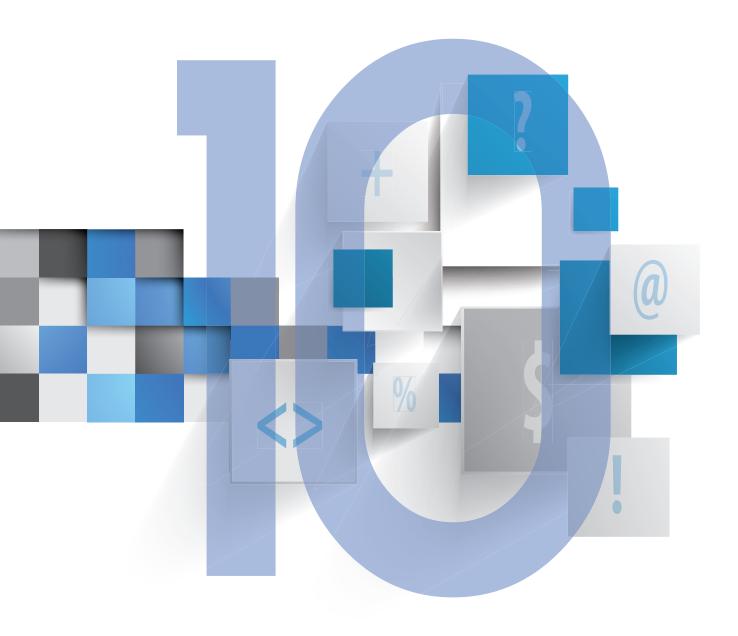
TOP 10 Mistakes Companies Make When Conducting Business Rules Projects

by Gladys S.W. Lam



Contents

Forward

Mistake 1: Treating Business Rules Initiatives Simply as IT Projects 1

Mistake 2: Not Focusing on Terminology **3**

Mistake 3: Assume Everyone Knows What a Business Rule Is 5

Mistake 4: Not Managing Business Rules from the Start 7

Mistake 5: Not Having the Right Business Infrastructure 9

Mistake 6: Not Having Strong Sponsorship 11

Mistake 7: Not Having a Well-Defined Scope **13**

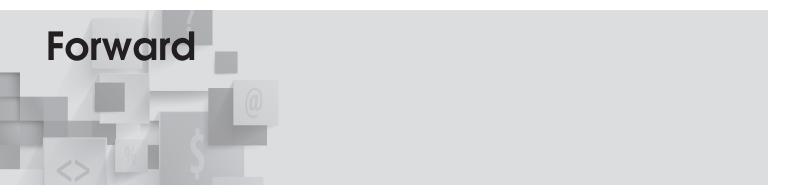
Mistake 8: Not Having the Right Skill Set **15**

Mistake 9: Not Having a Business Rule Methodology **17**

Mistake 10: Not Communicating 19

Business Rule Initiative Checklist 21

A Bit of History ... 22



Mistakes happen. It's a fact of life. However, we must realize that beyond these mistakes, what really matters is what we learn from them. We can then be armed with this newfound knowledge and be able to improve our practices going forward.

As Principal and Co-Founder of Business Rule Solutions, a company that focuses exclusively on business rules and business decision management, I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a variety of organizations internationally from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies on business rule projects. As moderator of the ever-popular "Business Rules Forum Practitioners' Panel: The DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," I am also able to ascertain from companies such as Bank of America, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Delta Dental, and many more their insights and experiences. As the Executive Director of the Business Rules Forum (BRF) conference, which has now expanded into Building Business Capability (BBC) conference, I, together with Ron Ross, have realized the vision of making business rules a centerpiece in building complete business solutions.

These Top 10 Mistakes started off as a presentation in the 2010 BBC/BRF conference. To my surprise, the conference room was packed. I had attendees practically sitting on my toes. In fact, the session was so well received that I was asked to present again in the afternoon. Given the apparent demand for this topic, I decided to write a short article on each mistake and publish it on BRCommunity. com. The final article was published shortly after the 2011 conference. I will not be giving this presentation again in the 2014 conference; however, I will let these writings speak for me.

In these pieces you will learn not only about the Top 10 Mistakes, but you will also gain practical experience about how to avoid them. Along with my words, you will hear voices from practitioners sharing their state-of-the-art advice.

Reading these pieces you will hear about some of the key topics in business rules and decision management, including:

Why – Why business rules projects? Why would sponsors support business rules projects? See Mistake 1: Treating Business Rules Initiatives Simply as IT Projects and Mistake 6: Not Having Strong Sponsorship.

What - Defining what a business rule is. See Mistake 3: Assume Everyone Knows What a Business Rule Is.

How – Methodologies and techniques. See Mistake 9: Not Having a Business Rule Methodology, Mistake 2: Not Focusing on Terminology, and Mistake 4: Not Managing Business Rules from the Start.

Who – Players and skill sets. See Mistake 8: Not Having the Right Skill Set, Mistake 5: Not Having the Right Business Infrastructure, and Mistake 10: Not Communicating.

Many of you might be under the impression that in business rules projects, we capture one business rule at a time. That's far from the case. Among other areas, our business rule projects support analysis of process activities, operational decisions, and contractual agreements. Business rules are captured, analyzed and managed in sets in order to guide behavior or to make decisions. See Mistake 7: Not Having a Well-Defined Scope.

These 10 Mistakes were written to be short, light and easy-to-read. They include many references for more in-depth reading should you wish to pursue any topic further. Much of the thinking, concepts and techniques described here are based on two books: Business Rule Concepts: Getting to the Point of Knowledge (4th ed.) by Ronald G. Ross, and Building Business Solutions, co-authored by Ronand me

Last but not least when you get to the end of the 10 Mistakes, there is a small surprise that is very personal to me.

Enjoy the read!

Gladys

Mistake

Treating Business Rules Initiatives Simply as IT Projects

Everyone who has a teenager must have gone through the cell phone selection process.

My daughter approached me recently and said, "Mommmyy (I know I am in trouble), I need a new cell phone." Given that she will be driving on her own and going away to college soon, I thought that a new cell phone was reasonable. It will give her an easily accessible way to contact me.

As it turns out (and no one will be surprised by this), she picked a very expensive cell phone. I asked her why she had to have THAT particular phone; this is what she said ...

- I can text without looking (which only means that she will text under the dinner table while she is supposed to be talking to me).
- I can get on Facebook (when I requested to be her Facebook friend, she rejected me).
- I can search anything on the web really fast (does she need to search for her mother on the web?).
- It comes in pink (and I care ... why!?).

I asked, "What about **my** requirements? I want to get you a cell phone because I want to stay in contact with you."

I travel a lot so I use email a lot. "Does the cell phone download email, and can you reply quickly?" (She doesn't know ... or care. Did you know that email is already passé?)

"Can I leave a voice mail for you?" (Her response: "What's voice mail?")

"How about that GPS thing so I can see where you are at any time?" (I thought I would get a reaction on that one. *Bingo!* She rolled her eyes, turned around, and walked out of the room.)

Since I am paying for this cell phone, I want to make sure *my* (business) requirements are met.

When your organization decides to adapt a business rule approach, be aware that the ultimate benefit must be on the business side. IT will very quickly discover that there is a whole

range of excellent rule engine tools that allow developers to quickly code, test and deploy rules.

However, the true value of the business rule approach lies with the business. The following are three very common business drivers for business rules:

- · The business taking full control of its own rules.
- The business knowing and managing its own rules.
- The business having better guidance and making better decisions.

1. The business taking full control of its own rules.

The true value of a business rule approach is the business having the ability to take full control of its own rules. This means the business being able to change and deploy rules with considerably reduced support from IT. Mukundan Agaram, Enterprise Architect at Delta Dental of Michigan, said it best:

"Make sure you are realizing all the important features that are necessary to fully realize the value-add of business rules as a business proposition. For example, at Delta Dental, we put the business rules entirely in the hands of business people, which meant that they author the rules, they test the rules, they regression test the rules, they analyze the rules, they deploy the rules ... so we get to have a vacation." [1]

The business can take changes from business policies, agreements, and operations to system implementation. In today's fast changing world, we recognize that rules change a lot faster than implementation cycles. With the right method, governance, discipline, and resources, business people can implement change an order-of-magnitude faster than with a traditional approach.

2. The business knowing and managing its own rules.

Many business rules projects are not system development projects. Organizations have business rules that are embedded in knowledge workers' heads, buried deep in system code, and/ or hidden in agreements or policies (that are often not complied with). With knowledge workers retiring or changing frequently,



the loss of corporate memory is starting to take a toll on organizations worldwide. The business rule approach addresses the core of this issue. Ian Cole of Strategic Technology for Starwood Vacation Ownership agrees:

"Our original use of a rules product was to go back and codify twenty-five years of contractual ownership rights that really were not documented anywhere. And today, we still haven't automated the majority of them, but we at least now have a fair body of knowledge of them." [2]

3. The business having better guidance and making better decisions.

Are your business rules enforced consistently throughout different areas in your organization? Are your operational workers within your organization making smart decisions? Externalizing your business rules, specifying a business rule only once, and managing your rules as a first-class citizen are keys to an agile business. "Business rules ensure your business works smart," declares Ron Ross, author of *Business Rules Concepts*. [3]

There are many drivers for business rules. However, don't let the new-novelty technical features cloud your judgment. There will always be better features tomorrow. Hold true to the business benefits. Stay focused and build your method, team and tool (and features) toward the business vision. I didn't give in to my daughter's wish for novelty technical features; you shouldn't either!

- [1] "Business Rules Forum 2009 Practitioners' Panel: The DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," *Business Rules Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Apr. 2010). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/a2010/b530.html
- [2] "Business Rules Forum 2009 Practitioners' Panel: The DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Apr. 2010). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/a2010/b530.html
- [3] Business Rule Concepts: Getting to the Point of Knowledge (Fourth Edition), by Ronald G. Ross (April 2013). ISBN 0-941049-14-0. Available at http://www.brsolutions.com/b concepts.php

Mistake

Not Focusing on Terminology

My daughter just got her driver's license. A new driver in Vancouver, BC, has to drive with a logo 'N' displayed at the back of the car for two years. One of the rules for an 'N' driver is that she can take only one non-family member in the car.

One afternoon, my 80-year-old mother asked for a ride home. I told her, "No problem; you have a granddaughter who can drive now." I sent my daughter.

Unbeknownst to me, my mother had just finished having dim sum with three friends, who also needed a ride. My daughter, being very protective of her newly-earned license, explained to my mother that she could take only one non-family member. My mother's immediate response was, "They are all family. Grandma Alice (it does not help that in Chinese tradition, everyone in your grandma's generation is called 'Grandma') is your mother's second cousin's mother-in-law; Grandma Josephine babysat you when you were little, and Grandma Laura is my best friend since high school."

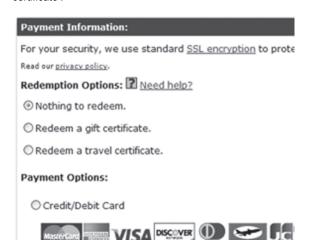
At this point, my daughter was almost in tears. She just could not explain to Grandma what 'family' meant. She called me to the rescue. I drove another car to chauffeur my mother and all her friends to their homes. All ended well. However, you can see how a rule is only as good as the understanding of the terminology used in the rule. According to my mother, almost everyone she knows is 'family'.

Concise and consistent understanding of business vocabulary is even more important in a business environment. Imprecise use of vocabulary can cause great frustration.

I fly a lot. The airline where I am a Platinum Million Mile member lost my luggage. To compensate for their mistake they sent me the following Customer Care Certificate to be used on my next purchase:

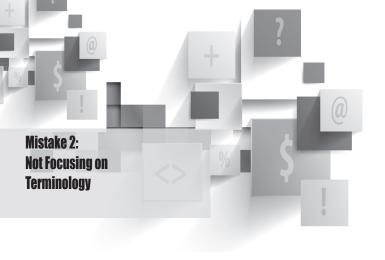


When I went to use the Customer Care Certificate, this was the screen I was presented with. It gave me the options of 'Nothing to redeem', 'Redeem a gift certificate', or 'Redeem a travel certificate'.



I looked at my certificate. It said 'Customer Care Certificate'. Now what do I do? They lost my luggage and they gave me this certificate. Does that mean this is a gift certificate? I clicked 'gift certificate' and was presented with:

Payment Information:
For your security, we use standard SSL encryption to prote
Read our privacy policy.
Redemption Options: Need help?
O Nothing to redeem.
Redeem a gift certificate. Gift Certificate Number: Apply
Redeem a travel certificate.
Payment Options:
O Credit/Debit Card
VICA DISCOVER ()



I looked at my Customer Care Certificate again. I couldn't see a 'Gift Certificate Number'. I do have a 'Certificate PIN'. Just as anyone else would have done in this situation (I'm pretty sure) I typed the Certificate PIN number in the Gift Certificate Number box and clicked 'Apply'. WRONG! 'Invalid Number' the screen told me. Urrgh!

Next, I clicked 'Redeem a travel certificate'. This was what I got:

Payment Information:
For your security, we use standard <u>SSL encryption</u> to prot
Read our privacy policy.
Redemption Options: Need help?
O Nothing to redeem.
O Redeem a gift certificate.
Redeem a travel certificate.
Program Year: Certificate Program PIN: Apply
Payment Options:
O Credit/Debit Card
TICA DISCOVER (I)

I saw 'Program Year'. I had no idea what the Program Year was. They lost my luggage. I didn't join any program.

I was about to give up but then I saw 'Certificate Program PIN'. I looked at my Customer Care Certificate again. I have a 'Certificate PIN'. I thought two out of three ain't bad. I gave it one more try. I typed the 'Certificate PIN' in the 'Certificate Program PIN' box, hit 'Apply', and kept my fingers crossed.

BINGO! It worked. However, by now, this airline's valued Platinum Million Mile member was totally frustrated. This could have been easily avoided if their terminology had been consistent.

Vocabulary issues magnify even more with business rules. Imagine if the airline had three simple rules:

- 1. A Gift Certificate must not exceed \$1,000.
- 2. A Travel Certificate must not exceed \$2,000.
- 3. A Customer Care Certificate must not exceed \$3,000.

What if my Customer Care Certificate was \$2,200? If I tried to redeem under 'Travel Certificate', it would say that I had exceeded the limit because a Travel Certificate needs to be less than \$2,000. Can you imagine my frustration if that had happened? Even worse, what if the screen did not tell me what was wrong. What if it simply rejected my \$2,200 redemption without providing any clear direction on what to do to correct it?

I'm sure you can all relate. We've all experienced similar frustrations.

What is important to recognize is that these issues are not system issues. They are business issues. It is imperative that the business recognizes the need for consistent terminology and has a method to use consistent terminology. One common Business Vocabulary modeling technique is Fact Modeling.^[1]

Lastly, I like to tell my clients that I can easily provide an estimate for specifying their business rules, given a scoped area. I like to also tell them that if they don't need me to align the rules with business vocabulary with the rigor that we practice, I can actually do the rules in *half* the time. The resulting set of rules will look very solid – just like in my three examples above. However, issues will likely not surface until the damage is done (i.e., when the client stumbles into the issue). Keep this in mind when you are writing business rules: the terminology is your key to success.

References

[1] Fact Modeling is described by Ron Ross in Business Rule Concepts: Getting to the Point of Knowledge, available at http://www.BRSolutions.com/b_ concepts.php



Assume Everyone Knows What a Business Rule Is

My daughter is in the process of applying to universities.

If you have gone through that process, you can empathize with my anxiety. The university application process is daunting and full of rules. There are rules for acceptance. For example, if a student is accepted through early decision, he or she must enroll at that university and withdraw all applications to other universities.

There are also rules for applying, of which the most important are related to essay submissions. Each university requires 2-3 essays. Each essay has word or character count limits. For my daughter, the shorter the essay requirement, the longer it takes her to write. She is applying to 10 universities ... Translation: Having to endure her writing process for 20-30 essays, with an average of 6 revisions for each. You do the math.

You can't imagine my jubilation when I saw the instruction on one of the applications that read: "The following essays are optional – and yes, they truly are optional! If you choose not to answer them, your chance of admission will not be affected." I was so excited and exclaimed to my daughter, "Look, you don't need to do essays for that university." Her immediate response was, "Yes, I do, Mom. It's the rule." At that point I realized my daughter does not know what a rule is.

One of the best parts of my job is the opportunity to visit major organizations worldwide. In guiding organizations in the business rules approach, one of the first things that becomes clearly apparent is that different people have different perceptions of business rules.

So, if you are embarking on a project on business rules, do not assume everyone knows what a business rule is or assume everyone thinks about business rules the same way you do.

- Some people might think business rules are requirements: "Provide a feature to handle electronic funds transfer."
- Some people might think business rules are use case statements: "Customer provides account ID. System displays account information."

 Some people might think business rules are system 'if/then' statements: "If the overdrawn flag is set to 'yes', then reject transaction."

So what is a business rule? The definition I like is from Guide 1995: "A statement that defines or constrains some aspect of the business... [which is] intended to assert business structure, or to control or influence the behavior of the business."^[1]

By that definition, business rules related to the requirement, use case, and system 'if/then' statements given above might be, respectively:

- Each employee expense reimbursement must be processed through electronic funds transfer.
- A customer must have a valid account ID.
- An account must not be overdrawn. ... An account may be considered overdrawn only if the amount of a cash withdrawal is greater than the balance of the account at the time of the withdrawal.

You can read more about the definition of business rules in Ron Ross's book *Business Rule Concepts: Getting to the Point of Knowledge, 4th Edition.*^[2] Clearly a guru in the field, he has also published an article on BRCommunity.com on this subject: "Five Tests for What Is a Business Rule?" [3]

My advice is to have a clear definition of business rules before you start a project. However, the definition in itself is not enough. In order for a project focused on business rules to be successful, you will also need to know:

- The level of detail you want your business rules expressed at. Business rules can be expressed at a very high level, like a policy statement, or be very detailed, showing all conditions of the business logic.
- How you want to group sets of business rules that provide complete business logic for guidance or operational business decisions.



- 6 3. How you want to express your business rules. In Business Rule Solutions, we use RuleSpeak^{®[4]} for business rule statements and Q-Charts™^[5] for decision structures.
 - Whether you need to capture business rules or system rules or both.
 - How you want to manage the business rules you discover (which I can guarantee will be in the hundreds, if not thousands).
 - 6. How the business rules deliverable gets integrated into the rest of your project deliverables (i.e., use cases, business requirement documents, etc.).

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- Business rules are lists of statements that tell you whether you may (or may not) do something or that give you the criteria and conditions for making an operational business decision. Make sure you and everyone involved in the project know what that means.
- You must define some basic principles for business rules before you start your project.
- You will harvest a LOT of business rules. Knowing in advance how to write them, find them, categorize them, and manage them is essential.

- [1] Business Rules Group. [July 2000]. Defining Business Rules ~ What Are They Really? (4th Ed). Available at: http://www.BusinessRulesGroup.org Note: Formerly known as the GUIDE Business Rules Project Report, (1995).
- [2] Business rules are detailed by Ron Ross in Business Rule Concepts: Getting to the Point of Knowledge, available at http://www.BRSolutions.com/b_ concepts.php
- [3] Ronald G. Ross, "Five Tests for What Is a Business Rule?" Business Rules Journal, Vol. 11, No. 10 (Oct. 2010). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/ a2010/b556.html
- [4] RuleSpeak® is a set of guidelines developed by Ron Ross for expressing business rules in concise, business-friendly fashion. For details refer to http:// www.RuleSpeak.com/en/
- [5] For more information on Q-Charts™ refer to http:// www.brsolutions.com/b decision.php

Top Mistakes Companies Make When Conducting Business Rules Projects

Mistake

Not Managing Business Rules from the Start

Here's a sampler from our conversations at home. Remember, we have a teenage daughter in the house.

"I'm going out with Julia tomorrow. Please don't tell Veronica."

"Arthur is having a party this weekend with Jonathan, Jesse, Veronica, and Michael. Julia and Alex are not invited so please don't tell them."

"If Sam calls, tell him we're at the library and he can meet us there. If Veronica calls, you don't know where we are. She doesn't like Sam so we don't want her going to the library and seeing us hanging out with him."

Then of course Veronica's mother calls and who answers the phone? *My husband*.

She wants to know if we can give Veronica a ride home this weekend from the party and he says yes. Then, he proceeds to ask if we need to give her a ride home from the library today (which, of course, Veronica doesn't know about). I wave my hands frantically, trying to stop him from talking about the library. He tries to change the subject and suggests that he can give Julia a ride home from the party as well, which, of course, is not good either since you'll recall that, in this soap opera, Julia was not invited. At this point, he hands the phone over to me to rescue the situation.

As you can see, it is hard to keep track of even a few simple rules. In order to comply with all these rules, it would be extremely helpful if the rules could be organized so that we could find the rules for a particular event, a particular friend, a particular date, or any combination of those.

Your organization has lots of business rules. One of the first principles of the *Business Rules Manifesto*^[1] is to treat business rules as a *first-class citizen*. This means externalizing your business rules from all your documents and managing them on their own right.

Business rules are embedded in business documents, such as agreements, regulations, and marketing materials, or in requirement documents, such as use cases and business requirements documents. For a business rules project, these

business rules should be specified independently from the other deliverables.

When you conduct a project using the business rules approach, you are going to specify a lot of business rules. These rules are not going to be very useful to you if they are not organized in a way that allows you to find and group them for review and analysis. I wrote an article back in 2004 entitled *Organizing a Pile of Rules*. [2] All the concepts described in that article still hold true today. Let me expand on that article and discuss the traceability items you might need to manage your business rules.

Traceability items are properties of a business rule that you might want to keep track of. My experience with different organizations is that each organization has very specific criteria for what they want to keep track of. Here are some that are most popular.

Source: Keeping track of where the business rule originates.

The business rule can come from a law, regulation, contract, agreement, business policy ... knowledge expert, from a physical document, or from system code. Knowing the source will allow you to answer the question, "Where did that business rule from?"

Motivation: Keeping track of why you have the business rule.

There are business rules where the motivation is fairly obvious. For example: "A canceled order must have a cancellation reason." You can understand (or guess) the motivation for that business rule easily.

However, other business rules have hidden motivation. For example: "A customer must not place more than three express orders in one day." There could be many reasons for this business rule. Is it to avoid fraud? Is it because IT only allowed three slots for express orders in one day? Is it that if you provide a fourth express order, the system will abend?

Whatever the reason, it is beneficial to keep track of the motivation once you figure it out. This will allow you to answer



8 the question, "Why did we have that business rule?" ... and save a lot of re-discussion and re-investigation time.

Versions: Keeping track of different variations of the business rule.

When you're deep in the trenches of rule harvesting, I can guarantee you will have a *déjà vu* experience. You will often find yourself saying, "I'm sure I've written this business rule before!" Keeping track of different versions of your business rules will help you answer the question, "Have I done this before?"

Status: Keeping track of the current status of the business rule.

You will need to review your business rules at different stages of the project with different audiences. It is extremely useful to know what status your business rules are in. Different types of project might require different statuses. The most common are: Approved; Under Review; Under Development; Implemented; Retired; Rejected. Keeping track of the status will allow you to extract the right set of business rules for the right audience at the right time.

Relationships: Keeping track of the various kinds of relationships between business rules.

Business rules are often related to other business rules. In your rule analysis, you might find that a business rule is in conflict with another business rule. A business rule may support other business rules. A business rule may be interpreted from another rule.

Once these types of analysis have been done, it is good to capture the results. This will help you answer the question, "What business rules might be impacted if I change this business rule?"

By now, you might think there is a lot to do in rule management. You are correct. Business rule management is no small task.

My advice is to always do what is useful and productive. Do not collect information about a business rule for the sake of collecting information. Know why you are doing it and what needs to be done.

Having an automated tool helps a lot. Microsoft Excel is the most common business rule management tool in

the marketplace. My 2004 article described some of the toolsets in the marketplace. Since then, several new tools have emerged. For a look at a best-of-breed tool, see RuleXpress.[3]

My recommendation is start managing your business rules early in your project. The longer you wait, the more your business rules will pile up. You need a structured organizing scheme to keep your business rules at your fingertips, a process to keep your business rules up-to-date, and a tool to help store and report on your business rules.

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- Organize your business rules early in the project cycle.
- Organize your business rules by categorizing your business rules, by collecting traceability items, and by associating related business rules to each other.
- An automated business rule tool can be very helpful. If nothing else is available, use Excel. In any case make sure the organizing scheme you use is well-thoughtthrough.

- [1] http://www.businessrulesgroup.org/brmanifesto.htm
- [2] Gladys S.W. Lam, "Organizing a Pile of Rules," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 5, No. 10 (October 2004). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/ a2004/b208.html
- [3] For more information on RuleXpress, refer to www. RuleArts.com/RuleXpress

Top Mistakes Companies Make When Conducting Business Rules Projects

Mistake 5

Not Having the Right Business Infrastructure

My daughter is the drama captain and a lead actor in her school musical production this year. The school has just put on five performances of their 2011 feature musical production, 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.

As the mother of the drama captain, I got the 'honor' of buying gifts for key behind-the-scenes contributors for the musical. My daughter's instruction was, "This is a spelling bee; the gift must have a bumble bee on it."

Have you ever tried looking for something with a bee on it in the middle of winter when there are three inches of snow on the ground? Not only did I have to find one gift, but I had to find *six* gifts – one for the assistant director, one for the stage manager, one for the assistant stage manager, one for the sound person, one for the light person, and one for the band manager.

In sheer frustration from not being able to find the 'right' gifts, I broke down and asked my daughter, "Is this really necessary?" Her reply was simply, "Mother, these people are very important. Without them, the show wouldn't be possible."

My daughter was right, of course; each of these supporting staff was just as necessary to the show's well-being and success as the 'stars' were. Without the right infrastructure, the 'show' could not go on. The same applies to our business rules initiatives.

Many organizations tell me that they want to adopt the business rules approach. As you may already know, the ultimate benefit of a business rules approach resides on the business side by enabling the business to take full control of its rules, to know and manage its rules, and to have better guidance and make better decisions.^[1] In order to reap business benefits, the business needs to take on a lot more ownership.

I often see organizations having the right vision, recognizing the benefit, and buying the appropriate technical tools – tools that they know they need to train IT on. However, they often overlook the fact that the *business* side also needs to be prepared. In order to achieve business success, a business infrastructure needs to be established.

Frank Habraken, Program Manager of CSC – speaking on his experience in the Department of Immigration Australia – says it nicely:

"The key piece, however, was governance and getting the organization to agree to particular terms and particular rules. Setting up that governance was critical. It's basically what I call the 'accelerator' ... or the 'decelerator'. It doesn't matter how good your engine is ... it doesn't matter how good your people are. If you don't have your governance approved, you might do okay for one little rules project ... but once you're up to about five or six that start to run into each other you're in trouble."[12]

Governance is critical to the success of your rule management activities. Governance is a process, organizational function, set of techniques, and system for putting business policy and regulations into operation.

In order for the business rules approach to be beneficial for the business side, governance needs to be focused on using business rules to implement policy into actual operation. More specifically, governance needs to focus on guiding the conduct and decisions of the business — it is not about designing systems. Governance must flow top down from the executive of the organization. It can't come from within the IT area.

A viable governance structure depends a lot on the culture of the organization, the maturity level with business rules, and the scope of business rules and business decisions that require governing.

Frank gave an example of a three-level governance process at the Department of Immigration:

- The top row the steering committee was the Chief Legal Officer and the heads of each of the business divisions. They did the final signoff.
- The level below that was their two Directors. They know how the business actually works, and they make the call in terms of "Yes, we agree with what's here." They also identify any issues based on their knowledge scope.



3. The next layer down from that has the policy and legal people, who spend time debating particular rules and terms, and then feed them up the line. If they spend too long – if they argue for more than two hours on some particular thing – it goes straight up a level. And if there is any issue at that level, then it goes up to the top level.

This three-level type of governance process is common to a great many organizations.

Alongside that process, the business/business rule analysts are working to specify, analyze, and annotate discussion and decisions. In order to do that, they need the right skill sets, methodology, tools, and support to enable effective results of managing business rules and business decisions. They need to be given sufficient training and focused time to learn.

Often, a Center of Excellence for Business Rules and Business Decision Management is established in an organization to share the knowledge, to mentor and support, and to provide education on business rules and business decisions initiatives. This Center of Excellence also acts as the quality control point for the business rules and business decisions that are under management.

In summary, in order for the business to benefit, the business needs to take on more control, responsibility, and work. An effective governance process specifies the control and the responsibilities. A group of experienced business/business rule analysts, trained in the capture, analysis, management, and implementation of business rules, will enable the work to get done.

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- Establish a governance process to manage your business rules and business decisions.
- A Center of Excellence is recommended to effectively share knowledge, to mentor, to train, and to provide quality control.
- Business analysts and business rule analysts need to be provided with skills, tools, methodology, and support to do their job.

- [1] Gladys S.W. Lam, "Top 10 Mistakes Business Analysts Make When Capturing Rules – Mistake #1: Treating Business Rules Initiatives Simply As IT Projects," *Business Rules Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 11 (Nov. 2010). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity. com/a2010/b562.html
- [2] "Business Rules Forum 2008 Practitioners' Panel: The Real World DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Mar. 2009). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/ a2009/b465.html

Top Mistakes Companies Make When Conducting Business Rules Projects

Mistake 6

Not Having Strong Sponsorship

Children know about the importance of sponsorship at an early age. Any parent can tell you how quickly a child figures out which parent will let them get away with what.

In my household, my husband is the generous one. So when my daughter wants that pair of designer jeans and I say no, she will say (you guessed it), "But *Daddy* said I can." On the other hand, dating is a hard thing for my husband to swallow. So my daughter will carefully ask me about going out before telling Dad. Of course, then she can say, "But *Mommy* said I can."

With business rules projects, sponsorship is especially important because it means both business and IT need to take on different roles than with traditional projects.

Mukundan Agaram, Enterprise Architect at Delta Dental of Michigan, and Kevin Chase, Project Director of Customer Information Technology Service Group at ING, said the following in the "DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules" Practitioners' Panel at the 2009 Business Rules Forum: [1]

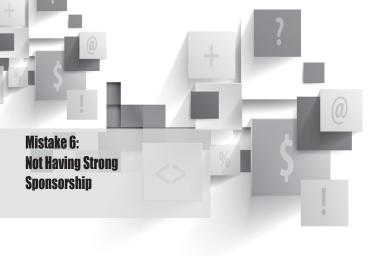
"Get executive buy-in early on. Educate them about what business rules can do for them; explain the value-add. You've got to do a lot of evangelism to get their buy-in because business rules, once you've put it in place, is a two-headed monster – business and technology. As such, in the organization, you need the clout to bring both sides together and to lead it as one effort for the whole enterprise...." – Mukundan Agaram

"You need strong executive sponsorship, and evangelism is a good word for this. You really need strong evangelism, both at the grass roots level, which I provided early-on, but also at the executive level, which my boss provided." – Kevin Chase

How do you get strong sponsorship? The key is having compelling business drivers. Business sponsors do not usually care about how something is done or what approach is used; they just want to know what business results are generated. To get a strong sponsor, you need strong business drivers. Below are some strong business drivers we have encountered over many years of working with different organizations worldwide:

- Fiduciary Responsibilities Support. Demonstrate compliance by officers of the organization with their fiduciary responsibilities.
- Risk Management. Enable more effective, timely, and focused management of risks by monitoring performance around critical items of business policy and strategy.
- Liability Management. Reduce or eliminate legal and financial liabilities due to non-compliance with contractual obligations and statutory responsibilities.
- Quality Assurance. Ensure consistency in business behavior, and appropriate interactions with external stakeholders.
- Regulatory Compliance. Ensure conformance with external regulation.
- Agility. Ensure timely and coordinated deployment of changes in business policy and strategy.
- Knowledge Retention. Ensure that specialized knowledge, business intellectual property (IP), and core competencies are captured and managed rather than being tacit, so that survivability and sustainability is less dependent on individual workers.
- Accountability. Ensure clear lines of responsibility for interpretations and deployments of business policy and regulation into day-to-day operations.
- Transparency. Ensure that business activity subject to external regulation is conducted in a manner that can be fully audited.^[2]

The driver for sponsorship might also change over time. Before the global financial crisis in 2009, we had a major banking institution that adopted the business rules approach because they needed to be agile. They needed to change products and get new products out into the market place as quickly as possible. After the financial crisis, that driver changed. Instead of agility being the principal driver, they needed to demonstrate more risk adversity and transparency.



Another client, a not-for-profit joint powers agency, shares their experience about the benefit of using a business rules approach: [3]

"The Independent System Operator (ISO) recently implemented the Market Redesign and Technology Upgrade (MRTU), a comprehensive program that enhances grid reliability and fixes flaws in the ISO markets. MRTU lasted three and a half years. Changes to the electricity market design meant constant change – weekly changes from the ISO for most of the last two years. Market defects would be found and ISO would change the rules accordingly. This in turn would mean our customer would need to update the rules in its systems.

Compared with how other organizations have implemented MRTU the results have been dramatic. While some groups of municipalities spent upwards of \$10M on components and consulting over three years implementing the rules, our customer spent just \$300,000 on components and consultation — a substantial reduction in costs. And this saving is in development cycle — ongoing maintenance will continue to be much less, boosting lowering the total cost of ownership over time."

That is 97% savings. A very compelling business driver indeed!

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- Ensure you have a strong sponsor who can support you in both the business and IT.
- Be clear on the business drivers.
- Communicate and reconfirm the business drivers regularly.

- [1] "Business Rules Forum 2009 Practitioners' Panel: The DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Apr. 2010). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/a2010/b530.html
- [2] Business Rule Concepts: Getting to the Point of Knowledge (Fourth Edition), by Ronald G. Ross (April 2013). ISBN 0-941049-14-0. Available at: http://www.brsolutions.com/b_concepts.php
- [3] From customer interviews conducted by James Taylor (http://www.decisionmanagementsolutions. com).

Mistake

Not Having a Well-Defined Scope

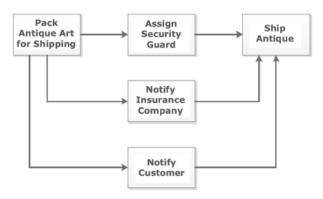
We all know how important having a well-defined scope is for any project activities. This is especially true for business rules harvesting projects. An additional process task, decision, or business concept could mean 10 to 100 rules. In my experience, any change in business scope always means some impact to business rules. The impact is never small.

Business rules need to be defined at the business level (not simply for just IT implementation). To do this, the scoping elements must be business friendly. Identify your scope criteria using business artifacts. The following are four very common scoping elements. You can define scope:

1. By Business Process Tasks.

This is perhaps the most common way of providing a boundary for business rules. In a business process model, identify the tasks that require business rules.

For example, here is a simple process flow for shipping antiques:



Each of these tasks may be guided by many business rules:

'Pack Antique Art for Shipping' – There are business rules on what packing materials must be used for what kinds of antiques.

'Assign Security Guard' – There are business rules on differently-valued antiques being assigned to different security levels of guards.

'Notify Insurance Company' – There are business rules on differently-valued or different types of antiques being insured by different insurance companies.

'Notify Customer' – There are business rules on who and where to notify the customer depending on destination.

'Ship Antique' – There are business rules on different types of antiques being shipped by different methods and different types of customers being given different shipping options.

Any one of these tasks can have anywhere from one to hundreds of rules, depending on the complexity of the business. Be very clear at the onset of the project which of these tasks is within scope for rule harvesting.

There is one thing I have learned about business rule projects. You can't assume any one task is simple (with fewer business rules).

For example, in almost any business, business rules around an address would be simple and standard. No one would allocate much time to harvesting address type business rules. However, at FedEx, they literally have thousands of rules about an address, rules that most businesses won't care about. So, be careful of your scope. Do not assume simplicity.

2. By Decisions.

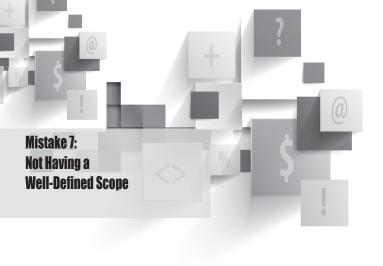
Identify the decisions that require business rules. Some decisions may be determining:

- · Is the customer eligible for membership?
- · Is the customer eligible for a discount?
- · Is the employee qualified to perform the activity?

Again, any of these decisions could require one or hundreds of business rules to determine outcome. Be clear which one is within scope.

3. By Business Concepts.

Any key concept that a business uses can have many rules around it. For example:



14 .

- Customer
- · Employee
- Claim
- Antique

Scoping at this high level is very dangerous. Can you imagine the number of business rules you might have pertaining to Customer? The more refined the concepts, the more precise the scoping. For example:

- Gold Customer or Delinquent Customer, instead of a just Customer
- Retired Employee or Temporary Employee, instead of just Employee
- · Bodily Injury Claim or Glass Claim, instead of just Claim
- Oil Painting or Renaissance Sculpture, instead of just Antique

4. By Source Document.

Identify the chapters, the sections, or the pages of a source document that are within scope. Be aware that a page in a source document can refer to business tasks, decisions, or business concepts that are in other parts of the document that can contain additional rules. Your scope can easily expand to cover the entire document if no other boundaries are identified. In order to get a precise scope, you need to combine the source document with one of the other three scoping items suggested above.

In fact, a combination of all four elements would provide the best, the most specific scope. For example, the scope for a business rules harvesting project could be:

- Business rules required to determine if a customer is a Gold Customer.
- Business rules that guide shipping antique art to Gold Customers.
- Business rules documented in "Chapter 4 Gold Customer" of the Customer Service Guide.

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- Without clear scope, your business rules project can easily go on and on. Adding one small scoping element can mean hundreds of business rules and can mean impacts to existing business rules already harvested.
- When identifying your scoping elements, be as specific as possible.
- Use combinations of scoping elements to ensure precision and clarity in scope.



Not Having the Right Skill Set

As an only child, my daughter has been very well cared for (in other words, spoiled) all of her 18 years of life.

My husband and I just installed our daughter at a university back east. When we stepped into her dorm room on the first day, we were greeted with a wooden bed, a wooden table, a plastic covered mattress, and dust balls rolling around the floor. My daughter took one look and announced that she would be late for orientation. Guess who was left with doing the clean up and furnishing of her dorm room?

Talk about not having the right skill set. I have zero cleaning and decorating skills and my husband is no handyman. We ended up cleaning floors (on hands and knees); lugging a refrigerator, microwave, and shelves up five flights of stairs (my husband and I are not physically fit); putting up shelves (of course, it is only when you are 70% done that you realize you have to start all over again); and moving furniture (with what few muscles we have).

At the end, I have to say the results were amazing. She now has a very comfortable, clean, and colorful room. My husband and I patted ourselves on the back.

How did we achieve success when we are so unskilled to do the work? One answer: Because we wanted it badly. We had one goal – building my daughter a home away from home. We were focused on that goal and we did whatever it took.

Having the right skill set to do business rules type projects is essential, but what's even more important is having the right vision or goal of what you want to do. Keep that focus. And the rest will fall into place.

Kelly Karlen (Manager, Business Rules Center of Excellence, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota) said this:

"Not everybody can be a good rules analyst – not even good business analysts ... they don't necessarily equate to a good analyst. You really need to make sure that you're finding people with the right skill set; it's a different mindset, to sit down and think through how your business is using its knowledge."

So, how do we train a good rules analyst? There are practical skills you can learn (which I believe is the easy part):

- Rule harvesting knowledge about how to capture business rules from people's heads, from documentation, and from system code.
- Rule specification knowledge about how to express business rules in a consistent manner.
- Rule analysis knowledge about how to analyze rules for duplication, redundancy and conflicts.
- Rule management knowledge about how to organize a large set business rules.
- Vocabulary management knowledge about how to define, model and manage corporate business terminology and concepts.

Kristen Seer, Senior Consultant, Business Rule Solutions, LLC said:

"Being a Rule Analyst requires more than a set of learned skills; there is a certain personality that comes with the territory. Although the traits of this personality can be developed or refined, they cannot be taught."

I can't agree with Kristen more. Rule analysis is not for everyone. Certain innate personality traits seem to pave the way for more natural rule analysis:

- Strong analytical ability. A Rule Analyst must be able to partition a large set of rules in a logical fashion to enable validation and verification of rules. The ability to break things down into manageable parts is innate.
- Ability to see the 'big picture'. While a Rule Analyst must be
 able to 'break things down into parts', he/she must also be
 able to keep the 'big picture' in mind. A Rule Analyst must
 be able to see how disparate projects or change initiatives
 fit together and impact each other, particularly with respect
 to rules.
- Ability to work at a detailed level. As well as being able to see the 'big picture', a Rule Analyst needs to be able to zero



in on the smallest details, as it can be the little things that make or break the effectiveness of a business rule.

Refer to Kristen's articles^[1] for more information on different personality traits and skills required for a Rule Analyst.

As Kelly Karlen mentioned above, a Rule Analyst needs to have a different mindset. The mindset she refers to is the ability to see business rules as a commodity of its own right – the ability to see business rules outside the context of process, people or events. This is especially difficult for those of us who have an IT background. We like to see things in a procedural manner (i.e., first do this, then do that, etc).

True business rules thinking requires a type of *declarative thinking*. One of Ron Ross's favorite examples is from the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill." There is no "If you kill, then this." There is no way to specify all situations where you "shalt not kill." A rule (in this case, a commandment) is just that – a declarative statement that can be applied in endless situations.

A good Rule Analyst has to be able to identify the rule and then identify the processes, people or events that it guides or constrains. This kind of thinking requires a different mindset. Reading helps; training helps; but most importantly, it is the willingness of the analyst to open his/her mind to a different type of thinking. This comes back to focusing on the goal. Just as my husband and I had the determination to build a comfortable 'home' for my daughter, the analyst has to have the right attitude to accept a new way of thinking.

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- The most important skill is not a skill. It is the analyst's willingness to accept a new way of thinking.
- · Practical skills can be trained.
- Rule analysis requires an analyst to be able to see the big picture, to be able to logically break things down into smaller parts, and to be able to be meticulous with details.

- [1] Kristen Seer, Senior Consultant, Business Rule Solutions, LLC, wrote a series of articles on different personality traits and skills required for a rule analyst:
 - Kristen Seer, "The Role of Rule Analyst (part 1)," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 6, No. 11 (Nov. 2005). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity. com/a2005/b255.html
 - Kristen Seer, "The Role of Rule Analyst (part 2),"
 Business Rules Journal, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Jan. 2006).
 Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/a2006/b264.html



Not Having a Business Rule Methodology

My husband is the chef in our family. Everyone who knows us knows that. He cooks like any Chinese would cook ... no recipe. A dash of this, a pinch of that ... voila! A tasty dish!

Now that our daughter is away at university, he has decided to open a restaurant as a pastime. He determined very quickly that he cannot be the sole chef of the restaurant. He needs some way to pass down to his hired chef his methods for creating his signature dishes. To do that, he would have to create a set of recipes. A recipe would allow him to ensure quality when different chefs are working on the same dish.

There's no difference when adopting a business rules approach. If you are the only person doing the work and if you know what do to, a formal methodology might not be necessary. You can adjust, adapt and learn as you go.

However, if there is a team who needs to produce deliverables that have to fit together at the end, it is good – in fact, necessary – to have a recipe (i.e., methodology). A methodology allows you to have:

- · A repeatable process.
- Consistent deliverables.
- · Sharable knowledge.

For business rules projects, you need a methodology that addresses the following areas:

- Rule harvesting. A set of processes and techniques to extract rules from ...
 - Subject area experts in facilitated sessions or one-on-one interviews.
 - Documentation by identifying processes, decisions, and policies and by asking the right questions to extract business rules.
 - System code by reversing engineering system logic to business logic and by distinguishing business rules from system rules.
- 2. Rule specification. A set of processes and techniques to ...

- Write business rule statements in a consistent manner.
 We use RuleSpeak[®].^[1]
- Develop decision logic. We use our Q-Chart technique, which is based on Question, Condition, Outcome, and Exceptions.^[2]
- Specify decision tables. Our decision table layouts are described in the same Q-Charting paper.
- 3. Rule analysis. A set of processes and techniques to analyze for ...
 - Duplication, redundancy, subsumption, and conflicts in rules.
 - Impact to existing rules when a rule is changed, deleted, or added.
 - Reuse of existing business rules, rather than creating new ones for each initiative or each business area.
- 4. Rule management. A set of processes and techniques to ...
 - Provide governance when business rule changes are needed.
 - · Organize a large set of business rules.
 - · Report on business rules from different perspectives.
 - Establish relationships between business rules or business rule sets.
 - Set up traceability of business rules from source to implementation.
- 5. Vocabulary management. A set of processes and techniques to ...
 - Define business concepts.
 - · Organize business concepts.
 - · Resolve synonyms and homonyms.

The methodology that I am advocating in this piece focuses on the business side of the business rules approach. I believe



that is the critical stage of a business rules project. Paul Avilez, Principle Software Developer, Liberty Mutual, shares my view:

"Do invest your time in your rule harvesting and elaboration work. On average we now find that close to 75-80% of the time it takes to complete a rule is spent in the elaboration (specification). Coding the rule and testing it takes next to nothing once the elaboration is done." [3]

Naturally there is methodology required for business rules implementation. This implementation methodology will need to be heavily dependent on your business rule technical environment (i.e., specific business rules engine or different implementation platform).

Once you have a methodology, I strongly recommend that you fine-tune it from your everyday learning. In my experience, an established, proven methodology is good for helping an organization kickstart the business rules approach. However, the methodology is most beneficial when it is refined over time, based on the maturity level, skill sets, timeline, and culture of the organization.

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- A methodology allows you to have a repeatable process, consistent deliverables, and sharable knowledge.
- Abusiness-focused methodology for capturing, specifying, analyzing, and managing business rules and business vocabulary is as important as a system implementation methodology.
- Your methodology needs to be refined as the organization matures through the business rules approach.

- [1] For RuleSpeak, visit http://www.rulespeak.com/en/
- [2] A paper on Q-Charting is available at http://www.brsolutions.com/b decision.php
- [3] "Business Rules Forum 2009 Practitioners' Panel: The DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Apr. 2010). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/a2010/b530.html

Top Mistakes Companies Make When Conducting Business Rules Projects

Mistake 10

Not Communicating

In this final piece of the series I thought it would be fitting to talk about communication. I certainly hope that all of you will continue to communicate with me through reading my articles on BRCommunity.com, linking to me in LinkedIn, and following me on Twitter (@GladysLam).

My daughter does not communicate. I don't mean the usual teenage thing where teenagers don't talk to their parents. I mean she simply forgets to tell us significant events she encounters or achievements at school. What my husband and I get are all the issues: she does not understand anything the math teacher says; her chemistry project blew up; or her friends are not talking to her.

In real life she is an A+ student, receives chemistry awards, and is very popular with her friends. When I ask her why she doesn't tell us all her achievements, she simply says, "I don't want to be boastful." I had to explain to her that communicating facts is not boastful.

I see the same thing happen with business rules projects. I have worked with many wonderful business analysts and business rules analysts who are so 'heads down' doing the work that they forget to communicate the wonderful work they have done.

Remember that the business rules are the business logic for the organization. Very often it contains the business' intellectual property and comprises the organization's competitive advantage. Once this proprietary know-how is captured, it should be shared with the appropriate people.

Kelly Karlen – Manager, Business Rules Center of Excellence, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota – shared her experience:

"We had sixty-six rules, and with those sixty-six rules we found we had twenty-four gaps or conflicts that we had identified simply by documenting it ... by getting it on paper. We had our Legal and Compliance area in there; we had our COO in there. And they were amazed at some of the things we were out of compliance on. We just had never sat down and looked at everything together, cohesively around

that scope. And our COO immediately asked, 'What's your next project?"^[1]

As a business rules analyst, one of your primary roles is to capture the business rules and communicate them to the appropriate parties. If you want to achieve the right results from your communication you must relate the right content to the right audience in the right way. An executive might not be interested in all the conditions you identified in your business rules to catch fraudulent activities, but he/she would be very interested that the business rules identified 1,000 fraudulent activities and saved the company close to \$1,000,000.

On the other hand, while an IT developer might not care too much about how much that business rule might potentially save the company, he needs to know the details of the business rule showing all the conditions to detect fraud as identified by the business. If he gets that wrong, that business rule will not be effective.

In a business rules project you want to communicate:

- · Business decisions and business rules sets.
- · Business concepts and their clear definitions.
- The approach that is used.
- Any findings (any conflicts, gaps, inaccuracies, and redundancies you discovered during your analysis).
- Successes.

The audience of your communication should be ...

- · Executives.
- Business stakeholders impacted by, but not directly involved in, your project.
- Business stakeholders directly involved in your project.
- Project team members.
- IT.



20 Again, the key to success is tailoring the message and the content to the right audience.

- For executives: You want to highlight the successes, communicate the business benefits, and describe some key findings. They likely care less about the detailed business rules.
- For business stakeholders impacted by, but not directly involved in, your project: You would want to bring in a little more of the key decisions and some high-level business rules. For this audience, you might need to simplify the business rule sets for easy understanding. Use graphical representation to show dependencies and impacts whenever appropriate.
- For business stakeholders directly involved in your project: You should be communicating with them regularly during the course of the project. They need to be involved in reviewing and validating the decisions and business rules. However, the business rule statements and decision tables presented to them should be simplified. Use graphical representation whenever possible. Business logic can be very complex. A walkthrough and detailed explanation by the business rule analyst involved with the business rule set would probably achieve the best result.
- For the project team: The project team should be given updated concept definitions and business rule sets on a regular basis. Major changes should be reviewed and walked-through in order for the team to understand impact.
- For IT: They need to be given all the detailed concept definitions and business rules sets. They must understand all the intricacies of each business rule and how the business rule relates to other business rules.

You might be thinking that there is a lot to communicate here. Where do I get the information to communicate?

I can guarantee you that if you are conducting a business rules project with the right discipline, the above content just falls out naturally. The business rules will have all the details. Once you have the details, simplifying them is easy. If you do analysis of business rule sets, you will find conflicts, gaps and inaccuracies ... and if there aren't any, that is good to communicate too (!).

Kelly's experience (above) of success from just identifying the business rules themselves is shared by many practitioners.

All in all, the fact that you have a project to externalize and manage your business rules is in itself beneficial to the company. Installing key performance indicators to monitor the implementation of those business rules will provide you even more information on ROI that can be communicated.

Just Remember ...

Plainly speaking, here are some of the main things you need to remember:

- Don't just be 'heads down' and do work. Look up and spend time communicating the good work you are doing.
- Communicate the right content to the right audience in the right format.
- What you need to communicate naturally falls out of what you are doing; there's no need to go searching for content.

References

[1] "Business Rules Forum 2007 Practitioners' Panel: The DOs and DON'Ts of Business Rules," Business Rules Journal, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Apr. 2008). Available at: http://www.BRCommunity.com/a2008/b408.html







- Know What 'Business Rule' Means
- 2. Concentrate on the Business Benefit
- 3. Build a Business Structure
- 4. Manage Business Rules for the Business
- 5. Focus on Business Vocabulary
- 6. Define Scope Early
- 7. Secure Strong Sponsorship
- 8. Communicate Constantly
- Foster the Right Skill-Set
- 10. Adopt a Business Rule Methodology



Now that you have heard so much about me from my mom's articles, it's time I return the favor. My name is Vanessa Lam, and I am Gladys' only daughter. Here I have written a short biography of my mom. I think you'll find it interesting ...

Some 52 years ago in rural China, Sui Wah Chiu was born. At three pounds and a handful of ounces, her chances of survival were not looking good. They slimmed even further when she was ten days old, when her mother was forced back into the fields and Sui Wah was sent to live with her grandmother's sister.

The early 1960s were a turbulent time for China, and it became clearer and clearer that the Communist regime would take radical measures. Sui Wah's parents knew that this was no place to raise a child, so they made the decision that no parent wants to make – to send their first born child away in hopes of having a better life. At the age of one, Sui Wah was smuggled out of China into British-controlled Hong Kong to live with her grandparents.

That was my mother's first taste of adventure and travel, but certainly not her last. Her childhood was spent wandering alone through the streets of Hong Kong and ordering around the maids in her grandfather's house. For the most part, Sui Wah was alone; her grandparents cared for her, but they never had time to raise her. She attended an English school in Hong Kong, where she was given the name Gladys.

At age 12, Gladys's grandparents knew they were too old to take care of her any longer. However, they could not send her back to China, for that would mark the end of her freedom. For a second time, Gladys was wrenched from her life and plopped into a new one, this time in Vancouver. Canada.

There, her aunt and uncle took her in and sent her to a secondary school not far from their home. However, to Gladys's dismay, practical English in a Canadian school was vastly different from English classes in a Hong Kong school. Her six years of learning to conjugate verbs and spell words about food and transportation could not help her when it came to making friends. Instead of giving up, Gladys took it as a challenge. She refused to speak Chinese to the few Asian classmates she had, and made every effort to be friends with native English speakers. Before long, she found herself with friends that had never spoken a word of Chinese in their lives.

Just as she was getting settled into high school life, it was time to leave. Accepted into the University of British Columbia (UBC), she pursued a computer science major, a degree she would use throughout her professional career. It was to that faculty that her future husband followed her (not that he would ever use the degree), and seven years later they married, giving her the name she goes by today: Gladys Lam.

Over the next several years, Gladys grew rapidly in her career. From a denim store retailer to banking, she finally found her place running her own consulting company, Elite Consulting Group. In the meantime she earned enough to sponsor her parents and two younger siblings to join her in Canada.

Seven years following their marriage, Gladys and Sunny made the most important decision of their lives—having me! Not that it seemed that way at the time. While my mother was in labor with me, she was on the phone negotiating contracts with two clients. After I was born, the only reason she stayed in the house was because her mother made her; it is Chinese tradition that the mother cannot leave home for one month after her child is born. The day the month ended, my mother hopped on a helicopter and was off to Victoria Island, where she was working on a consulting project.

My mother continued with this double life until I was three, when she became partners with Ron Ross. This is when she had her second child, a rambunctious, troublesome son named Business Rule Solutions, LLC (BRS). He was, and continues to be, that annoying little half brother. While my mother was teaching me to read and changing my dirty diapers, she also had to deal with whatever the brat spit up — anything from needing a new book published to flying across the globe to give talks.

My mom spent a lot of time with BRS, always off to some new place. She spent a lot of time going all over the USA, many places across Europe, and some in Asia.

When I was young, I'm told I used to cry when she left. But I can't remember those days. Since I can first remember, I was proud of my mom and proud of that little brother named BRS. When I was six, I would tell my friends that my mother was in Washington, DC , in Texas, in England. When I was ten, I would tell them that my mother published a book, and the author (Ron) dedicated it to me. When I was sixteen, I told her that I wanted to be a consultant, just like her.

Now that I'm nineteen, I'm telling her I'm going to travel too. At college on the East Coast, these days I see my mom when she's at work travelling, instead of at home. My little baby brother is not such a baby anymore, either. He has matured quite a bit and has a bunch of new additions like BRCommunity, AttainingEdge, and the Building Business Capability conference. My mom makes sure they all behave as they should and makes sure that all her children grow up to be successful.

No one would have expected my mother to be where she is today. From those modest beginnings on a farm in China, who could have known that the twelve-year-old who could barely speak English would grow up to become an internationally recognized lecturer, consultant and publisher? It's a dream even many native North Americans could not imagine. All in all, I think her parents' wish for a better future for her turned out alright, don't you?

Vanessa Lam

Candidate for a Bachelor of Science in Economics

The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania Class of 2015

August 17, 2012

TOP 10 Mistakes Companies Make When Conducting Business Rules Projects

by Gladys S.W. Lam



About Gladys S.W. Lam

Gladys S.W. Lam is a world-renowned authority on applied business rule and decision techniques. She is Principal and Co-Founder of Business Rule Solutions, LLC (www. BRSolutions.com), the most recognized company world-wide in business rules and decision analysis. Ms. Lam is co-creator of IPSpeak[™], the BRS methodology. She is Co-Founder of BRCommunity.com, a vertical community for professionals and home of Business Rules Journal. She co-authored Building Business Solutions: Business Analysis with Business Rules, with Ronald G. Ross, an IIBA® sponsored handbook on business analysis with business rules.

Ms. Lam is widely known for her lively, pragmatic style. Ms. Lam is an internationally recognized expert on business rules and decision techniques. She speaks worldwide at conferences and other professional events. She co-presents interactive online seminars. She is also Executive Director of the Building Business Capability (BBC) Conference, which includes the Business Rules and Decisions Forum and is the official conference of the IIBA®.

Ms. Lam is a world-renowned expert on business project management, having managed numerous projects that focus on the large-scale capture, analysis and management of business rules and decisions. She works comfortably with senior executives providing insights and advice. She advises senior management of large companies on organizational issues and on business solutions to business problems. She is most effective with mentoring and training business analysts worldwide.

Ms. Lam is most recognized for her ability to identify the source of business issues, and for her effectiveness in developing pragmatic approaches to resolve them. She has gained a world-class reputation for fostering positive professional relationships with principals and support staff in projects.

Ms. Lam graduated from the University of British Columbia with a B.S. in Computer Science.



@GladysLam

(281) 217-9878

About ...



Business Rule Solutions, LLC



Business Rule Solutions, LLC (BRS) is the international leader in business analysis, business rule, and decision engineering techniques. BRS provides training, consulting and mentoring grounded in the business connection and focused on each company's rich operational business know-how, its core intellectual property (IP). The BRS methodology, IPSpeak™, provides a structured approach to capture what makes your company smart (business strategy, business concepts, business rules, business decisions, and key performance indicators), develop world-class requirements from it, and achieve a winning, durable business solution. We can show you how to engage business stakeholders proactively in your projects. Our instructor-led interactive on-line training is convenient, effective and always highly rated. With 20 years experience in practical application for clients around the world, as well as extensive involvement in innovation, research and standardization, BRS is the world-recognized leader in the business rule and decision engineering space.





Business Rules Community: BRCommunity.com is a vertical, noncommercial community for business rule professionals. BRCommunity provides articles, commentary, discussion areas, and a variety of other valuable hands-on resources. BRS established BRCommunity.com, and its flagship on-line publication, the Business Rules Journal, in 2000. The Journal (free) is known for its high-quality, non-commercial editorial focus. BRCommunity.com is the place to be for business rules! Visit BRCommunity.com.





Building Business Capability (BBC) Conference: The annual Building Business Capability (BBC) Conference encompasses four co-located conferences: Business Rules Forum, Business Analysis Forum (the official conference of the IIBA®), Business Process Forum, and Business Architecture Summit. The BBC offers insight and expertise to help organizations create more effective, complete, and agile business solutions, especially involving automation. Gladys S.W. Lam is BBC Executive Director. Visit BuildingBusinessCapability.com.