8 Questions every Business Analyst Should Ask

It does not matter what project you are going to undertake. It is not important what industry you are going to be assessing. What is important is you know what you are going to do. You must as questions. You must find what it is the client wants. Presented is a list of obvious questions every good business analyst should know the answer to when starting a project.

1. What problem is this business having that you hope to solve by developing this project? It should be obvious as to why you would ask that question. If you do not understand what the problem is then you can not help to solve it. Also, when reading the project program it may not be clear as to what the client actually wants. The scope may only tell you what they would like to see happen. It could and often times is not focused on what the true issues are.

2. What is the business doing at present to alleviate or solve the issue? What has been tried in the past? You must understand what the client is doing in order to understand what must be done. You do not want to develop a project plan overview only to have someone tell you it has been tried. Listen to the customer. Find out what they have done. Ask questions while you are listening. On your toes brainstorming so to speak. Listen to what has not worked.

3. What inside resources will this project be utilizing? What outside resources will be necessary? You will want to determine where your help and team players are coming from. You may be familiar with most of the IT, but if the client wants to outsource it is a different game. You may have to make a list of external interactions. Define the company's strengths and weaknesses. This can be most advantageous.

4. Have you determined a vision for the project? The business analyst will compare this scope with the one he or she will develop to ensure consistencies and a parallel outlook. In other words make sure you are on the same path. This is sometimes easier said than done. Communication is the key to success with this question.

5. What risks to you foresee and are you willing to take them? A conservative client may not be inclined to take large risks. Getting them to be specific can help when generating the project program. You may also be able to overcome some of their fears or doubts by explaining the risk factor more thoroughly.

6. Are you under any type of time constraint? There has to be a set time frame for the outcome. A goal can be reached for any project if time is not a factor. Most clients have time constraints which affect every avenue of business. You

will want to know what these are and plan accordingly.

7. What is the projected cost of the program? An aggressive business analyst
may be blunt and honest by wording the question like this. What is the projected
budget and can it be deviated from? There are times certain steps must be taken
which can cause a project to run over budget. Other plans of action may not need
implemented because management was not fully aware of certain assets available.
It is best to know exactly what is going into this project for the project
program to succeed.

8. Who is the end user? What support will they have? You will need to know this
in order for the program to even fulfill it's purpose. Marketing data must also
be collected to incorporate what the end user is asking for. The goal is to
reach the objective with everyone satisfied. A business analyst can not do this
without talking and listening to everyone involved.