My Approach to Full Cycle BA Projects and the Types of Projects I Have Worked On

Hello and welcome to this review of my approach to full-cycle business analysis (BA) projects, and the types of projects I have worked on so far in my career.

I'll cover my project approach first, before then moving onto the types of projects I've worked on.

BA Project Approach

I first developed a basic business analysis project framework during my degree (Business – 2:1) and have then refined it throughout my career working on BA focused projects. All projects are different and often require a tailored approach, but in general, these are the steps I follow on start-to-finish BA projects:

1. **Onboarding/Get oriented.** Try to get up to speed as soon as possible by conducting contextual research and analysis and preliminary stakeholder analysis. Review any existing current state documentation etc. Start planning communication.

2. **Discover the primary business objectives.** Conduct research and stakeholder interviews to ensure that the project is aiming to solve the right business need or problem. Keep asking why. The aim is definite concrete clarity.

3. **Define the scope of the initiative.** Using communication and facilitation skills, try to align business and technical stakeholders on the scope of the solution. Use effective questioning to ensure everything essential is included and anything superfluous is excluded.

4. **Formulate a business analysis plan.** Identify the project deliverables, the work required, the resources, the timeline etc. and decide who needs to be involved and when. Document and share with all relevant stakeholders.

5. **Document detailed requirements.** Following further communication with stakeholders, produce professional clear and concise user-friendly documentation such as a business requirements document, software requirements, functional requirements etc. to inform and guide the solution design. Incorporate text deliverables such as use cases and visual deliverables

such as wireframes. Use diagrams for systems and business processes and data flows etc.

6. **Support the technical implementation.** Offer comprehensive support to the technical team and try to ensure they have everything they need to successfully implement the solution. Be readily available to answer questions/provide further information.

7. **Help the business implement the solution.** Support business stakeholders during user acceptance testing, solution implementation and change management (training/documentation etc.) so the roll out is as smooth as possible.

8. **Assess the value created by the solution.** Post-implementation, assess the solution's return on investment (ROI) and evaluate what went well and areas for improvement for future projects. Evaluate own performance through reflection and plan CPD. Ask for feedback and offer feedback. Celebrate successes.

The Types of Projects I have Worked On

Here now follows my review of the types of **BA** and **UX** projects I have worked on in my career so far.

The purpose of this review is to provide you with clear understanding of my professional business analysis and related experience so far to help you make an informed decision as to whether I am suitable for your vacancy.

This document works in tandem with the rest of my portfolio to give you a clear picture of me as a professional BA. Please see my CV and the other pages on my portfolio: Qualities, Tools, Training, and Testimonials for the full picture.

Please let me know if you require further information about any of these projects or if you have any questions.

Recent Full Cycle BA/UX Projects – 2016 to 2023

From 2016 to 2019, I worked on comprehensive BA/UX projects for small to medium sized businesses, sourcing my own clients and working with/managing a small team of freelance designers, developers and marketing experts.

From 2019 to 2023, I worked for Oxbridge Home Learning on a full time employed basis.

The projects I managed from **2016 to 2019** were very much focused on business processes and systems improvement, UX improvement, and online presence development. I believe this to be a powerful transformative combination which can modernise and move businesses forward.

My intent was to offer this powerful combination of services to small businesses in my local area to help them improve and succeed in a sustainable way. I always endeavoured to empower the business owners to be able to update/manage their new products and services moving forward by leaving them with guides/training materials.

Based on my previous project experience, I developed a full-cycle approach that could be adapted to all these projects. My approach was traditional and rational but also incorporated lean principles given the time and budget restrictions of my clients.

I really enjoyed working on these projects, but after three years of marketing and sourcing my own clients, I was ready for a longer-term role with just one client/employer.

With my experience in learning and development, and with my teaching and assessing qualifications, I accepted an interesting diverse role with the distance learning college Oxbridge Home Learning, a fast-growing educational start-up focusing on courses and qualifications for adults. This role was from **2019 to 2023**.

Given the business was a start-up and developing/growing fast, my role evolved along with it.

I was given responsibility for improving the adult education suite of qualifications including the assessing qualification CAVA, and the teaching qualification AET by functioning as a BA.

Interestingly, I also worked as a tutor (I am a qualified teacher/assessor) on CAVA/AET with a small caseload and i gained great insight into all aspects of the courses and learner/tutor experiences as a result.

Again, given that the company was small but fast growing – they were keen to see me implement lean principles. For a full review of this stage of my BA role with Oxbridge, please see the case study on my Examples page.

Following the success of the project to improve the adult education suite, I was promoted into the role of course development and quality assurance lead and

given responsibility for improving all the course/qualifications offered by the college to the same standard as the adult education suite.

This involved a comprehensive period of elicitation/requirement gathering and contextual research in order for me to be able to start to develop an approach to such a comprehensive undertaking.

Unfortunately, I had badly broken my leg a few months before my promotion and there were so many complications with my recovery that I felt the need to leave my role with Oxbridge to focus on my recovery. This was a great shame as I was making very good progress, had many innovative ideas for solutions that had been enthusiastically received, and I could see how I could have a major impact on the quality of the courses and all associated business processes.

Agile UX Projects – UXR/UXD/Content Design – 2013 to 2016

During this period, I worked mainly as a UX designer/researcher and as a content designer.

As I worked for various Asian companies, as well as the UX focused work I carried out I had a lot of copy writing, translation and quality assurance responsibilities.

I worked on a freelance basis for several large design agencies on lean agile projects, overcoming significant cross-cultural challenges.

Throughout this time, I was sourcing the majority of my work from online freelancer portals such as UpWork and PeoplePerHour etc. and I had to be flexible and adaptable in order to help make projects work.

UX as a profession was quite new at the time so these roles were not always clearly defined, and the projects could be a bit rough around the edges. In a positive light, having to diversify and overcome many communication challenges etc. definitely improved me as a professional.

This period was my first real experience of working on agile projects which incorporated scrums including morning stand ups, sprints, and backlogs etc. For me, it didn't seem a radical difference from other approaches, and it seemed to me to suit the nature of the projects.

I ultimately didn't get the chance to work as a UX designer as much as I initially intended because as the majority of projects required an English speaker to carry out research and user testing, this usually ended up being where I was most needed/useful. Ultimately, I believe I am perhaps better suited to the research aspect than the design, and I really enjoyed the research and testing.

As this was my first experience of working on UX projects, I saw first-hand just how powerfully impacting UX research and design can be. Statistically the ROI can be as much as £100 for every £1 spent. This then motivated me to start to offer UX (and BA) services to small business in my local area in the UK so they could benefit from this relatively new approach. *Please see above.*

Full Cycle Business Analysis and Development – Early Career – 2006 to 2012

From 2006 to 2010 I worked as part of a funded group in Yorkshire as a business development manager helping to get new small businesses started/improve existing ones.

I really enjoyed my time working on these projects as I/we were able to make a significant and lasting positive impact that really helped struggling communities.

UX wasn't really established at this time, but I had learned a lot about customer service during my degree and my first/previous job in retail on a graduate scheme. I was a trainee training manager for Next on the graduate scheme, and I learned a lot about how to design, develop and then deliver training to meet business needs. As well as my degree in management (which included operations management and business process improvement) I also had/have a HND In marketing. Therefore, during this subsequent period I was able to offer comprehensive services to the small businesses covering general business analysis and process improvement, quality assurance, customer service training and development, general training manuals and videos, and marketing. The services offered were tailored to the needs of the businesses at the time.

It was during this time that I first had a comprehensive opportunity to work as a BA following tried and true approaches. Research and effective communication/elicitation/requirement gathering was a key part of the general full-cycle approach I would follow. Exactly which analytical tools I would use would depend on the project.

I worked with a wide range of local small businesses during this time, including (not exhaustive):

Butchers/hog roast/outdoor catering

Fruit and veg shops

Wedding photography and videography

Cafes/coffee shops/restaurants/take aways

Event catering and event management

PR and marketing companies

Web design and development

Sports and social clubs

Charity shops

Clothes shops

Mechanics and car sales garages

Overall, from the feedback I received through these years, the business owners found great value in the new business process models and the staff/product training materials that we developed together. They could always refer to them once the project was complete, empowering them to sustain the improvements made. It was great to see the positive impact I/we made, and this led to my next career move

As a result of the local success I had between 2006 and 2010, I was offered the chance by Doncaster council to help setup and then manage an opportunity centre based in a struggling community. The centres offered support to those not in education, employment or training to help them progress.

There was much initial resistance due to poor previous experiences the local community had with previous similar initiatives. By applying BA and UX principles I/we were able to successfully overcome them to such an extent the centre was a great success and I was given a mayor's Award for Services to the community in 2012.

Rather than repeat myself here, for further details please see the case study covering my time with the opportunity centre on my **Examples** page.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review my BA project approach and my experience to date. Please let me know if you require any further information or have any questions. There are three comprehensive project case studies on the **Examples** page of my site that go in depth into my role and the impact I had.

For a review of the professional qualities I have developed during my career, please see the **Qualities** page on my portfolio.

I have included feedback from clients on my **Testimonials** page.

If you are interested in hiring my services, please check my contact page for my availability, or email me at: stevencookba@hotmail.com.

Thank you!

Steven Cook

www.stevencookba.com

stevencookba@hotmail.com