

# *: What is the job of a decision support analyst?*

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Job titles often summarize job duties and sometimes the title conveys prestige or reflects the responsibility of the person holding the job. Decision support analyst is a somewhat ambiguous job title. For example, a major hospital wanted to hire a decision support analyst who knew SPSS to prepare studies and analyses for administrators and outside agencies. This job function is certainly important, but some use the job title to describe an Information Systems specialist who helps with building and using decision support systems. So when is it appropriate to seek a decision support analyst and when is it best to hire a DSS/Business Intelligence analyst. In general, an analyst refers to an individual whose primary task is a detailed examination of a specific, limited problem area.

In some companies, decision support analysts are support staff “users” of decision support systems/business intelligence systems who prepare special studies for middle-level and senior managers. These analysts often use a data-driven DSS to conduct an ad hoc query that is then analyzed with a statistical package, Excel or a desktop OLAP tool. They may build small model-driven DSS and write-up the results of the analysis prepared with the DSS.

A decision support analyst may conduct various types of specialized analyses including cost-benefit analyses, financial analyses, and feasibility studies. A decision support analyst documents analytical findings and conducts internal and external research. A decision support analyst supports managers by analyzing data and conducting analyses and summarizing the results in an understandable way to assist in decision making,

An example may help clarify the decision support analyst job and job description. At SUNY Upstate Medical University, the Decision Support Systems group “provides hospital departments with the tools, technology, and applications to access clinical, financial, and administrative information on a timely basis. The development of an enterprise data repository makes information available to support the hospital's critical planning, management, and decision-making activities. Decision Support analysts assist departmental users in determining the information necessary to satisfy specific business requirements.”

What is the job of a DSS/BI analyst (Decision Support System/Business Intelligence Analyst)? For starters, a DSS/BI Analyst is usually the intermediary or liaison between users and DSS developers. He/she may work as a member of a DSS application support team. A DSS Analyst often works gathering requirements, analyzing solutions, writing specifications, maintaining product information as well as assisting in training and documentation support. A Decision Support System Analyst often

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works with users to define and document system requirements for Decision Support Systems. A DSS Analyst may help redesign business processes to better use a computerized Decision Support System. Some DSS Analysts manage a specific DSS or ensure data integrity in a focused data mart like a customer data mart.

Well, the job descriptions for these two job titles are not standardized, but my generalization is that a decision support analyst is a staff specialist who uses DSS and prepares special studies for decision makers and a DSS/BI analyst is a technical analyst who serves as a liaison with actual and potential users of a DSS and may help build a specific DSS with help from technical experts and IS/IT "toolsmiths". If you are thinking of applying as an analyst, read the job description. Employers should write a narrative about job duties and develop a list of major tasks associated with the decision support analyst job.

The above response is modified from Power, D., What is the job of a decision support analyst? How does it differ from a DSS analyst? DSS News, Vol. 2, No. 19, September 9, 2001, updated April 13, 2012.

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Last update: 2012-07-30 09:36