

# The Bad Ass BA Observes the Hunt for “The Right Business Analyst”

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By Cecilie Hoffman  
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## Now Hiring Business Analysts

### Must have problem solving skills

Like so many other people, I’m job-hunting. Job-hunting is never easy, even when you

are doing it from the relative safety of having a job, but one that you would like to leave. In this era of the robo-online job postings job-hunting it feels particularly demoralizing because most companies do not provide any form of closure on your application. You apply, you get a robo-acknowledgement of your application and then you hear nothing for weeks and months. In four months of searching I have received exactly one email, machine-generated, that thanked me for my application and informed that the position had been filled. That organization went to the top of my list for, “keep an eye on them – they would be good to work for” because of the implication that someone had written a requirement to actually close the loop with applicants!

There are some good job postings out there, jobs that describe a position with required skills, experience and responsibilities that make sense for a business analyst. There are also a plethora of weird job postings wherein the job described seems either too narrow or too broad or suffering from role confusion. I’m seeing pattern in these less-than-optimal job postings. It seems that every company has their own definition of the role of the Business Analyst. From where I sit it is going to take more than a grass roots effort from the BA community to bring together the HR / hiring manager view of the BA and the IIBA’s vision of the BA. Here are four patterns in the job postings that cause me the most consternation:

Pattern #1: The “Bird in a Cage” model

**Requirements jockey** – We need you to handle proposal requests. You will write the BRD and throw it over the wall to the outsourced development team.

**Requirements change control czar** – “We need a patient, detail oriented, people-oriented person with excellent documentation skills.” Translation: you will be in the person that everyone complains to. The users and their managers will always be escalating; the development team will always be exhausted, and the auditors will always be looking for something to be wrong with the record keeping.

Pattern #2: The “Two for One” model

**System Analyst / Business Analyst** - “The successful BSA will drive end user experience innovation. Must have professional software development experience with front end web development (JavaScript, HTML, CSS, AJAX) and the ability collect requirements from stakeholders.”

**Quality Assurance Analyst / Business Analyst** – “You are the right person if you can model business processes, facilitate discussions and write detailed business requirements and use cases, facilitate walkthroughs of detailed business requirements and use cases, and perform functional tests.”

**Project Manager / Business Analyst** – “You are the right person if you can compartmentalize the perspectives and responsibilities of a PM and BA for a business owner who dithers. The last BA hired was great at dealing with the project stakeholders musing about changing direction, but her head exploded when she put on her PM hat and considered the ramifications to the project.”

Pattern #3: The “**All in One**” model

“You are the right BA for this company if your background includes an MBA, and MA in Information Science, and you have managed projects, and you have both IT and product development experience, and you have worked with marketing and sales teams and you are fluent in Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Portuguese. 50% travel.”

Pattern #4: The “**clone the 25-year veteran who just retired**” model

“The right BA for us has experience in our customized PeopleSoft modules, can modify Business Intelligence reports, is familiar with SFDC, can do a mind meld with stakeholders, can hold the requirements traceability matrix in their head and can mentor junior business analysts.”

The IIBA is already working with PMI so that there will be a better understanding of the contributions of the two roles to future projects. Perhaps the IIBA might consider an initiative to work with Human Resources professional organizations as well. In my humble opinion more could be done to educate HR staff and hiring managers about the role of the BA. In many companies, “job reqs” (job requisitions) are drafted by the hiring manager and completed by an HR staff member. If that HR staff member were more familiar with the envisioned industry standard BA role, we might see fewer job postings like the ones above. In my ideal world, there would more consensus amongst companies about the role and value of the business analyst. Moreover that consensus would be in alignment with the IIBA vision, and we wouldn’t see job postings that leave us scratching our heads in bemused consternation.

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**Cecilie Hoffman's** professional passion is to educate technical and business teams about the role of the business analyst, and to empower the business analysts themselves with tools, methods, strategies and confidence. Cecilie is a founding member of the Silicon Valley chapter

of the IIBA. She authored the 2009 Bad Ass BA series for BA Times and most recently the poem, A is for Analysis, also at BA Times. See her blog on her personal passion, motorcycle riding, at <http://www.balsamfir.com>. [Cecilie.Hoffman@comcast.net](mailto:Cecilie.Hoffman@comcast.net).