember hearing a 10,000+ person company drop the F-bomb in an all-hands employee meeting. Bad-ass wouldn't even raise an eyel

...

written by ndaza, April 07, 2009

My bad-ass analysts and I frequently have coffee at the Bad Ass Coffee House a block from our work place. We ne get our heads out of the corporate gutter and start enjoying our work.

...

written by darpearson01, April 08, 2009

Wow, what too sensitive folks. I thought it was a great article and no offense taken. Chill out!

...

written by pmulvey, April 09, 2009

I agree that we, as BAs, need to push for quantifiable metrics to show the benefit of a particular solution. Too often, hear sponsors state, "better than it is today" - how much better? 10% better, 100% better? 1% better? When valida deliverable, BAs could have written "better", coders could have made it "better", but the "better-ness" is only .05% t sponsor is unhappy.

Bottom line - get the sponsor to commit to a success measurement for the goals and objectives.

...

written by Scot024, April 11, 2009

I loved this article and found it very usefull. I haven't been a BA long so this is the kind of stuff I love to hear and wil

applying to my documents and meetings starting Monday.

Having only known about this eZine for about 1.5 minutes now and having this be the first article I came to... rarely excited about about joining an online community... rarely do I join an online community.

I'm looking forward to what the BA Times has to offer!

...

written by kburoz, April 14, 2009

Remove the pickles from your bad-asses.

...

written by johnstde, April 15, 2009

Loved the article. It is right on. I will use many of the suggestions. Thanks Cecilie! On the title, I love all the Bad Ass articles, but have to admit, it is inappropriate where I work. It is ultra conservative here and I have hesitated sending my peers for that reason. For me,, I take no offense,,, I like the idea.

...

written by SteveM54, April 15, 2009

First, let me comment on the content of the article. I think it does a very good job of succinctly a describing we can into from time to time.

Now on to the debate that the title of the article has generated. I will not propose an opinion one way or another on illustrates another challenge the BA so often has to overcome. That of multiple interpretations of a single, seeming! How often do we find that when a person states something they infer a meaning that is different if not contradictory of the same term.

Just a different perspective.

...

written by SteveM54, April 15, 2009

And I've just shown another one. Proof read your work before publishing :-)

...

written by safa, April 22, 2009

If you're that sensitive to the term "Bad-Ass" you shouldn't be a BA - BA's are supposed to be thick skinned to deal the countless cheap-shots BAs take on projects from all angles. So I suggest you get over it - another thing BAs sh accustomed to doing. Ironic tho, because i think Bad-Ass could be interpreted in many ways (its really up to the ind thats kinda what this article is saying we (as BAs) should be weiry of... Maybe BA Times should take some time to they mean by "Bad Ass" to clear the confusion/dislike of the term.

...

written by Naidoo, April 23, 2009

The first poster's core problem hasn't been addressed - that her company's mail sweep program blocks this article. the content of the article is great and well-received by the community at large (from the comments above), the choi is clearly a problem.

So - we can all write to our mail administrators saying please allow distribution of emails with the word "Ass" in ther

of this excellent series of articles could change.

I'm hoping reason will prevail and a slightly less offensive but still fun title can be found...how about Bad-Buttocked

...

written by haroldwolf, April 27, 2009

How about "The Big Bad BA"?

...

written by jborden, April 28, 2009

I completely agree with the first comment. "Bad-Ass" is inappropriate and often filtered by email servers.

"Tough-Ass" would be a much better word choice.

PS - Remember no matter how bad or tough you are... a good BA doesn't ass-ume anything. Validate those assum
make them conditions. :)

...

written by charlieboz, May 12, 2009

Perhaps she has a bad ass and is just being honest?

...

written by anujvaidya, May 22, 2009

Removing those weasel words and ensuring that you make a customer commit to a measurable and traceable
functionality is the key thing for managing scope. A better your work product is the further you are away from the d

The bigger and more important question is how you do you help your client not even think of those weasel words? |
help him create a clearer vision of the application? How do you ensure he understands what will bring value to his c

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