

# Benefits of Usability Training for Business Analysts



A Conversation with Mary M. Michaels  
Global Director of Training  
Human Factors International

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# Benefits of Usability Training for Business Analysts

**Training in usability analysis represents a logical way for business analysts to enhance their careers.**

## How Does Usability Analyst Training Help Business Analysts?

Business analysts use their skills to function as liaisons among various stakeholders to understand an organization's structure, policies, and operations so that they can recommend solutions for enabling the organization to achieve its goals. However, true research with users has not typically been a part of a business analyst's responsibility.

Fortunately, there is a growing opportunity for business analysts to pick up additional skills in usability and user experience to improve the outcomes of their work. Training in usability analysis represents a logical way for business analysts to enhance their careers.

## Which Business Analysis Skills Are In Common With Usability Analysis?

Business analysts already are skilled in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, documentation, analysis, and building relationships. They also have additional skills concerning specific industries and specialized domain expertise. This base of skills provides business analysts with an excellent overlap with what is needed to perform usability functions.

Usability analysts use the same base set of skills, and advocate from the end-user's perspective to ensure that resulting interfaces are intuitive. Training in usability enables business analysts to improve the user experience of an interface.

Usability and user experience professionals typically focus more on end-users and customers, while business analysts are usually more focused on the organization. In practice, however, the dividing line between these roles tends to be more fluid. As organizations strive for greater efficiency, there is an increasing demand for individuals possessing skills in both business analysis and usability analysis.

## What Additional Tasks Are Typically Performed By Usability Analysts?

Usability analysts develop user stories and scenarios through task analysis, process mapping, and input from users, as well as evaluate user interactions, conduct usability studies, present findings, and develop recommendations for interface design improvements. Training in these areas can help business analysts take advantage of additional career opportunities where usability experience is required.

# Benefits of Usability Training for Business Analysts

**“This was exactly the course I needed in my UX career.” – Marie Pitcherella, Principal UX Designer, Capital One**

## HFI Usability Training

With the growing emphasis on usability and user experience, individuals and organizations are looking for the most relevant training that meets their specialized needs. Human Factors International (HFI) is the global leader in this area, and our training provides significant benefits in a variety of ways, helping practitioners with tools and techniques they need to know now in order to be successful.

### First, what does the training include?

It gives you a solid set of skills and techniques to create the best possible user experiences for your sites and applications. The training includes a variety of proven approaches to help ensure that interfaces are effective, easy to learn, efficient, memorable, and satisfying.

Our training helps participants learn to make quality interface design output routine.

### The Four Courses

- First, we provide foundational knowledge about how humans perceive, decide, and act through our course *User Experience Foundations: The Core Insights, Models, and Research Findings* (2 days).
- Next, through our course *User-Centered Analysis and Conceptual Design* (3 days), we present practical methods to conduct user and ecosystem research with the types of users and customers who use your offerings.
- Then, research-based design principles are examined in our course *The Science and Art of Effective Web and Application Design* (3 days), so you can construct intuitive navigation, appealing visual designs, useful content, and smooth interactions.
- Finally, we present a variety of techniques in our course *Practical Usability Testing* (2 days), to ensure that customers can meet their goals through your site or your application.

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## Course Format

These four courses are taught in person, and run two to three full days each. The public courses, offered in a variety of cities globally throughout the year, can be taken one at a time, whenever your schedule allows. Or you can choose to take the courses consecutively in a 10-day intensive format. In addition, onsite training for 10 or more participants can also be arranged, offering a savings in terms of the course itself as well as travel costs.

## Instructors

You'll find our course instructors are experienced and passionate about UX, and know how to convey the concepts and exercises in ways that are engaging and immediately applicable.

Plus, our instructors are active professionals who have extensive real-world experience in a variety of industries, such as e-commerce, financial services, government and non-profit, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, media, telecommunications, and software development. As practicing consultants, they can provide many specific examples to illustrate the concepts being presented. Their ability to connect course content with real-life examples makes the materials even more memorable.

## Why is this training important to individuals, as well as to organizations?

Producing user-centered designs is important to everyone working on an interface, regardless of whether it's just one person or a few individuals handling usability tasks, or whether you have several large teams with specialized user experience (UX) functions.

Trying to develop interface designs based merely on common sense will often lead to mistakes. Without proper training, you and your team will likely create less than optimal design decisions unintentionally because many of the organizational assumptions about your users and customers may be off base.

However, design decisions supported by scientific research increase the likelihood that your user interfaces will be easy to use, and effective when launched, without expensive and unnecessary revisions.

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**“Design decisions supported by scientific research increase the likelihood that your UIs will be easy to use, and effective when launched, without expensive and unnecessary revisions.”**

When anyone who works on the user experience for your organization becomes more knowledgeable about user-centered design, they can help your organization create far better interfaces.

Ultimately, following a user-centered design approach for products and services helps to increase your organization’s competitiveness in the marketplace of commerce or of ideas.

### **What are the benefits of being trained as a usability analyst?**

Becoming more educated regarding user-centered design benefits a variety of the team members. It’s possible that you are the sole person responsible for designing the user interface. Or perhaps you’re already a member of a large UX team. Or maybe you work in marketing, or you’re a developer, or possibly a business analyst or systems analyst, or even a project manager.

All of these individuals can collaborate more effectively and efficiently in producing good user interfaces when they share a common understanding of user-centered design.

HFI’s time-tested framework has helped individuals and organizations think about user-centered design in a more structured way. Our courses follow this framework, so you can immediately benefit from this methodology, which is based on thousands of projects and experience with several hundreds of clients since 1981.

The more closely your interfaces match how your users think, the more easily your users will be able to accomplish their goals on your site or application. Those goals could include finding and downloading certain information or forms, or purchasing a product or service on your site, or successfully completing the required steps in an application.

Being trained as a usability analyst helps both you and your organization make *informed* design decisions regarding your user interfaces – instead of merely guessing and then producing designs based on incomplete data or incorrect assumptions.

## Benefits of Usability Training for Business Analysts

**“The training gives you a proven approach that incorporates best practices for producing high quality interfaces more efficiently.”**

### How does being trained as a usability analyst help in someone’s career?

The training gives you a proven approach that incorporates best practices for producing high quality user interfaces more efficiently. In your journey as a user experience professional, the training is helpful in numerous ways.

#### Assists those new to the field

The training provides a solid basis for UX professionals just starting out in the field. In many organizations, the training serves as part of an employee orientation program, creating a consistent foundation for all of the team members responsible for the user experience.

#### Helps experienced practitioners

For those individuals who have completed higher education courses in human factors, the training delivers real world application to the theories they learned in the classroom.

#### Expands your network

The interaction that course participants have with other professionals during the training is also beneficial since it helps them to hear about the UX challenges faced by other organizations, and how they’re working to solve them. In addition, the relationships formed with these peers is in itself a valuable expansion of their network of UX resources.

#### Enhances your career

Even UX professionals who have been in the field for many years can benefit through learning additional approaches, built around a rigorous methodology for user-centered design. These individuals/employees find their skills and knowledge are validated, along with learning additional terminology and processes that enhance their careers.

Individuals have the option to take the HFI Certified Usability Analyst (CUA) exam whenever they choose. The test assesses mastery of the basic principles of user-centered design. Note that attending the usability analyst courses is not required to take the CUA exam.

Many individuals tell us that after passing the exam and attaining the CUA credential, they receive an increased level of respect from colleagues for their design decisions.

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**“A lot of useful and important information that I can immediately use.”**  
– Elizabeth Halim,  
*Business Analyst,  
Meridian  
Knowledge Systems*

### What can participants take back to their organizations from their learning experience in these courses?

As a course participant, you can expect several very immediate and practical benefits. The training provides you with a great tool kit of information that you're able to take back to your company.

For each course, you'll be able to apply knowledge based on scientific research to support your interface design decisions. You'll be able to leverage the formal approach to user-centered design, and to use the course materials as reference guides back at your workplace.

### Course Takeaways

- From our course on UX Foundations, you'll understand the practical implications of scientific research studies on visual, intellectual, memory, and motor functions, and how to effectively apply the results to your sites and applications. This course contains the solid base of key UX research that informs the rest of our training, and is useful throughout your career.
- Our User-Centered Analysis course gives you the skills to conduct data gathering to create profiles, personas, and scenarios, as well as how to perform task analysis and create an information architecture that makes sense to your users.
- The course on Web and Application Design focuses on the basic layers of the user interface: navigation, presentation, content, and interaction, and it teaches you how to make better decisions regarding the visual design, which supports user productivity.
- And our Usability Testing course provides you with practical and proven techniques for assessing design usability and usefulness at every stage of development, ensuring that your interfaces are meeting the needs of your users, so that your organization's goals, as well as your customers' goals, can both be achieved.

Individually, each course provides you with important knowledge and skills about user-centered design. Taken as a whole, the four courses contribute to your success as a UX practitioner, enabling you to be well versed in a broad range of usability content areas and methods.



## Benefits of Usability Training for Business Analysts

**“The most valuable career training occurs when the training organization presents reality and how to work within it.” – Karen Ball, Program Manager, Hewlett-Packard**

Usability analyst training gives you a learning experience which makes you a more knowledgeable and skilled UX professional, and thus a more valued and productive member of your organization.

This provides a vital return on investment for the training, which is essential in today’s challenging and competitive global economic climate.

### **Why should individuals and organizations be concerned about getting formal training in user-centered design?**

Designers and developers need adequate training to understand how to most appropriately apply the range of interface design decisions available to them.

Attempting to merely rely on assumptions about users and customers is risky. The UX team requires practical training about how people really think, see, remember, and move, in order to design highly effective user interfaces.

Plus, it takes the coordinated effort of many trained individuals in UX to help ensure the development and implementation of the most useful and usable designs.

UX professionals also help to protect an organization’s brand by delivering easy to use interface designs and satisfying user experiences, thereby minimizing potential negative interactions for internal or external users.

Taking time to plan and implement good Web and application designs from the beginning significantly lowers the risks of launching poorly designed interfaces—the kinds of interfaces that may unfortunately increase helpdesk calls and cost considerably more to revise than if they had been designed properly from the beginning.

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**“Becoming a CUA is undoubtedly the single most important decision I made to help my career. Within 6 months, my certification had paid for itself.” – Art Zippel, UX Information Architect, The Word and Brown Companies**

### Why choose HFI’s usability analyst training program?

HFI has successfully trained individuals and organizations in user-centered design practices for almost 15 years, longer than nearly any other firm in the industry.

Since 2001, HFI has taught thousands of individuals globally, through both our public and onsite courses. Moreover, the value of our training program is reflected by the nearly 6,000 individuals globally who have successfully passed the exam thus far to earn the Certified Usability Analyst credential. No other related certification program even comes close.

Our usability analyst training courses provide you with a practical set of skills and techniques within the framework of a proven methodology to create the best possible user experiences for your sites and applications. Working smarter, saving money, and reducing risk – all while producing great user experiences for your customers – is what the training is all about!

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### About Mary



Mary M. Michaels, BFA, MBA, CUA, CXA  
Global Director of Training Evolution,  
Certification, & Strategic Advisor  
Human Factors International

Mary M. Michaels has more than 15 years in the field of user-centered design. Her expertise includes all aspects of user-interface design: stakeholder and user interviews, personas and scenarios, task analysis, information architecture, wireframes, visual design, usability testing, and institutionalization of usability. She is skilled in strategy development and design for Web sites, intranets, and applications. Industries include: e-commerce, financial services, government, healthcare, insurance, nonprofits, and telecom.

Mary oversees and manages HFI's training courses, their content, and the instructors for HFI worldwide. She also leads and performs test development and item writing for the CUA and CXA certification exams for individuals.

She has taught over 100 courses, in both public sessions as well as onsite at clients, across the U.S., the U.K., Ireland, The Netherlands, and South Africa. She has moderated over 500 usability sessions, both in-lab and remote, within the U.S. and across several countries around the globe.

Before joining Human Factors International, Mary's experience included: Senior Web Project Manager, The McGraw-Hill Companies; Project Manager, Princeton Partners, Inc.; Project Leader, Educational Testing Service (ETS); and Director of Operations, Microcon Computer & Software Center.

She is currently a member of the User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA), and served for five years as treasurer of the New York City Chapter of the UXPA. Mary also is a practicing visual artist. You can view her work at [marymichaels.com](http://marymichaels.com).



**Human Factors**  
International

Fairfield, IA 52556  
Phone: 800.242.4480  
Fax: 641.472.5412  
[hfi@humanfactors.com](mailto:hfi@humanfactors.com)  
[www.humanfactors.com](http://www.humanfactors.com)