

Overview

The Business Analysis Capabilities Assessment is a framework for evaluating the current state of an organization's ability to execute a business automation effort from an end-to-end perspective. The evaluation examines an organization's capabilities from a wide-range of perspectives to help evaluate the system dynamics that contribute to any issues. In addition, the assessment examines a range of specific activities in order to provide insight into immediately actionable points of intervention.

The primary purpose of the assessment is to support organizations' efforts to gain greater value out of their existing expenditures in business automation. The assessment draws upon existing knowledge derived from documented practices by various professional and standards organizations as well as years of pragmatic experience with Enterprise Agility's own Business Solution Specification Framework. The BSSF is a proven approach that has been successfully followed by major corporations and which provide a formal framework defining how to relate business rules to other business specification elements.

The assessment focuses on the Solution Analysis effort that is the key responsibility of Business Analysts. However, in order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of how the Solution Analysis effort is impacted by other factors the assessment also examines: Stakeholder Alignment, Solution Analysis, Initiative Management, Communication and Resource Development.

The comprehensive nature of the Business Analysis Capability Assessment provides a framework that can be adapted to focus on the particular needs of each organization.

What is Enterprise Agility's "Business Analysis Capability Assessment"?

During the assessment process, we partner with our clients to review key areas of organizational capabilities that prove to be most important for organizations to address in any business automation initiative. There are six areas of organizational maturity evaluated as part of the assessment. These areas of maturity are:

- ***Stakeholder Alignment***

Stakeholder alignment is essential to ensure that the automation deliverable provides meaningful business value. A well aligned organization is able to identify how decisions made in the development of a business automation solution support specific business objectives.

- ***Solution Analysis***

Solution analysis is the key skill set of an organization's business automation team. These skills provide an organization with the ability to describe a business level mechanism that supports the delivery of process improvements or enables new business capabilities via automation technology.

- ***Initiative Management***

Reviews how an organization executes initiatives in order to assure that they deliver on-time and on-budget while balancing various conflicting demands. This involves the development of standard project plans, risk, issue and defect management, as well as the ability to link portfolio, program and project goals.

- **Communication**

Effective communication between levels and within levels of an organization is important to ensuring alignment of views and to reinforce shared values. An organization that communicates effectively is able to minimize misunderstandings and promote teamwork by clearly identifying risk and recognizing achievement.

- **Resource Development**

Reviews how an organization helps hire, retain and develop personnel with the skills required to support their business automation analysis efforts. This involves examining the skills required for various types of projects, creating job descriptions that incorporate these skill sets and providing training to develop targeted skills.

Stakeholder Alignment

Reviews how an organization's objectives are used to ensure that alignment exists between any automation initiative deliverables and defined business outcomes. This involves the capturing of hard benefits as well as mapping how soft benefits contribute to specific organization objectives.

Assessment Points

Responsibility identification

Locating all the parties with interests in an effort is essential in order for an initiative to be certain that it has identified all parties that might potentially be impacted by any work done as part of the initiative. A structured approach to responsibility gathering can help reduce the likelihood of unanticipated impacts from poorly understood networks of involvement.

Benefits definition

Establishing metrics for project benefits and then insisting that the gathering of these metrics be part of the deliverable is an essential approach to providing an accountability cross check for any automation initiative. An approach that defines metrics and links these to the outcomes that these are expected to drive provides a framework for helping validate the success of an initiative and provide an opportunity for tuning of the solution.

Investment identification

The identification of capabilities is an important way that organizations can help provide increased visibility into investment decisions. Identifying the benefits supported by individual deliverables within an initiative and either mapping these to the processes where these will be realized or identifying them as capabilities whose value will be derived by a later initiative can help make clear how an initiative is satisfying multiple demands.

Scope definition

Controlling the scope of an initiative is critical to make sure that identified benefits can be achieved within the limitations proscribed by the scope. An approach that integrates process-based scope definition combined with benefit mapping can help ensure that scope is sufficient to achieve the benefits as well as helping identify potentially extraneous scope.

Solution Analysis

Reviews an organization's ability to create business automation designs which provide positive business value to a new or existing business activity. This includes managing requirements as well as using automation to support management of business rules, process/workflow and task enablement.

Assessment Points

Task Design

Improving the manner in which a particular task is performed is one of the key ways that business automation contributes value. Standardized techniques for performing task analysis can help assure that a full understanding of the task impact is gathered and that appropriate tradeoffs have been made.

Workflow Design

Understanding how work flows through an organization is important to optimize the order, timing and paths that control how work moves through an organization. Mapping the workflow can help organizations avoid investing in automation that is not well-aligned with delivering end-to-end business benefits.

Knowledge Design

One of the most challenging aspects of business automation initiatives is dealing with knowledge design and requires understanding business concepts, the IT representations of these concepts and the relationship between these. Miscommunication about the meaning or availability of business concepts can have severe consequences for projects.

Requirements Management

Requirements are the key drivers behind business automation efforts but are frequently one of the most problematic pieces of the efforts. Providing a structure that allows requirements to be tracked and validated can significantly reduce the project disruptions from missed or incorrect requirements.

Initiative Management

Reviews the organization's ability to identify, monitor and resolve the key deliverables within an initiative. This includes tracking issues and risks that threaten to disrupt the initiative as well as the appropriate use of facilitation to resolve or gain agreement upon steps for moving forward.

Assessment Points

Deliverable Management

Deliverables are the life-blood of any initiative. Properly identifying the set of deliverables and their dependencies is a critical step in any initiative. The ability to manage these deliverables is dependent upon

the development of standards for the level of completeness of deliverables at various stages and criteria for validation and acceptance of those deliverables.

Issue Management

All initiatives have issues that arise unexpectedly. How these issues are managed and brought to a successful conclusion is a key differentiator of successful initiatives. An effective approach to issue management includes root cause analysis and attribution as well as the tracking of the rate of discovery and resolution of issues as a measure of the quality of the various business analysis deliverables.

Risk Management

The circumstances that can impact an initiative are often not entirely under the control of that initiative. Identifying these risks is an important way of providing additional visibility to the impact of occurrences external to an initiative. Proper tracking and characterization of these risk is important to avoid the benefits of an initiative being diminished for reasons beyond its control.

Facilitation

Meetings are one of the key opportunities for involved parties have an opportunity to share views and ensure alignment. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of a meeting can waste significant resources and fail to add any significant value to an initiative. In addition, Consensus Building, Alternative Development and Idea Discovery have essential roles to play in any initiative.

Communication

Reviews how an organization provides communication between stakeholders and project members to minimize misunderstandings and promote teamwork. This involves characterization and identification of risk, recognition of achievement, and identification of issues with alignment.

Assessment Points

Status Communication

The most basic communication for any initiative is the communication of status. Status has many aspects and should include traditional cost and schedule elements. Additional measures such as those describing the quality of deliverables quality provide enhanced visibility into potential future schedule and cost changes.

Risk Communication

Basic risk communication entails communicating the current risks associated with an initiative as well as approaches to mitigating these risks. By characterizing the way that risks interact with the initiatives' deliverables and with each other it is possible to improve the visibility into the potential impacts of the risks associated with the initiative.

Incremental demonstrations

Larger initiatives have a higher risk of failure. This risk derived from the lack of visibility into the progress of an initiative. Simple status may be inadequate in these cases. Incremental checkpoints which deliverable some level of demonstrable outcome are a key way of helping to bring visibility to potentially hidden risks.

Change impact feedback

Change occurs frequently during the course of an initiative but the way that this change impacts the initiative is often not well understood. Developing standard techniques for capturing the tradeoffs involved in change requests can help avoid the tendency to underestimate the impact of changes.

Resource Development

Reviews how an organization invests in the people that are involved in business analysis initiatives to develop the skills these individuals bring to these efforts. This includes broad organizational training to build common understanding as well as individually-focused efforts that are intended to build particular skills for specific individuals.

Assessment Points

Foundational Learning

One of the most powerful benefits of broad training is that it develops a shared level of understanding across an organization. This shared understanding reduces the amount of time lost to misunderstandings and helps promote the effective sharing of techniques across groups.

Train the Leaders

Traditional structured training cannot provide the mastery level of the business analysis skill sets that is essential for individuals to be able to act upon what they have learned. Detailed workshops that offer hands-on ways of using techniques on actual initiatives along with mentoring of targeted leaders is an effective way of balancing the need to build deep skills with the costs and time required to build those skills.

Recognition

The successful adoption of any approach is ultimately dependent upon individuals being motivated to pursue the goals of the effort. Recognition of individuals who have made a significant effort is a primary way that organizations motivate these individuals as well as providing an opportunity for an organization to demonstrate that the value they place on the adoption of the techniques and approaches associated with their business analysis effort.

The Enterprise Agility Advantage

Enterprise Agility is a recognized leader in the areas of business process analysis, business rules management, requirements management, systems architecture and iterative full-lifecycle development. Enterprise Agility has led the industry with innovative approaches and techniques that tie directly to delivering business results. This is made possible through our strategic relationship with technology vendors and our thought leadership in the areas of business process analysis, business rules management and bridging the communication gap between business and IT.

Enterprise Agility partners with organizations to help them create a sustainable marketplace advantage, which is realized through implementing a repeatable and institutionalized process. Maintaining this sustained advantage requires approaches and tools that provide an organization, over time, traceability and alignment from the business vision to the processes and systems that support the business vision. With this purpose in mind, Enterprise Agility offers mentoring and training programs that focus on Business Process Analysis, Requirements Management and Business Rules Management.

By leveraging these interlocking components of the Business/IT Lifecycle as a cohesive service offering, we are able to move our clients beyond industry best practices and conventional wisdom. As a result, our clients are able to optimize their business by achieving a greater ROI while creating the agility necessary to maintain a sustainable marketplace advantage.

Enterprise Agility's service offerings include:

- Mentoring, Leadership & Training
- Business Process Transformation
- Rules-driven Business Process Management
- Business Rules Implementation & Management
- Business/IT Lifecycle Management
- Requirements Management



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