

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up somewhere else”

As with most quotes from the famous Major League MVP Yogi Berra, the statement that “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up somewhere else” continues to resonate with wisdom and wit. This line of thinking is also highly relevant to the world of business, which undergoes continual change both external and self-imposed, particularly in a world of economic constraint, globalization, and increased focus on corporate governance. As a result, in order to continue to remain aligned with business IT must also be willing and able to adapt accordingly.

Change in itself represents risk, particularly if it does not also contain within it an understanding of where we have been, where we are and where we need to go. This ‘situational awareness’ is the key to minimizing the risk associated with change as well as encouraging the desired behavior in those that need to adopt and adapt to a change.

Information Technology has both responded to and driven change over the past several decades through the creation of processes, methodologies, and frameworks. This maturity has gone a long way to increase the quality of project deliverables and improved sustainment of IT services. Unfortunately, this maturity has also come at a price as in many cases IT practitioners have created silo processes and point solutions, which do not share common outcomes, integration points or even language and terminology. What follows are some examples of where this results in outcomes that do not align with the business:

BUSINESS ANALYSIS:

A Case Study:

- Before a project is initiated, a Business Analyst is engaged to obtain high level business requirements for a potential project.
- Part of this process results in a Business Case in order to determine if it is feasible for a project to be initiated based on the identified financials
- The project is initiated, detailed requirements are obtained, and effort continues through to completion; however, none of the IT Service Management sustainment activities were identified in the original Business Case.

The Lesson:

Projects end...Services don't. The Total Cost of Ownership / Return on Investment for a given project must consider all aspects of sustaining the delivered products and services. In some cases these operational costs can far outstrip the capital cost of the project. The IT Service Management processes and resources should be engaged early and throughout the project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT:

A Case Study:

- A Project is initiated based on a Business Case justification. The Charter is created which identifies the corresponding dimensions of the initiative (deliverables, scope, financials, schedule, etc.)
- The original Business Analyst moves on to another initiative
- Design, Development, Testing, and Deployment activities proceed throughout the project, however the necessary artifacts were not traced back to the original business requirements.
- Once the product is deployed, the project team is disbanded and Operations is left to support the resulting changes to the environment with minimal engagement of the original project team.

The Lesson:

Ongoing engagement of the Business Analyst is required in order to retain a consistent link back to the business in order to ensure that project artifacts are traceable to requirements and determine if the business objectives have changed, or even if the project should continue.

SERVICE MANAGEMENT:**A Case Study:**

- Ongoing production events, incidents, and problems continue to be captured and recorded by the IT Service Management practitioners
- Small, iterative, and ongoing modifications are made to the environment and supporting processes in order to not compromise or disrupt Production
- New projects are initiated by the business which continue to result in changes to Production but do not include a recognition of the evolving 'As-Is' current state that Operations continues to maintain

The Lesson:

A feedback loop is required between IT Service Management resources and the Business Analyst who is building the case for a project with the business. Modifications to the current state should be included in the project definition in order to ensure that the Production environment remains stable

So what is the common link? Ultimately, Change means Projects and Projects mean Change but in the end it is all about the Business so ensure that your focus is on Business Analysis at all times. Here are some key points to consider:

1. Early engagement of IT Service Management Practitioners by the Business Analyst:

The Business Analyst must ensure that Operations is engaged early regarding potential projects. This should include input based on issues related to the current state of Production as well as the required human and environmental changes required to sustain the outcome of the project.

2. Requirements traceability throughout the product development lifecycle:

The Business Analyst require continual exposure to project artifacts such as design elements, test plans, and sustainment processes in order to ensure that these align to, and traced back to, business requirements.

3. Continual communication between the Business Analyst and Operations:

Business Analysts should have direct access to issues relating to the current operating environment within the context of how it affects their respective business stakeholders.

4. Common, Business Focused language within IT:

All IT processes and methodologies will have their own unique language and terminology that is required in order to ensure that there is clear understanding concerning context. Ensure that the Business Analyst is familiar and clear concerning the specific language that is used throughout all of your frameworks (Service Management, Project Management, Quality Assurance, etc.). Ideally, this should be terminology that can be easily transferred to business terminology if and when required by the Business Analyst. Promote a common language throughout IT that aligns to the business culture and remember that individuals are more likely to embrace change if they are engaged in it.

5. Business Analyst as change ambassador:

Nurture relationships with the business, particularly through your Business Analysts as these will be your greatest partners, ambassadors, and advocates with the business stakeholders.

As practitioners of change, we must understand the culture of the business environment and their appetite for risk. As a result, we need to focus on change that can be readily adopted, is not too far ahead of the corporate culture, and recognize that no one methodology is going to solve the challenges associated with the management of change.

These are exciting times and represent some of the greatest opportunities that we may see throughout our careers. As an industry, we have made great strides in the creation and evolution of process and methodology however there continue to exist opportunities for greater alignment both within IT and with the Business. Given the appropriate focus and diligence, we should all look forward to a day in the not so distant future when we read articles outlining how far we have come in maturing our relationships with the business, particularly through the integration of Business Analysts with other IT methodologies and frameworks.

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