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The Role of Lead Business Analyst in the Contemporary Enterprise Reporting Process

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The Role of Lead Business Analyst in the Contemporary Enterprise Reporting Process

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Abstract

The term business intelligence can be defined as a group of widely used ICT tools that gather all kinds of complex data concerning a certain organisation and compiles them into reports that are meaningful, exact and delivered on time. Those tools can provide meaningful insights into the state of an entire organisation. They are used in many different areas: from identifying the most profitable group of clients, business regions, sales in different branches, products to improving cross-sell activities. Most people working for those organisation that do not participate in those processes are not fully aware how to work with those systems neither how much time it is necessary to pass from the disclosed business problem to report which will then be delivered to the necessary personnel. In the process of writing this paper, the theoretical background of BI and its use within the organisation will be emphasised, as well as the role of lead business analyst. Processes that occur in the companies from the idea of a report to its fulfilment will be explained and the overview of main responsibilities of lead business analyst will be given by analysing and gathering job adverts posted at LinkedIn.

Keywords: business intelligence, organisation, enterprise reporting, information, data, knowledge, ad-hoc reporting, BI processes, lead business analyst

JEL classification: M12, M15

Introduction

Business information has always been of crucial importance for the successful survival of all organisations whether in the economics sector, education, science, health, public administration or any other (Pavkov et al., 2016).

According to Murfitt (Panian and Klepac, 2003), "business intelligence is the way to deliver the right information in the right format to the right people and at the right moment." The business information system includes input, processing, delivery, storage and other management activities that convert data into information (Varga et al., 2016). It is structured, organised, equipped and staffed in a system designed to achieve business interests, needs and goals (Javorović et al., 2007). Intent of today's business intelligence concept is not to create a large number of information, but to increase and achieve the highest possible quality of information needed to make decision, so BI systems combine a wide variety of data analysis, methodology, data storages, data mining applications, OLAP tools, ad-hoc analysis and reporting, mobile business intelligence, collaborative and cloud business intelligence and

much more (Pavkov et al., 2016). And the fundamental part of improving business intelligence and knowledge management in an organisation is the reporting system. A good business intelligence system, as well as good business analysts, collects as much as information possible from all parts of the company, analyses them, prepares all the necessary reports and sends them to people who use it for the process of decision making. By doing this, everyone gets the information exactly "tailored" to create solutions for every day's business problems.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasise the role of lead business analysts in the modern business organisations and its reporting processes as well as to examine what requirements job applicants must fulfil in order to successfully do the job once selected. To examine the latter, 200 different international job adverts were gathered and analysed.

The definition of business intelligence and the necessity of quality reporting systems will be the starting points of this paper. The paper will be split as follows: first part will explain the methodology used in the process of writing this paper, then the overview and the results of the acquired job adverts will be given and the last part of this paper will consist of conclusion with the notification of paper limitations and possible further researches.

Methodology

As a source of data for this paper, theoretical background of BI was gathered through secondary data from numerous books and articles in the area of contemporary application of business intelligence such as Javorović and Bilandžić (2007), Panian and Klepac (2003) but also examples from business practice were used, as well as analysis of gathered international job adverts posted at LinkedIn between March 15 to March 18 2018 (<https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/lead-business-analyst-jobs>).

Background

According to IFAC "effective and transparent business reporting allows organisations to present a cohesive explanation of their business and helps them engage with internal and external stakeholders, including customers, employees, shareholders, creditors, and regulators."

"Tailoring" those reports to fit all needs can be a complex task, but when prepared properly they can give considerable insight and advantage to the company. Reporting can be broadly divided into two types (Bailey, 2017):

- General reporting – covers what activity is happening on the site (e.g. how many visitors came there, their engagement, number of sold items during that period).
- Deeper reporting – aims to understand why certain activity is happening on the site (e.g. which segments are changing rapidly).

In the process of creating those reports, lead business analysts (sometimes simply abbreviated as LBA) make the greatest company's asset as a link between applicants and its department and the IT department which, by programming, creates reports. But reports are not the only role they have. A lead business analyst also makes plans for designing, developing and launching efficient business systems in support of core organisational functions.

The goal of this paper is to examine the requirements needed for job applicants in order to successfully do the job once selected.

Some of the skills that this person must possess are found in different sets of job descriptions: communications skills, analytical thinking, problem solving skills are expected for each of the persons applying to this job. The person must have a proven experience in designing, developing and implementing of different business solutions, also the person must know how to exactly use programmes created to make reports, spread sheets (such as MS Excel), graphs and flow charts for their advantage on job and for the benefit of the organisation where they work.

Further on, it is expected that the people applying for this job must have high levels of self-motivation with keen attention to details. Also, it is expected that the person is highly educated in Business or IT and with averagely more than 8 years of work experience). Ability to work in competitive and dynamic environment with collaboration with developers, management and stakeholders across other workgroups is also a must.

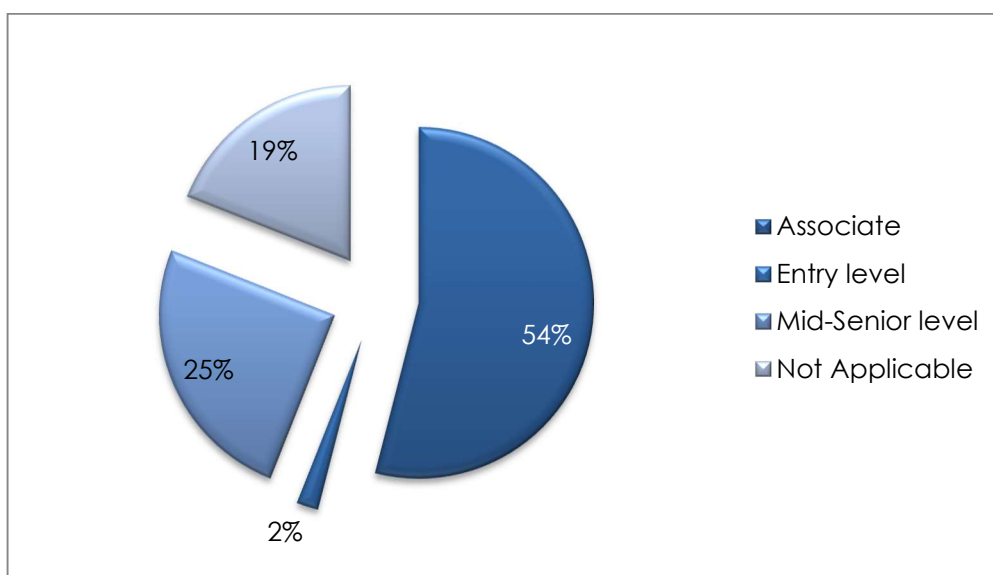
Results and discussion

For the purposes of this research, the job adverts posted on LinkedIn were reviewed. Focus was on the job adverts related to the Lead Business Analyst. Data collection began on March 15, 2018 when there were 3.858 active job postings, and ended on March 18, 2018 when 3.652 job postings were active. A total of 200 adverts were collected, which makes up roughly 5% of the total number of adverts.

Basic statistics shows next:

- 148 advertisements are posted directly by the company, and the rest is through specialised head-hunter agencies;
- 108 job adverts for employment were based in North America, 47 in Europe, 26 in Asia, 12 in Africa and 7 in Australia;
- For only 8 adverts, the amount of salary is published, and for 54 adverts, formal education is required;
- The seniority level position offered in the job adverts is as follows:

Figure 1
Seniority Level Needed for the Position of LBA

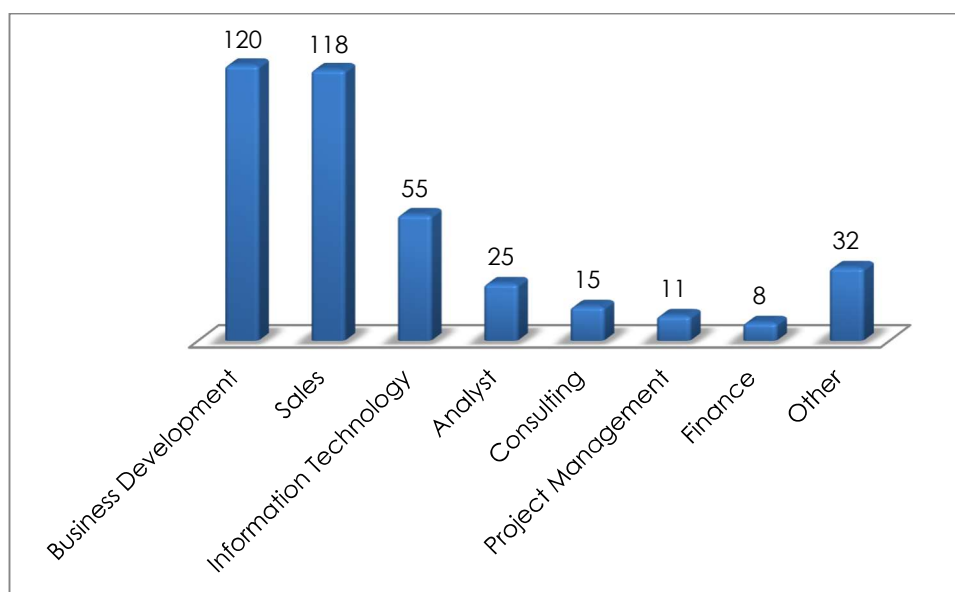


Source: Authors' illustration

It can be noticed that in most of the job adverts regarding Lead Business Analyst positions, the level of Associate is offered. After that, the most offered seniority level position is Mid-Senior level. Most job adverts are from Financial Services (81) and Computer Software (60).

According to the function of the business, most Lead Business Analyst job adverts appear in Business Development and Sales, only after that in Information Technology, Analyst, Consulting and Project Management which is shown on the Figure below:

Figure 2
Job functions of a Lead Business Analysts



Source: Authors' illustration

It is interesting to look at the distribution of responsibilities expected from Lead Business Analysts. There are a total of 709 different types of responsibilities that appeared in job postings for 774 times. This means that very few saw the same responsibilities for the same position. Some of the most frequently mentioned responsibilities are:

- Collaborates with different teams for improving and achieving organisational goals;
- Conducts ROI and other business or financial analysis to support project funding/prioritisation;
- Designs and implements projects requiring systems integration, small teams and multiple technical platforms;
- Ensure compliance with all regulations and policies that have an effect on the organisation's management;
- Identifying conflicting business practices and suggesting alternative solutions;
- Leading, collecting and analysing business requirements for large, multifunctional projects;
- Participating with other IT employees (such as systems analyst and project managers), organisation's management, clients and other stakeholders in creating new products, services or business solutions;
- Performing feasibility studies;

- Provides input to management (both IT and business) on business procedures and policies;
- Works with current and possible business clients in order to clarify and plan for their current and future technology needs.

As far as experience is concerned, this situation is the same as for the responsibilities. A total of 652 different types of experiences were presented. Some of the anticipated experiences that are mentioned in most ads are:

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills;
- Ability to multitask and follow-up on unfinished business;
- Ability to pay attention to details and to be organised;
- Ability to work independently and in a team environment;
- Demonstrated ability to manage multiple projects with short deadlines and priorities;
- Experience deploying self-service capabilities in campaign management and Reporting/BI;
- Experience integrating different marketing technologies with various data sources;
- Goal oriented with distinguished and creative personality with good interpersonal skills;
- Thorough knowledge of MS Office (such as MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint) as well as great data analysis skills;
- Willingness to take initiative;
- Ability to work closely with different development teams that support various technology platforms;
- Experience managing, coaching and developing a small functional team;
- Detailed theoretical knowledge of Waterfall and Agile business analysis approaches, but also work experience with both of them is a must;
- Experience in business and data analysis, solutions design and testing, data modelling;
- Fluent in English;
- Proven leadership and negotiation skills;
- Attention to detail.

Conclusion

In this paper the authors observed only a limited number of job adverts related to the job of the Lead Business Analyst in order to more accurately determine the observed data. Data collection for this paper began on March 15 2018 and ended on March 18 2018 and a total of 200 adverts were collected, which makes up roughly 5% of the total number of adverts present on LinkedIn in that period. The goal of this paper was to show what skills are set for this job, as well as what is expected of these employees on their workplaces once they are hired.

The lead business analyst is the middle-man in the process of creating new and meaningful reports between different lower level analyst and ICT departments in a company. Their role is immeasurable today as they gather and analyse different sets of data in support of business cases, proposed reports and projects as well as systems requirements. The lead business analyst is also responsible for generating and compiling reports based on the findings, complete with probable causes and possible solutions to systems issues. Business Analysts neither are just IT employees nor are they only Project Managers. They have much larger and wider spectrum of operations.

There are similar researches of this topic, such as "Defining the Value of the Business Analyst" (Percival, K., 2010) in which the author roughly sums up the skills necessary for working as a Lead Business Analyst and their job descriptions, but without any stated methodical analysis of job adverts. Also, one of this paper's authors wrote a paper "Creating a Profile of Employees in the Accounting Department" (Grdošić, L., 2015) about gathered job adverts in the field of accounting and auditing, but with smaller amount of gathered job adverts which were gathered only for Republic of Croatia and adjacent countries.

The authors see the possibility of further research so as to take into account a larger number of job adverts or to interview Lead Business Analysts working in Croatia to compare their responsibilities and opinions on modern BI systems and their respective roles in that processes.

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