

Business Analysis & Service Management

How BABOK complements ITIL

White Paper

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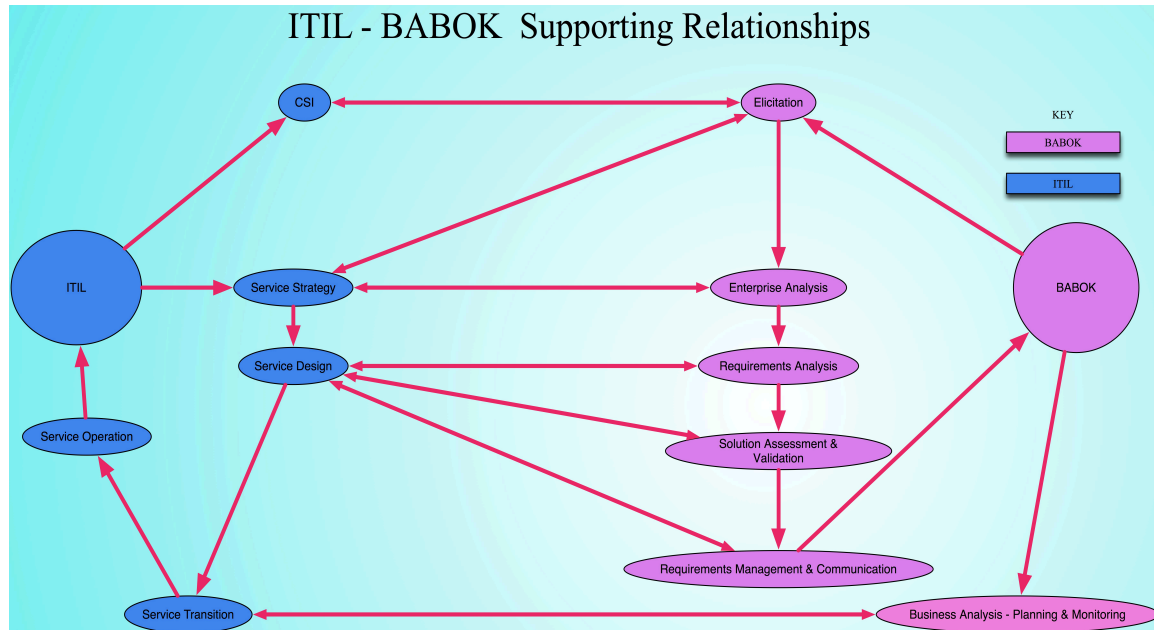
How BABOK complements ITIL

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT ITIL CAN OFFER BABOK	5
WHAT BABOK CAN OFFER SERVICE MANAGERS	6
THE NEXUS - RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE SERVICE DESIGN PACKAGE (SDP)	7
SPECIFIC LINKS	8
CSI ↔ ELICITATION	8
SERVICE STRATEGY ↔ ENTERPRISE ANALYSIS + ELICITATION.....	8
SERVICE DESIGN ↔ ENTERPRISE ANALYSIS + REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS + SOLUTION ASSESSMENT & VALIDATION	8
SERVICE TRANSITION ↔ BUSINESS ANALYSIS PLANNING AND MONITORING	8
DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH	10
CONCLUSIONS	11
REFERENCES	12

Business Analysis & Service Management

How BABOK complements ITIL

Introduction



Service Management has been defined, in part, by ITIL since the last century. It is a mature library of five core books that had their third major revision in 2007.

Business Analysis has, as a discipline, been around probably as long as Service Management, but only relatively recently has its practices been codified. Firstly by the formation of the IIBA in and the publication of *A Guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK® Guide)* in 2003. This book has most recently been updated in 2009 and provides an excellent description of the Knowledge Areas and work involved in Business Analysis as a discipline. The book also makes the important differences between Business Analysis and Project management very clear, something that should help remove the common confusion between these activities.

Unfortunately, to read both ITIL and BABOK would be to believe that they had arisen in quite different universes. Though they both cover important, very closely related areas, they use different terminology and different approaches to the same things.

Both, however, add much value to the job of Managing IT so that it provides value to the business. Combining the best practices found in both ITIL and BABOK would add considerable value to practitioners in these areas, as well as in the development of the valuable knowledge in both disciplines.

It isn't altogether a surprise that the ITIL and BABOK are so disconnected. On the one hand, ITIL references (in Service Design) only two books about Business Analysis, one

Business Analysis & Service Management

How BABOK complements ITIL

from 1995, on 'Requirements Engineering' even has the name of the author recorded incorrectly in the references. On the other hand the BABOK team did not have access to the ITIL books at all, only to a non-OGC, non-TSO 2007 book 'Foundations of IT Service Management Based on ITIL V3'.

This paper investigates the relationship between the two areas to explore the value that practitioners can get from both.

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What ITIL can offer BABOK

Service Strategy, Service Design, and CSI are particularly engaged with understanding and developing Business Requirements to serve the needs of the Business. Various excellent processes, methods and tools are suggested, all of which can help establish good requirements.

In particular, Service Design devotes considerable space covering many areas of Business Analysis (interviewing, prototyping, and so forth) it even has a good Requirements Template. ITIL refers to the process of Requirements Analysis as 'Requirements Engineering' and, under this title, it offers much that would be of great value to Business Analysts, if they were aware of it.

Apart from the close connections and overlap shown in the diagram at the start of this White Paper, BABOK would benefit greatly from the application of the ITIL metaphors of 'Service' and 'Process' as they are applied across all the ITIL books.

BABOK produces transition requirements, the process of defining, and deploying these could be made much clearer by use of the Service Transition book that also would help by defining the interface to Change Management more clearly.

Knowledge Management, and the Service Knowledge Management System, offers a means to coordinate and control information in a structured and integrated manner – exactly what is needed by Business Analysis to keep track of formal requirements through the life-cycle of a project, programme or service.

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What BABOK can offer Service Managers

Experienced Business Analysts, using BABOK as a reference, have very specific skills to bring to a Service Management engagement. Their experience and training enables them to elicit well formed requirements and then define and communicate them with clarity and precision. This is necessary for Services, Projects and other activities to be well-formed and to reduce the risk of re-work and poor design.

BABOK, provides more considered, up-to-date material from the field, than the (though excellent) advice in Service Design. It also provides a good conceptual framework for the gathering and management of requirements.

ITIL emphasises good communication, engagement of stakeholders and proper control of requirements. BABOK provides the means to achieve all of these with the production of good requirements that are properly understood and agreed by stakeholders.

There is a pervasive danger, given the background of many Service Managers, that the drive to timely resolution will lead to solutions-driven thinking. When people think of the shape and form of the solution too early in the requirements analysis phase, this leads to a closing off of options and, usually, to a sub-optimal result (at best). Often the same mistakes will be made repeatedly because too narrow a view is taken of the possible solutions. An experienced Business Analyst will be well aware of this danger and, using principles from BABOK, will be able to avoid it and ensure that the proper time is spent to produce precise requirements which then can be used to explore a wider range of solutions and, where possible, allow innovative, lower-cost and higher value solutions than would otherwise be possible.

The Nexus – Recommendations and the Service Design Package (SDP)

ITIL Service Design produces, as output from the lifecycle phase, a document called the Service Design Package (SDP). This describes, from a delivery perspective, the service throughout its life.

The SDP is the formal input to the next phase, Service Transition, where it is used to build, test and install the service into Operations by means of change, release and deployment management.

The SDP contains a Business Requirements section that contains the requirements for the service. Not just the current requirements from a product perspective, but also, as SLRs, Service Level Requirements that may not translate into SLAs or Product features at this stage.

It is this section of the SDP that is the direct communication between ITIL and BABOK. The whole process of Business Analysis is devoted, to eliciting, then managing and monitoring the refinements of the Requirements and their eventual realisation in the product.

What is missing from the ITIL SDP idea is that all SDPs, together in the Service Portfolio, share a common Requirements Space. Some requirements underpin a number of services, for example, so there is considerable merit in identifying these and developing them as general requirements, rather than just as specific to the particular services. A link between a general pool of Requirements, most represented as part of specific SDPs, would also allow a better channel to the Risk Register (part of overall Corporate Risk Management), something that BABOK acknowledges as of fundamental importance, but doesn't describe the connection through an SDP, Requirements Register and a Service Portfolio.

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Specific Links

CSI ↔ Elicitation

Business Analysis is, of course, concerned with improvements and updates as well as to completely new products and services. The Elicitation process uses Enterprise Analysis as a starting point, just as CSI uses an understanding of the Business Vision and Goals as a starting point. Both recognise that requirements for improvement can only make sense within the Business Context and have to go through a, potentially multiple stage, refinement process in able to prioritise those that are going to deliver the highest value to cost ratio.

Service Strategy ↔ Enterprise Analysis + Elicitation

Enterprise Analysis explores, as Service Strategy does, Market Spaces, Business Opportunities and maps these to existing product and service solutions.

Service Design ↔ Enterprise Analysis + Requirements Analysis + Solution Assessment & Validation

The largest ITIL area of overlap and communication is, unsurprisingly, Service Design. As is discussed in this paper, the Service Design Package (SDP) is the core part of the Service Portfolio that relates to Business Analysis.

Importantly, though, Solution Assessment & Validation crosses over to Service Transition, with a similar V-diagram approach to testing, verification and validation. This is included here as these are elements of design, that are then carried over to Service Transition, rather than being elements of Transition itself.

Service Transition ↔ Business Analysis Planning and Monitoring

The Transition part of BABOK is probably the least thoroughly explored - specifically because most is outside the scope. The requirements of the BA are

Business Analysis & Service Management

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well covered in Service Transition, though. What is required is for the link through the SDP to be better understood and, specifically, integrated into the Business Analysis Planning and Monitoring stage. Similarly the role of the Business Analyst is missing from Service Transition. It would improve the book considerably if the role and its touch-points at this stage was included.

The V-Diagram and its components, would be improved by recognising the role of Business Analysis in Planning and Monitoring as well as in Enterprise Analysis and Requirements Analysis.

In particular, the SKMS should be shown to include both the SDP and Requirements Register, showing that the Requirements Register contains test, validation, and verification results to capture the successful transition of particular requirements into operations. This overall controlling cycle from a requirements perspective is missing from Service Transition.

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Differences in approach

What is most evident in BABOK is how it focuses attention on the Business, Business Value and Stakeholders, not simply lip-service, but actual attention to the detail of their needs and how to translate that into meaningful and useful requirements.

While ITIL does much that is excellent in supplying value to the Business, it has a more IT-driven approach. Even the choice of 'Requirements Engineering' rather than 'Business Analysis' shows the roots in the technical side very clearly.

It is worth remembering that the Business focus in ITIL has been growing. In ITIL V2 there were two OGC/TSO books called 'The Business Perspective' (Part I & II) that came out late in the cycle. In ITIL V3, this material, and other new material was included particularly in the Service Strategy and Service Design books.

So, though the IIBA has only been around since 2003, ITIL V3, which includes the design aspects and the focus on business in these books, has only been around since 2007.

Interestingly Skills for the Information Age (SFIA) includes Business Analysis as an area under 'Business Change Management', so, though SFIA is based on ITIL, it also includes contributions from Business Analysis.

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Conclusions

The itSMF (IT Service Management Forum) has a large vested interest in the development and improvement of ITIL in collaboration with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). Similarly, members of the IIBA have a large vested interest in improving BABOK.

Though both groups would benefit greatly from a combined Best Practice reference library, this is unlikely to appear as producing it doesn't align with the direct interests of the organisations or their members. Similar situations exist with Project Management (PRINCE2 or PMI), eTom and Cobit, all of which would be more convenient to some practitioners if found in one place, using one set of terminology. Even within the OGC, the publications of ITIL, MoV, M_o_R are different enough in their terminology and approach to appear to have come from quite different publishers, even if their actual look and feel is similar.

Since such integration is unlikely for the above reasons, the next best approach would be a book, similar to the book produced by Cobit and endorsed by the itSMF International on Service Management, showing the integration points. Such a book should probably follow a similar structure to this white paper, but also include roles from both areas, case studies showing how ITIL and BABOK advice can best be integrated and, in particular, recommendations of how to use ITIL SKMS structures and Knowledge Management techniques to manage requirements through their life-cycle.

Even better, though, would be for the next revision of BABOK to have access to the ITIL core books and somebody with full ITIL qualifications and for the next release of ITIL (a release is due out soon, so this is too late for that) to include BABOK as a reference book and use somebody with full IIBA qualifications.

Business Analysts would find it valuable to become familiar with the ITIL books, Service Strategy, Service Design and CSI – and, if possible, Service Translation. ITIL Experts who are involved with Business Analysis (or, Requirements Engineering) will find much of value in BABOK.

Service Managers and other ITIL practitioners would benefit from a short course in Business Analysis to understand the field better and should add BABOK to their reading list.

Business Analysis & Service Management

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