

# AMIR TALIB'S BLOG ARTICLE:

'Dancing On A Shifting Carpet'... Or, how  
I learnt to become an effective business  
analyst

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# 'Dancing On A Shifting Carpet'... Or, how I learnt to become an effective business analyst

<http://bit.ly/2gAo6OT>

Personal and professional growth, so they say, comes from overcoming adversity. The sort of adversity that tests and tries, but doesn't overwhelm. Like a well-balanced strength building regime. A balance of time under positive pressure, recuperation and adaptation.

"Personal and professional growth... A balance of time under positive pressure, recuperation and adaptation."

My watermark moment was working as a business analyst within the oil & gas industry. A moment that taught me the value of communication and perspective.

The Setting: A multinational company. Operating out of a tiny nation, perched on the North West coast of Borneo island.

The Journey: The implementation of a new multi-project delivery process.

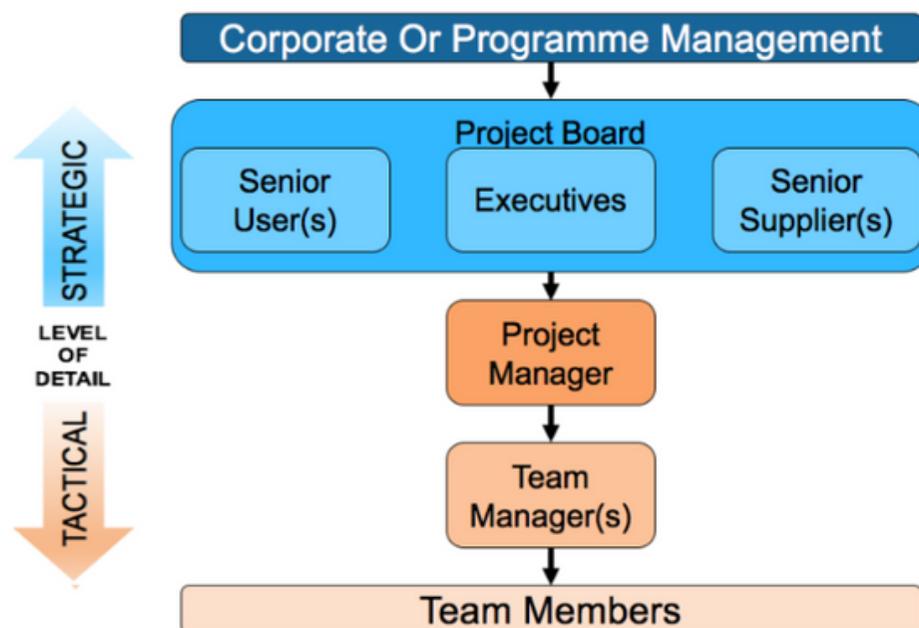
The Challenge: Success factors involved,

- Minimising scheduled oil production deferment,
- Optimising shared resource utilisation, and
- Maximising asset integrity.

The task put to my team and I was no small ask. We had the guidance of a well-placed senior manager as our sponsor. A panel of capable managers that acted as the project board. And, support of the head office based in Europe. This support translated into organisational buy-in at the local level.

The new project delivery process had a name: Integrated Activity Planning (IAP).

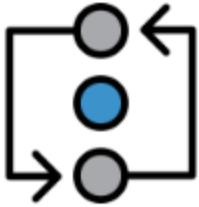
It strove to integrate, rationalise and optimise project plans. Plans provided by different operating units within the organisation.



This was a keystone project in a time of uncertain economic realities. Oil prices were erratic, to say the least. With an obvious downward trend that looked like the new normal for some years to come.

The organisation needed to relook its operations in the short, medium and long term. Ensuring what resources were available would be put to effective and efficient use. The primary concern being the creation and best utilisation of the organisations business budget.

Achieving this involved,



Process. Designing and embedding the formal IAP process within the current planning process



Technology. To produce quality data for planning, leveraging on: SAP Project Systems, SAP Plant Maintenance and Primavera P6.



People. Assessing and developing the competencies of the individuals to meet IAP requirements.

At first, I sat within the technology component of the project. This was due to my competency in SAP Project Systems, Plant Maintenance and Primavera P6. But soon found that I needed to sit across process, technology and people. A necessary and essential move on my part as a business analyst.

Become acquainted with every art ~ Miyamoto Musashi

I find that information technology enables a unique insider's perspective. Providing insight into business processes, people and technology. This perspective enabled me to learn about:

- Planning for projects. For simple, complex and inter-related projects.
- Business plan development. Incorporating a short, medium and long view.
- Procurement of materials & services. The challenges involved in coordinating provision to onshore and offshore sites.
- Production deferment. The demands of balancing production deferment against asset maintenance and integrity.

- The mentoring and development of competent personnel.
- Data integrity and interconnectivity. The value of ensuring that correct data gets recorded and acted upon in a system. And,
- Technology. Using the right tool for the right task at hand.

Through effective engagements with stakeholders, I was able to contribute timely information. In forums such as the project team and project board meetings. Information that affected specific positive outcomes.

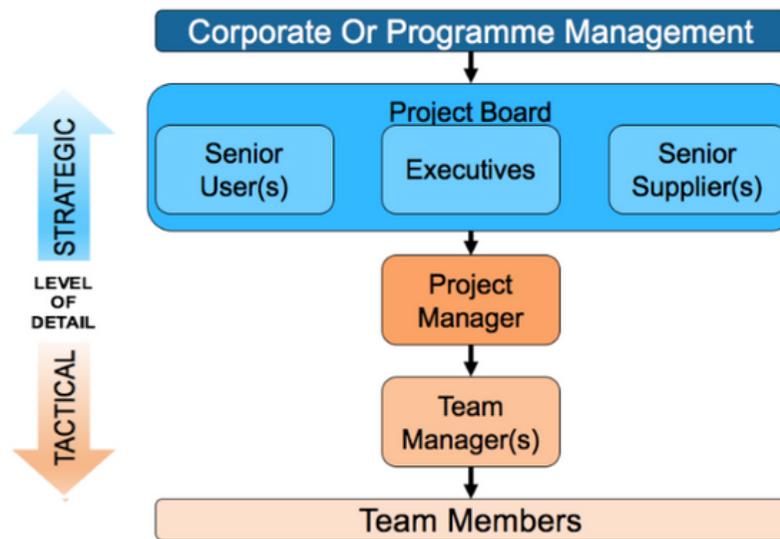
I became a strong advocate and practitioner of a consultative and inclusive approach. A strategy that has since held me in good stead throughout my career. People appreciate it when you are able to listen and represent them in the right forum.

They appreciate it when you can show that you have a firm grasp of their business concerns. This adds to your integrity, and in the long run, your credibility as a business analyst. In the many industries that I have worked with, I have seen lip-service and BS called out all too often. It is damaging for both the business analyst and the organisation.

With your spirit open and unconstricted, look at things from a high point of view ~ Miyamoto Musasahi

It can be easy to lose sight of the forest for the trees. To get caught up in the granularity of the concerns at play. Especially when there are many moving parts to the project.

A good project structure will ensure the necessary level of granularity of information. Ensuring that the right types of information reach the appropriate individuals. The individuals who can digest and act on the information.



Note: The diagram is a basic project structure as advocated by the Prince2 Methodology. I developed the 'Level Of Detail' component to illustrate the paragraph above.

A business analyst, however, can find him- or herself mired in a lot of information. Losing the necessary perspective.

The IAP project strengthened my ability to look things at both at the ground level and from a birds eye view. To zoom in and out of the details.

An example of when I did this,

- Workorders for an offshore oil rig were not entered into SAP in a timely and correct manner.
- The maintenance work was not scheduled into the appropriate dates. Dates associated with the production deferment of the offshore oil rig.
- The corresponding resources required for the activities were then not allocated.
- Running a financial report for the quarter during the production deferment isn't accurate. Not reflecting the proper planned cost.

- The work offshore doesn't get done and affects the integrity of the oil rig.
- The work is however identified as critical but unplanned for.
- It costs more to carry out because it wasn't accounted for by finance.

Like untangling a ball of yarn, I followed the issues at the operator end of the technology component. Uncovering the issues, and the wider impact on the operation of the business.

All Good Things...

I have to say that although it was the most challenging of times, it was also one of my personal best. The steep learning curve was bearable because of the quality of the organisation. As well as the competent and professional individuals that I had the pleasure of working with. Individuals who I have since gone on to call good friends.

There will be occasions when a situation may feel as though you are standing on a proverbial shifting carpet. But with some level of perspective and engagement of the right people, you too can learn to dance on it. Sometimes listening to the orchestra as an ensemble. At other times, singling out a particular instrument.

It doesn't need to be a solo act.