

SAIT Podcast: Paleontologist Turned Business Analyst Episode 7

[00:00:00] **ANNCR:** The Best Careers You Never Knew Existed Podcast, sparked by SAIT and co-hosted by CITI, the podcast that helps you navigate jobs. Learn about new careers and industries!

[00:00:12] **Lora:** Hi, I'm Lora. I work in continuing education and professional studies at SAIT.

[00:00:15] **Zach:** And I'm Zach, the founder of Careers in Technology and Innovation.

[00:00:19] **Lora:** Hello and welcome to our podcast. In this episode, we're talking to Adile about being a business analyst. Make sure you stick around for resources and advice after the interview.

[00:00:27] **Zach:** Yeah, we hope you enjoy the conversation.

[00:00:30] **ANNCR:** Now, here's a career you never knew existed.

[00:00:34] **Lora:** Welcome to the podcast Adile, could you introduce yourself?

[00:00:38] **Adile:** Yeah. My name is Adile Abbadi-MacIntosh. I'm a born and bred Calgarian. Lived here my entire life, educated here, career here. I guess you could say, a software developer for the past 25-ish years, but I kind of do a whole bunch of other stuff. I'm an instructor, I've done a lot of business analysis work, it's a big part of what I do.

[00:01:00] **Adile:** I'm a former paleontologist, believe it or not.

[00:01:02] **Zach:** Cool.

[00:01:03] **Adile:** Yes. That's a whole story for another day. Like I worked for years at the Terrell Museum digging up dinosaurs actually, it's very cool.

[00:01:10] **Lora:** I feel like that's the ultimate career pivot.

[00:01:11] **Adile:** Well, it was actually. Yeah. It was a big career pivot for me.

[00:01:15] **Adile:** When I went to university, I had these aspirations to become the Moroccan Indiana Jones kind of thing. So, I wanted to go to Morocco where my family's from and dig dinosaurs there. That was actually my dream at that time. My dad thought I was absolutely insane. And so, yeah, I went to university here in Calgary and did an undergrad in geology, geophysics.

[00:01:36] **Adile:** It was a double major with an honors degree in Paleo. And worked at the Tyrrell for five years, four years, almost. Every summer I was out there digging dinosaurs and stuff, but software was always something that I kind of did on the side. It was this thing that kind of put me through school.

[00:01:51] **Adile:** It was something fun to do for me just to make some extra cash because it paid better. And then, I had finished school at U of C and was planning to go to grad school for Paleo. And I met my, at that time my then girlfriend, now my wife, and, you know, we went traveling, went backpacking around the world a little bit and, and went to Morocco as part of that to actually do a little bit of preliminary field work.

[00:02:17] **Adile:** Came back from that trip and I was pretty broke. Couldn't go to school, couldn't afford anything and so I said I need a job. And so, I ended up hooking up with a company called Critical Mass here in Calgary. And I quickly became a software, you know, one of their senior software devs. I realized I made more money there than I'd ever made being a paleontologist.

[00:02:38] **Adile:** I was like, we were getting paid pennies, and I was like, wow, I can actually afford to buy a car. And it was one of those epiphany moments. And then I fell in love and all

that kind of fun stuff. And I was like, I don't think, she's going to come move to Drumheller with me.

[00:02:51] **Adile:** So, I figured I needed to do something different. So, it was a massive pivot for me. Yeah.

[00:03:00] **Lora:** Isn't that the story though? It's where you think you're going to end up and then where you actually end up.

[00:03:05] **Adile:** Absolutely.

[00:03:05] **Lora:** But today we wanted to talk to you about Business Analyst. I know that's been a hat that you've worn. Can you tell us a little bit about what is a Business Analyst?

[00:03:15] **Adile:** Yeah, that's a great question. My kids, yesterday asked the exact same question because I told them I was coming to do this podcast and they were like, you know, dad, what is business analysis? And I was like, yeah, well, you know, it's an interesting field, it's an interesting job.

[00:03:31] **Adile:** And it's something that I kind of like fell into as a result of the work that I was doing for clients. So, you know, as part of like building tech, one of the things that really comes out all the time is that you have to understand how businesses operate and how to make them more efficient, and how do you solve internal problems.

[00:03:49] **Adile:** That's a big part of software development, right? Like you're coming in and you're like, hey, we have this internal efficiency problem, or we're trying to automate our processes, or we're trying to solve a challenge that we're doing with our customers. And so, you can't just come in blindly and just start coding.

[00:04:04] **Adile:** You can't just start. You have to analyze the business. You have to understand what are you guys doing, what are the processes that you have in place? How do we look for ways to improve those processes? How do we get better at that? You know, where's wasted time happening? And then from that, you have to then build requirements.

[00:04:18] **Adile:** You have to say, okay, well, you know, in order for me to solve these problems, we have to build requirements that requires elicitation and interviews and being able to work with your clients and work with the people that you're trying to build this stuff for. And ultimately, at the end of the day, all that information, all that knowledge that you get, result in the product to actually solve that initial business challenge. So that work, that analysis, that process, understanding that requirements elicitation, basically analyzing businesses, trying to find challenges and problems that they have.

[00:04:50] **Adile:** Look for ways to make improvements, looking for ways to support new initiatives, new projects, build new projects. That's the work of a Business Analyst is helping those businesses basically deal with those challenges.

[00:05:02] **Zach:** So how did you go from Software Developer to Business Analyst?

[00:05:04] **Adile:** Well, like I said, I kind of fell into that role.

[00:05:07] **Adile:** I couldn't just be the guy that just sat there and just coded right. Just telling me what to do. I needed to understand why I was doing this stuff. How was I going to make this business better. And so, I think that role of the BA sort of just fell into it because it was a natural progression you needed in order to solve those challenges, you needed to do that kind of work.

[00:05:30] **Adile:** I needed to understand why so that I could find better ways to solve these challenges for these people. Right? Because sometimes people come to you, they tell you what they think they want you to fix. But the reality is when you start to dive deep and you start to

understand what they're doing, you start to realize, well, no, like here's the other ways that you could look at it.

[00:05:45] **Adile:** You know, oh, you guys have missed a requirement. Oh, this is another way we can solve this problem. Oh, we can fix these two issues at the same time. Oh, here's a new feature that would actually maybe give you a competitive advantage in your business. Right? Those are the types of things that kind of just came out of it naturally, and it was just sort of became a natural progression.

[00:06:01] **Adile:** In fact, actually, I didn't even realize I was doing BA work until somebody told me that I was actually doing BA work and that was actually interesting, and a lot of BA's that I've met have actually been in that same boat as me. They didn't realize they were doing that kind of work. You know, they might have been a project manager, they might have been a software team lead.

[00:06:20] **Adile:** They might have been, you know, who knows what it could have been. It was a whole bunch of things. I've seen Data Scientists who are like, oh my god, yeah, I do that kind of stuff too. And they don't realize that they're actually doing BA work.

[00:06:29] **Zach:** Because it sounds like you a little bit of following your curiosity. But not all BA's come from a technical route.

[00:06:34] **Adile:** Not at all. And actually I think that's one of the common misnomers is that I think a lot of people think that Business Analysis work is automatically attributed to a technical background. BA work can be applied to any environment. So actually one of the classes I've taught was around business process.

[00:06:52] **Adile:** And so, people automatically think, oh, business process automatically around like automation and having software to support a process or stuff. Like I said, no, it's actually not even that. You could look at any business can be broken down into a simple process, right? Like, you know, I always use the example of a hotdog stand in my class, and people always laugh at it, but it's actually such a simple thing.

[00:07:11] **Adile:** It's like the concept of having a hotdog cart and selling. So, what is the process of selling a hotdog cart? Well, it's like customer comes up to you, they give you the order, you get the bun, you take the hotdog, you stick it in, you know, you ask for the condiments. So, there's branch points in that process.

[00:07:26] **Adile:** Something as simple as that. You can actually really break it down into complexities and then when you start to actually analyze it, you start to go, oh, well there's ways of being more efficient, right? And there's other ways to, you know, have this continuous improvement and then introduce new products or, you know, find ways to reduce costs and all this kind of fun stuff.

[00:07:42] **Adile:** So, you don't have to be a technical person at all to be an effective Business Analyst. That business analysis can be applied in any domain.

[00:07:50] **Zach:** When you're looking at those efficiencies or changes like, you know, this word gets thrown around a lot, agile. How do you bind the improvements and efficiencies as a BA and have the software development process continue?

[00:08:04] **Adile:** I mean, it's a great question. I mean, I think that's a hard one to sort of answer. I guess in sort of a generalized way I think when you're looking for efficiencies, when you're looking for improvement, it's about trying to recognize, you know, what is that business trying to accomplish? Who are its customers at the end of the day?

[00:08:17] **Adile:** Who are the people that are providing into that process and what is coming out of that process? And I think it's looking at, you know, how these businesses actually operate and you don't need necessarily a software background to really look at it from that perspective. In fact, actually I look at it from the perspective of software is there to support those processes.

[00:08:33] **Adile:** Software is there, and technology is there to help keep these businesses moving forward. It's like, you know, you have a process, how do we make software and then simplify that, right? So, it's like hey, you've got a process that maybe takes like 10 steps, let's say for example. Well, if I can automate seven of those steps, and if I can help bypass some of those steps so that you're not having to do a bunch of data entry or whatever it is, I've now made you more efficient. Right. And then there's an ROI on that that you can get.

[00:08:58] **Lora:** How much do you need to understand tech to be a BA? Because there's some element of utilizing technology, I guess too, or as an option.

[00:09:07] **Adile:** Yeah. You know, I think it really depends on the kind of BA you wanna be and what kind of domain you wanna be in.

[00:09:12] **Adile:** I don't think you necessarily have to be, you know, you could have, for example, if you were to take a retail type of scenario, right? Where you're trying to automate or trying to simplify a process inside there. That could be as simple as like looking at the way you deal with customer service.

[00:09:30] **Adile:** For example, do you necessarily need tech to support that? There could be a technical component, but you don't need to be a technical person to be able to solve an efficiency problem. So that's why I'm saying BA should not be limited to tech people. It's actually, in fact, a lot of the really good BA's I've met are non-technical, right?

[00:09:47] **Adile:** They have some technical, you know, understanding like they understand what a database is or something like that. But I think you don't necessarily have to be. Now, mind you, there are lots of pathways in BA that you can go down that have like a tech component. For example, there's Data Analysts who were BA's and became Data Analysts because they really love the data aspect of it.

[00:10:07] **Adile:** So, they start to learn about data, they learn how to manipulate data. Data is very, very powerful, particularly powerful for a BA. As a BA if you're trying to improve businesses or you're trying to look for opportunities and stuff like that. And if you've got the data to support that, then, you know, that's a very, very powerful tool.

[00:10:21] **Adile:** So being a Data Analyst is a very natural progression where these BA's go, oh, I really like data, I like working with data. I like to understand data. So, they start to learn about, you know, how to work with databases, how to work with business intelligence, ML, AI, all that kind of fun stuff. Learning how to actually pull data out of systems and then they can then apply their BA knowledge to the data knowledge side of it, and then be able to really come up with some cool efficiencies and cool things that they can come out to make businesses better.

[00:10:45] **Lora:** Well, what would you say are the core skills that a BA needs?

[00:10:48] **Adile:** I think the number one skill is that critical thinking aspect. I think being able to come into a situation and really spend the time to actually analyze what is actually going on and understand the business, the domain, the stakeholders, all the people that are involved, the competitive environment, the market.

[00:11:07] **Adile:** You have to be somebody who's willing to sit down and critically think about the situation. And it's about listening, right? Like active listening, critical thinking, all those types

of skills. I think that's probably the most powerful skill that you have. A lot of other stuff can be learned, right? You know, learning about technology, learning about databases, all that kind of fun stuff.

[00:11:25] **Adile:** But being able to be that critical thinking and have critical thinking skills and have that active listening, I think is a very, very important aspect of it. And then I think beyond that, one thing that I've learned meeting BA's is I think having that ability to talk to people. I think that's another one.

[00:11:41] **Adile:** Some of my classes I've had people come up and they're like, "oh my God, one thing I'm realizing about the BA is I need to need to converse with people. I need to actually be able to talk or present or, you know, present a business case or whatever." And they're terrified of that.

[00:11:54] **Adile:** Like they're actually terrified of that social interaction, right? Like they're maybe a little bit introverted and I've said yeah, I think a big part of that is, you have to be able to come out of your shell and be able to talk to people and feel comfortable talking to people and being able to feel comfortable, you know, presenting and all that kind of fun stuff.

[00:12:08] **Adile:** And so, I've actually had students, I remember I had one lady, she said to me, "I've never done this before. Like, I'm terrified of this, do I really have to do this presentation?" And I said, "Look like you're in a safe place. You know, nobody's going to judge you. All the students here are doing the same thing. Come in and just try it."

[00:12:22] **Adile:** And so she did, she actually did the presentation and she came back afterwards. She's like, "oh my God, thank you for pushing me in that direction because like I would've never done that and now I feel more confident that I could do this again." Right, and so I think that's a really huge aspect.

[00:12:38] **Adile:** So those are, I'd say the main skills. And then of course there's all these other little things, but that would be the big ones for me.

[00:12:44] **Zach:** Do those skills change at all as you become more senior in your career?

[00:12:47] **Adile:** Yeah, absolutely. I think a big part of it is confidence and experience, right? One of the things that commonly comes up when people are talking to me about BA work is that they're like, well, how do you know what to do?

[00:12:59] **Adile:** Right, like, how do you learn? And I say honestly, it comes from experience. And it comes from experience based on the domain that you're in. So, I happen to be in the technical domain, right? So, I'm implementing software and implementing technology. So, you implement enough platforms under your belt over time you learn a thing or two, right?

[00:13:15] **Adile:** And so, then you can learn how to approach the next situation and say, "Hey, I learned from this previous experience", and then I can apply that knowledge to something else. So, I think for somebody who's just starting out, I mean, I think getting into that environment where you could be mentored and supported by somebody else who has that experience, and then you can learn from that, I think is a huge aspect.

[00:13:33] **Zach:** So, what's a day in the life look like?

[00:13:34] **Adile:** My days are not average because I'm everywhere, and anywhere. So, I mean, there's days where I'm doing more BA work than others, and there's days where I'm doing more technology and development and stuff. Yeah, I don't know. I don't even know how to answer that question actually from what's an average day for a BA.

[00:13:45] **Adile:** I think an average day is coming in and working with your teammates and keeping projects moving along and looking for ways to make sure things are being made better and looking for opportunities for improvement and initiating projects and getting teams organized and things to that effect.

[00:14:03] **Adile:** I really think it depends on the domain that you're in, but I'd say for me, my average day is usually finding out what I need to build for my clients next and making sure those processes are being maintained and supported and looking for efficiencies to help them keep going.

[00:14:17] **Zach:** You've shared this concept of domain. Can you give us an example of the breadth of domains that you'd see BA's in?

[00:14:22] **Adile:** Oh my god. Anything and everything. So, I mean, that's from oil and gas to health to retail, to tech to startups. Startups need BA's, oil and gas need BA's. I mean, the role of the BA is interesting.

[00:14:36] **Adile:** It's one of those ones where I still think a lot of people don't know about it. And then I think there's companies that do have formal BA roles. And there's a lot of companies who don't actually have them, don't even know what they are, but somebody is doing BA work in that environment, but it's probably in a different job title, Project Manager, you know, Software Team Lead, whatever it happens to be.

[00:14:56] **Adile:** Yeah, I think any domain can benefit from BA work. And I think the more and more people recognize BA as an actual profession, I think you'll see more and more adopt it. Definitely today you see it a lot more in organizations, more than I've ever seen it. 20 years ago, when I was first starting off in the career of my career, that was a completely foreign concept.

[00:15:18] **Lora:** How would you describe the difference between a Project Manager and a BA?

[00:15:22] **Adile:** That is a great question and very different skill sets. You know, I think project managers, funny enough, I just wrote a whole section on this in one of the classes I'm working on.

[00:15:32] **Adile:** I'd say the key difference is that Project Manager's responsibility lies in keeping the project organized, moving forward, and people getting to their tasks. BA's on the other hand, are very much focused around how do we make sure that the project is aligned with the business objectives, that we're satisfying requirements.

[00:15:50] **Adile:** The BA's are involved in that requirement elicitation. So, making sure that we're actually building the project to a certain specification. BA's are responsible for making sure that the project is aligned with processes that are inside of that organization. And BA's are ultimately responsible for KPIs that come out of a project, right?

[00:16:08] **Adile:** So, has it been successful? Did it meet on our objectives? Project Managers tend to be more focused on, I've got a project, I've gotta organize the team. Are you actually on schedule, building out the schedule? You know, do I have the right people doing the right thing?

[00:16:22] **Adile:** You know, did we meet our deadlines? That kind of thing. BA's are a little bit more, they step back and they look at it from a different perspective. They're looking at it from the perspective of, you know, are we actually making sure that this aligns with our business objectives and it's actually meeting our business objectives?

[00:16:35] **Lora:** So, you mentioned that you kind of fell into it and it sounds like other people fall into it. If someone wanted to become a BA, how would you recommend they go about doing that?

[00:16:46] **Adile:** I mean, I know there's a lot of great BA programs that are offered. And SAIT obviously has one and I think that's a great starting point.

[00:16:54] **Adile:** I think also, you know, a lot of people, what I found is that they realized that they became a BA sort of, like I said, they kind of fell into it, right? So, you know, I think being involved in projects, people don't realize this, but you automatically start doing this kind of BA work and a lot of times they don't realize it.

[00:17:10] **Adile:** And so, I think it's about recognizing more that you're doing this kind of work in the job that you're doing. So, I mean, you might be a Software Lead and you're kind of going, hey, I like the software side, but I really enjoy that. More analytical thinking, the building requirements, all that kind of fun stuff.

[00:17:25] **Adile:** And then I think it's about recognizing that that actually is BA work. And then you kind of go, "oh, I actually really like that. I wanna pursue that. I want to go down that path". So, I think that's kind of like the two sort of pathways I would say. There is a BA certification that you can get and, you can go to school, like I said here at SAIT. The other opportunity is that you just kind of realize you're doing it and then you just build upon those skills.

[00:17:47] **Lora:** What do you think is the opportunity for people that want to do BA work as consultants? Because I have in my head that there's a lot of folks, especially in the Alberta market, who are consultants as BA's. And you know, do you think that's a viable path for someone?

[00:18:01] **Adile:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. In fact, a lot of the BA's I know are contractors because they're jumping from project to project, right? I think that's actually one of the things that's really cool about being a BA is that you don't get pigeonholed into one industry, right? If you've got those kinds of skills to understand elicitation requirements, all that kind of stuff that I've kind of already been talking about. You don't have to be like, "well, I've got to be just an oil and gas BA." You could take that, you can help with a project, you could apply the critical thinking skills, you can do that analysis, all that kind of fun stuff, and then very easily jump to a healthcare project, right?

[00:18:39] **Adile:** You might have to understand the domain a little bit better, but at the end of the day, those skills are very transferable. So yeah, a lot of people that I know, a lot of the BA's that I've met over my career are contractors, and it's because of the nature of the kind of work, they're jumping from project to project.

[00:18:54] **Adile:** And it's probably the personality of the individual too. If they like working on different things at different times. And so, there's lots of opportunities. In fact, I just had a recent friend of mine who was a BA, he had been working for an oil gas company here in Calgary. He got laid off and he was talking to me.

[00:19:10] **Adile:** He's like, "oh, I'm having a hard time. I don't know what to do? People don't understand the BA realm, you know, so when I'm trying to apply for a job, I've had a bit of a struggle" right? You know, because they're like, "well, you're not a pro, you haven't had a project manager role".

[00:19:22] **Adile:** But he's applying for a project, but when you look at the job description, it's BA work, right? And he's like, "so I've had a struggle". And I said to him, "Hey, you should pursue

looking at contract. Why don't you see what's out there from a contract perspective"? And you know what, he took my advice.

[00:19:35] **Adile:** He reached out to a couple people that he knew and within a week he had a contract, and he was on a year doing more process improvement work, which was very much centered around BA work. So yeah, I think there is absolutely an opportunity there from a consulting perspective. I think that's what makes it fun.

[00:19:50] **Adile:** You get to jump to different types of projects. You get to see that project through, you get to do all the analysis, you see the success of it, and then you can move on to another project and do something else and then apply that knowledge and that experience to different environments. So yeah, absolutely.

[00:20:05] **Zach:** Do you feel that based on your experience, the type of projects that are being worked on is significantly different from working in, let's say, a corporation in oil and gas versus working at Critical Mass or a startup?

[00:20:17] **Adile:** Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean if you look at, for example, a startup, when you're coming in as a BA in a startup, you are probably coming in, you know, at the ground level of that business, right?

[00:20:28] **Adile:** That business is just trying to figure out where it wants to be. It's trying to put its big boy pants on, right? It's trying to see who it's going to be, where is it going to go, and all that. You have to be agile. And so, from that perspective, a BA comes in, probably takes on a significant amount more responsibility than it would in an oil and gas company, right?

[00:20:43] **Adile:** An oil and gas company, if you come in as a BA, a bigger enterprise, you're probably coming in to work on a very specific project with very specific boundaries. Then you've got very specific work. Whereas when you come into something like a startup, you're probably coming in and you could be touching everything, every project, even just deciding what that business is going to do and how it's going to operate and the market that it's going after and challenges that it's trying to solve. So, I think it absolutely can be very, very different between the two types of environments and the type of work that you could be doing and the level of engagement that you could have.

[00:21:17] **Zach:** We recently had a member of the Careers in Tech community who landed a business analyst job. And she was like more down training herself. She was an accountant by trade and then she was training herself on data. Cloud, those type of things to end up as a Data Analyst, but she ended up in this Business Analyst role, which I don't think that was her target. Can you talk a little bit more about previous like professional work and how that can be leveraged in a BA role and how does data fit?

[00:21:46] **Adile:** Yeah, I mean, I think it comes back to what I'd mentioned before, which was this notion of experience, right? Experience and working and stuff. So, for example, you're the person you're talking about, you know, she was an accountant, she's probably worked on a bunch of different projects, potentially worked in different businesses.

[00:21:59] **Adile:** She's seeing different things. She saw the value of data, right? She understood what data can do and data, how it can transform a business, how it can support a business, how it can provide huge value to a business. I can see how that would be a natural progression. An accountant looking at the numbers, looking at the data, I can see that natural progression to go towards that, to see the value behind that and then end up in this BA role.

[00:22:22] **Adile:** Well, absolutely, because you know, it's one thing for you to look at the numbers and look at the data. It's another thing to do something with it, right? And I think that's that big leap, right? Understanding what does that data do? And then taking that and leaping towards that. Well, how can I take that data and make that valuable to a business and how can I use that in an interesting way and how can I use that to chase after new markets or improve efficiency or whatever it happens to be?

[00:22:43] **Adile:** And I think that's actually really the power. So, to answer your first question, yeah, I think that experience really helps you to be able to take on new challenges and to be able to understand how to learn how to solve new problems and learn the power and the value of the data and whatever it is that you're looking at.

[00:22:57] **Adile:** And then I think that sort of natural progression into that sort of BA role, just kind of happens to so many people and it's one of those things I've seen happen so many different times. I mean, like I said, myself, that's me. That's kind of how I ended up doing BA work. When I started back, you know, it was very typical.

[00:23:12] **Adile:** Like whenever you have a project that you'd have a front-end developer, a backend dev, potentially a database person, and then you'd have a project manager and likely a designer, right? And somebody, a creative individual. So that would be your team, and then you would move forward and build your project.

[00:23:30] **Adile:** I think the paradigms are going to shift to where you're going to have all those people plus a BA and, they're going to recognize the value of what that BA does in terms of like understanding requirements, looking for ways to improve, making sure it aligns with business objectives and all that kind of fun stuff.

[00:23:43] **Adile:** So, I think you're going to see that in every project. Any project that's going to be initiated, I think we're going to get to a point where BAs are going to be recognized as this person that brings huge value and is going to be a significantly distinct role within an organization. But that's not to say that also you're not going to see that the BA skills are going to be something that's going to be applied to all other types of roles, right?

[00:24:05] **Adile:** In small organizations, you may not be able to afford a BA. But that doesn't mean that you don't see the value of BA work as part of, you know, a project manager's position or the lead dev or whatever it happens to be.

[00:24:18] **Lora:** Yea for sure, understanding requirements, critical thinking, problem solving.

[00:24:22] **Adile:** Yeah, and, just understanding the business at the end. I mean, that's, that's the crux of business analysis. Understanding the business, right? And what does it do? What's it trying to achieve? Where is it trying to go? Who is it trying to service? What value is it trying to bring? The BA basically understands all that and helps people see it and align it and deliver on it.

[00:24:42] **Zach:** Is there a best practice on the requirement gathering, like by standards or do you feel like every team has a different approach?

[00:24:48] **Adile:** Great question. Yeah I mean, there are, there are standards. I mean, the BA, there's this thing called the the BABOK, which is the BA Body of Knowledge, and there's this sort of standardized way in terms of like how you elicit requirements, how you define them, the types of requirements there is. There's a standardized way I do see in various organizations that people, you know, they mold things to their business.

[00:25:10] **Adile:** And that's the same with all types of BA work, whether that's requirements gathering, whether that's like, you know, people have their own version of agile. Right, in terms of how they approach agile and how they approach projects and all that kind of fun stuff. So, you're going to see that, you're going to see that all over the place, and I don't think that's ever going to go away.

[00:25:26] **Adile:** But there is, yes. I mean there is a standardized way of how you should do it, but I think there's flexibility there that allows people to sort of mold it to their business. And I think actually in many respects, that is kind of BA work if you think about it, right? Because you take that underlying principle and you say, "Hey, let's apply it to our business."

[00:25:44] **Adile:** But then, you know, oh, but our business is unique so let's slightly adjust this or slightly adjust it that way so that it works better for us and makes us more efficient. And I think that's BA work in its own right.

[00:25:55] **Zach:** What would be your top tips for someone that's thinking about this career, wants to get in this career? What would you say is the best things for them to do?

[00:26:03] **Adile:** The easiest thing I could say is go take a BA program, the simplest thing, right. You know, go to SAIT, and do their BA program. That'd be fantastic. And I'd probably say that for somebody who's very junior, has never done anything, doesn't know where they want to go, I think that would be a very easy answer.

[00:26:21] **Adile:** I think for somebody who probably has been in their career for quite a bit of time and they're looking for a pivot, I would ask them the question. I would say, you know, "what are you doing today that could be considered BA work?" Right. And of course, they'd ask me, well, I don't know what BA work is, right?

[00:26:39] **Adile:** And so, I'd tell them what I think BA work is. And then when you start talking about it, they start to realize, oh yeah. And then I'd ask the next question, "do you like any part of that? Do you actually enjoy doing that kind of stuff?" You'd be amazed, like people are like, "yeah, actually, I kind of do."

[00:26:53] **Adile:** And I've seen that actually happen. Like I've seen that so many times. It happens every time I've taught a class. Same thing that happens. I have a person who comes in, they're like, yeah, I was a programmer or I was an accountant, and I realized I didn't really like what I was doing, but I liked this aspect of what I was doing, and now I've decided that that is the direction I want to go, right.

[00:27:13] **Adile:** So that would be my tip from that perspective is if you wanted to get into BA work, ask yourself, are you already doing BA work? If you're already in that career, and then if you are and you enjoy it, then, go down that path.

[00:27:30] **Lora:** So, you've mentioned training options. Brought up briefly the association, I think IIBA is a good resource.

[00:27:37] **Adile:** Yeah. The IIBA, they're the ones that provide the certification and built the BABOK, which is the Body of Knowledge. Yeah.

[00:27:45] **Lora:** Yeah, absolutely, and then we know that there's BA's in CITI currently that people could connect with, but can you think of any other resources or places where we could send people if they wanted to learn more?

[00:27:58] **Adile:** Oh, wow. I mean, the interweb is for full of fantastic resources. I know there's tons of classes online, like from the Udemy and that kind of stuff in the world. I think also talking to other BA's, finding out if there's other BA's that you know. So, going to those

networking type of events and looking for individuals who are doing that kind of work and networking with them and understanding what they do and finding out what makes them tick, I think is an excellent way to learn more and find those sort of mentorship opportunities.

[00:28:30] **Zach:** Yeah, and you know, maybe one last question. If someone was on the fence. What would be something you'd say to encourage them to explore more?

[00:28:35] **Adile:** You mean on the fence of whether or not they wanted to do BA work?

[00:28:36] **Zach:** Yeah.

[00:28:36] **Adile:** Or to be a BA?

[00:28:37] **Zach:** Yeah.

[00:28:37] **Adile:** Yeah. I think I'd say the same thing I kind of said before. I'd say think about the work that you've been doing, like if you're a junior, like if you've never done it before, I think it's more about understanding, does that interest you?

[00:28:51] **Adile:** Right. Do you like the idea of working on projects, do you like the idea of supporting a business and their objectives and like helping align businesses and look for ways to do efficiency and improvements and stuff like that? So, I'd say from that perspective, those are the types of general questions, I would say.

[00:29:04] **Adile:** I always ask the question like if somebody's like, "oh, I didn't realize I'm a BA", or "I'm not sure if I am a BA" or whatever it is, I always ask that question. I come back to that, are you doing BA work? Do you enjoy that BA work? Do you realize you're doing BA work? What is it that you actually do?

[00:29:20] **Adile:** You don't realize that, but you're doing BA work, right? Already, and then they're kind of like, oh. And it's interesting, a lot of the BA's I've known some of them I've met, I guess the right way to describe it is that they kind of almost felt like they didn't know what they were doing in their career.

[00:29:34] **Adile:** They kind of didn't know how to define themselves, like they're doing this job. They're kind of like a project manager. They're kind of a systems analyst. They're like, "I just, I don't feel like that job title applies to me, I don't really feel like I'm a project manager. I don't really feel like I'm doing this, I'm not a developer but I'm kind of doing this work."

[00:29:48] **Adile:** And it's this requirements work and this managing projects or I'm acting as like a scrum leader, but I'm kind of like also building requirements and doing this kind of stuff. That's always the ones that I find are when you kind of give them that opportunity to talk about what it is that you're actually doing and then put a word around it.

[00:30:09] **Adile:** It almost like becomes a bit of, not an epiphany, but doesn't close the door, and actually says, "oh, I know what I am now." You know, it's almost like they've been kind of working for so many years and they're like, "I'm not really sure what I was, I'm not really sure what I was, I kind of did this. I kind of did all these different roles."

[00:30:22] **Adile:** But then when you put that, you say, "Hey, you know what? You're actually a BA". They're like, "oh, right". They have this moment and they're like, "Oh my God. That's where I am. Oh, that's great". You know, "Now I know what I like." They almost feel like fulfilled, like they almost feel like "I know what I am, I know what I do."

[00:30:36] **Lora:** It's a real job.

[00:30:36] **Adile:** Yeah, it's a real job. That's right. But it's not that they didn't have a real job before, it's not that. But yeah, I always find that that's the thing I find interesting is they have this epiphany moment and it's like, "oh, that's what I am, oh that's great."

[00:30:51] **Adile:** You know, now I know where to go and now I know where to improve and now I know the kind of skills I should take on and those kinds of things. And I think that's always fun.

[00:31:01] **Lora:** We really enjoyed our conversation with Adile.

[00:31:02] **Zach:** Yeah. What I really enjoyed, particularly, this business analyst role, I feel like I'm just tipping the iceberg about learning about it, but it does seem like it's at this intersectionality of people, process, business, and technology. And allows people that are really fascinated about solving problems with technologies, but really understanding the people in the business. It gives them the opportunity to really bring that together and drive impact.

[00:31:26] **Lora:** For me, it was interesting to hear that it's a role. The options for the role for consulting or contract work and in companies, and also that the skills are kind of inherent in other roles. So, it seems like a very diverse, well used skillset to develop.

[00:31:45] **Zach:** Yeah. And I hope to see more of it. It sounds like, we talked about this like falling in into a business analyst role, but I think the stories I heard is more like a follow or led themselves into a role that they didn't necessarily think they're going to walk into.

[00:32:00] **Zach:** So, opportunities for people to really follow their curiosity around impact to end up in kind of that business analyst role. So, I think it's an exciting role that I know there's a few people, who have been looking for this type of role, and they're like, "I don't really think I'm a data person or tech person, but I want to be close to it and I want to drive the business, what am I?"

[00:32:20] **Zach:** I think the biggest part that Adile said was like this moment of euphoria when people realize this is what they are. And I think that's exciting that hopefully many, many more people will have that moment.

[00:32:32] **Lora:** Well thanks Zach, and thanks to our listeners for listening and thanks to Adile for being part of the podcast, but also for all the work that everyone's doing in the community for people that are evolving their careers.

[00:32:42] **Zach:** Make sure to check out the resources below.

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