

BA DIGEST

- Cybersecurity and Business Analysis
- New Year, New BA Community
- AI Data Cleansing
- Green NFRs
- And much more ...



Your regular round-up of useful BA content

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Welcome

Happy New Year! It seems hard to believe it is 2025, it seems like yesterday I was celebrating the turn of the millennium with friends. (I'm aware that some readers probably weren't even born in 2000!).

The late 90s and early 2000s were a time of fax machines, Nokia phones and Snake (IYKYK).

In the twenty five years since, we've let so much technology into our lives. That technology has enabled so many conveniences, and has also created new social conventions. As with any change, there are winners and losers; pros and cons.

I wonder what the next twenty five years will hold. I'm sure many of us are utilising AI to some extent in our work. AI has the capacity to cut down routine work, and enable us to focus on the creative stuff. Yet, I find myself being lazy: "Summarise this", "Write me an email about that". Is it efficient? Yes. Is it human? No.

I worry I'll become overreliant on AI and lose crucial human skills. In the same way that I can't handwritten legibly any more (true story), maybe one day I won't be able to skim read and summarise. Perhaps that doesn't matter. Perhaps AI will be so ubiquitous that old skills won't be seen as relevant any more. The future is yet to be seen.

As with anything, there are choices

on how technology can be utilised. However, it's rarely one 'big' choice; it's thousands of micro-decisions taking place over months and years. As BAs, we have the chance to nudge those decisions, both in how we choose to use AI, and as we work within our organisations to implement AI solutions.

Thinking about the ethics, the human side, seems crucial.

As usual, you'll find a wide variety of articles on all sorts of different topics in this edition (including about AI!). Kudos to all of the authors who have taken time to share their experiences. If you see an article that resonates with you, please do connect with the author and let them know. Believe me, they'll appreciate it.

Finally, thanks to our advertisers. Remember, it is the advertisements that keep BA Digest free. Be sure to check them out, and when you need a service that they offer, be sure to consider them.

Thanks again for reading, until next time,

Adrian

Adrian Reed

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If Data Is the New Currency, Why Do People Treat It Like Monopoly Money?

Emily Tom



When I was a kid, my siblings and I used to play countless hours of Monopoly during our summer and Christmas breaks from school. I remember one of my older sisters doing something that I thought was rather clever. We somehow lost a handful of \$1 bills from the Monopoly set and we needed more in order to play. So my sister took some blank scraps of paper and made some new \$1 bills.

If only life were that simple. It's been

several years since the expression "data is the new currency" was coined (sorry for the pun). But this comparison of data and currency made me reflect on money, Monopoly money in particular.

How Is Data like Monopoly Money?

After thinking about data as currency, I observed a few strange things about how organisations really treat data like Monopoly money:

<i>Monopoly Money</i>	<i>Treatment of Data in Real Life</i>
Is only good in the game of Monopoly	Organisations “own” data without thinking about its impact outside of their organisations. Organisations think that their own business rules are the only rules that are applicable to their data.
Can be printed, at will on scraps of paper	Fake / dummy data can be created at the discretion of certain people inside or outside of the organisation. Or, “let’s just use this ‘comments’ field to capture this specific piece of data since there’s no other field we can use for our report.”
Can sit around in a pile where ownership of it is forgotten when a player goes to the bathroom	Often there’s a lack of agreement on who really owns a piece of data—is it the “technical team,” or the “business”, and if so, which “line of business”?
Causes loud arguments over the Free Parking square. (Many people say that money paid as taxes etc. goes in the middle of the board and is won by landing on Free Parking, however this is not in the official rules)	The context in which the data is collected and used is not clearly understood. For example, there might be different views as to why a particular piece of data is collected. Or perhaps it is used differently throughout the organisation.
Doesn’t account for inflation	Data can become stale when not updated in a timely manner and thus leads to outdated reporting.

Importance of Data Governance

Data is everywhere and is produced and used by everyone. Organisations are increasingly relying on data analytics and artificial intelligence to do business. So it’s critical that everyone does their part to ensure data quality, timeliness, availability and privacy. That’s where data governance plays a major role. Organisations should be implementing data governance plans. Some of the key features of data governance plans are:

- A common understanding among stakeholders of how the data is defined.
- Clear ownership of data is identified so that it is understood who has decision-making powers when it comes to how the data will be used, who is allowed to use it and how it can be changed throughout its lifecycle.
- Silos between lines of business and stakeholders internal and external to the organisation are broken down, thus allowing data

to be used to support end-to-end processes.

There's an interesting blog post "[Why is data governance important?](http://www.colibra.com)" at www.colibra.com which provides some further information.

Business analysts play a key role in creating awareness and adherence to data governance plans. Of course this is easier said than done. Everyone wants good data, but why is it so hard to implement data governance?

While having a data governance plan sounds great, it's not as easy to implement as we would like. I've seen that people within organisations resist data governance because it may necessitate a change in their processes. When ownership of certain parts of the data is unclear, there is a lack of consensus on how the data is defined and how it is governed.

It also requires an investment in business analysis work to analyse the current state, envision and communicate the future state and identify the work to be done in order to bridge the gaps between current and future state. And implementing this can be challenging while the organisation is still trying to conduct their business. It's like changing the wheels on a car while it's still moving.

The Risk Is Too High

It's hard to implement and maintain data governance in organisations, but with data being the new currency, doesn't it seem that people should be handling it with more care? Organisations are in such a rush to implement new IT solutions and start producing, collecting, and reporting

on data without realising until afterwards that the data doesn't exactly meet their needs to be able to conduct business in an efficient, effective manner. They love to massage the data in Microsoft Excel in order to get the reporting results that they want. After a while these manual processes become unmanageable because people need to manipulate data in unmanageable volumes. In addition, with all of the manual massaging, collection of data that isn't valuable and misinterpretation of data, data integrity problems tend to emerge. People then start using data in ways that were not intended or envisaged. This may also cause data privacy and security risks.

I don't have all the solutions on implementing and maintaining data governance. I'm happy to hear your thoughts and observations. What has been your experience in creating the sense of awareness and commitment to data governance? Please contact me on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/emily-tom-cbap-59190453).

Data is too important to treat like Monopoly money. Because the last thing we want is for our stakeholders to Go Directly To Jail. Do Not Pass Go. Do Not Collect \$200.

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The background of the slide is a vibrant, abstract illustration of a digital city. It features glowing orange and red circuit lines that snake across a dark, textured surface. In the center, a tall, rectangular building is composed of many small, glowing orange squares, resembling a data center or a server rack. To the left and right of this central building are other structures, including a large, dark, rectangular block on the left and a more complex, multi-layered structure on the right. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, blacks, and greys, punctuated by bright oranges, reds, and greens, creating a high-tech, futuristic atmosphere.

Why Software Needs to Adopt Green NFRs to Realise a Sustainable Future

Colin Cripps

[According to the World Economic Forum](#), estimates currently put digital carbon emissions at around 4% of global CO₂ emissions. The same article states that by 2040, it's anticipated that the storage of digital data will produce 14% of the world's total emissions.

This shows that our digital lifestyles have a massive impact on the planet and so also on our ability to live

sustainable, environmentally friendly lives.

Based on [2021 statistics from Greenspector](#), a person's yearly average time using social media emits the CO₂ equivalent of driving over 260 miles in a small petrol car. Scale that across its many millions of users and you land on a very large amount of emissions.

As a consumer and citizen, that impact is nearly impossible to avoid. Everything we do has a digital element these days, from accessing healthcare, reading the news, listening to music or watching TV, getting paid or buying anything. It all has a digital side, and that 'side' adds to our digital carbon footprint.

To lower that, and start reducing global digital emissions, we need our software engineers and designers to start making products and services with lower emissions. To do that, technologists need to understand the carbon impact of different elements within the software design lifecycle and know what is good, bad, acceptable and not-acceptable from an emissions perspective. Just as with physical products like cars or white goods, our software should be accountable for its efficiency and energy consumption too.

But How Do We Do This?

Business analysts know, whether through painful mistakes, or excellent intuition and training a fundamental to creating excellent software that excites and attracts people is good non-functional requirements.

Non-functional requirements (NFRs) are a piece of software's backbone. Broadly speaking, they're not what something does, but how or how well it does it. If you have a lovely new TV, speakers, and a great lamp, but no plug sockets, they aren't much use. NFRs make sure there's a place to plug in your TV.

If our software was built around

certain sustainability objectives and requirements, let's call them 'sustainability NFRs', we could start to measure and control the level of greenhouse gases emitted across the product and service's use.

What Would Sustainability NFRs Look like in Practice?

As BAs are aware, effective NFRs need specificity and context so that they can be reliably tested against to prove whether they've been met or if there's still work to do. Here's an example to illustrate that. Consider these two possible NFRs:

- i. 'The homepage should support lots of users'
- ii. 'The homepage should successfully load for traffic levels of 1 – 1000 concurrent visitors'

Comparing these, ii) specifies the volume of load (1-1000) a tester needs to verify the homepage against. This allows everyone to know the effects of increased load on the loading success. On the other hand, 'lots' is very subjective and impossible to validate.

For sustainability NFRs we need to specify an acceptable upper level of CO2 (referred to as 'carbon weight') per a specific action. For example,

1. Per user visit to the homepage, there should be a max carbon weight of XX grams.
2. The carbon weight per checkout journey (from 'view basket' through to successfully purchased) should be less than XX grams

3. Every product image shown should have a carbon weight of less than XX grams (accounting for selecting the product image)

As you can see these vary in scope. Example 1 focuses on a specific action (visiting the homepage), but 2 accounts for the full carbon load associated with a common user journey (the checkout process). Example 3 demands a specific carbon load is measured at a scale (i.e. every individual image associated with a product).

Importantly, none specify a solution, only the acceptable amount of CO2 per the 'action'. This allows engineers, designers and other members of the development team to decide the best way to achieve the requirement. For example, they could use smaller images, different file types, or lower resolutions. This could also encourage alternate solutions such as looking at the code's efficiency or seeking more efficient data architectures, for example on device vs on client storage and caching.

What Are the Benefits of Doing This?

Integrating sustainability NFRs into your design and development process is beneficial for many reasons and for multiple stakeholders.

For engineers, having specific sustainability requirements to meet will lead to efficient programming practices, having a direct impact on reducing carbon emissions.

Product managers will have the data they need to engage their audiences on broader sustainability objectives and take them along a journey, while still offering an excellent experience. Imagine the value to executives if you can combine data about journey carbon load with transaction volumes per week / month / quarter to offer a metric that directly evidences emissions reductions. This could help win new work, gaining funding, and gain more clients and customers.

The value for consumers and citizens is direct and real. Without any conscious choice, they'd have lower digital carbon footprints. At scale these changes could have a hugely positive impact on reducing global digital emissions, even as more of our lives become digitised.

BAs balance competing objectives. A buried, disconnected database is secure from cyber-threats but not much use to the business. A black and white, text-only website might be more sustainable but it's not going to sell many clothes.

Achieving this balance is the art in a business analyst's craft. Learning to do it with a carbon lens using sustainability NFRs is crucial to a sustainable future.

Colin is a Business Analyst and Consultant. A Linux Foundation verified Green Software Practitioner and advocate for responsible AI and ethical technology for the benefit of communities and society.

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Business Analysis and Cybersecurity

- What Can (or Should) a BA Do?

Bindu Channaveerappa

In this three-part article series, we are looking at why cybersecurity should be an intrinsic part of business analysis and what BAs can do to support this mammoth problem. In the [first article](#), I outlined the problem by looking at a couple of cyber incidents, recognising that cybersecurity is more than just IT, and the impact is significant if we get it wrong. Looking at the potential causes for the breach in both incidents, it was ascertained that the underlying cause in both those incidents was the lack of awareness or not having a security mindset.

In the [second article](#), I summarised the root cause of the issue by

taking a step back to gain perspective on the root causes to help us evaluate why a change in focus towards cybersecurity is necessary, highlighting the fact that expansion is the future. **The more technology expands, the more vulnerable the ecosystem gets, and the more security controls are required.**

Role and Responsibility

In this article, we'll look at the role of BAs in protecting the organisation's information and intellectual property.

Role and responsibility are often used interchangeably, yet they have distinct meanings, particularly in

business analysis. A role defines an individual's position within a team or organisation, with certain expectations, authority, and scope. Responsibility, however, relates to the specific tasks and obligations an individual must fulfil within their role. While both are important, responsibility is crucial as it reflects an individual's commitment, ownership, and accountability.

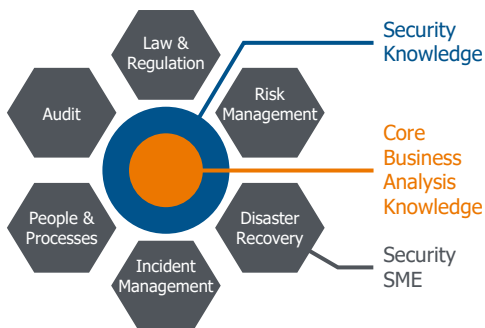
A business analyst must be aware of all the environments impacting their organisation, including internal and external factors and the current and future business landscapes, during their analyses. Although traditionally regarded as a non-functional requirement in business analysis, cybersecurity has evolved to become foundational to modern operations. In today's business landscape, where technology is integral to success, it is essential to address cybersecurity comprehensively. Failing to do so results in an incomplete analysis.

As trusted advisors, it is a business

analyst's responsibility to deliver a complete analysis that includes cybersecurity considerations. Excluding cybersecurity from an analysis means delivering an incomplete assessment, which no longer aligns with today's technological landscape. Previously, technology served merely as a tool for solving business problems. However, today, it is the primary driver of business change. This shift means that cybersecurity is integral, and not optional, in any thorough analysis.

That said, BAs don't need to be cybersecurity experts. However, they need to equip themselves with enough foundational knowledge to collaborate effectively and holistically integrate cybersecurity into their analysis. As BAs consult business Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) as required, they can also leverage cybersecurity experts based on project requirements. Here is the list of cybersecurity knowledge areas necessary to make the shift.

Cybersecurity Knowledge Areas

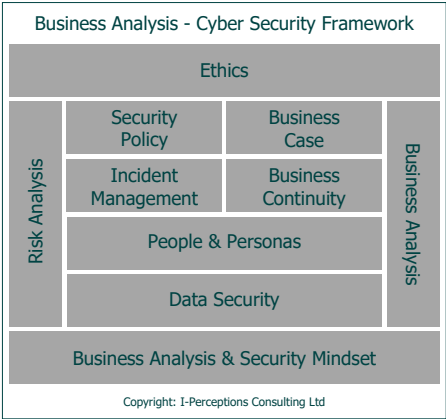


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- Exposure to the Cybersecurity speak
- Cybersecurity risk analysis
- People and process management
- Security controls
- Law and Regulations
- Auditing
- Disaster Recovery
- Business Continuity

In order to help BAs transition into these knowledge areas, I've developed the "Business Analysis and Cybersecurity" framework to integrate cybersecurity analysis holistically seamlessly across the project development phases.

The elements of this framework are versatile, and they can be implemented as an individual component tailored to an organisation's and project's unique requirements or collectively to build secure and resilient systems and products.



This framework broadens the BA toolkit by offering structured techniques to assess risks, identify potential vulnerabilities, and ensure that security recommendations are actionable and seamlessly integrated into scenarios, personas, and functional and non-functional requirements.

"Business Analysis and Cyber Security"
Framework Components

Built on a foundation combining the BA and cybersecurity mindsets, this

framework provides an essential lens for evaluating whether an asset is genuinely secured or assumed to be safe. It is an additional lens to perceive everything from a security viewpoint, a heightened awareness to see the value of the asset, its threats and the required protection.

With business analysis and risk assessment as its two core pillars, the framework emphasises security at every phase of product development. Merging BA insights with targeted cybersecurity knowledge empowers BAs to rigorously assess asset security, moving beyond assumptions to ensure robust protection against threats.

The data security component focuses on safeguarding data at every stage—whether stored, in transit or actively in use. This framework enables a thorough assessment of security measures throughout the data's lifecycle, helping business analysts pinpoint potential vulnerabilities by closely analysing process flows and data workflows.

The framework also emphasises the crucial role of human behaviour in cybersecurity, acknowledging the motivations behind various cyber threats. By understanding these behaviours, organisations can develop more effective security strategies—whether responding to external threats like scams or phishing attacks or addressing internal risks, such as employees misusing their access.

The framework offers guidance on integrating cybersecurity considerations into business cases, enabling decision-makers to recognise the value of cybersecurity investments. By embedding these

elements into business proposals, business analysts can help ensure cybersecurity initiatives receive the support and funding they need to succeed.

Leveraging their expertise in process management, BAs are well-equipped to develop effective incident management and business continuity plans. Their strong analytical and communication skills allow them to engage key stakeholders and facilitate the development of robust security policies.

Like the foundational mindset, ethics serves as a guiding principle throughout the framework. By incorporating ethical considerations, the framework emphasises not only security measures but also promotes trust among all stakeholders involved. Together, these components create a robust foundation for developing effective cybersecurity strategies.

An Ongoing Journey

Security is not a fixed destination but an ongoing journey that continually adapts to the evolving landscape of threats and challenges. This understanding emphasises the need for perpetual vigilance, adaptation, and improvement in the constantly evolving business environments. Organisations must remain proactive, anticipating potential risks and changing their strategies accordingly.

The Business Analysis and Cyber Security Framework recognises this dynamic nature, providing a roadmap for professionals to navigate this continuous journey effectively. It nurtures a mindset that embraces change, learning, and adaptation, ensuring security measures remain resilient against emerging threats. As

the digital landscape evolves, the framework equips professionals to maintain a state of readiness, reinforcing that security is an ongoing process rather than a fixed endpoint.

It is well-established that security cannot be an afterthought or a quick fix at the end of a project; it must be integrated into the solution from the very beginning. The book "[Cyber Security and Business Analysis](#)" equips business analysts with the knowledge and tools needed to embed cybersecurity from project inception, ensuring close collaboration with security and IT teams as key stakeholders. It offers detailed chapters on incorporating cybersecurity, covering each component of the framework and every stage of the project development lifecycle along with extensions to IIBA®'s Knowledge Areas and Business Analysis Core Concept Model™ (BACCM™).

Business analysts equipped with a security mindset and security framework are well-positioned to assess the intended and unintended impacts of business changes thoroughly. This mindset allows them to integrate cybersecurity considerations seamlessly into their analyses, ensuring a comprehensive and thorough analysis is delivered.

Bindu is a BA consultant, author, and Regional Director of IIBA® EMEA. She authored the book [Cyber Security and Business Analysis](#), published by BCS, and co-authored IIBA®'s cybersecurity certification. Through [CybersecurityforBusinessAnalysts.com](#), she offers a dedicated digital space for the BA community to explore cybersecurity. [Connect with Bindu on LinkedIn](#)

Data Cleansing for BAs in the Age of AI



Tom Tomasovic

For data analysts (or data wranglers) and some BAs, cleaning data is second nature. For the rest of us, cleaning data is a tricky and mysterious art. In this article, I suggest adding AI to your toolbox to unravel the mystery.

Data Cleansing: A Worked Example

To start the process, I asked [ChatGPT](#) to produce a record set of 100 records that needed to be cleaned, with no additional direction. It replied with a dataset that had 11 completely valid records. The remaining records exhibited typical data quality issues.

For analysis of the data quality, I switched to [Claude](#). To eliminate extraneous information, I first informed the tool that I would be using Excel and [Power Query](#) for my data cleaning. While these data cleaning exercises can be done entirely by an AI tool, I think it's

better that we understand and maintain control. That way, we can do it ourselves if a tool is not available.

Excel formulas can handle many data cleaning tasks, but Power Query (PQ) offers several advantages. It supports:

- Faster and more robust processing
- Repeatable cleaning queries
- Preserving original data by working with a copy
- Step-by-step review and modification of the cleaning process

To begin the cleaning process, I asked Claude to analyse the dataset and generate an error report. This comprehensive table (see excerpt below) identified problematic columns, described specific errors, provided examples, and suggested solutions—creating a structured checklist for the data cleaning task.

Column	Issue	Description	Example	Suggested Action
Customer_Name	Missing Values	Some customer names are blank		Replace with "Unknown" or investigate
Email	Missing Values/Invalid Data	Email addresses missing or "invalid"		Replace with "Unknown" or investigate
Age	Missing or invalid Values	Age values are missing, <0, or >110		Consider imputing or flagging
Gender	Inconsistent Format or Missing	Inconsistent values (M, F, Male, Female, Unknown)		Standardise to M/F/Unknown
Country	Missing Values	Some country values are missing		Replace with "Unknown"
Signup_Date	Data Type, Invalid Values	Dates stored as text		Convert to date format; set invalid to null
Last_Purchase_Date	Missing Values; Data Type	Stored as text; Some missing		Convert to date: Set to null or investigate
Total_Purchases	Invalid Data; Data type	Negative values; Numeric type		Convert to integer; Set to 0 or investigate
Total_Spend	Missing Values;Data Type	Should be numeric: One missing value		Convert; Impute or set to 0
Preferred_Payment Method	Missing Values	Some values are missing		Replace with "Unknown"
Is_VIP	Format: Missing Values	Inconsistent; Some values are missing		Standardise; Replace with "Unknown"
Last_Purchase_Date	Data Validation	May be earlier than Signup_Date		Flag and investigate
Total_Purchases	Data Validation	Check consistency with Total_Spend		Investigate discrepancies

Alongside the AI tools, I worked through cleaning the dataset using Power Query tools, which offer easier column manipulation compared to traditional Excel formulas.

Here are the key cleaning steps that I followed:

1. Standardise categorical columns:
 - Gender: M, F, U (Unknown)
 - Is_VIP: TRUE, FALSE (default: FALSE)
 - Preferred_Payment_Method: Replace null with "Unknown"
2. Correct likely data entry errors:
 - Example: Total_Purchases, replace -10 with 10
3. Flag data quality issues:
 - Missing or invalid data in critical fields (Customer Names, Email, Age, Country)
 - Age range validation ($0 < \text{Age} \leq 120$)
 - Date integrity (Signup_Date, Last_Purchase_Date)
4. Data type corrections:
 - Set proper date formats for Signup_Date and Last_Purchase_Date
 - Handle invalid dates (replace with null or preserve)
5. Create "flag" fields to capture records with invalid or missing data
6. Create a concatenated error field

The most challenging aspects (and the only ones that required "programming") were:

1. Creating "flag" fields to identify invalid records in each column
2. Developing a concatenated flag field to highlight all invalid records

While these tasks required some coding, they were comparable to using straightforward Excel formulas. The main complexity came from formatting the output for readability (using TRIM and REPLACE functions), and the AI tools can readily explain and provide code examples.

The most disturbing aspect of this process was the discrepancy between Claude's final analysis and my own results (developed using its recommendations!). Our final exchange highlights the challenges and limitations of using AI for data cleaning and analysis and encapsulates crucial lessons for anyone integrating AI tools into their workflow:

Me: *"I'm wondering why your initial analysis of the table yielded erroneous results. I guess I can't rely on your output, and that I need to use your advice to confirm my logic and, perhaps, things like coding syntax. Does that resonate with you?"*

Claude: *"You're absolutely right, and I sincerely apologize for the error in my initial analysis. Your observation is spot-on and raises a crucial point about the reliability of AI-generated outputs.*

Your conclusion resonates strongly with me, and I want to emphasize its importance:

1. *Verification is crucial: Always verify AI-generated results against your own data and logic. AI can make mistakes or misinterpret instructions.*
2. *Use AI as a tool, not a replacement: My role should be to assist you in developing and*

refining your logic, providing guidance on syntax, and offering suggestions - not to replace your critical thinking or data validation processes.

3. *Trust but verify: While I strive for accuracy, errors can occur. Your approach of using AI advice to confirm your logic and syntax, rather than blindly accepting output, is the correct one.*
4. *Human expertise is irreplaceable: Your domain knowledge and understanding of the specific context of your data are invaluable. AI cannot replace this.*
5. *Collaborative approach: The best results come from combining human insight with AI assistance, each playing to their strengths."*

AI tools can significantly enhance the data cleaning processes, offering efficiency and insights, but human expertise remains irreplaceable. Approach AI integration with caution and curiosity. Don't let initial challenges stop you—the long-term benefits will far outweigh temporary setbacks. Embrace the opportunity to expand your BA toolkit.

Inspiration for this article comes from my own adventures with AI tools, augmented by LinkedIn posts from [Deb Ashby](#) and [Geoffrey Rhine](#).

Tom Tomasovic is a neophyte AI enthusiast. He is excited about the prospect of BAs using AI to improve themselves, enhance and streamline the work we do, and provide the leadership necessary to integrate AI tools in our organisations.

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Would the Real Business Analyst Please Stand Up

Claire Pullan



If you were to ask a business analyst about what they do, they would likely describe a multifaceted role requiring a range of skills and adaptability. They might mention terms like 'flexibility' and 'adaptability' to highlight the diverse traits required for their work. Business analysts often find themselves tasked with responsibilities beyond their core duties, such as writing test scripts or conducting change impact assessments, reflecting their willingness to contribute wherever needed.

While this broadly encompasses reality for a BA, it doesn't fully address the various types of business analysts and their unique paths. The diversity in business analyst roles stems from the different experiences that professionals bring, the contexts they work in, and varying organisational expectations. You could consider the field of business analysis as a multiverse, with different variations around a core skill

set, each adding its own unique 'power-ups.' The more business analysis infinity stones you collect, the closer to the 'Thanos' of the BA world you become, but with the noble goal of enhancing organisational effectiveness rather than destruction.

In the global business analysis community, it's common for different types of BAs to have varying opinions on approaches or techniques. For example, a technical business analyst might criticise a non-technical analyst for not providing prescriptive solution details, while a functional analyst might push for solution-specific requirements that could compromise broader business outcomes.

So, what are the main variants:

Senior business analyst: This role is characterised by a broad skill set, usually with no specific specialisation but a strong ability to analyse business strategies, processes, systems, data, and objectives. Senior



BAs are big-picture thinkers who can delve into details as needed, excel in stakeholder management, and have the flexibility to adapt to any industry or organisation. Their focus is on achieving outcomes and finding the right solutions to problems.

Business process analyst: This role is primarily operational rather than IT-focused. Business process analysts concentrate on business operations and process improvements, often employing methodologies like Lean, Six Sigma, or Kaizen, especially in industries like Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) or manufacturing.

Technical / business systems analyst: Specialising in technical aspects, this role covers areas such as writing detailed technical specifications for system development, configuration, data migration, and integration. Typically, technical BAs come from a computer science background and possess strong technical skills, including proficiency in programming languages and SQL. They blend business analysis with IT expertise to enhance system capabilities and business operations.

Functional business analyst: These analysts focus on specific software solutions, such as SAP modules. They understand detailed configurations and functionalities of their respective systems and often work on implementation projects to help customers align their processes with the solution's capabilities.

Business data analyst: Although some may debate the distinction between data analysts and business analysts, business data analysts must

understand the processes associated with data inputs and outputs. Their role extends beyond producing reports and metrics to include knowledge of data sources and business rules throughout the data lifecycle. This role overlaps with, but is distinct from, business intelligence analysis.

Agile business analyst: Agile BAs are distinguished more by their ability to work within an agile framework than by specific skills. Most BAs can adapt to various delivery frameworks, making adaptability a key trait in agile environments. Agility can be relevant for many different analysis contexts, meaning that it is compatible (and can overlap) with any of the roles above.

If you work in the business analysis field or are thinking about taking on a business analyst role, it is important to remember your path is your own. Finding the right type of BA role that fits you often involves exploring different roles until you discover what aligns best with your skills and interests. There is no one size fits all approach, which is why it is not uncommon for projects and organisations to hire a combination of business analyst types, because even they recognise that there are multiple ways to approach a problem, and all of them bring different types of value.

Claire is a senior business analyst and consultant with over 20 years global experience in utilities, compliance, and local government. Claire holds a bachelor's degree in public administration and public policy and is passionate about strong human centred leadership.

Good Vibrations

Nick de Voil

Like-mindedness

Sometimes I receive invitations to industry events which promise an opportunity to interact with “like-minded people.” To be honest, it would probably be at least equally interesting to meet *differently*-minded people. Nevertheless, these offers are based on a well-known principle: communication with other people is easier and often more pleasant if they share a common set of ideas with us.

As we saw in [article 1](#), Group Construct Analysis (GCA) sets out to elaborate the idea of a **worldview**, as described in Peter Checkland’s Soft Systems Methodology, using the notion of a **construct system**. So, using GCA, the “like-mindedness” of two or more people can be visualised clearly and simply using a construct map showing what their respective construct systems do and don’t have in common. In this article we’ll think

about how we can turn this to our advantage.

Communicating Effectively

If two individuals have similar construct systems, they’ll be able to communicate relatively effortlessly, simply because there is less to make explicit. For a business analyst, this isn’t always a good thing. You may sometimes feel baffled when hearing two business stakeholders talking to each other—you can tell that communication is taking place, but you don’t quite “get it.” This is because there’s a closer similarity between their two systems than between theirs and yours. They’re able to understand each other thanks to an implicit shared background of experience, culture and language—in other words, group constructs. As a BA, you need to fill in the gaps or risk being left behind. You can achieve a more fully shared understanding by systematically finding those gaps and addressing them explicitly.

Communicating Persuasively

Our ability to persuade others to accept our suggestions depends largely on how successful we are in seeing the world as they see it, understanding their constraints and concerns, and consciously addressing these when constructing and polishing our argument.

For example, I'm writing this in the wake of the US presidential election. People around the world are trying to make sense of the fact that the American electorate chose to elect Donald Trump. It seems that many voters feel that he "speaks their language" or "stands with them." They believe there is a congruence between his construct system and theirs—whether that's true or not.

Of course, as business analysts, we typically have other concerns besides making people think we speak their language—but if we want to work with stakeholders effectively, it's something we should always be striving for.

An Analogy from Physics



Figure 1: Tuning Fork

Not everyone likes it, but we've all heard the expression "that resonates with me," or even "I resonate with that." It makes me think of a tuning fork, which is a metal object designed to produce a certain musical pitch when struck. Normally, you have to hold it very close to your ear to hear the note, which is quiet and dies away very quickly. This is frustrating if you're trying to tune a musical instrument at the same time. But if you place the handle of the fork on the body of a guitar or violin, the sound is massively amplified and sings out for much longer.

Physicists tell us that every structure has a **natural frequency** at which it vibrates. Musical instruments such as violins are designed so that their natural frequency is matched to the frequency at which the strings vibrate. This produces resonance. A systems thinker might say that the instrument's ability to produce a beautiful tone is an **emergent property** of the system composed of the violin's body, strings, bow and player.

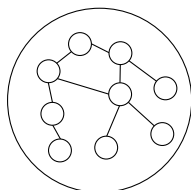
Sometimes resonance can't be heard, but is a property of a mechanical system. Applying a force at a frequency matching the system's natural frequency amplifies its movements strongly, while a force applied at a different frequency doesn't. Think of a child's swing. Once the swing is moving, you can easily make it swing higher by pushing it with just the right timing and force, but if you try to push slower or faster than necessary, you only succeed in slowing it down.

We can think about construct systems similarly. Just as a violin's natural

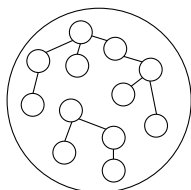
resonance is a function of its structure and the material it's made from, the construct system of an individual or group has a natural resonance based on its elementary constructs, their relative strengths (see [article 7](#)) and the way they fit together. The system will react most readily to stimuli which are "on the same wavelength." Conversely, an ill-judged input can have a negative or mediocre effect.

An Analytical Method

Suppose there's an issue which you've gathered information about and analysed. You now want to present your conclusions on the topic to a stakeholder or group of stakeholders whose construct system you've started analysing. This is shown in Figure 2.



Map 1: analyst's construct map relating to the topic

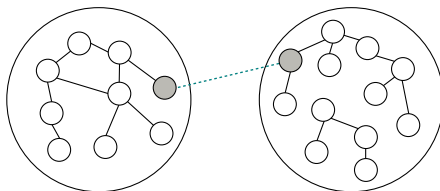


Map 2: stakeholder's construct map

Figure 2

You can start by searching map 2 for any constructs which are present in map 1. If there are any, you've found a potential resonance — you can draw a line between the two constructs, as shown in Figure 3. When communicating with the stakeholders, the link between these constructs will form the pivot of your argument. For example, if map 1 has a Strong Governance construct and the group's construct system also includes Strong Governance, this will resonate. If it's absent from their

map, then your communication probably won't "cut through", even if you think you've got a good argument.

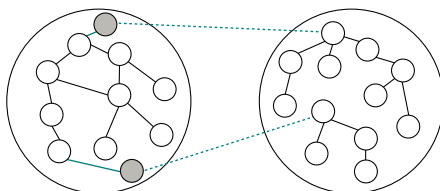


The same construct is present on both maps, so a direct connection can be made

Figure 3

Otherwise, you'll need to think of a way of adding a further construct to map 1 which provides a way of linking the two maps together. For example, if map 2 doesn't include Strong Governance, but it does include Risk Avoidance, you can add Risk Avoidance to your topic map and link Strong Governance to it.

I refer to these communication-enhancing constructs as **rhetorical constructs**. You can add more than one rhetorical construct, as shown in Figure 4, and this will strengthen the resonance—providing the new constructs don't introduce some kind of conflict or confusion.



Two rhetorical constructs have been added to link the maps together in complementary ways

Figure 4

A Holistic Approach

The approach I've just described is an analytical one—it relies on looking at the individual constructs one by

one, as business analysts often do when conducting **gap analysis**. However, as we saw earlier, resonance is an emergent property of the entire system, so we also need to think about the overall effect of the whole message. This can only be done by taking an empathic approach based on understanding the stakeholder(s) as well as possible.

Even when thinking analytically, bear in mind that rhetorical constructs can include the full range of metaphors (see [article 14](#)) and other framing devices (see [article 12](#)), so this is an inherently creative activity.

As usual with GCA, this technique can be used in more than one way—for example, as well as helping you to craft your own communications, it

can also shed light on the communication strategies used by other stakeholders.

Nick specialises in helping organisations create people-oriented systems, products and services. He's trained thousands of professionals in business analysis, user experience, systems design, project management and agile development. Nick is author of the book "User Experience Foundations" and is working on a book about GCA.

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Definition of Ready

Debbie Clegg

In my role as a digital business analyst, I work across multiple departments. My role helps drive the execution of our customer-centric product portfolio, assisting in the development and acceleration of our digital products and solutions.

I would like to share with the BA Digest community how my team and I know when a description of a required digital feature is ready for development and what makes it ready to be presented to our development team during our formal

refinement meeting. We have implemented a defined set of criteria that, when complete, indicates that a feature meets “ready” status. Each part of the software development lifecycle benefits from the Definition of Ready (DoR) state.

Stage 1: Planning, Analysis & Design

As BAs we have a responsibility to create, prepare and manage a product backlog of e-commerce

digital features, based on the evolving needs of our business. Our colleagues across the business submit change requests relating to the online digital experience, our data, or our technology applications. Once a change request has been prioritised and evaluated within a formal review process it is allocated to a BA for the design and analysis stage of work to begin.

Stage 2: Define Requirements & Design

Our BAs analyse a range of requests, which may include examining both online and offline processes to determine what changes and new features are required. The analysis objective at this stage is to prepare a package of agreed product backlog items (usually written as user stories) that can be handed over to a team of software engineers so development can begin.

The package of agreed items is presented by the BA and used as a negotiation vehicle, prior to further discussions taking place with the development team during a refinement meeting. At this stage, the team determines whether or not the item is ready for development.

Stage 3: Ready for Development

To achieve a “ready” status each user story must be immediately actionable by a developer and have met the desired Definition of Ready criteria.

For a product backlog item to be considered “ready”, it must meet the following criteria:

- There are clear feature analysis metrics which will enable the business to measure the expected performance following product release.
- For user interfaces: Prototypes (such as low-fidelity website wireframes for desktop and mobile users) are included to illustrate the desired user journey.
- A written user story with clear acceptance criteria has been produced.
- Acceptance criteria against each user story. This may include but is not limited to:
 - What is displayed on screen to the customer or other user.
 - What will the customer or other user be able to interact with and what happens when they do.
 - What validation checks are performed and what happens when they are not met.
 - What happens when something does not complete successfully, and how errors should be handled.
 - Specify the relevant areas of the site where the feature will be visible.
 - Where the solution is customer facing, and requires wording/copy (e.g. email templates), a link to the wording will be provided in English, and any other language that is required.
 - All wording, in English or any language that it is written in, will

be validated with the relevant business stakeholders

- Any supporting process flows or data mappings are added as part of the requirement documentation.
- Peer review of all relevant artefacts has taken place, and passed.
- Refinement with development and quality assurance teams has taken place, with unanimous agreement to agree that the product backlog item is 'ready'.

Stage 4: Development

During the development stage of the lifecycle the Definition of Ready items are a means to reduce the number of errors that may have otherwise occurred during the sprint. With a greater understanding of the requirements, the development process is slicker and the team knows the task, dependencies, and requirements to complete the feature build within the sprint.

Stage 5: Testing & Release

Adopting a standard Definition of Ready criteria supports the testing process by ensuring a clear understanding of each product backlog item, and reducing any requirement ambiguity. This prevents the tester spending time on clarifying requirements and reduces the risk of a requirement being misinterpreted. It also makes test planning easier, as there is a clear expectation of what requirements artefacts the testers will receive. It also reduces the need for

reworking that may occur due to missed requirements, reduces bugs or incomplete features going into production. Clear requirements also help the QA team understand if the feature is testable. Having a complete Definition of Ready also helps reduce blockers from emerging during the sprint.

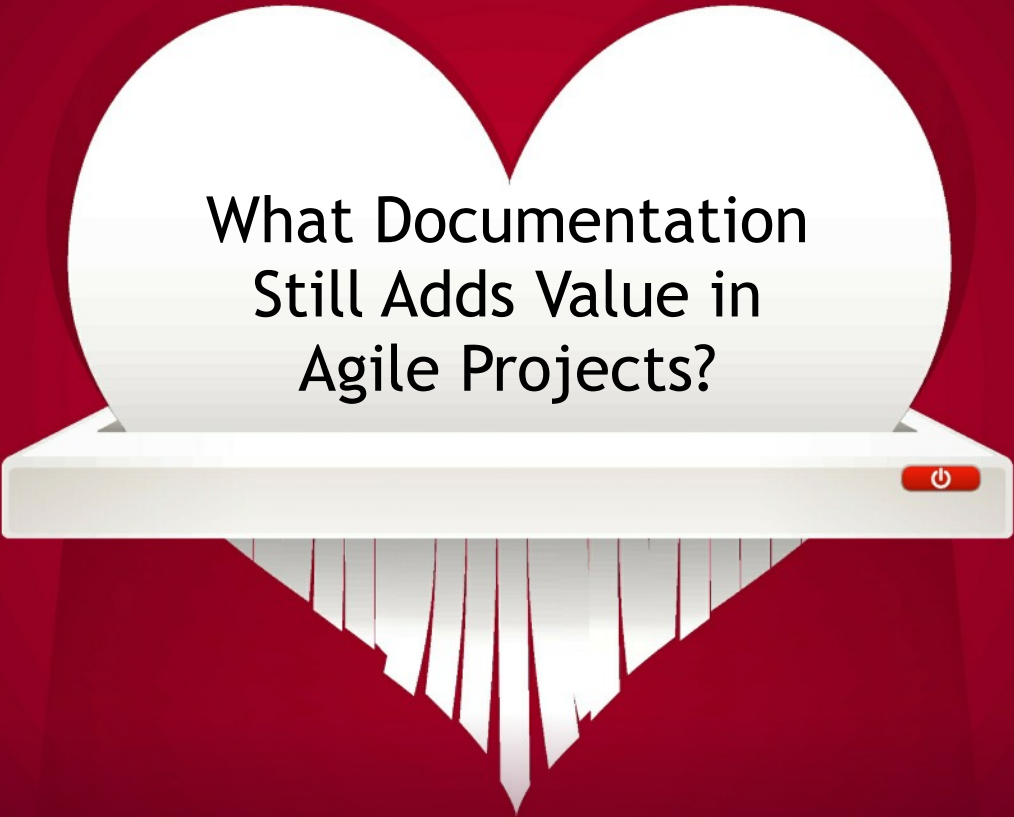
Benefits of Definition of Ready

An agreed Definition of Ready offers guidance and structure to our digital team and a comprehensive set of information that supports the team to plan, commence work and deliver features. It provides confidence that the work package received is in a fit state for work to commence imminently. The BA assigned understands the required outputs to classify their feature as "ready."

As agile working represents flexibility and transformation the Definition of Ready structure should be reviewed and updated via retrospective meetings to ensure this process continues to support the team and maximises the benefits from having it in place.

I hope that this article helps your agile teams in understanding the Ready state for feature requests.

At Cromwell, Debbie leads end-to-end feature development, ensuring each feature meets customer needs and delivers a positive experience. As part of an agile team, she defines user stories, manages the product backlog, providing clarity on each feature's vision and goal. [Connect with Debbie on LinkedIn.](#)



What Documentation Still Adds Value in Agile Projects?

Nuno Santos

As organisations began adopting agile frameworks, a common misconception arose that their projects required no documentation at all. That assumption has proved to be incorrect in many cases. In this article I will explore several typical scenarios that highlight the need for creating valuable documentation.

Let's start by highlighting a few example situations where

documentation will be useful:

- A feature was developed by someone who subsequently left the team and the underlying business need behind it is not known
- A feature was requested a long time ago, and nobody can remember the rationale

- A change in market behaviour or law emerges that necessitates previous rules to be revisited.

What the Scrum Guide Says

Teams using Scrum should be producing relevant artefacts and documentation. The [Scrum Guide 2020](#) outlines three artefacts:

- Product Backlog
- Sprint Backlog
- Increment

The [Scrum Guide](#) goes on to say that each artifact “contains a commitment to ensure it provides information ... against which progress can be measured”. In practice, this “information” is usually expressed as an appropriate form of documentation. Each artifact’s commitment, per the Scrum Guide 2020, is:

- For the Product Backlog: the Product Goal.
- For the Sprint Backlog: the Sprint Goal.
- For the Increment: the Definition of Done (DoD).

It therefore follows that if teams are using Scrum, at a minimum they are documenting and maintaining the artefacts and commitments above.

Is It Enough?

There are other artifacts that, although not explicitly part of Scrum, might be useful to bring the team’s

work in the right direction.

At a **strategic level**, being able to document a [product vision statement](#), together with the Product Goal, is useful to give context to the team about their mission. The vision statement provides a high-level description of what the product is intended to achieve and why it exists.

At a **tactical level**, an example of an artifact is a product roadmap. The features of the product are planned and placed on a board to communicate direction and progress toward the vision. The order of features from the roadmap is then reflected in the Product Backlog. Three commonly used roadmaps are:

- [Goal-oriented](#)
- [Now-next-later](#)
- [Story map](#)

Closer to the teams, at **operational level**, any relevant information is passed on in little chunks—at a Product Backlog Item (PBI) level (e.g. stories). As a disclaimer, I am totally aligned with Dr. Alistair Cockburn’s book [“Unifying User Stories, Use Cases and Story Maps”](#), that states *“write the needs, not the encyclopaedia”*. Using this approach, we write a use case or a user story in a typical short-sentence format with just the essentials. Later, if we want to add details, we have them as attachments, properly linked (the “encyclopaedia”).

Having said that, information about a PBI shouldn’t stop after the PBI is included in a sprint. Documenting what is discussed throughout allows us to store what we learn. Two

possible ways are documenting as we discuss or including documentation as part of the DoD.

Detailing PBIs from Conversations

Early in a project you start with figuring out the context you're working. As you start figuring it out, it's a good idea to sketch out all of this information.

Context and use cases diagrams allow you to organise your thoughts and validate them with stakeholders. In these diagrams you represent the business events and their flows, breaking down the business need. As Laura Brandenburg explains in her article ['How to Write User Stories'](#), when we are focused on user stories, it is easy to lose track of the big picture. And then, it's common to miss requirements because you're focused on one little piece.

Every time you discover a new business event, it should be added to the diagram.

Some types of models can be used to foster discussions and additional information about a PBI. This doesn't mean that we have to draw an extensive set of models upfront. These details can emerge as part of a conversation with the team. Business Process Model & Notation (BPMN) or activity diagrams are useful when understanding more about a business situation.

In sequence, components or deployment diagrams, we model technical details about a software component. For example, we can sketch a sequence diagram when

discussing how a new component would use a 3rd-party API, and how it would make use of the data retrieved.

I have also found it useful to make rapid low-fidelity prototypes, both before and during the sprint. These prototypes are great for structuring thoughts about requirements and uncovering issues that we didn't think of initially.

Documentation as part of the Definition of Done (DoD)

A possible way is to agree to document as part of the team's DoD. A typical DoD may ensure that the acceptance criteria are passed. Equally, a DoD may be: "the new features are appropriately documented".

One potential form of documentation is a user manual. User manuals are typically used when introducing a new solution, or to document one already in use. Having a point in the DoD dedicated to updating the user manual encourages the team to document new functionality when it's still fresh in the team's memory.

Another example of documentation is a business rules document. My experience tells me that rules tend to be discussed, yet remain undocumented. Yet knowing the business rules will be useful when planning all test cases for a feature, the test scope for the main flows and all alternative flows will go around such business rules.

Another way to document the

business rules is within the acceptance criteria, rather than a dedicated document. Unless all acceptance criteria are easy to find, I would suggest gathering information such as business rules into a document that is easy to find and maintain. If business rules are central to the product, this could even be another step to add to the DoD.

Key Take-aways

- When working in an agile way, we don't focus in comprehensive documentation, but that doesn't mean that agile teams produce no documentation at all
- Some additional artifacts beyond

the ones from the Scrum Guide can provide value, from the strategic level (e.g. vision statement), to tactical (e.g. product roadmap) to operational (PBIs)

- At the operational level, writing acceptance criteria is common, but adding business rules, user manuals, PBI details (using models, for example), is also useful, and is perfectly doable and aligned with an agile process.

Nuno Santos is a Squad Lead and a Senior Business Analyst in Natixis in Portugal, and you can contact him on LinkedIn at

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Breaking Down Silos - Driving Change As a Business Analyst

Mufaro Mary Nyachoto



According to IIBA®'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide, business analysis is "the practice of enabling change in an enterprise by defining needs and recommending solutions that deliver value to stakeholders". BAs deliver transformation by working across teams and gaining buy-in across stakeholders. This involves working within and across silos.

A silo is part of an organisational structure where teams or units operate in isolation, often with minimal communication and/or coordination with others outside of

their area. This leads to a lack of information sharing, workflow inefficiencies, increased number of errors, and poor team morale. Silos are problematic because they impact the employee experience, disrupt the customer journey, and decrease innovation. Silos impact not only the daily work activities; they also impact the organisation's ability to achieve its long-term goals.

In my experience, silos persist because of organisational culture. Where I have seen silos, the main reasons they have persisted are lack of leadership, a culture of blame, a

lack of trust, poor communication protocols or resource scarcity. Business analysts as change agents work across functions so silos hinder the work to gain a complete picture of the organisation, resulting in incomplete requirements, project delays and potential misalignments. BAs can work to counteract a poor culture by creating safe spaces for cross-departmental feedback, helping teams share information without fear of judgement. In doing so, we take up a change leadership role.

Change Management and Change Leadership

Change is essential for organisational growth. Two important disciplines associated with change initiatives are change leadership and change management. Change leadership is people-focused and skills-based while change management deals with the processes and structures of change. Change management involves planning and executing steps to restructure workflows, while change leadership entails motivating stakeholders to embrace restructuring as beneficial to their roles.

Change managers skilled in the discipline of change management plan and execute change projects. Change leadership, based on relational skills, can be undertaken by anyone brave enough to step up to the role. Relational skills like listening, empathy, and transparency are essential for BAs to gain trust and build relationships across departments, paving the way for cross-functional collaboration. Influencing and inspiring people to

achieve a vision is the work of change leaders. Change leadership enables BAs to cultivate trust, inspire cross-functional teams, and foster an environment where stakeholders are open to change. Change leadership is about empowering others to own and handle change.

Characteristics of change leaders include collaboration, relationship building, adaptability, and communication. These match up well with characteristics associated with business analysts: trustworthiness, adaptability, and communication. Adaptability allows BAs to adjust their approach based on stakeholder needs, and collaboration helps BAs to create a shared understanding of goals.

Change Leadership: Influencing without Authority

Business analysts are change agents. Most do not have positional authority based on status, rank, or position. BAs enable lasting change within organisations. Business analysts are leaders, and we use influence, relationship building and trust to advance our work. For change to stick, business analysts must communicate why the change is needed and what the benefits will be. Being the person that understands the need and the expected benefits makes the business analyst best suited to inspire stakeholders across levels.

Co-creating complete, effective solutions requires business analysts to build trust rapidly. Business analysts need to be transparent, to

explain the project and to clarify the role of the stakeholders.

Recently on a project to document financial workflows the manager insisted on being present and chiming in. When I validated the workflows with the staff, they felt empowered to take ownership and ensured that the workflows were correct and complete because they wanted the project to succeed and to make their work experience better.

Business analysts are in a unique position to engage with stakeholders across levels and across functions. By championing the organisational vision, business analysts can reduce resistance, help impacted stakeholders understand the benefits of the future state and create shared purpose.

Through the facilitation of cross-functional workshops, business analysts should address resistance by actively listening to concerns and modify workshop objectives to tackle real needs, ensuring buy-in. Creating shared documentation helps with transparency and reduces the likelihood of data hoarding. Business analysts can establish repositories, dashboards or reports that ensure real-time statuses are visible to all teams. Collaborating with teams to create workflows provides visibility, reduces redundancies, and highlights opportunities for collaboration. With greater transparency, teams are more likely to have shared ownership in transformation (change) projects, be more empathetic and open to collaboration.

Empathy allows business analysts to understand stakeholder perspectives,

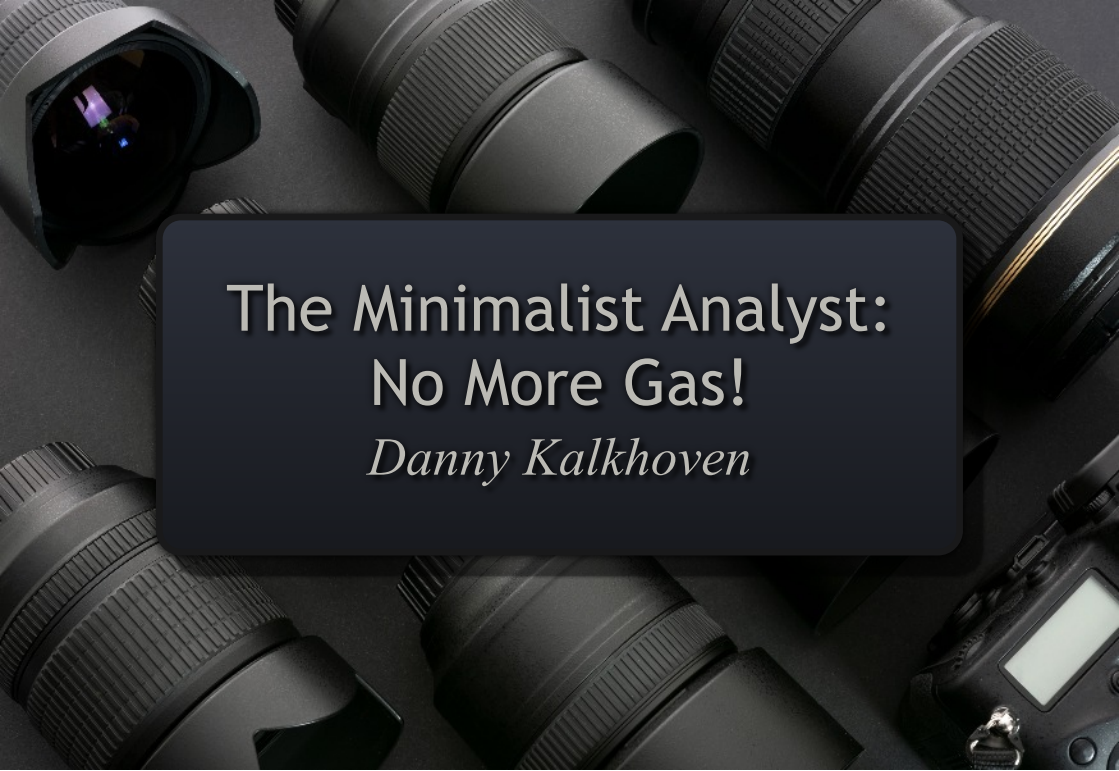
making it easier to create shared ownership. By creating a culture of mutual respect and understanding, business analysts can reduce resistance to new workflows or processes.

Leading with a People first Approach

Business analysts provide opportunities for teams to know their purpose, their impact on other teams, and their contribution to long-term organisation success is helping organisations to reach their strategic goals. Using change leadership skills, business analysts are not just driving projects but are breaking down barriers that hinder innovation, collaboration, and efficiency. By putting people first and fostering cross-functional alignment, BAs help organisations not only achieve their strategic goals but also build a resilient, open culture ready for future challenges.

In summary, business analysts have a unique role in breaking down silos and fostering a strong, agile organisation. By embracing change leadership, we drive project success and lay the foundation for a collaborative, resilient organisational culture.

Mufaro M Nyachoto is a Business Analyst Consultant and a social techie who likes to make connections between people, ideas, and technology. She believes in supporting the BA community and volunteers for her local IIBA chapter. Contact her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/mufaronyachoto



The Minimalist Analyst: No More Gas!

Danny Kalkhoven

In my free time I'm an enthusiastic photographer and I enjoy the creative process of making images. In recent years my work has been accepted for exhibitions in Paris, Tokyo and several locations in my home country the Netherlands. So one could say that I am a successful amateur photographer.

You might think that being successful in this field requires lots of expensive technical equipment. However, the funny thing is that my success came only after *downgrading* my equipment. Up until a certain point I suffered from what photographers know as "GAS"—(Gear Acquisition Syndrome).

"GAS" tends to encourage photographers to purchase new

camera gear, even when their current setup is perfectly good. And it's not limited to photographers, it may also affect musicians (who buy new and unnecessary electric guitars), kitchen chefs (who buy fancy new knives), and even business analysts (who seek out shiny new modelling tools).

I gained my insight about "GAS" many years ago. I was on a photography course and the trainer sensed that I had too much focus (pun intended) on my cameras and lenses, and not enough on my story. He suggested that I move my focus on to the images that I wanted to show the world.

Just as with photography, in business analysis we often want to tell a story through pictures.

We call these pictures flowcharts, diagrams, swimlanes, object models, Entity Relationship Diagrams (ERDs), rich pictures etc.

After all, the saying goes “a picture paints a thousand words”, right?

And here is where the temptations of shiny tools come into play: GAS. There is a new supertool available! Now you can easily draw large diagrams and connect all the elements on a single canvas. You can use multiple colours and export the diagram to all possible formats for exchange with other tools and development platforms!

Big promises, and they might be true.

GAS and Analysis: An Example

I once went on a three-day course together with the whole development team to learn a new big tool. That tool could be used for drawing process models, related data models, defining software components, user roles, and more. And everything was tied together in a big database that more or less described the whole organisation. We came back full of enthusiasm for this tool, determined to use it for our project.

However, the scope of our project did not extend to improving and automating the whole company. Plus, our stakeholders did not attend that course. And that’s where it all went wrong.

We did our best, leading to some awkward workshop experiences where we tried to discuss

the requirements and process improvements through the diagrams produced by the new modelling package. The stakeholders could hardly follow what we were showing them, as they had not been on the three day course. So we switched back to flipcharts, markers and some rudimentary powerpoint sheets with boxes and lines. And we learned how to understand each other.

Sadly, the new shiny tool was hardly used. It was only utilised at the end of the project to create formal documentation which could be used for maintenance of the software components.

Ensure Stakeholders Understand the Model

It is also worth considering that business stakeholders may not be used to interpreting models. They might need an explanation of the technique, on the meaning of lines and boxes. Especially in the early stages of the project, you want to verify your thoughts, and you need their feedback on ideas and proposals. When you show them a beautifully arranged impressive model/picture, they might be hesitant in commenting on it. It looks so good...

There is a big lesson in this for us all, and perhaps there are some illusions that we should avoid:

- Illusion one: better tools deliver better models.
- Illusion two: our stakeholders understand our modelling language.

- Illusion three: the temptation of shiny tools doesn't affect me.

Great tools are tempting and dangerous when not used deliberately and with purpose. The temptation is that the tool creates the notion of "when it looks good, it is good", which is misleading. A flimsy sketch of a well-designed process is far better than a beautifully composed drawing of a badly designed process.

This brings me to a statement by the great photographer Ansel Adams:

"the single most important component of a camera is the twelve inches behind it."

For this article I would like to translate that into:

"the single most important component of a modelling tool is the analyst using it"

Just as with any tool: it's you, the person using it, that brings the real value!

(This article is based on Danny's presentation at the [BA Conference Europe 2024](#))

Danny Kalkhoven is a business analyst and trainer with Le Blanc advies in the Netherlands.

He has worked in banking, insurance and healthcare environments as a BA for over 20 years, and is a trainer for a series of BCS Business Analysis courses in NL. [Contact Danny on LinkedIn](#)



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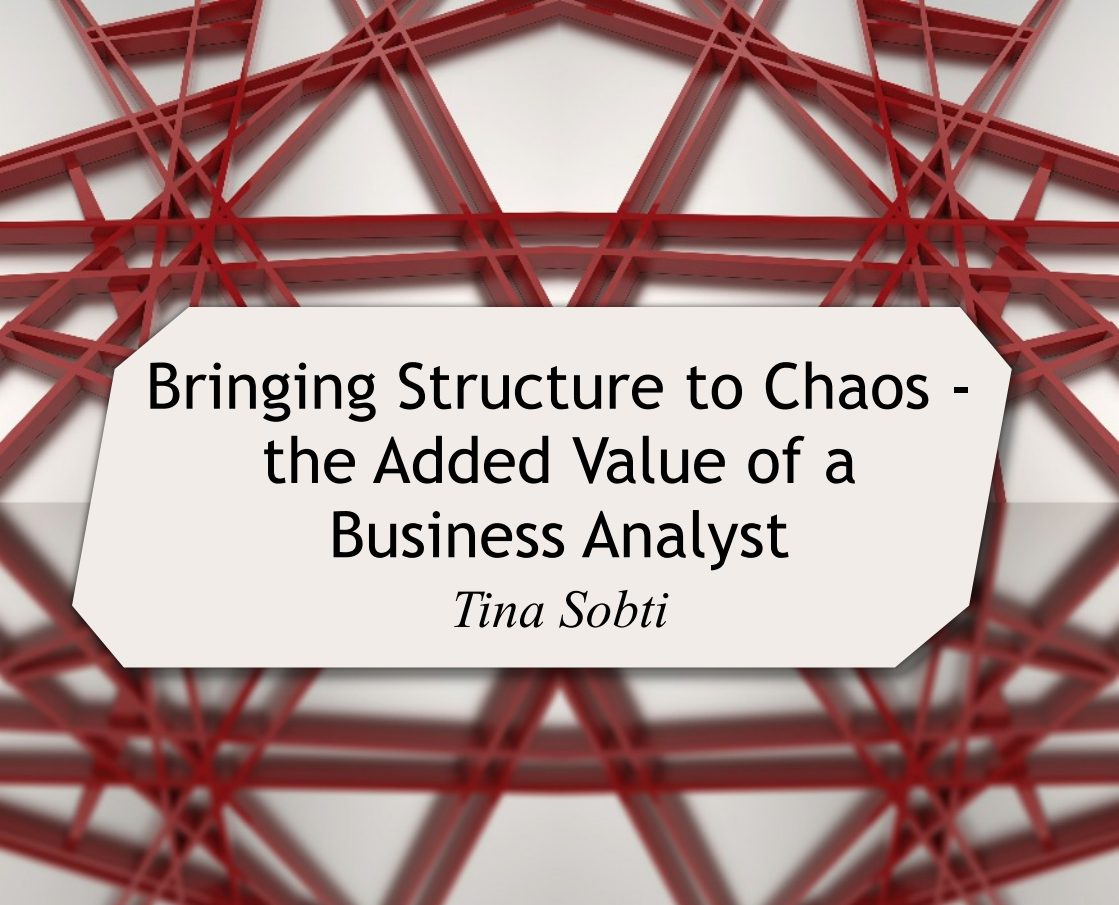
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Bringing Structure to Chaos - the Added Value of a Business Analyst

Tina Sobti

The role of a business analyst covers many responsibilities and can initially appear quite daunting. Working your way through whiteboarding, user stories, acceptance criteria, unrelenting iterations of requirements sign off and 'sudden scope creep' can be exhausting. You would be forgiven if you felt like the weight of the project was on your shoulders.

It's an emotional game with key stakeholders looking at you with their eyes dilated as you endeavour to gain sign off from them, while the project manager is taking every opportunity to avoid scope creep. You are the

conscience of the project (because people have a tendency to forget details) and you may find yourself actively reminding key stakeholders of what was previously agreed.

So, against this tricky and sometimes seemingly chaotic backdrop, how do you maintain clarity, carve out structure and most importantly stay calm?

Document What You Know and Invite Discussion

When confusion or uncertainty prevails, a simple method I use is to

document what I think to be my understanding of the situation and invite comments. This is an effective way to stimulate conversation, and communicate ideas otherwise held untested in people's minds. At this stage, what you document does not have to be correct, but good enough to invite debate.

This method can be used at any point in a project, whether it be defining outcomes, scope, a detailed process map or requirements. Depending on who your audience is, consider what would be the most appropriate method of documentation. Is it a simple PowerPoint slide showing a set of options? Is it a spreadsheet as it may need to contain detailed information? Or is it just a set of bullet points in a Word document that allows you to stimulate conversation?

Make the documentation you produce the 'version of truth' that you and your stakeholders can rely on, trust, and build upon. Without this, you will be constantly trying to re-establish a baseline rather than move forward. Don't be surprised if you continue to remind your stakeholders of what was agreed and reinforce key messages!

This is an area that requires you to rely on your facilitation skills, probe your stakeholders, ask them to be clear, ask more questions, seek clarity and be brave! Go for it and enjoy the debate that unravels! It can be quite revealing of your stakeholders' beliefs and motivations.

Ensure the Quality of Each Request

Projects have finite resource and budget. This means that when

requests are made, or scope needs to change, priority calls need to be made on what can be left to the backlog or even descope. Providing an objective, structured way to conduct this exercise is very much within the arena of the business analyst. Developing a clear set of criteria to determine priority will offer a quicker way for you to assess each request/change with your stakeholders.

A key question to pose when working through such an exercise is 'does this request align with the project outcomes?' If your stakeholders agree that it doesn't, there is a clear path to descope. If it does, you can establish the level to which the request meets the outcomes by asking questions such as

- Does it align totally or partially with the project outcomes?
- What is the risk of not doing it now?
- Is there any research/data to support this request?
- Could there be a manual solution offered to this request that will not impact timelines?

I have often found that having a broad 'T-shirt' size estimate of complexity against each request adds another valuable dimension to the debate that can speed up decision making. So, it may be a good idea to have an initial chat with your project manager, or development team and gauge a view of impact for inclusion into the discussion.

The questions posed above can be used not only to determine initial

scoping but to meet the challenges faced when the implementation of agreed requirements goes a little awry or the 'unknown unknowns' of a project suddenly become glaringly obvious, and quick decisions need to be made.

Agreement to the answers above will remove a considerable amount of uncertainty and give confidence to your stakeholders that whilst their request may not be met in full, they have 'had their say', been kept informed and arrived at a decision with all the facts known...well until the next 'unknown unknown' appears as an unwelcome guest!

Hold Your Position Lightly and Carry on

I can't recall the number of times I have felt very smug at getting agreement to a set of requirements or an option to a complex business issue, only to have it subsequently revisited or challenged. It has been very tempting to 'throw my toys out of the pram', lament at the number of hours it took to get agreement, and feel 'hard done by', but then reality kicks in.

Projects by their very nature are ever changing. You may feel that absolute clarity has been achieved, however, what was agreed at day 5 may not be fit for purpose by day 20. When this happens, you'll have to resist the temptation to be annoyed. Instead, it's important to roll your sleeves up, understand what has changed (and why) and carry out the necessary analysis.

Removing the emotion from what is probably quite an emotive situation and focusing on the facts will not only help you but also other members of the project team and your stakeholders. If such changes mean additional scope items need to be considered, then you will be thanked for raising this early on.

It is important to remember that carrying on does not mean trying to do everything within the existing timelines. If your analysis concludes that extra time is required that will impact timelines, it is imperative to communicate this to your project manager and other key stakeholders immediately and agree on the best way forward. As somebody who previously felt that any delays are a personal challenge that need to be absorbed during my weekends, I have learnt the hard way that asking for help early on is key.

Finally, remember that whilst you can influence and challenge the course of events, the final decision does lie with your business sponsor/business stakeholders. Therefore, be as thorough as possible in covering all the facts, options and impacts and let the debate unfold to a natural outcome. Never be surprised at what you get agreement to, it could even be to something you never thought of!

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Application Portfolio Management With TIME

Philippe Robitaille

Application Portfolio Management (APM) can be used to manage the numerous software applications across an enterprise. To break down the abbreviation, you can think of portfolios as a means for segregating an inventory of applications into groups where you can manage their assessments and lifecycles in the context of the business priorities they serve.

Why is APM Important?

In most general terms, the ongoing Return on Investment (ROI) of applications diminishes over time. There is the initial cost of implementing the application. When it is launched, two things happen.

First, there is typically a spike in the value returned to the business which stabilises, followed by a period of diminishing returns. Second, the cost of ownership tends to increase over time as licence fees are paid and maintenance efforts persist, particularly with resource-intensive upgrades. At some future time in the application's lifecycle, the cost to operate the application will exceed the future value which can be realised by the business. APM is intended to track application investments so that key decisions over when to retire or replace applications can be made before costs exceed value.

In making these decisions, two key factors should be considered:

1. **Business fitness:** measured in terms of how well the application serves the business need
2. **Technical fitness:** measured in terms of how well the application conforms to technology standards

What Is the APM Process?

The APM process involves tracking an enterprise's applications over time using the following repeated steps.

1. Create an inventory of all the applications across the organisation. For each:
 - a. Identify the application's function and any potential overlaps to be rationalised over time.
 - b. Identify application owners to perform business fitness assessments.
 - c. Identify application experts to perform technical fitness assessments.
2. Using automated surveys, initiate assessments with the owners and experts.
 - a. The business fitness survey might include rubric elements to gauge alignment to business priorities, useability, vendor support and any other conditions relevant to your business architecture.
 - b. The technical fitness survey might include rubric elements to gauge standards compliance, technical resource specialisation, frequency of severe outages and any other conditions relevant to your technology architecture.

3. Close the surveys and derive **strategic ratings** using scores from the insight provided by the survey. Your organisation will need to determine its own algorithm and criteria for creating these—there is no 'one size fits all' approach here.

4. Review the results with business stakeholders.

Conducting this process annually may be appropriate, but the frequency chosen will depend on how closely your organisation wants to track its applications and how much tolerance the application stakeholders have for performing the self-assessments.

Application Assessments with TIME

The TIME model (originally [proposed by Gartner](#)) provides a transparent and objective decision making tool. It plots the strategic ratings derived for your organisation's applications, as illustrated in the diagram.

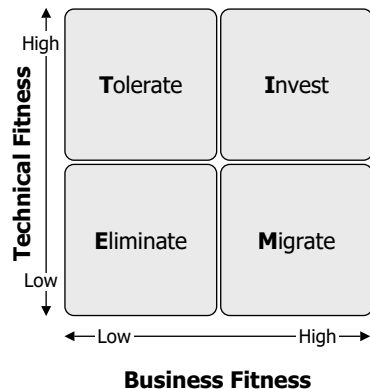


Diagram created by author, inspired by Gartner TIME framework

These strategic rating scores are used only as indicators for planning. Some of the indicators that can be reviewed with stakeholders infer the following.

- Applications scoring high for technical fitness and low for business fitness will yield a strategic rating of **tolerate**. This suggests a higher bar for making enhancements and the application should be monitored for increasing risks.
- Applications scoring high for both technical and business fitness will yield a strategic rating of **invest**. This suggests enhancements be enacted quickly and the application's use should be maximised.
- Applications scoring high for business fitness and low for technical fitness will yield a strategic rating of **migrate**. This suggests enhancements should be minimised and risks mitigated while the application users should be readied for migration to a more technically suitable platform.
- Applications scoring low for both technical and business fitness will yield a strategic rating of **eliminate**. This suggests no further enhancements should take place as risks are mitigated and dependencies are reviewed for gaining buy-in for decommissioning the application.

APM practice supposes that these reviews with the business should repeat periodically to track the movement of applications across TIME and in time—year over year.

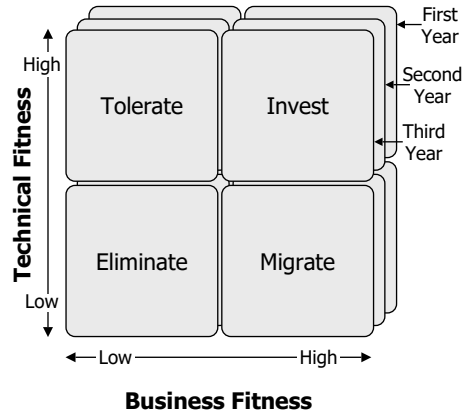


Diagram created by author, inspired by Gartner TIME framework

In the first year of performing these assessments, you'll probably find a distribution of applications generally clustered in the invest quadrant. Even so, it's important to have application owners and experts perform their own assessments. As you repeat the process, you should be able to build trust with these stakeholders as they come to perceive that the assessments are geared to the very long term for planning. With that trust, you might see the distribution of applications spreading out to other quadrants in subsequent years. This is where that data will inform proactive maintenance of all applications wherever they lie in their lifecycle.

What Are the Other Factors?

These TIME scores of strategic ratings have been presented in qualitative terms. Ultimately, you'll want to layer in additional metrics.

Firstly, to quantify application costs,

you'll need to tie the applications to their supporting infrastructure and the business services or capabilities that they realise. With that, you can roll-up proportionate costs from infrastructure to application costs and then to their corresponding business services or capabilities. This will enable the cost reporting of multiple technology components potentially realising multiple business needs. In effect, the question being asked here is: "what's the bottom-up cost of running a particular service or providing a particular business capability?"

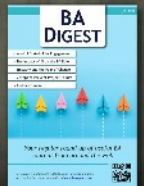
Secondly, you'll want to account for complexity. Application Integration Management (AIM) can be used to assess the total number of (and complexity of) integrations across your organisation's applications and thereby provide reporting on data dependencies across those applications. Highly-integrated

applications require additional analysis to assess the cost of rationalisation.

Finally, as you establish a reliable inventory of your enterprise applications, you'll want to include other attributes that will serve an overall application architecture. This might include data about application licensing, user base, end-of-life, hosting type and so forth. When you get to this point of managing an overall enterprise application architecture, you'll be ready to leverage the features of an architecture repository with built-in surveying functions.

Phil Robitaille is an independent business architect and writes about storytelling in enterprise architecture under the pseudonym [The Allegorical Enterprise Architect](#). Connect with Phil on [LinkedIn](#).

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A New Year, a New Business Analysis Community?

Line Karkov



In late May 2024 the [BA & Beyond](#) conference was held across four countries. This was the first ever conference dedicated to business analysis held in Copenhagen, Denmark. I was part of the organising team for the Copenhagen leg of the conference which I volunteered for out of sheer curiosity. With no established community outside of the largest IT organisations, would it be possible to succeed with a conference?

The desired *result* is an active business analysis community in Denmark. Filip Hendrickx summarised the situation: "There is no IIBA® chapter or any BA events, yet it is a region where a lot of

business analysis seems to be happening. The enthusiasm from IIBA® Global to support us in initiating a community in this region has been great."

The desired *change in behaviour* is that business analysis professionals increasingly develop and improve their practice together. This is for the benefit of each individual's job satisfaction and career prospects. It is for the benefit of the increasing number of medium-sized companies going through digital transformation, that now need to integrate digital products in business development but also deal with security threats, GDPR and making sure their IT is fit for

purpose now that it takes centre stage. It is also for the benefit of public institutions who have suffered scandals that were very costly for the taxpayers, and who have been accused of “forced digitalisation” resulting in frustration for many citizens.

The BA & Beyond conference is a great opportunity to test the *hypothesis* that within Denmark there is a foundation to build a sustainable community on. I’m pleased to say the following data points support this hypothesis:

- It was possible to attract a good number of participants to the conference
- It was possible to attract local speakers sharing their expertise
- IIBA® and the international community showed interest in our region by joining the conference

However, the following learnings were also made:

- Many speakers and participants were made aware of the conference through personal networks
- It was difficult to attract professionals who work with business analysis but who are not already aware of business analysis as a discipline

I was not sure if this is sufficient to fully prove or confirm the hypothesis. I decided I needed to know more about the business analysis professionals. Since the conference, I have therefore been actively reviewing open business analysis

positions. It is certainly the case that business analysis is performed by professionals with many different job titles. However, I assume that organisations that employ business analysts must know of business analysis as a discipline.

After reviewing many job descriptions, I have found that around 1/3 of them are really data analyst positions. I note down the title, the company, the company’s industry and number of employees (from our public register of companies). Around 25% of the open positions originate from two large companies (though with such a high number it is possible that the same positions are reposted). I know that one of those has an internal community of practice for business analysts.

However, another more interesting pattern is also emerging. Several companies in the computer programming industry are recruiting business analysts. These are companies that develop and support custom made software for customers that are companies that have outsourced software development. About 30% of the companies recruiting business analysts in Denmark are in this industry and they have posted about 30% of the open positions.

Based on my findings (the *asset* that was the report I produced), I believe that the software development industry is a basis for a community of business analysis professionals within Denmark. Within this industry, business analysis seems to be a recognised discipline. Also, these companies are relatively small which

makes it more difficult to build internal communities, and because of that, the motivation to engage in a wider business analysis community might exist.

This is why I am writing about this in BA Digest. Several of these companies are international companies. Which means that you, dear reader, might have a colleague, who is a business analysis professional in Denmark. If that is the case, I would be happy to connect via LinkedIn.

My hope for 2025 is that we hold a BA & Beyond conference as successful as last year, and in addition to that define the contours of an established business analysis community.

At the conference, I met Angela Wick who recently co-wrote "[Futureproof: Amplifying Agility with AI and Insightful Business Analysis](#)". This article is an attempt to apply the framework of the book to the idea of creating a business analysis community in Denmark. The framework consists of business results, hypothesis and experiments, user behaviour changes, assets and team tasks and activities.

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Lessons From the Gym: From Powerlifting World Champion to Business Analyst

George Briley



In November 2014, at just 18 years old, I travelled alone to West Palm Beach, Florida, to compete in the World Powerlifting Congress (WPC) World Championships. Having recently won the European Grand Prix that August and breaking six world records, I was hungry for more success. The championships were an incredible experience, and I returned home with three gold medals, and three more world records.

But my powerlifting career was far from smooth sailing. Just a few years later, I woke up paralysed from the waist down. I was diagnosed with [Cauda Equina Syndrome](#), a severe condition that left me uncertain about my future. It felt like the aspirations I'd set for my professional life might have been compromised by my commitment to my athletic goals. But the skills I'd learned as a powerlifter—

resilience, adaptability, and the value of discipline—became the foundation of my success in a different arena.

Thankfully, over the past few years I have been able to make a miraculous recovery and I have not only been able to continue my business analysis career, but regain my ability to stand and walk. Professionally, I was honoured to be a finalist for the IIBA® UK Chapter Business Analyst of the Year at the Business Analysis Conference Europe last year, where I had the chance to walk on stage with my fellow finalists.

Ten years after my first world championships and nearly ten years into my professional career, I often reflect on the lessons from my athletic background and how they've made me a more effective business analyst. I hope that sharing these principles

will inspire you in your professional growth or in pursuing your own personal ambitions in fitness and health.

Progressive Overload

In powerlifting, “progressive overload” is the practice of gradually increasing the weight lifted to build strength. It’s achieved by adjusting repetitions, sets, or weights over time. Typically, a powerlifter cycles through routines every six weeks, increasing weights with each new cycle to push past previous limits. It’s a methodical process—a slow and steady push forward, taking on a greater challenge as your strength improves.

Writing this, it also strikes me that progressive overload is much like delivering a new iteration through each cycle as a new slice of strength is developed each iteration!

This approach has been just as essential in my journey as a business analyst. Setting challenging goals is critical for growth, but so is recognising when you’re not yet ready to take on the full weight of a project or responsibility. By working through and owning parts of a larger responsibility, you can gain a deeper understanding of what’s needed, positioning yourself to take on more complex responsibilities in the future.

Consistently challenging yourself, while also building a foundation of reliable work, creates a lasting impact. Gradually expanding your analytical skills and tasks not only enhances your own capabilities but demonstrates to others that you’re both ambitious and dependable.

Adaptability

As business analysts, we work in ever-changing environments, with project priorities shifting and new tasks constantly arising. There’s been a lot of discussion lately about adaptability and context switching in the field.

For me, this skill began in the gym, where I had to work around injuries and physical limitations. I learned how to train other muscle groups or focus on form and flexibility when injuries demanded a change in approach. Adapting was a key part of achieving long-term success in powerlifting—overcoming obstacles to maintain momentum.

This strategic approach to adaptability has been invaluable in my work. By investing the time to understand the broader strategies of the organisations I work with and their long-term programme goals, I’m often able to navigate around significant roadblocks and propose meaningful alternatives that keep projects progressing.

We, as business analysts, hold a unique, holistic view of our projects. With our understanding of varied stakeholders and a close knowledge of project requirements, we can act as the connective tissue in change initiatives, finding creative solutions that align with both immediate and strategic needs.

Accountability and Form

In powerlifting, proper form is crucial, both for maximising strength and preventing injury. Without it, not only is lifting dangerous, but your progress is significantly hampered. While

coaches or training partners help with accountability in the gym, true progress also requires self-accountability: consistently practising good form, adhering to recovery protocols, and following a strict diet. This diligence pays dividends in both strength and resilience.

In business analysis, accountability and form take shape through our commitment to best practices. Resources like the [BCS book 'Business Analysis Techniques: 123 essential tools for success'](#) and the [IIBA®'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge \(BABOK®\)](#) guide us in delivering quality work. Holding ourselves accountable for accuracy and depth in our analyses ensures that we provide reliable insights to stakeholders, which ultimately reinforces trust in our work.

We're also accountable for our development, a necessity in a field that's constantly evolving. Whether it's staying current with emerging technology, such as AI and its implications or learning new methodologies, professional growth keeps us relevant and valuable.

Patience, Consistency, and Discipline

These three principles were critical in helping me break nine world records and achieve my athletic goals. Consistency enabled me to build enduring strength; discipline ensured I showed up, every day, even when motivation waned. And patience—waiting for results as I consistently worked toward them—kept me grounded in the long-term journey.

These traits are just as significant for a business analyst. Developing strong

analytical habits and showing up with focus and dedication each day has helped me grow professionally and build a reputation for delivering reliable results. Consistent application of skills, tools, and methodologies has not only improved my abilities over time but also built trust with stakeholders.

When testing hypotheses or implementing changes, patience is critical. Often, gathering the necessary data or understanding post-implementation results takes time. The process of refining and optimising solutions to deliver maximum value requires discipline and a focus on the bigger picture.

Importantly, I've learned that business analysis is rarely a 'one-and-done' process. Embracing an iterative approach means I can build on what I learn, return to stakeholders with new questions, and refine solutions over time. This approach demonstrates our role's value and enables us to deliver meaningful, lasting change within our organisations.

In writing this article, I knew it wouldn't be polished on the first draft. But with the discipline to keep refining it and the patience to let it evolve, I hope I've provided something different in this quarter's BA Digest—and perhaps something enjoyable, too.

George is a Lead Business Analyst, IIBA BA of the Year Finalist 2024, 9x World Record Holder, and 3x WPC Powerlifting World Champion. He's passionate about helping others and looks forward to connecting on LinkedIn at www.Linkedin.com/in/GBriley-BA/

The Balancing Act: Ensuring Just Enough Details for Successful Requirements

Darya Miler



The world of requirements can feel chaotic at times. You may think everything is complete and ready to proceed, only to later realise that the level of requirements detail that has been captured is insufficient or that something important was missed. It's crucial to understand that this is normal—the level of detail in requirements can fluctuate, and finding the "right level" comes with experience and the right tools.

It's a common misconception that requirements must always be as detailed as possible. In reality, the level of detail depends on several factors:

1. Experience and Domain Knowledge of Stakeholders

The level of detail can vary based on how familiar stakeholders are with the domain. For example, when writing functional requirements for a team that has been working on the project for a long time, fewer details may be necessary as there may be a common tacit understanding of the situation.

However, this doesn't apply to newcomers—the requirements for a new team or individuals unfamiliar with the system should be detailed

enough to ensure they gain the correct understanding. This not only ensures high-quality outcomes but also helps the team understand the project better, reducing the need for constant clarification.

2. Regular Feedback from Stakeholders

How do you know if the level of detail is sufficient? The simplest yet most effective approach is to ask stakeholders. As a business analyst, you can't manage requirements in isolation. Schedule regular review meetings, ask clarifying questions, and take note of any questions that arise. If someone asks for clarification, it's likely that the end user (or another consumer of the requirements) will have the same question, so it's important to incorporate the answer into the requirements. Keeping requirements up to date by incorporating feedback ensures they reflect the evolving scope and expectations, helping you identify gaps and adjust the level of detail accordingly.

3. Writing Notes during Scoping

When drafting requirements, you are their first reader. Your initial thoughts and observations, even if you don't have time to refine them immediately, are valuable. Write them down! These notes often highlight potential issues or gaps that other stakeholders might also identify. Many of these thoughts should be incorporated into the final requirements to prevent future misunderstandings.

4. Requirements Traceability

Establishing traceability between requirements and other project artefacts is essential. Traceability helps track changes and dependencies, enabling you to assess the level of detail needed for each requirement. If gaps or unclear areas emerge, it's often a sign that more detail is required. Ensuring completeness and coherence throughout the project lifecycle depends on understanding these relationships.

5. Alternative Formats: Prototyping and Diagrams

Visualising requirements in different formats, such as prototypes or diagrams, can be incredibly useful. For instance, if you're creating a new web page after the functional requirements are written, describe each element when the prototypes or designs are ready. This helps clarify the elements of the user interface and ensures there's a common understanding of the purpose of each feature, often revealing additional details that need to be included. Visualisation allows you to approach the requirements from different perspectives, ensuring completeness.

6. Iterative Refinement and Retrospective Feedback

As you continue working on the product, it's important to periodically review the level of detail in your requirements. Retrospectives, after some time has passed, provide opportunities for team members to

give feedback when they have more clarity. As a facilitator, you should ask direct questions: Are the requirements detailed enough? Are they too detailed? Overloaded documentation can cause confusion among stakeholders, making it harder to focus on the most relevant aspects of the project.

7. Finding the Right Balance

The right level of detail is found through experience and iterative processes. It's okay if the details evolve over time, as the project's scope and team's understanding progress. A balance must be struck between providing enough information for clarity and not overwhelming stakeholders with

unnecessary minutiae.

Conclusion: Requirements as a Masterpiece

Requirements should be treated as a living document, adaptable and refined over time. They need to be valid, clear, and understandable to the intended audience. Whether you use feedback loops, prototyping, traceability, or other tools, the goal is to create requirements that guide the team effectively while being flexible enough to adjust as new information comes to light.

Darya Miler, is an experienced Technical Program Manager and certified Product Owner. You can contact her via

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4 INSPIRING KEYNOTES



Daniel Grist

In the charming town of Little Whisk, Tom's bakery was more than a shop; it was a haven of comfort, known for its delightful pastries and warm smiles. Recently, a new shop had sprung up in Little Whisk, drawing crowds with its innovative flavours and undeniable 'Instagrammable' appeal. Tom secretly yearned for fame and fortune, envious of others.

One starlit evening, as Tom opened his old recipe book, and as some flour fell on to the worktop, so did a genie, shimmering with promise. "One wish, and it shall be yours," it declared. Tom's eyes, reflecting his burning

ambition, didn't hesitate. "Make my bakery go viral," he wished.

With a flourish of magic, the bakery transformed. Neon signs danced to life, and exotic scents beckoned from afar, new unusual pastries arrived. Crowds surged, cameras clicked, and Tom's creations became the talk of not just the town, but the Internet as well. As the days melded into a blur of success, the bakery's soul waned. The regulars, once the heart of the bakery, were eclipsed by novelty-seekers, wanting to try the latest and greatest. The problem is, that when the fad faded, Tom stood amidst

silent ovens and empty victories.

While pondering his hollow triumph, the genie reappeared—not with splendour, but with a simple query: 'What truly feeds the soul, Tom?'. Offering a humble apple pie, the genie illuminated the essence of his bakery—not fame, but the joy his baking brought to the everyday lives of his patrons.

Struck by this revelation, Tom returned to his roots. The neon dimmed, and the authentic scent of fresh bread welcomed the community's return. The bakery's heart pulsed once more, not with the frenzy of fame, but with the rhythm of home. Instead, Tom thought how he could better the bakery, making it into a hub for the community, featuring local flavours, interesting artworks, support for the needy and an atmosphere that was not rushed, but made people feel like they had found 'their place'.

The Illusion of Desire

As you read this short story, perhaps you already have some ideas of what I am going to say, about how what we think we want and what we *actually* want can sometimes be very different things.

Tom's tale is a parable for our times, as we stand on the cusp of this Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution. AI, like the genie, grants exactly what we ask. My worry is, at least at the moment, that it often misses the context, the deeper need we seek to fulfil, the 'Illusion of Desire'. This is where I believe the core value of a curious BA becomes indispensable.

The BA delves beyond the surface, uncovering the true problems and hidden issues. They are pivotal in steering projects away from the pitfalls of inaccurate requirements—the second leading cause of project failures.

Here are some other key AI baked goodies that we can sift from Tom's bakery story.

The Surface-level Solution Fallacy

In the realm of AI or even a naïve BA, we sometimes encounter the 'Surface-Level Solution Fallacy'. This is where someone proposes a solution that only addresses the superficial symptoms of a problem, rather than tackling the underlying root cause.

Without the nuanced understanding of human desires and complexities, AI solutions can be akin to the genie's wish—granted to the letter but devoid of soul. I've also seen this with inexperienced BAs, or indeed experienced BAs that have been 'shot down' or do not feel empowered to delve deeper. This reminds me of a social media post I made last year, around 'gathering' requirements and some stakeholders. Unfortunately they believe that requirements are like apples, ripe and ready for the taking, you just need to gather them up, something that you'll probably be hearing from me about again soon.

This idea of 'gathering' requirements goes along with the 'Surface-Level Solution Fallacy' in that you aren't diving in deeper: you aren't eliciting and finding the hidden requirements or motivations.

The Unseen Depths of Business Analysis

The role of a BA is akin to an artisan, crafting solutions with a blend of empathy, understanding, and technical acumen. BAs navigate the labyrinth of human emotions, organisational culture, and stakeholder interests to reveal the core issues at hand.

The 'Surface-Level Solution Fallacy' often arises from a lack of critical thinking, or a desire for quick wins. People may opt for solutions that appear straightforward and require minimal effort, even if they don't address the core issues. For instance, implementing a new software tool to improve team collaboration without addressing communication problems within the team would be a surface-level solution. The business may or may not be aware of whatever the underlying issue actually is, but the BA will delve into it, and in doing so will highlight the risks and rewards. They'll also highlight how technology and organisational change may be required for sustained change to be successful.

AI as a Tool, Not a Replacement

AI is a formidable force, driving advancements in various fields, one area where it can be so useful is medicine. However, it cannot replace the human elements of conversation, connection, and **curiosity**. It is only through trust and curiosity that a team can transcend surface-level solutions and unearth hidden truths, as a team that lacks trust will often

gloss over or miss the hidden truths.

The Need for Human-centric Analysis

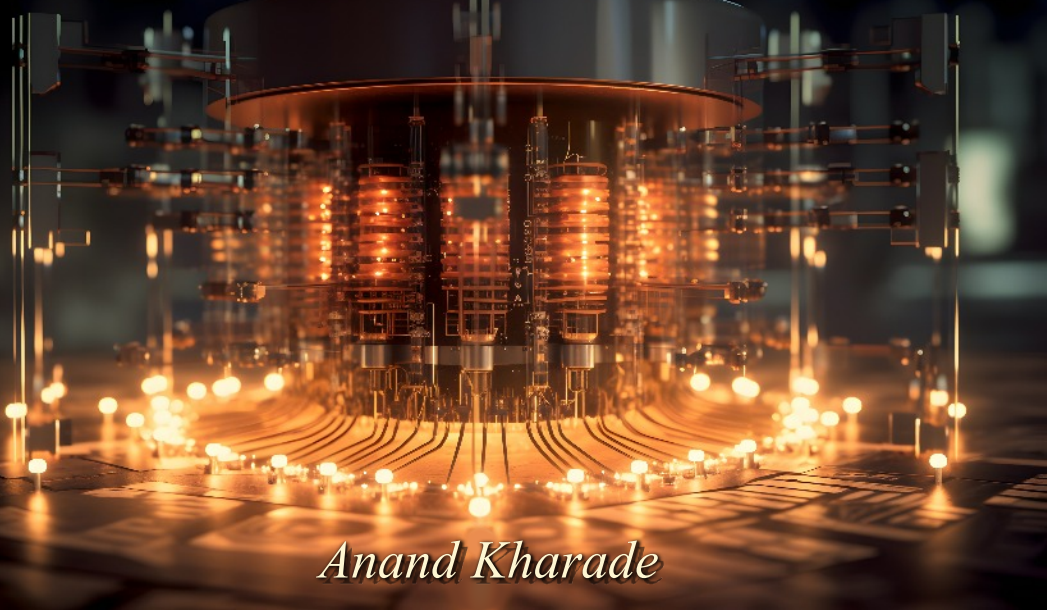
In the end, Tom's bakery thrived, not for its spectacle, but for its spirit. It became a canvas of community expression, a sanctuary for the soul. This transformation mirrors the value that holistic thinking of an issue and delving deeper can add, a skill that the best BAs bring.

As we embrace AI, let us heed the timeless warning: "*Be careful what you wish for, lest it comes true.*" For it is in the nuanced understanding of human desires and complexities that true solutions are found. AI, when guided by the deft hands of a BA, becomes a powerful ally, not a misguided genie.

I also think of this important quote, which is so often missed in modern life with the instantaneous nature of communications, where people so often want to speak and rarely want to listen: "*Listen with curiosity. Speak with honesty. Act with integrity. When we listen with curiosity, we don't listen with the intent to reply. We listen for what's behind the words.*" (Roy T. Bennett)

Daniel Grist is a Senior Consultant in Business Analysis. He's naturally curious, blending internal and consultancy expertise. Transitioning to Business Analysis unexpectedly, he now holds a Degree Apprenticeship and CBAP. He volunteers with Young Business Analysts (YBA), speaks at events, and aims to advance fellow analysts. Connect on [LinkedIn](#).

AI Integration in Business Analysis to Accelerate Transformation



Anand Kharade

In today's fast-paced world, organisations need to adapt quickly to stay competitive and improve their performance. Often, this means accelerating transformation efforts to meet tight deadlines and performance targets.

Against this landscape, businesses are turning to AI and its various applications to keep pace with the rapid changes. By integrating AI into business analysis, companies can process data faster, automate tasks, and create space for informed strategic decision-making. AI tools, when deployed and embedded well, can help businesses stay ahead of the curve and adapt quickly to new developments.

For example, AI-powered simulations and analytics enable businesses to foresee market changes, test hypotheses and adjust their strategies proactively, rather than just reacting to events as they happen. This foresight gives companies the time and information they need to make well-informed decisions.

By harnessing the speed and efficiency of AI, organisations can better handle tight deadlines and meet their performance goals. Ultimately, integrating AI into business analysis makes for a more agile, responsive, and data-driven approach to transformation, allowing

companies not just to keep up with change but to lead it effectively.

Using AI Tools in Business Analysis

In this article, I'll explore how integrating AI tools into business analysis can be beneficial. I'll mention some specific AI tools, and how they can be utilised by BAs.

ChatGPT, a powerful language model from the realm of AI's Natural Language Processing (NLP), is a game-changer for business analysis. It can streamline your workflow by automating data analysis, generating valuable insights, drafting reports, and creating detailed business process documentation. Plus, it's customisable to fit your specific business context and analytical needs. Think of ChatGPT as your virtual coach and facilitator, helping to transform complex research documents into clear, concise summaries that spotlight the key points. When you enable personalisation, it tailors these summaries to your unique requirements.

Additionally, ChatGPT can help design custom templates for documents, reports, and presentations based on your specifications. With its personalisation features, it can adjust templates to match the format or style you need. It's also great for identifying and defining business or technical scenarios where AI and language models can be most effective. You can fine-tune it according to your input and preferences to focus on the use cases that matter most to you.

For developers, ChatGPT assists in generating and refining code snippets or scripts, helping with writing and debugging tasks. Its personalisation capabilities can adapt code to specific programming styles or project requirements. Additionally, it can generate Mermaid and PlantUML code for creating flowcharts, diagrams, and mind maps with tools like Draw.io.

Claude AI is another advanced AI tool that offers robust natural language processing capabilities, making it an excellent asset for business analysts. It excels in data analysis, synthesising business scenarios, identifying trends, generating insights, and evaluating scenarios. Claude AI can efficiently summarise large datasets, detect trends and patterns, highlight key findings, and assess potential impacts, making it invaluable for in-depth business analysis.

Lastly, **Otter.AI** is a standout tool for turning audio recordings into accurate transcripts, improving the documentation of stakeholder interactions. This feature enhances the efficiency of reviewing and analysing discussions, ensuring that critical information is captured and readily accessible.

AI Ethics and Cybersecurity

AI tools offer exciting opportunities for business analysis by streamlining tasks, reducing turnaround times, and uncovering valuable insights. However, it's crucial to ensure these technologies are used ethically and effectively. This means maintaining transparency in their development and continually testing for biases. It's also important to be aware of AI

hallucinations—instances where the AI's outputs diverge from reality, potentially leading to flawed decisions in subsequent analyses.

With legislation such as [GDPR](#) and [CCPA](#) in play, it's more important than ever to rethink our approach to security and data privacy, especially when using AI-powered business analysis tools. While tools like ChatGPT can assist with simulations and team management, a solid and broad understanding of cybersecurity is beneficial, though not always necessary to the finest detail.

To ensure ethical and sustainable AI deployment, thorough training of the underlying AI models is a must. This involves using diverse data sets, performing regular algorithmic audits, and applying techniques to mitigate bias. Adhering to data protection regulations means setting up robust data protection policies, ongoing employee training, and frequent audits. Encrypting both stored and transmitted data is essential for safeguarding information.

By effectively managing ethical concerns, compliance with regulations, and ensuring adherence to suitable cybersecurity practices, businesses can leverage AI responsibly. To address the risks of AI hallucinations, apply domain expertise, ensure comprehensive training data, validate AI outputs regularly, and implement human review processes to catch and correct errors.

Conclusion

AI integration is changing the

landscape of business analysis, with tools like ChatGPT and Claude AI streamlining data processing and boosting strategic flexibility. However, it's important to navigate the ethical concerns and occasional inaccuracies that come with AI. To make the most of these technologies, it's crucial to have hands-on practice, work with diverse data, and maintain strong security measures—all while sharpening your critical thinking skills.

Business analysts should focus on enhancing their critical thinking and cybersecurity knowledge to keep pace with current challenges. It's also essential to develop strategies to manage AI's occasional errors effectively.

As AI continues to transform business analysis, we face an important question: Will our drive for efficiency with AI undermine our human analytical skills, or will it elevate our insights to new heights? The answer hinges on how we develop and regulate these powerful tools.

In conclusion, business analysts should remember not to rely solely on AI for critical decisions, especially when exceptional outcomes are at stake.

Anand Kharade is a competent Business Analysis professional at his workplace, specialising in diverse business analysis skillsets and serving as a process expert within the PV Domain consultant team. He is committed to driving innovation in business analysis for the modern era. Connect with him on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/anand-kharade-gaipc™-sfpc™-mima-b77845261.



BA Back Stories

Vincent Mirabelli

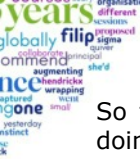


Interviewed by Christina Lovelock

Vince is a keynote speaker, trainer and is principal research director at Info-Tech Research group. He is the president of the [IIBA® Toronto Chapter](#) and a LinkedIn instructor on topics relating to strategic analysis.

***What would you be doing
if we weren't having
this conversation?***

I'm working on a lot of things! I'm just wrapping up my research for this quarter.



So that's what I would probably be doing right now. The other thing that I might be doing is working on courses for LinkedIn or [writing blog posts](#). I try to write at least one blog post a month but it's often hard to carve the time out, that's something I need to get better at!

What are your passions or areas of focus at the moment?

I do a lot of work in the strategic space, which for me has always been really interesting because it allows me to touch on areas that maybe seem ancillary or external to business analysis, but are actually very important. For example, yesterday I did an IIBA® webinar called "navigating toxic waters" and it was all about understanding and navigating organisational politics. That's something that's external to business analysis, but is really relevant to BAs, and is relevant to me personally, as my background is in political science.

Like most of us, I'm wading into the AI waters. Over the past year I've written a lot of research for Info-Tech, and also delivered keynotes sessions and designed a number of courses for LinkedIn learning. The message that I'm trying to get out is don't be afraid. We don't need to be ostriches and stick our head in the sand and pretend we can get by. The reality is we need AI and it makes us better. So, a lot of my focus has been on getting people comfortable using it, explaining, "here's some use cases, and here's some things that you can do with it".

I'm also excited to share and talk about the soft skills business analysts

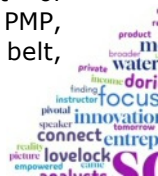
need, like stakeholder management and improving communication. Those are going to be the differentiators in the future of our profession, because we're going to have AI augmenting us and so those skills become increasingly important, and I'm much more fascinated by human behaviour than anything else.

What led you to business analysis?

I have to quote [Filip Hendrickx](#) on this one—in my case, BA absolutely stands for 'by accident!' I studied politics, then started working in administrative areas like accounts payable. I wasn't happy and just felt frustrated. So, I did a bit of self-retrospection and thought "Well, what else can I do?". I knew I had skills. I knew that I was being underutilised, but I didn't know what alternatives existed. I came across this profession called business analysis, and I looked at what BAs did, and I thought, "well, I can do that!" That seems like a natural fit for me and that was step one, just finding out about the profession.

There were a number of business analyst roles available, but they were really hard to get, so I went back to school, almost ten years after graduating. I did a programme at the University of Toronto, then did a master's level programme at York University. The people that I met there were also instrumental in supporting the launch of my speaking career. I feel very fortunate to have found business analysis as a career.

I have invested in a lot of personal development, CBAP, PMP, Lean 6 Sigma master black belt,



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certifications in Lego serious play, design and innovation. I did the IIBA® cybersecurity certification. I think it's really important for BAs to be able to contribute in multiple dimensions, and this has helped me to work on the strategic side because it's not just about the tactical execution of projects, it's more about understanding that broader picture.

What is the philosophy or mindset that you bring to business analysis?

I once had a leader that said to me: "You think like a criminal". I didn't know what to make of that, but I think she meant like a criminal mastermind. (At least I hope!). Because when I see a problem, I start to look at it in multiple dimensions and see it from multiple perspectives. That's why it's so important to have a grounding in project management, change and innovation and all of those other areas because it gives you the ability to view a problem from a different perspective.

That means you can draw the appropriate arrow from your quiver. If all you have is a hammer, every problem is a nail, right? But I wanted to be the Swiss army knife, and I think that's why professionally, I've always excelled as a bit of a contrarian. I don't necessarily like going along with the status quo. What I try to do is push people's thinking. To consider things that maybe they haven't considered, ensuring that people are seeing things from multiple angles. So that's what I try to bring to my work now and have always tried to bring in the past.

Has there been an epiphany or light bulb moment for you that stands out in your career?

Going into business analysis to begin with, which was a bit of a leap of faith. It was a significant investment to go back and learn and I was a bit scared, because there was no guarantee. In retrospect, I see that nothing is ever guaranteed. Tomorrow is not guaranteed for any of us, and that's both freeing and terrifying. I thought "if I don't take this leap, then I'm stuck here where I am for the foreseeable future or I take a leap and maybe nothing comes of it, but maybe something really, really awesome does". Sometimes you have to trust your instinct, trust your gut by taking the road that is scary, but has the potential to be awesome.

What's something that you'd still like to do, experience or achieve?

Looking back to what I hoped to achieve five years ago, I have been able to achieve a lot of what I wanted to do. When I first started speaking in 2015, I set a goal to speak internationally at some point in my life (and as a Canadian, the US doesn't count!). The first time I stepped out of my comfort zone (and away from the security of being a local and always having people there to support you), was going on my own to [BA Conference Europe](#) in London. I didn't know anybody! (Except Adrian Reed, we were Twitter buddies).

I would love to do more of that, I'd like to continue to share what I have learned globally. We've got a really

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learning, and I do some private training. That book really inspired me to take action. It's not about being rich, but being more in control.

So those are the three things that I would recommend: the awesome BA Community, Originals (and really anything else) by Adam Grant and Entrepreneurial You by Dorie Clark.

Vince is the host of the LinkedIn Live show [Analysts After Work](#). [Connect with Vince via LinkedIn](#).

About the interviewer:

Christina Lovelock is a BA leader, author and coach. She's active in the Business Analysis professional community and champions entry-

level roles. She's the author of two BCS books, [Delivering Business Analysis](#) and a new release [Careers in Tech, Data and Digital](#).

She'd be delighted if you'd like to connect!

[Linkedin.com/in/christina-lovelock](https://www.linkedin.com/in/christina-lovelock)



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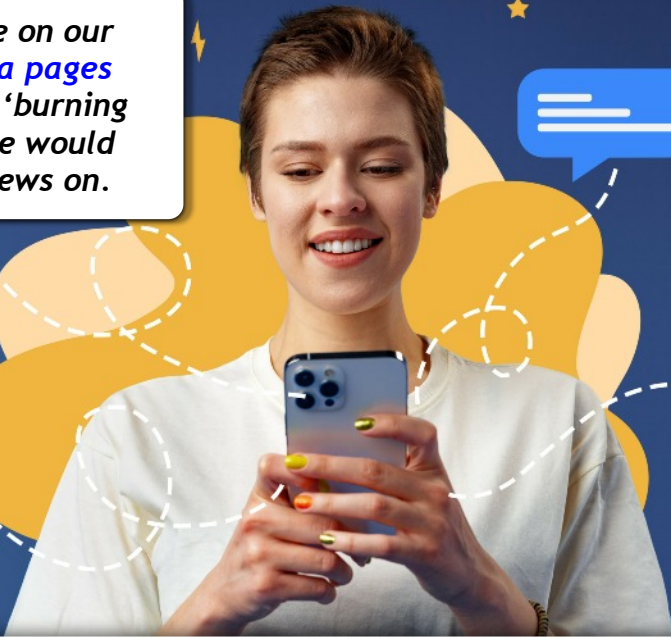
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Keep an eye on our *social media pages* for the next 'burning question' we would like your views on.



VIEWPOINTS

On social media, we posed the question

If you were explaining the benefit of business analysis to a stranger, how would you describe it?

Business analysis is how we know we're building the right thing.

Even if it was right when we started building it, the world often changes while we are building it.

So while analysis can make sure we built the thing well: the most well-built thing that solves the

wrong problem is a waste of effort to build and a waste of time to promote (which means a waste of money).

Business analysis means we've set out to build the right thing - and it has not become the wrong thing while we've been busy.

Garrie

Business analysis is like being the navigator on a road trip. Imagine a company is the driver, heading toward a goal (success). The navigator's job is to study the map, find the best route, and identify possible roadblocks or shortcuts. Without a navigator, the driver might take wrong turns, waste time, or run out of fuel.

A business analyst does this for

organizations by understanding their needs, analyzing challenges, and designing solutions—whether it's improving a process, choosing the right software, or solving customer problems. They ensure the company reaches its destination efficiently and avoids unnecessary detours.

Afifah Hanun

When you want to construct a building for your organisation, you get an architect to draw up a plan. This design is discussed and changed (and discussed and changed) until the client is satisfied with the design and the estimated price.

If you don't make a design-discuss it-change it, you will lose a lot of time and money.

(This approach has been tried and tested since the 1960s. It has never worked.)

Christiane Vandepitte

Most of my friends are either mechanics or into their cars. For them, I describe my role as a BA as being like when someone buys a track-day racing car. They may drive round the track, not get the times they want and tell their mechanic, "The car isn't fast enough, make it faster". The mechanic then might improve the acceleration and / or top speed of the car, but this may not fix the real problem!

My job is to hear the customer say

that, and understand they want to achieve a lower lap time. I'd do an analysis of the car and the driver's performance and may discover the real issue is the performance of the brakes.

Then, advising the mechanic to upgrade the brakes, we allow our driver to brake later for corners, to drive at a higher average speed around the course and lower their lap time.

George Briley

Einstein (allegedly) once said: “If I would be given one hour to save the world, I would spend 55 minutes understanding the problem and 5 minutes should then be sufficient to find the solution.” This quote symbolises for me the true essence of business analysis.

That means that, if you need someone that will dive into the real business problem (or opportunity) before thinking

about solutions, involve a business analysis practitioner.

If you need someone to only work on solutions, get a solution / functional / system analyst. But that doesn't guarantee that that solution will solve the real problem ... unless of course a good BA practitioner identified the real problem (or opportunity) prior to the solution definition 😊.

Stefan Bossuwé

Understanding the problem or opportunity the business is actually facing, and ensuring the proposed solution delivers maximum value in overcoming

this problem or leveraging the opportunity.

David Smith

Thanks to all the authors who kindly allowed us to use their content.

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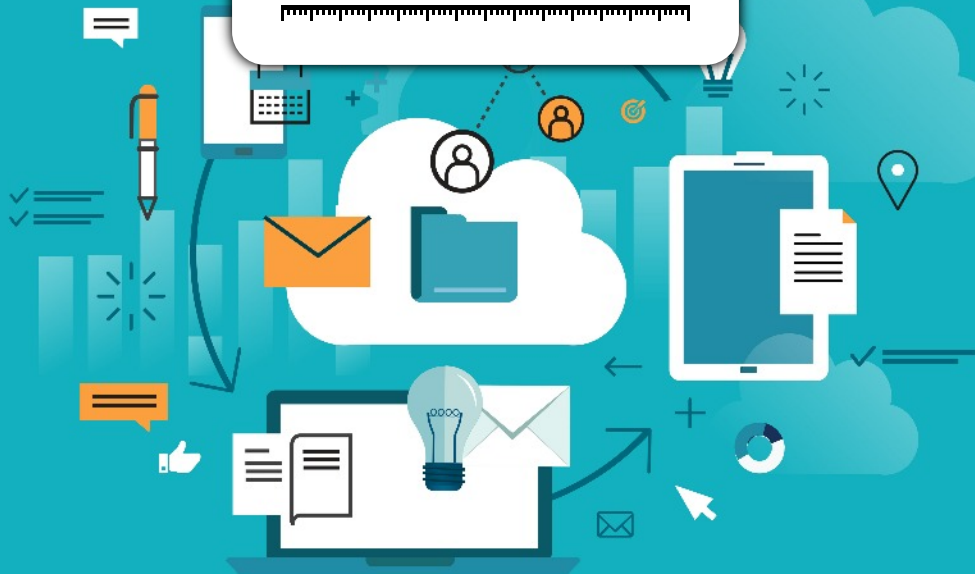
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