Practitioner Experience

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The assignment asks the student to research business intelligence (BI) career postings, job responsibilities, internships, volunteer opportunities, educational requirements and certifications, and areas of specialization within the industry that might lead to competitive advantages.

**Job Duties and Responsibilities**

Reese (2014) describes a business analyst (BA) role as one that works closely with clients and project supervisors to design solutions to business problems by collecting and analyzing large data sets. BAs should possess excellent communication skills, strong analytical skills, and a basic understanding of database structures. Similarly, McKnight (2005) describes BAs as those who interact with customers, report and analyze business needs, and develop business specifications.

**Trends and Volunteering**

Obeidat et al. (2015) describe some of the current trends and challenges in BI: (a) data explorations and visualizations (e.g., dashboards), (b) cloud computing, (c) self-service BI, (d) improving computing issues in BI, and (e) open-source software for BI (e.g., RStudio). Additionally, Murugesan and Karthikeyan (n.d.) describe the current trends towards real-time computing in BI to analyze and change business process parameters instantaneously.

Non-profit organizations, as well as small businesses, present wonderful volunteering opportunities within the BI community; both need BA services, as many undocumented processes exist within these types of organizations, yet often neither are in positions to hire full-time BA staff. Examples of such organizations include local churches, parent-teacher groups, and pharmacies (How to Find Business Analyst Volunteer Positions, n.d.).

**Internships and Educational Requirements**

To secure a BI internship, one of the first requirements is typically to earn an undergraduate degree. Of the 88 BI positions listed on indeed.com for the Denver, CO area, 88 seek candidates with bachelor’s degrees (100%), 36 with master’s degrees (41%), and 11 with doctorate degrees (12%). Some list two degrees, as evidenced in the following Report Developer position with Kaplan: “Bachelor's Degree (B.A./B.S.) or Master’s Degree (M.A./M.S.) in Computer Science, Decision Sciences, Information Management, or related fields” (Business Intelligence Bachelor’s Jobs, Employment in Denver, CO | Indeed.com, n.d.).

**Certifications and Specializations**

Microsoft’s Certified Solutions Expert is considered one of the best BI certifications. Another popular option is TDWI’s Certified Business Intelligence Professional, which exists on two levels: “practitioner” and “mastery.” There also exists the possibility to receive a certification in a specified language such as SAS (“How to Become a Business Intelligence Analyst | Business Intelligence Analyst Salary Information,” n.d.).

**Conclusion**

I believe my strongest attribute is my diverse scripting knowledge that includes SQL, SAS, R, VBA, and Python. I have substantially increased my knowledge of data warehousing structures recently and believe certifications are the next step allowing me to maximize my skillset. The thing I learned that interested me the most is the tremendous opportunity the industry presents; the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts the job market for BAs to grow 21% from 2014 to 2024. (“How to Become a Business Intelligence Analyst | Business Intelligence Analyst Salary Information,” n.d.). As such, not much concerns me about a career in BI; the future looks rather bright when considering the opportunities the industry presents.

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