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Ultimate guide to business analysis careers



About the author



Simon Buehring is Knowledge Train's owner and founder. Simon has worked on projects since 1989 in the UK, Southeast Asia, New Zealand and Japan.

Since graduating in 1988 with a Masters' degree in Information Technology from Kingston Polytechnic, Simon has gained a wealth of real-world experience. His work on projects has spanned over 30 years and includes working as a software engineer, team leader, consultant, technical director, and project manager including time working for the BBC, HSBC and IBM.

In 2005, Simon set up Knowledge Train with a passion to help others learn the best ways of managing projects. Since then, he has established Knowledge Train as a highly reputable PRINCE2 project management training company with a focus on delivering the very best in training and customer service.



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Introduction

If you're wondering about the different career opportunities waiting for you in business analysis, this ebook provides you with an overview of entry level, mid-level, and top-level business analyst (BA) job roles. We will also give you an idea of the average salary of each job role.



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As a bonus, we will also discuss the advantages of [BCS business analysis certification](#) to help boost your career as a business analyst.

Business analysis in a nutshell



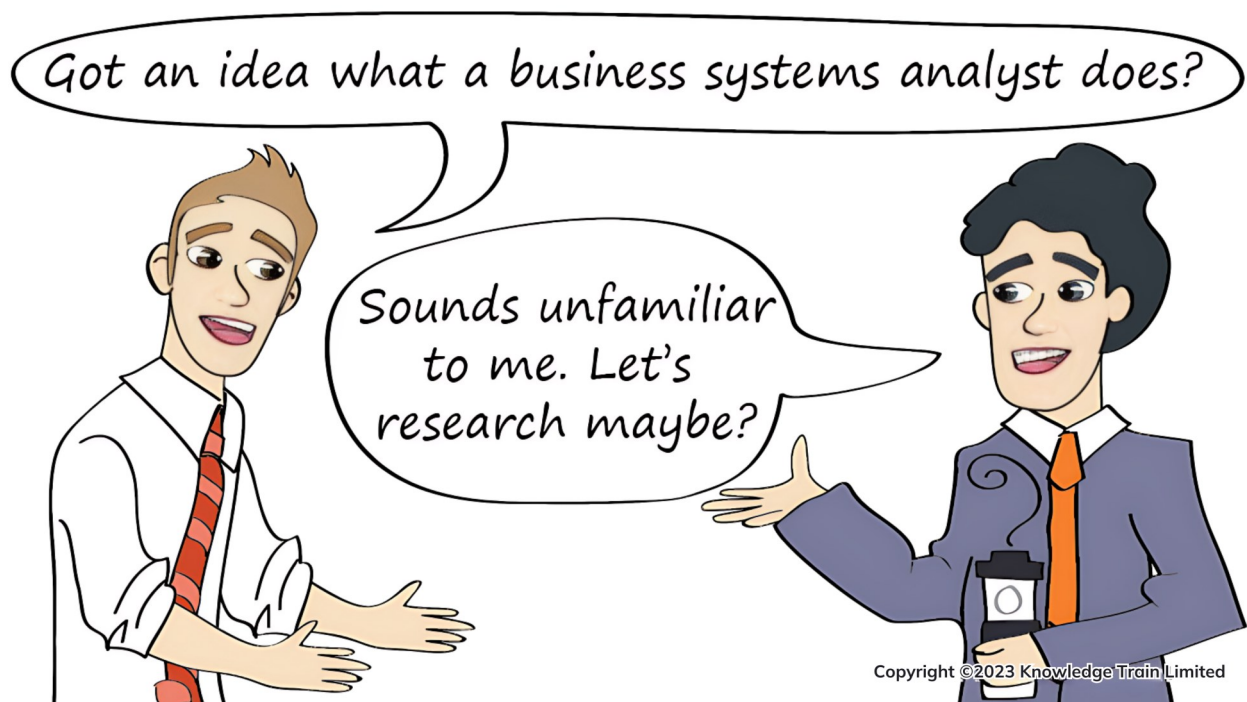
Business analysis is the “process of enabling change in an organisational context, by defining needs and recommending solutions that deliver value to stakeholders”[1]. It involves learning an organisation's business processes and operating procedures, so that problems can be identified and solutions can be formulated to help the organisation achieve its business goals. Projects are normally planned upon successful completion of business analysis activities.

The value of business analysis lies in the identification of benefits, discovering new opportunities, modelling the organisation, and improving how an organisation carries out its projects.

So, what's a business analyst then?

If you're a business analyst (BA) you'll work as a "liaison among stakeholders in order to understand the structure, policies, and operations of an organisation, and to recommend solutions that enable the organisation to achieve its goals"[2].

As a BA, you're expected to perform these duties across all levels of an organisation. This means that you will be involved in determining the strategy that will be used and identifying the requirements and processes necessary for the accomplishment of a project.



Business analysis techniques



As a business analyst you'll require a lot of tools and techniques in your toolkit to help you analyse business needs, evaluate options, define requirements and help to deliver changes. Some of the common [business analysis techniques](#) which you'll need include interviewing, observation, workshops, mind maps, spaghetti maps, fishbone diagrams, gap analysis, business processes modelling, activity analysis, cost-benefit analysis, investment appraisal techniques, impact analysis and risk analysis[3].

You can learn about all these techniques and more by studying the [BCS Foundation Certificate in Business Analysis](#) course.

Business analysts on projects



It's common for companies to focus on the development of information systems to improve their business operations. Business analysts help ensure that technical specialists deliver the business solutions required by stakeholders.

They also help with creating of the overall business vision and help to implement it within projects. Projects therefore depend on business analysts because they help keep projects on track by focusing the project team on delivering solutions that meet the most critical business needs. This increases the quality of solutions delivered, and the ability of the business to make good use of these solutions[4].

Without business analysts, stakeholders will find it difficult to take the correct decisions when choosing the best information systems for their organisation. They will then inevitably fall into serious financial and business risks.

Business analysis career opportunities



It is probably clear to you by now that, due of the diverse nature of the job, a business analysis career isn't just limited to a business analyst role. It extends to other job roles too. Many industries depend on business analysis, so there's no need to worry about your options when it comes to job titles. But what exactly are the other job titles available within business analysis?

Job titles

Job titles requiring business analysis skills include the process analyst, business systems analyst, systems analyst, enterprise analyst, product manager, product owner, requirements engineer, business architect, data scientist, management consultant and business intelligence analyst. These are just a few of the possible jobs that you can land if you choose to enter business analysis.

Experience counts

Like other jobs, you can begin with entry-level positions in business analysis and later move to junior business analyst positions. This can obviously only be achieved if you have enough experience and a good record of performance. As a tip, "some choose instead to return to school to get master's degrees before beginning work as business analysts in large organisations or consultancies"[5] for a higher chance of getting promoted or landing a better job title in the industry. Gradually, you can take bigger roles and move into high-level management positions in other organisations.

Qualifications

Regarding qualifications, employers in the UK can sometimes demand at least a bachelor's degree in business-related disciplines. However, it is still possible to succeed with a business analyst certifications, such as [BCS Business Analysis Foundation](#) or the more advanced [BCS Business Analysis Diploma](#).

To know more about career opportunities, we've prepared a summary of entry level job roles, mid-level job roles, and top-level job roles with average salary, skills, experience, and qualifications needed, to give you an idea of your potential career in business analysis. Read on for more.



Entry-level business analysis roles



Entry-level business analysis jobs include software developer and quality assurance. As a developer, you are in-charge of creating and designing software applications to meet the business requirements. For quality assurance, you are responsible for improving the processes that prevent any mishaps in the execution of a project.

To help you learn more about the average salary, skills, experience and qualifications needed for entry-level job roles in business analysis, we've created this summary to guide you:

Average salary: £57,883 per year as a developer[6], £44,151 per year as quality assurance[7]

Skills: These roles require strong communication skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, documentation and analysis skills. If you're working as a developer, you are required to have technical skills (e.g. SQL, .NET, VBScript, Perl) that will enable you to create software and analyse any problems that need to be addressed. These skills will also allow you to communicate with technical stakeholders.

For quality assurance, you will be involved in the software development lifecycle. You will participate in design sessions with the project team and work to specific processes or methodologies to ensure the finished software is of high quality.

Experience: 0-3 years of experience. Since you are just starting in business analysis, you're not expected to be fully familiar with the process. However, experience in business analysis-related jobs will give you an advantage. Practical knowledge and background in gathering of requirements and analysis and problem solving are also a good starting point. Since you may not have a wide experience as a new business analyst, skills like general documentation and writing skills can help you perform your tasks.

Qualifications: Most companies require at least a bachelor's degree for entry-level business analyst positions. Relevant programs include finance, business administration, IT and software development. Additionally, candidates with business analysis certifications are prioritised by employers. If you don't have

these yet, you might want to consider enrolling in a [business analyst course](#) or [business analyst online course](#) to acquire them. This will help your position as a new business analyst and will help you advance your career further.



Mid-level business analysis roles



If you're confident about your business analysis skills and qualifications, you might want to move up the ladder and take a middle-level job role, such as IT business analyst or senior/lead business analyst.

As an IT business analyst, your main responsibilities would be to understand the needs of stakeholders, to identify business processes, and to evaluate and recommend new methods to improve IT processes. If IT isn't your field and you opt to focus on the business analyst role, then senior/lead business analyst might be a better option for you. As a senior business analyst, your job involves leading modelling and translating requirements into design, and you will also lead the planning and organisation of software design and implementation projects.

If you aspire to level up in your career as a business analyst, here's what you need to know about being an IT business analyst and senior/lead business analyst:

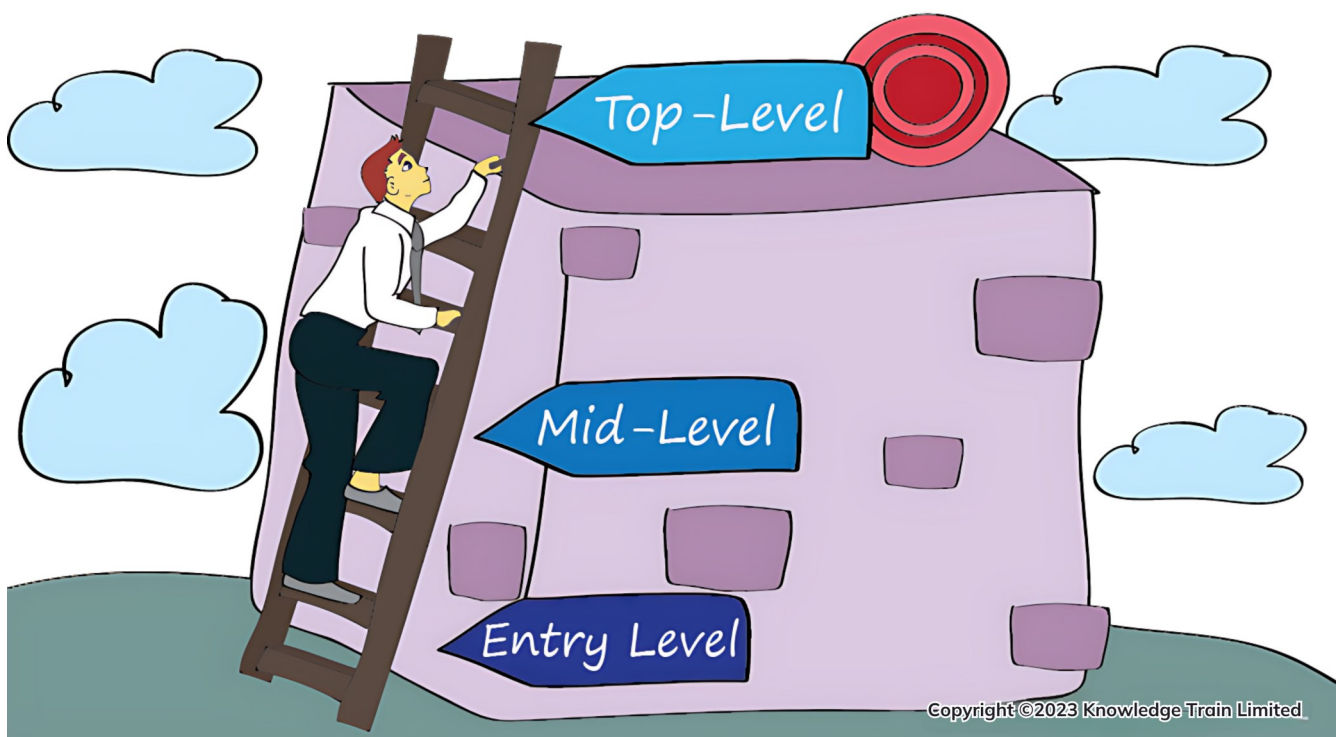
Average salary: £46,458 – £85,000 per year (IT Business Analyst)[8], £55,936 – £98,000 per year (Senior Business Analyst)[9]

Skills: IT business analysts need systems and data analysis skills, alongside impressive interpersonal and communication skills. This is because IT business analysts function as a communication channel between the team and the stakeholders. Analytical skills, problem-solving skills and knowledge about current technologies are also useful if you intend to pursue this job. Current knowledge will ensure that the organisation is using the latest technology, which will lead to more successful projects. Although this job sounds technical, creativity is very useful too, as it will aid in finding solutions when problems arise.

When it comes to the senior business analyst role, knowledge of internal or external business issues is necessary. You must also be knowledgeable of financial processes and of handling finance reference data. Again, although the job may sound technical, strong communication skills will give you an edge in this role since you will be communicating with stakeholders.

Experience: 3-8 years of experience. As a senior business analyst, you will be operating at a senior management level and will be expected to have experience of change and stakeholder management. As an IT business analyst, relevant experience working in a similar industry is always a plus. If you have any experience when it comes to managing stakeholders, this will surely give you an advantage too.

Qualifications: A business-related bachelor's degree is a great advantage for both the IT business analyst and senior business analyst. For the IT business analyst, a degree in computer science or any related field is always a plus. Employers will also look favourably on those who possess professional business analyst certification, especially those awarded by the BCS. Relevant [BCS business analysis qualifications](#) include [BCS Business Analysis Foundation](#) and [BCS Business Analysis Diploma](#).



Top-level business analysis roles



If you have experienced working as a quality assurance expert or as an IT business analyst, and you believe that you've gained enough experience in the world of business analysis, then maybe it's time to take the leap to a top-level business analysis role!

As you acquire more skills, knowledge and experience along the way, you become more equipped to take bigger roles in the industry. Here are some of the top-level job roles that you can consider as you progress in your career: business requirements analyst, process analyst, decision analyst, business systems analyst, systems analyst, functional analyst and agile analyst.

If you plan to take leadership roles in business analysis, here are the career paths that you can pursue: BA project lead, BA program lead, BA practice lead, relationship manager, enterprise architect and business architect.

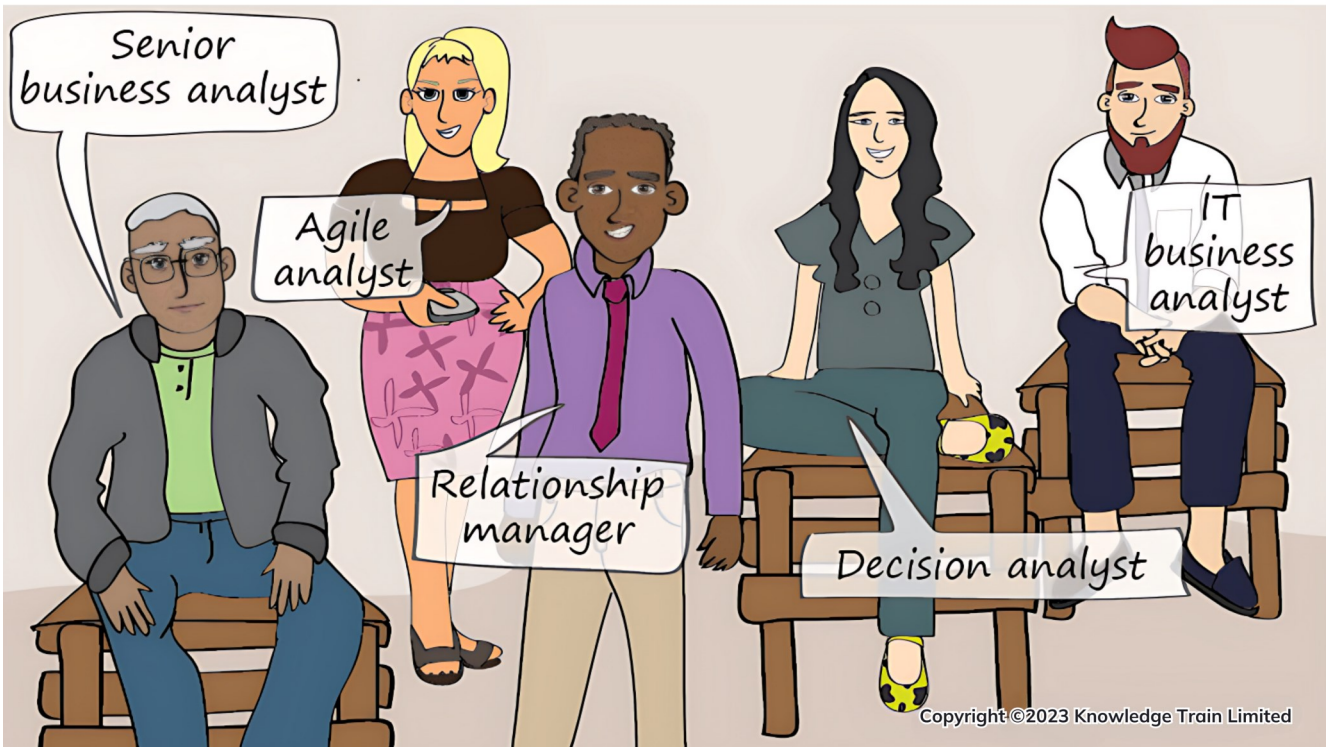
Let's find out more about the average salary, as well as the skills, experience, and qualifications required for these top-level business analysis roles:

Average salary: £37k – £117k per year (senior decision analyst)[10], £34k – 88k (senior business systems analyst)[11], £46, 226 per year (relationship manager)[12]

Skills: By now, you should be well-acquainted with the general skills required to pursue a career in business analysis. For these top-level job roles, you are expected to possess the following: decision analysis and cost benefit analysis skills, knowledge of organisational frameworks, knowledge of technology structures, command of data analytic tools like SQL Service Analysis Services, knowledge of software development cycle, prototyping skills, and knowledge of modelling processes and systems.

Experience: Experience with requirements workshops and interviews is required for a senior business requirements analyst. For the senior business systems analyst, experience writing verified requirements and functional/non-functional requirements, is necessary. For the senior systems analyst, experience in data extraction, as well as loading database management systems, will help you. In general, experience in determining opportunities regarding process and system improvements can be an advantage in all top-level business analysis job roles.

Qualifications: Since we are speaking about top-level job roles, it's a given that companies will require higher qualifications. Business and IT-related bachelor's degrees are required and will give you a big advantage. Business analysis certification accredited by BCS, especially the **BCS Business Analysis Diploma** can also bring you a step closer to these top-level job roles.



Summary



We hope you now feel more confident in starting a career in business analysis. The career paths described in this article are all good starting points for an exciting and fulfilling career in business analysis. So, what are you waiting for? Take the leap and start your career in business analysis today!

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