Technical Interviews and Assessments for Business Analysts

An interview for a Business Analyst position will consist of questions that test your **leadership, communication, and collaboration skills.** As a Business Analyst, your most important role is to bridge the gap between what requirements a business needs to function successfully, and the technical teams that create the product/service. Hence, your communication and collaboration skills are extremely important. Leadership skills come into your ability to use your knowledge in leading a team towards a common goal; making a successful product/service for a marketplace. Your leadership, communication, and collaboration skills may also come in handy when dealing with external clients.

A Business Analyst role may be client-focused, data-focused, and/or technically-focused. This should be outlined in the job spec you receive from the company before your first interview. This will assist you in preparing for the kinds of questions you may be asked throughout the interview process (e.g. communication and collaboration-specific questions for a client-focused Business Analyst role).

It's important as a Business Analyst to think critically whenever you solve a problem. You could be required to build models which the technical teams need to follow to succeed. It is crucial to build a **good tool box** you can refer to when creating these models. A good Business Analyst tool box consists of both soft/general and hard/technical skills.

A Business Analyst interview will consist of a few major themes; how you use your **critical thinking and market knowledge to improve the functioning of a team and get results,** and how you go about **leading and collaborating with the team.**

The following will be assessed in an interview process for a Business Analyst role:

1. Qualifications and Experience

Business Analysts often come with backgrounds and qualifications in **Information Technology, Data Science, Computer Engineering and/or Business subjects.** Companies usually require a Bachelor's degree for a Business Analyst role, so if you don't have qualifications in these specific fields it'll be important to demonstrate the transferable knowledge you have gained through your professional experience. This can be done in the initial interview with a company.

2. Soft Skills

- *Analytical thinking and problem solving*

    - In an interview, you may be required to explain a scenario in which you demonstrated **creative thinking** in the way you solved a problem.
    - It's important to prepare for **competency-based questions.**

- *Communication*

    - Some companies may require you to deliver a presentation to test your **written and verbal communication skills.**
    - You might be focusing on the content when you prepare, but don't forget that **how you present your ideas** (and how convincing you are in advocating for them) is part of the assessment.

- *Collaboration*

    - You may be assessed on your **facilitation, negotiation, leadership and teamwork skills.**
    - This may be assessed through direct questioning, but they could also be watching the ways in which you present yourself in the interview itself.

<u>Example Questions:</u>

1. As a Business Analyst you have to work with people in different teams and positions throughout a company. How would you deal with a difficult stakeholder?
2. Can you describe a time when you had to steer a client toward a different course of action than the one they were set on taking?
3. Describe a time you solved a difficult problem or describe a time you faced a difficult challenge and what you learnt from it.

3. **Hard Skills**

- *Business Knowledge*

  - You may be asked to explain or reference **common business principles and practices** during an interview. You may have to outline or define a particular principle or practice, but it's more likely you'll be asked to reference these concepts as you've applied them in previous roles, or in a case study.
  - **SDLC** is a critical skill for most Business Analyst positions. It is important to demonstrate your experience across the entire Systems Development Life Cycle.
  - If you have experience in a **Project Management** role, mention the skills you have picked up through this role that you use as a Business Analyst.
  - It is important to take some time to **research the company** you're interviewing with so that you understand the role, the organisation and the industry they operate in. Different companies may expect a Business Analyst to take on different types of responsibilities, so it will be important to understand what they expect of you in this particular position. Being able to reflect on the types of challenges the company faces and how they might address these will also help you make an impression in the interview.

- *Software/Technologies*

  - It is important to learn about **common technological solutions/software** that could be used in daily tasks at the specific company. Brush up on **modelling and diagramming tools** that you would use to analyse an aspect within a business (e.g. UML diagrams and business process models).
  - You may be required to complete a **case study** using modelling.
  - **SQL** and the ability to do some basic coding (e.g. scripting to move and transform data between various systems and APIs). This is more for technical-focused Business Analyst roles.
  - Excel, VBA, Python, Tableau, Google Analytics.

<u>Example Questions:</u>

1. What tools do you think are the most important for Business Analysts to do their job well and why?
2. What types of Business Analyst diagrams and charts have you had experience using?
3. How much experience have you had using SQL?
4. What is your understanding of the SDLC? What experience do you have in applying this in practice?
5. Have you practiced Agile and/or Waterfall methodologies before?

4. Technical Assessments

Often a company will present you with an assessment specific to the type of Business Analyst role you are interviewing for. These tests can consist of a case study, where you are **given existing data and asked questions based on said data.** In this instance, the interviewer wants to see how you analyse and create solutions based on the data. As mentioned before, you may be asked to reference business principles and/or practices in your answer to a case study. Try and show your **understanding, critical thinking, and creativity** around the problems the company is facing in the case study.

You may encounter one or several of the following kinds of assessments in an interview process:

- *On-site Case Studies:*

  - When you are given a case study to complete, getting to the correct answer is not as important as the **process** you used to get to your final answer. You want to use the case study to demonstrate your ability to **analyse, identify issues, and develop a solution** using a **structured and logical approach.**
  - You may choose to use a **logical framework** that is suitable to the scenario you are engaging with (e.g. SWOT analysis, PESTLE analysis).
  - A case study could be in the form of a **take-home assessment** that you complete in your own time, or it may be a **question in an interview.**

- *Take-home Case Study:*

  - Whilst this will give you a lot more time to prepare and do research, the end-result will be expected to be of much higher quality than an interview case study, since you have time to work on it.
  - **Understand the goal of the case study** – It's important to recognise the case study for what it is; a way in which the hiring manager is testing your Business Analyst problem solving skills.
  - **Leverage your unique experience** – Use your career experience in solving the problem. Your unique experience will make you stand out more to the hiring manager. If you have little career experience, complete some practice case studies online.
  - **Don't skip any part of the process** – Follow a logical framework so that your problem solving is structured and justified. This will help you if the hiring manager asks for your reasoning behind what you did.
  - **Proofread and check everything** – Once you have completed the case study, run through everything again to make sure you didn't make any mistakes.
  - **Anticipate follow-up questions** – By thinking of possible follow-up questions, you will be more prepared when presenting your solution.

- *Interview Assessment:*

  - An employer may ask you to complete an in-interview assessment, e.g. roleplaying a consultation with a client to assess your communication and collaboration skills.
  - **Take your time in answering** – Talk through the problem you've been given to make sense of it first.
  - **Ask questions** – You can ask the interviewer to define an aspect of the question (such as an acronym or the interviewer's definition of a particular word/phrase) or to repeat the question. When working on a project with a client, asking questions is how you figure out what problems may arise.
  - **Be flexible** – You may need to be prepared to participate in a particular part of the question as instructed by the interviewer. Hence, you will need to be flexible in case the format the interviewer follows isn't the same as your own format in solving a problem.
  - **Use visual aids** – If there's a white board to use and if it'll help get your ideas across, don't be shy to use it. The most important thing is that you are demonstrating your problem solving skills.
  - **Dive into where you can have the most impact** – When faced with a problem to solve, where can you make the biggest impact in solving the problem? Decipher where that is and emphasise this part whilst discussing your thinking and assumptions around the problem.
  - **Tell a story** – Relevant experience in your career has helped you progress so far, and so use that experience to solve the problem. Through your unique insights, you can let your individuality shine and stand out for the interviewer.
  - **Pay attention to cues** – Never dismiss anything the interviewer says, as it probably means something important. E.g.: The interviewer might say that the case is about a retailer who wants to increase the value of a company it purchased, and the owner loved the brand when growing up. That seemingly obtuse detail is to indicate that turning around and selling the asset is not an option for making it profitable, as the owner is emotionally attached to it.

- *Written Test Format:*

  - This will be an assessment with questions that are designed to test your analytical thinking, data interpretation and written communication skills.
  - **Analytical thinking** – Questions testing this skill will focus on your ability to analyse and solve different business problems.
  - **Data interpretation** – This section will require numerical and graphical data understanding and analysis.
  - **Written communication** – There may be questions on sentence correction, selecting the right words, spotting errors, and reading comprehension to test your communication skills.

<u>Example Questions:</u>

1. What would be your approach for introducing a product into a foreign market? What are the risks and benefits to consider i.e. producing in your own country vs producing in the new country?
2. Company ABC is struggling, should it be restructured? Identify the three main problems it's facing. What is the most important problem the company is facing? How would you recommend the company address this problem? How would you turn this company around? Provide your reasoning for your recommendation(s).
3. Build a business case for developing a major new product, service, technology solution, or customer experience.
4. Build a business case for a developing new line of business, spinning off an existing one, or creating a subsidiary business.
5. Recommend whether to pursue a purchase, divestiture, acquisition, merger, joint venture, strategic alliance, or major partnership.
6. Recommend whether to enter a new market, and if so, by what competitive strategy (e.g., cost, service, quality).
7. Determine how best to improve company or business unit growth, and how it might affect critical areas of the company's financial statements, especially revenue, gross margin, EBITDA, or profitability.
8. Determine how best to price or segment a new product or service offering Determine whether to rehabilitate a brand.
9. Determine how to respond to a major competitive threat (e.g., "Google/Amazon/Microsoft just entered our space").

Resources:
- https://www.careerprofiles.info/case-study-interview-examples.html
- https://www.bridging-the-gap.com/ba-interview-sell-skills/
- https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/swot-pestle-and-other-models-strategic-analysis#:~:text=Business%20analysis%20models%20are%20useful,more%20strategically%20about%20your%20business.&text=SWOT%20(strengths%2C%20weaknesses%2C%20opportunities,technological%2C%20legal%20and%20environmental)%20analysis
- https://www.bridging-the-gap.com/good-business-analysts/
- https://www.thebaguide.com/blog/how-to-prepare-for-your-business-analyst-interview
- https://www.softwaretestinghelp.com/business-analyst-interview-questions/
- https://intellipaat.com/blog/interview-question/business-analyst-interview-questions/
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- https://www.roberthalf.com.au/career-advice/interview/common-questions/finance-accounting/business-analyst
- https://www.arcadiadata.com/resources/knowledge-base/article/business-analyst-using-streaming-analytics/
- https://businessanalystlearnings.com/blog/2013/2/3/tips-for-your-business-analyst-interview
- https://www.bridging-the-gap.com/business-analyst-experience-counts/
- https://mbs.rutgers.edu/articles/career-focus-what-employers-want-business-analyst
- https://blog.interviewmocha.com/how-to-assess-and-hire-a-business-analyst
- http://mockinterview.co/index.php/2018/02/14/five-tips-for-solving-data-scientist-analytics-take-home-case-study-challenge/
- https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/blogs-careers/secrets-to-a-successful-case-study-interview