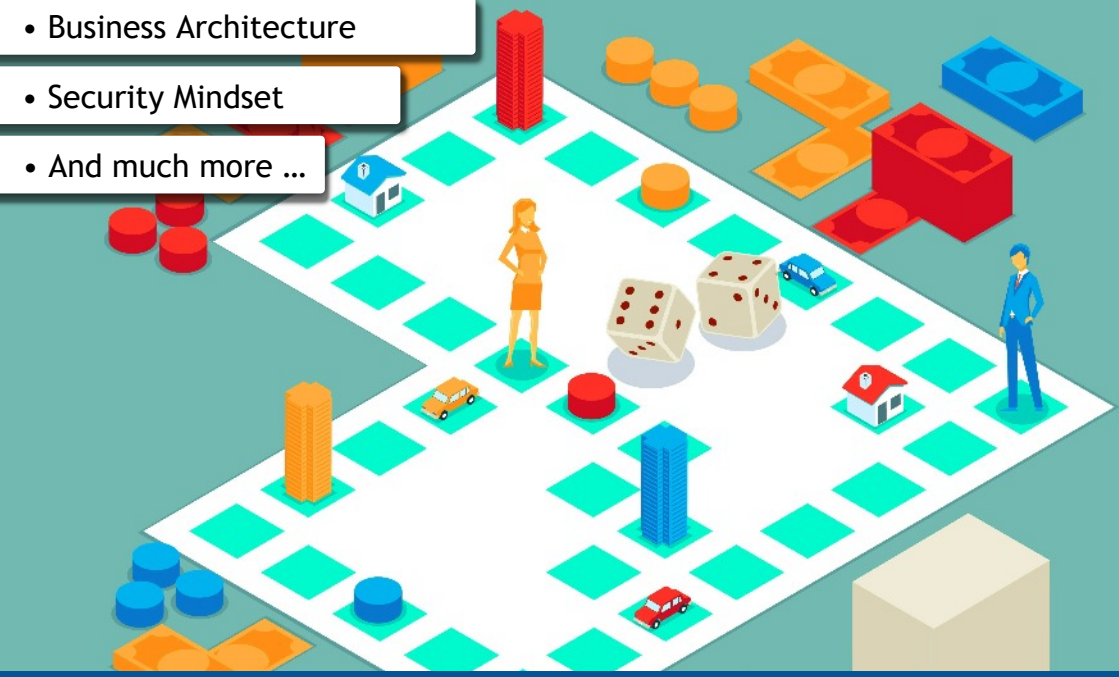
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BA DIGEST

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Welcome

Welcome to this edition of BA Digest.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, for many of us it's a time for career reflection. There's something about the end of one year, and the beginning of another that seems to encourage reflection and goal setting.

I was recently reflecting on BA Digest. Some of you may remember that BA Digest started in 2015/2016 as an email newsletter, and became a PDF magazine in Q4 2020. That's right, the PDF magazine is now four years old, and the concept itself is eight or nine! Time really does fly.

I wish I could tell you there was a grand plan from the beginning, but that wouldn't be true. The PDF magazine started as an experiment, and one that really shouldn't have worked. We were exhibiting at a virtual conference, and needed something to give away at our virtual stand. The feedback was really positive, so we decided to try circulating it more broadly… and it grew from there. There was a hypothesis of value, which we tested, and we've adapted along the way.

But BA Digest really shouldn't work. "Free" (without registration) shouldn't work . "Long form PDF" shouldn't work in this era of short-form social media dopamine hits. Yet somehow it does, and for that I'm really pleased! Perhaps this highlights the importance of experimentation, rather than accepting assumptions without testing them.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed, to this edition or any edition. And thanks to those who read the magazine. If you know of anyone else who might benefit from reading BA Digest, please pass it on. The more people that see it, the better.

As usual, you'll find a wide variety of articles on all sorts of different topics in this edition. Kudos to all of the authors who have taken time to share their experiences. If you see an article that resonates with you, please 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

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest

Principal Consultant, Blackmetric

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The Stakeholder Network Effect: Strategies for Managing Communication Challenges

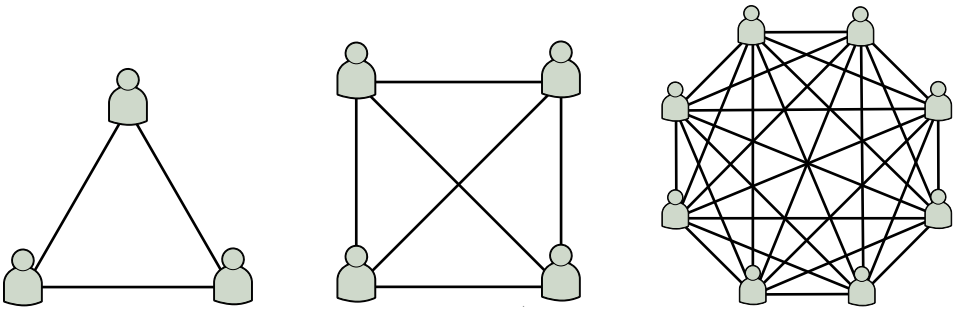


Karen Newnham

The network effect is the powerful driver behind the success of platforms such as TikTok, Uber and Just Eat. It's what makes LinkedIn a useful tool for managing your career. But did you know the same effect impacts your stakeholder engagement?

Robert Metcalfe first proposed a way to calculate the value of a communication network in 1980. The resulting equation is called Metcalfe's Law and shows that as the number of nodes in a network increases, the number of unique communication links or pathways between the nodes increases at a faster rate.

The maths can be used for groups of people. Two people have just one communication channel between them. Add another person and the number of channels increases to three. With four people there are six channels.



When you or your Project Manager (PM) decides to increase the number of workshop attendees from four to eight the number of potential communication channels increases from six to 28 both during and after the workshop—that's over four times as many channels.

This rapid increase in communication complexity can quickly become difficult to manage and lead to coordination challenges, and slower decision-making.

But enough with the maths lesson. What can we as BAs do about it?

Overcoming Communications Challenges

Firstly, just being aware of the effect will motivate you to consider ways to manage the complexity or work with it.

For workshops, consider carefully the number of attendees. Moving from nine to ten people is a jump from 36 connections to 45. That's a lot of extra complexity to manage. So, challenge who really needs to be there. If attendance is out of your control, consider how you design the session to reduce the complexity. For example, break people into smaller groups for as much time as possible and bring the groups together for debriefs only so you can control the message.

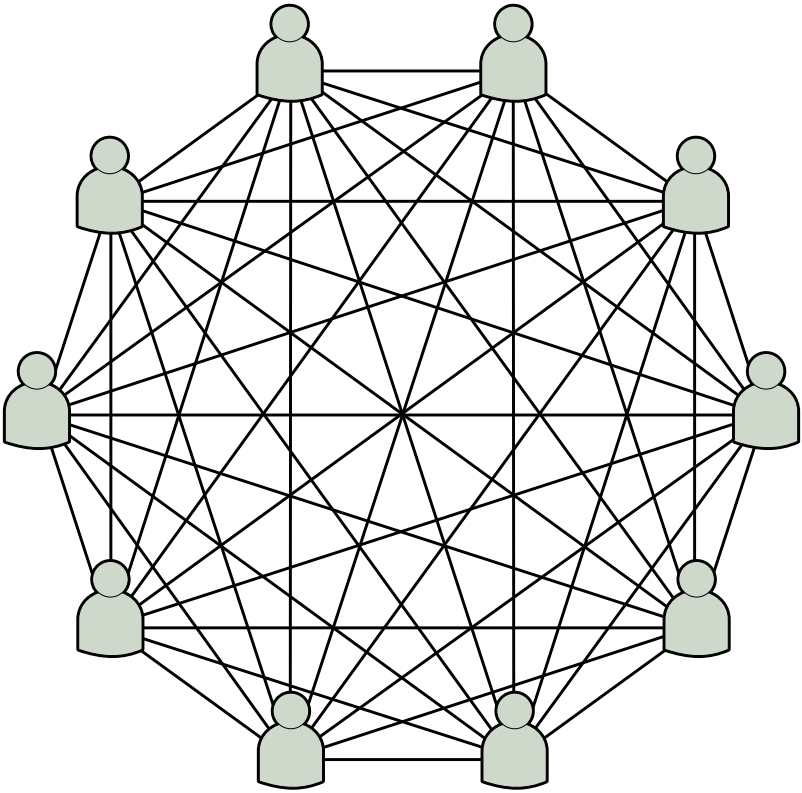
For smaller meetings it is still worth considering the impacts. Moving from two to three people is a jump from one to three connections. This happens a lot in my daily work but rarely do people increase the time of the 'quick' 30 minute meeting to account for a three-fold increase in connections. However, if the meeting is anything other than an information briefing then the chances are that not allowing more time for discussion will result in the need for another meeting.

Finally, reflecting on how the number of connections you need to manage in the different stakeholder management settings can help you be more successful in influencing decision makers. Rarely is someone an island and if you have convinced one person to go in a certain direction, chances are there are a whole load of other people you also need to convince (and keep onside) to stay on track. This means getting things moving or changing direction will take a lot longer than you think. Factor in the extra

time to bring everyone along on the journey into project plans. Also, consider where you may need to reach other stakeholders individually before a group session to make sure they are on board with a decision point or recommendation.

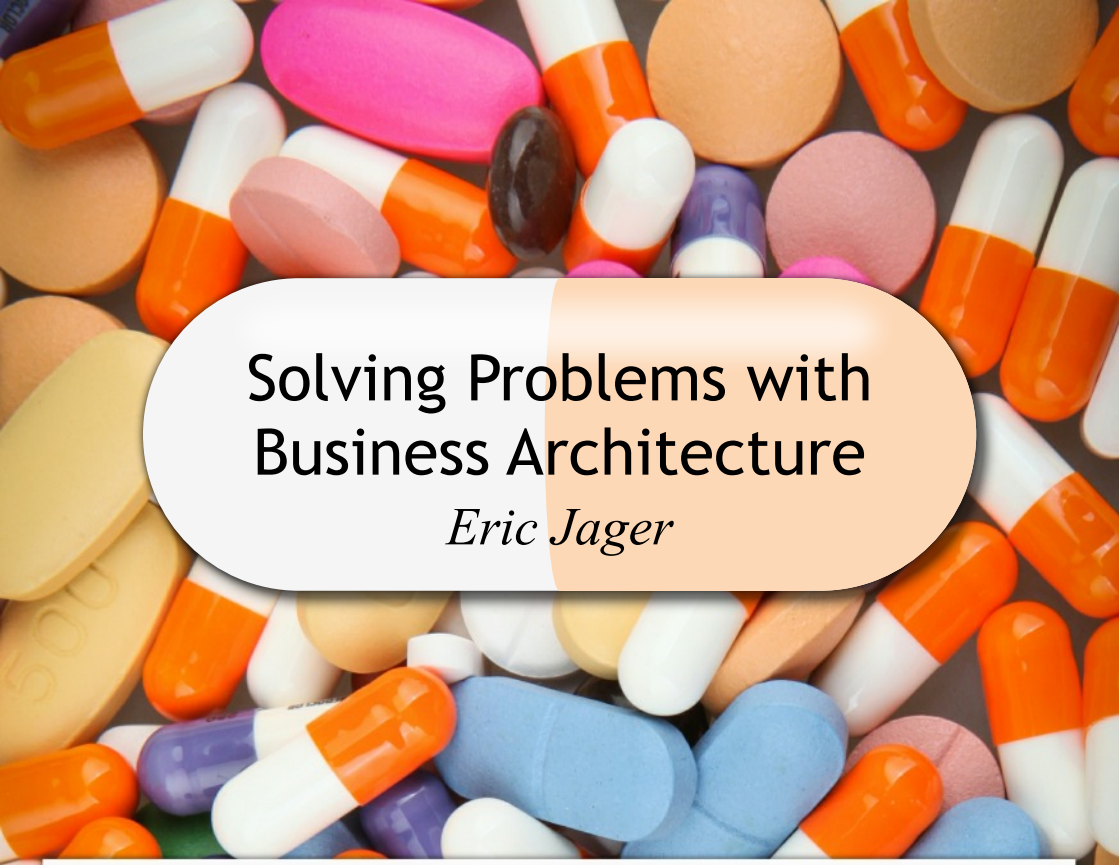
Some of you may be thinking that not all your stakeholders have individual relationships with each other so the complexity may not be as bad as it sounds. But even a casual meeting in the canteen or a virtual chat can derail decisions. This is why regular communication on decisions and progress is an important habit in stakeholder management.

In short, being aware of what you are dealing with helps you take more control. And if your PM wants to add one more person to your nine person workshop - draw them a picture!



Karen Newnham is on a mission to help every business analyst be more impactful.

You can reach her here:
www.linkedin.com/in/karennewnham



Solving Problems with Business Architecture

Eric Jager

Business architecture is a rapidly growing profession. Fortunately so, because it is the missing link between an organisation's strategy and its implementation. Business architecture can help organisations bridge the gap between the two. This role, which is still lacking in many organisations, is essential for understanding the impact that certain strategic decisions can have on an organisation.

A Practical Example: New Legislation

Recently I was working for an organisation that was faced with new legislation coming into force. This new legislation would require certain departments to take on additional responsibilities. These were so numerous that it was quickly concluded—somewhat prematurely—that the organisation would need increased resources.

As is often the case in this type of situation (something changes in the organisation's environment that leads to an increase in the execution of a set of activities and operations), it was immediately assumed that a substantial increase in staff was the only way forward. Vacancies were advertised online in haste, in the hope of attracting

the necessary staff well before the new legislation came into force.

A significant number of candidates responded quickly to the vacancies. However, during the recruitment and onboarding process, the organisation noticed that previously interested candidates were dropping out. There were frequent complaints on social media about the organisation's treatment of the candidates. A mild panic spread through the company as time was running out. This was not the desired starting point for dealing with the pressure that was building up.

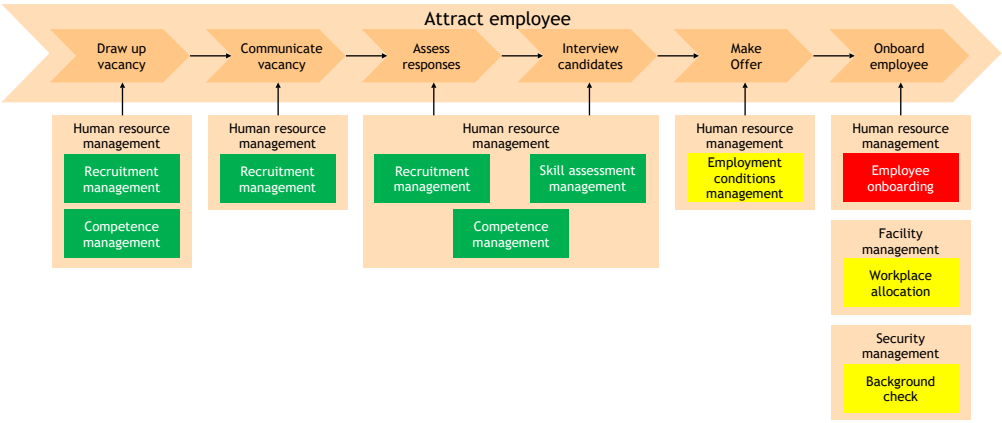
Fortunately, I was able to provide support from my role as business architect.

Collaborative Use of Business Architecture Concepts

Together with the HR department, I analysed the problem. Using architectural concepts such as value stream mapping and capability mapping, I was able to quickly and efficiently create an overall picture of the company's recruitment and onboarding process.

> *A value stream is a representation of a series of activities that create value for a stakeholder. A capability says something about what an organisation should be able to do, without directly linking it to a specific department, role or person. By mapping these elements to other elements, you can visualise their interrelationships.*

Armed with the knowledge of how and in what way the recruitment and onboarding capabilities played a role in the value stream of attracting employees, I was able to interpret with the HR department where the problem lay in the situation that had arisen. The decline of candidates became apparent during the onboarding process. This is illustrated in the following diagram, with problematic areas highlighted in yellow and red.



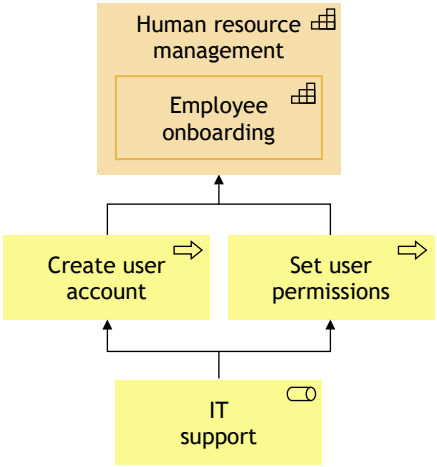
Further and more in-depth research and several interviews revealed that the potential candidates initially eagerly accepted the offer made to them. However, by the time they were due to start work (or in some cases during or shortly after their first day), problems began to emerge.

Diagnosing Root Causes

By utilising business architecture, I was able to link the processes the organisation was running to the capabilities needed in the onboarding process fairly easily. It soon became clear that one of these processes, the one that should be responsible for registering new employees in all IT systems, was not working optimally. In fact, the underlying workflow mechanism was not working.

In-depth investigation revealed that the application supporting the workflow system was in an advanced state of migration. The migration to a new system had not yet been completed, resulting in a situation where certain steps in the workflow process had to be performed manually. The team responsible for these tasks had delegated them to one person. And that person had recently resigned, just before the vacancies for new staff arose.

As there was no record of what this person did, there was no effective handover when the person left. This resulted in little ability to perform the process steps required to properly create accounts for new employees in the IT systems. This then led to a situation where new staff did not have access to information systems. In some cases, new recruits were unable to enter the building. To make matters worse, there were situations where staff were completely unknown to the organisation and were left to fend for themselves on their first day; no one knew who they were or what they had come to do.



The use of business architecture made it painfully clear that the onboarding capability was far from optimal due to the lack of a person to manually execute some of the processes. With this capability dysfunctional, there was no way to successfully execute the final stage of the value stream for attracting new employees.

Resolving the Issue

Fortunately, the situation was eventually resolved by assigning a new person to carry out the manual steps. Within a short time, the employee data was correctly reflected in the relevant

systems. The actions required for the onboarding process were also centrally documented and recorded to prevent reoccurrence. Ultimately, the migration of the workflow system was accelerated.

Business architecture allowed the organisation to visualise not only the value they were creating (or trying to create) for their new employees, but also the underlying capabilities required. Once these capabilities were mapped to their corresponding processes and complemented by the right business roles, the organisation could identify the root cause of the attrition.

The positive aspect of this situation is that, from this point on, business architecture is increasingly involved in all sorts of issues related to the implementation and execution of the strategy. This strategy, and therefore the achievement of goals and intended results, is now always first tested by the business architect. A translation to implementation is now invariably requested by the organisation before starting.

Eric Jager is the author of Getting Started with Enterprise Architecture and a Certified Master Architect in Enterprise Architecture.

Eric is considered to be a Thought Leader in the field of architecture, and speaks at various conferences and seminars. He lectures on architecture at the Eindhoven University of Technology.



Implementation of Peer Reviews: A Game-changer for Our Business Analysts



Christine Savriacooty

The initiative of introducing peer reviews within our BA practice was inspired by the Mastering the Requirements Process training, attended by our BA lead, Reena Cheeneebash.

The training served as a wake-up call. We realised that without an additional set of eyes reviewing key artefacts, ambiguities, inconsistencies and even factual errors could easily slip through the cracks. This critical realisation underscored the need to implement a peer review process as it will benefit not just the business analyst, but also those who rely on the user stories and other BA artefacts. By incorporating this step, we can ensure that each user story is not only accurate and clear but also meticulously crafted and written at an appropriate level of detail. It's a simple yet powerful safeguard that will prevent us from unknowingly building on shaky foundations.

Identifying the Need for Standardisation: Launching a Workshop to Align Best Practices

The introduction of the peer review initiative took place during a comprehensive masterclass training 'The Power of User Stories,' delivered by our business analyst lead and myself. It became evident that our BAs needed a unified approach to ensure that user stories are not only consistent but also meet high standards of accuracy, completeness, clarity, and logical flow. Our peer review initiative therefore aims

to align our BA team on best practices for writing user stories, standardising their approach and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Building Awareness: Introducing Peer Review to the BA Community

For the initiative to succeed there would need to be a fundamental cultural shift in our community. To embrace this change, we embarked on a comprehensive awareness campaign. We focussed not only on the benefits such as improved quality, early issue detection but we championed the holistic benefits for everyone. We painted a picture of a team empowered by learning opportunities fostered by knowledge sharing and unified by a commitment to maintaining high standards. We emphasised the sense of ownership each business analyst would gain during these sessions and how peer reviews would cultivate a culture of excellence and not of criticism.

Setting the Standards: Defining Key Criteria for Peer Reviews

To guarantee effective peer reviews, we established a robust set of criteria. This was not a top-down approach; we leveraged the expertise of experienced business analysts and valuable insights gathered during the masterclass to build this framework. The criteria focused on core elements: accuracy of information, crystal-clear language, comprehensive details, a logical narrative flow, adherence to best practices and most importantly ensuring alignment with business objectives. This approach ensured a shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality user stories.

Implementing a Peer Review Log and the Benefits

This peer review log is not only a record of who reviewed what and when. The log serves as a repository of collective learning as we capture the key feedback points and rating from both reviewers and reviewees. This also helps us identify recurring issues, track improvements over time and gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of the peer review process. This transparency fosters accountability and fuels a continuous improvement cycle ensuring our user stories consistently meet the highest standards.

Encountering Challenges with the Implementation of Peer Review

Implementing peer reviews was not without its hurdles. Some BAs expressed apprehension over the extra workload and the prospect of receiving critical feedback. To address these concerns, we reinforce the fact that it is a great opportunity to learn and improve together and that it will not be a platform for negativity. Additionally, some business analysts questioned the relevance of reviewing projects outside their area of expertise. We countered this by promoting the value of cross-project

insights that could bring fresh perspectives leading to brilliant ideas. Furthermore, we went beyond the immediate task of reviewing user stories. We presented peer reviews as a springboard for a more engaged community. This included discussions about optimising the process reviews, brainstorming sessions to tackle common challenges, fostering a space for open knowledge sharing and any topic that could add value to the BA experience. Presentations, open discussions, and showcasing successful peer review implementations further solidified buy in and encouraged active participation from our peers.

By reframing the narrative, we chipped away at initial resistance and paved the way for a smooth transition.

Positive Outcomes

Since launching the user story masterclass and implementing peer reviews, we have witnessed significant improvements in the quality of user stories. BAs themselves report a clarity in their work, more efficient communication with stakeholders and a strong alignment in project goals. Our BAs are now confident and concise in their communication ensuring everyone is on the same page.

Our software engineers have observed significant improvements in the quality of user stories resulting in clearer requirements and fewer misunderstandings during the development process.

The magic lies in the cross-collaboration. Business analysts no longer operate in silos as they have a comprehensive understanding of shared goals leading to a more cohesive and impactful development process.

The success of ‘The Power of User Stories’ masterclass has set a new standard for our BA community.

Testimonials and Some Figures

Over the past 6 months, our BA community has actively performed approximately 118 reviews which include user stories, process reviews, user story mapping and brainstorming sessions on specific features.

This dedication has yielded impressive results. Here is what some of our BAs are saying:

"While anyone can write user stories, I wanted to ensure they were done the right way as a business analyst should and these peer reviews have been immensely beneficial in achieving that goal."

"I used to feel isolated working on my own projects. Now, through cross-project reviews, I see the bigger picture and can contribute valuable insights to others."

"The clarity and efficiency in my communication with stakeholders have significantly improved thanks to the focus on clear and concise user stories during peer reviews."

To Sum up…

The introduction of peer reviews within our BA community has been transformative. We embarked on a journey of building awareness, establishing clear and collaborative quality standards and meticulously tracking progress. This commitment has fostered a vibrant culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. While initial hurdles were present, we have successfully navigated them, resulting in a significant boost to the quality of our deliverables. More importantly, our BAs are experiencing professional growth. Peer reviews have empowered them with a deeper understanding of best practices leading to more confidence and effective contributions during refinement sessions. This win-win situation ensures exceptional user stories and an engaged business analyst community.

Christine Savriacooty, a passionate Senior Business Analyst dedicated to excellence and continuous learning. I am committed to improving processes and delivering top-notch results. I take immense satisfaction in mentoring and supporting others to grow and enhance their skills.

Connect with me on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/christine-s-3b62918b.

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What Business Analysts Need to Know about the Product Operating Model

Kent J. McDonald

In my experience, during the past ten years software has become much more pervasive in organisations, especially those not normally thought of as “tech companies”.

This is especially the case in industries where business analysts are most common: insurance, financial services, retail, healthcare, and government.

In order to adopt software into their day-to-day operations, many organisations undergo a series of transformations.

These transformations try to emulate ways of working from other industries, often ones that do not widely use business analysts. The result is business analysts can often get left behind in the change to their, and their organisations’, detriment.

It doesn’t have to be that way.

The latest of these transformations—the switch to a product operating model—provides an opportunity for business analysts to make substantial contributions.

To explain how, I need to explain how we got to where we are.

First Agile, Then Digital, Now Product

In a broad sense, here are the three types of transformations that organisations have gone through to become more tech enabled:

- **Agile transformation:** When IT develops software for us, it seems to take so long, and have so many issues. How can we go faster?
- **Digital transformation:** Hey, now that we can build software faster, perhaps we should view IT as an asset rather than a cost centre. Maybe we can use it to automate our processes and help customers self-serve.
- **Product transformation:** Wow, we can build stuff fast, but more often than not, it's the wrong stuff. We ought to figure out how to decide what stuff to build.

When organisations go through a product transformation, they may describe it as going from *projects* to *products*, or focusing on *outcomes* rather than *outputs*. They're actually adopting the product operating model for their change efforts.

What Is the Product Model, Really?

Marty Cagan, with Silicon Valley Product Group, described the product operating model this way:

> "The product operating model, also referred to as the product model, is a conceptual model based on a set of first principles that leading product companies believe to be true about creating products.
>
> The product operating model is about consistently creating technology-powered solutions that deliver value to customers and that also drive results for the business. It's about achieving outcomes versus merely producing output."

When your organisation adopts the product operating model, you're changing how you decide which problems to solve, how you solve problems, and how you build solutions.

How You Decide Which Problems to Solve

The product operating model reinforces the need for organisations to decide explicitly what they will and will not build. In addition, it identifies what should guide those discussions—a customer centric product vision and an insight-driven product strategy.

How You Solve Problems

Instead of being handed solutions to deliver, leaders ask teams to solve problems and achieve outcomes. This gives the people who know most about the technology the latitude to determine the best solution to achieve the desired outcome.

The solution the team finds needs to address four risks, as outlined by Elijah Calhoon:

- **Value:** does your solution benefit customers and will they use it?
- **Usability:** are users able to figure out how to use your solution?
- **Feasibility:** is your team able to build what you need with the time, skills and technology you have?
- **Viability:** is your organisation able to deliver your solution at a best-in-class level?

It turns out that viability can be the one risk that gets the short shrift.

How You Build Solutions

Strive to build software using small, frequent, and reliable releases of at least once every couple of weeks and preferably using continuous integration and continuous deployment.

Viability and Business Analysts

The common wisdom is that you have a product trio made of people with different skill sets focused on those four risks I described above:

- A product manager who is best suited to pay attention to value (and viability)
- A tech lead who is best suited to pay attention to feasibility
- A product designer who is best suited to pay attention to usability

Notice I didn't say those roles "own" or "are responsible for" those risks. The trio works together to address those risks, and it doesn't hurt when different members bring different expertise.

What Is Viability? It Depends.

When you work on tech products, viability means the solution works within constraints from other departments, such as marketing, sales, finance, service, legal, and compliance.

When you work on an internal product—software an organisation builds for its own use—the meaning of viability shifts in a subtle, but important way. The department constraints you're concerned about are those departments that will use the software you build.

In either case, you can describe those constraints in terms of the rules, data, and processes that make the solution work, and that make it fit within its environment.

Sound familiar? Right, those are a business analyst's sweet spot.

So Who Pays Attention to Viability?

In tech product settings, product managers can pay attention to both value and viability.

Most product management training includes how to discover your customers' needs (establish value) and figure out how to create business cases and take the product to market (ensure viability).

Product managers typically aren't as familiar with (unless they came from a business analysis background) how to deal with rules, data, and processes from internal business departments.

Business analysts can easily fill that gap, either by becoming product managers or, as another member of the trio (which now, I guess, is a "quad").

That's not to say you're getting one of those roles because you're a business analyst, but because you know how to understand the relevant rules, data, and processes and work with your team to craft a proper solution.

Chances are the role you fill in this setting may not even be business analyst. It could be product owner, or delivery lead. That doesn't change the fact that you can leverage your business analysis skills to be an indispensable member of your team.

For example, I was the delivery lead on an internal product that calculated prices for an agriscience company. Because of my business analysis background, I was the one who dived into the specific pricing rules the new system needed to enable, what data we needed to set those prices, and what the business process would look like to make that happen.

I started off with a series of discovery sessions so the team could get familiar with the organisation and the specific activities of setting up prices. Once we had a fairly good basis of understanding, we moved into a pattern of continuous discovery, refinement, and development.

While it's tempting to describe this as requirements elicitation, it was much more than that. We became familiar with the rules, data and processes that we needed to have in place to set prices properly. We were ensuring the **viability** of the solution.

Business Analysis Has a Place in the Product Operating Model

A key piece of adopting the product operating model is caring about viability. A lot of what business analysts do is ensure the solutions an organisation builds work for that organisation.

So if you want to be part of an organisation's move to the product operating model, don't insist that you should be on the team because you're a business analyst.

Instead, explain what skills you have because of practising business analysis and explain how you can use those skills to make sure teams build viable and valuable solutions.

Your value comes in the skills you can apply, not necessarily the title that you hold.

I help organisations that build software for their own use decide what to build. I've practised my craft with teams in more industries than I care to admit. When not working with teams, I provide just-in-time resources for product people at insideproduct.co. Connect with me on LinkedIn.

Maximising Efficiency in the Digital Age: The Untapped Potential of Existing Technologies

Ashley Cruz-Singh



In the swiftly changing tech landscape, the latest innovations often overshadow the robust capabilities of tools we already have at our disposal. This tendency to constantly seek out the new may lead us to overlook the rich potential embedded in the technologies we use daily. This article delves into the transformative impact that can be achieved by fully leveraging existing technological resources. Through comprehensive exploration, it aims to illuminate the often-ignored capabilities of familiar tools and platforms, demonstrating how their advanced features can radically alter our work

processes for the better. By unlocking the full potential of the technology we already own, we can revolutionise our approach to tasks, fostering a culture of efficiency and innovation that propels us toward our goals.

Unleashing the Full Potential of Existing Tools

The Microsoft Office Suite, a staple in most workplaces, is more than just a set of familiar tools. Its lesser-known advanced features can transform the way we work. For instance, PowerPoint's Designer and "Rehearse with Coach" functions can transform a simple presentation into a compelling narrative. PowerPoint Designer automatically creates professional-looking slide ideas as you start typing based on your content. Do you have a PowerPoint to present and want to know how you can improve it? PowerPoint guides you through your presentation pitch by providing live and conclusive personal feedback on your delivery, pacing, and use of filler words with "Rehearse with Coach", helping you deliver it just right.

Another underappreciated gem is the search bar, now conveniently at the top of all Office applications. This feature improves how we interact with these tools, making locating functions or executing tasks easier without endless menu navigation. The simple act of 'asking' the search bar can swiftly guide you to the feature or solution you need.

Not to be overlooked, the "dictate" feature across Word, Outlook, OneNote, and PowerPoint introduces a hands-free way to capture your thoughts. Converting speech to text allows for a more fluid transfer of ideas, streamlining the process of drafting emails, documents, or notes.

For those grappling with data, Excel's Power Query and Power Pivot features are nothing short of transformative. They simplify complex data analysis, enabling users to perform sophisticated operations with just a few clicks. This saves valuable time and makes data analytics more accessible to those who might not be experts.

The best part? Microsoft offers free, easily accessible online tutorials for these applications.

Resource Sharing within Organisations

Collaboration extends beyond interpersonal interactions. It involves a collective awareness of the technologies each department is leveraging. Take, for instance, my experience as a business analyst at a non-profit organisation. I wanted to enhance our project management processes, so I embarked on a simple yet transformative journey: reaching out to various departments to understand the technological tools they were utilising.

This initiative led me to discover that the marketing team was utilising Monday.com to streamline their event planning and execution. This revelation wasn't just an insight but a breakthrough for my project. The platform's capabilities in project creation,

management, and execution were precisely what we needed to upgrade our software management process. Other departments could adopt existing software for their projects. Similarly, tools like Grammarly Professional, if already budgeted for, can be utilised across the organisation to ensure clear and effective communication, summaries, status reports, etc.

The journey toward technological maximisation and organisational efficiency begins with a simple step: dialogue. Engaging in conversations about the tools we use can uncover hidden gems within our existing technological arsenal, streamline our workflows, and enhance our collaborative efforts. This approach saves costs and enriches our work environment with a diverse toolkit fully leveraged to meet our collective and individual needs.

Integrating Free New Technologies for Enhanced Communication

While I seek to highlight the importance of leveraging tools already within reach, this does not mean avoiding embracing new technologies. Add-on tool integrations should be considered enhancements to our existing toolkit. Applications like Microsoft Teams and Viva Insights offer a multitude of add-on tools for better planning and well-being. They represent a shift from commanding technology to querying it for self-improvement and efficient workday management. Even in the face of AI advancements, the goal should be to augment our current capabilities and workflows to their maximum benefit.

The Synergy of Existing and New Technologies

The road to enhanced efficiency and productivity doesn't necessarily require acquiring new technologies. Instead, a significant part of the journey involves turning inward and re-evaluating the tools that lie dormant within our current arsenal. Projects that took weeks can now be completed in days, and those hours into minutes with increased accuracy and a fraction of the manual effort if you leverage well. The capabilities of the technology we already own are often underestimated and underutilised. Therefore, I urge you to take a moment to assess the familiar platforms and applications at your disposal. Dive deeper into their advanced features, explore the training resources available, and consider how these tools can be adapted or combined to meet your needs. By maximising the utility of our existing technology, we foster a culture of resourcefulness and pave the way for innovation from within. Before looking outwards for new solutions, look inwards at the untapped potential surrounding you. Embrace the challenge to revolutionise your workflow and push the boundaries of what your current tools can achieve. The key to unlocking a new level of efficiency and collaboration is already in your hands; it's time to use it to its fullest potential.

In conclusion, the key to unlocking efficiency and productivity lies in a balanced approach to leveraging the existing tools at our disposal and being receptive to integrating new technologies. The transformation in my work approach, from enhancing presentations with PowerPoint's advanced features to adopting Monday.com for project management, underscores the profound impact these tools can have. Moreover, open communication about technology use within the organisation can help refine strategies, ensuring our tech ecosystem evolves to meet our goals. The future of work is not about replacing the old with the latest but about enriching our toolkit and embracing the possibilities that this combination holds. Let's challenge ourselves to explore the full potential of our technologies and pave the way for a more efficient and collaborative work environment.

Ashley Cruz-Singh, a visionary Business Analyst based in Bermuda, specialises in driving business innovation through AI and data, specialising in healthcare. Committed to process improvement, inclusivity, and operational efficiency, her career showcases achievements in leveraging data and strategic project management. Connect with her on LinkedIn:
www.linkedin.com/in/ashleyccruz

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B.

The Power of Curiosity

Kyle Roycroft



Change is inevitable. In his article entitled "Navigating Rapid Change: How Businesses Can Stay Ahead in Dynamic Times", Colin Cooper mentions that "Change is one of the only constants in today's fast-paced business world". Amid global events and constant technological advancements, businesses must continually evolve to remain relevant, let alone competitive. From adopting AI, to adapting service offerings, businesses have no choice but to press forward. As a result, job roles and job descriptions are evolving too. This poses a potential threat to many, and if we ignore it for too long, we might find ourselves left on the sidelines as the world moves forward without us. So, if you are wondering, "What does this mean for the security and relevance of my chosen career?", then keep reading.

Reading articles or posts on LinkedIn about the future of businesses, how tech is shaping the future and where BAs will feature in all this change can be daunting. When it comes to the role of business analysts, we cannot necessarily predict what the future holds. Will business analysis still be a distinct job,

or will it become part of another role? Only time will tell. However, what we do know is that simply aligning your skills and experience with the future in mind may not be enough to future-proof your career. What's important to ask ourselves is which personal attributes would play the most significant role in a business analyst's future success, regardless of the environment. One such attribute is certainly *adaptability*. So, what does it mean to be adaptable in an ever-changing business environment?

The Importance of Adaptability

As Cooper states, "the accelerating rate of technological innovation, evolving customer preferences, and recent global events have all contributed to an environment of rapid change and uncertainty. The old adage of 'adapt or die' has never been more pertinent".

Collins Dictionary defines "adaptability" as "the quality of being able to adjust oneself readily to different conditions or situations". This seems to imply more of a survival mindset. However, to thrive, we can't simply adjust. This is where *curiosity* comes in—we must be curious about the changes taking place around us.

Change is not always in our control. In many cases, we are forced to adjust to technological advancements and shifting trends rather than being invited to participate. Change can often come with resistance—even fear—for many, as it is coupled with the unknown. However, when change is approached with curiosity, there is a willingness to be open to what that change could look like.

Curiosity Contributes to Adaptability

Think of it as an invitation to play with the idea of "What if?" When kids play, they interact with their environment, experiment and let their imaginations run wild. Adopting this mindset can completely transform your perspective. Operating with curiosity better equips you to navigate uncertainty and recover quickly from difficult conditions. It will lead you to seek out opportunities for growth and development—not only personally but professionally as well.

In addition to helping you better navigate change and future-proof yourself in your profession, adopting a curious mindset has the following benefits:

- **Continuous learning:** Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the unknown, uncertainty is viewed as an invitation to fill the gaps in your knowledge. It's less about staying ahead of the curve and more about seeking out opportunities for development.

Tip: Subscribe to industry newsletters, attend webinars and meet-ups, and engage in self-directed exploration.

- **Better engagement:** Adopting a curious mindset enables you to become more attentive to the perspectives of others, eager to learn from their experiences and insights.

This can even help you to develop a deeper sense of humility and empathy toward others, which results in more effective collaboration and teamwork.

Tip: Engage in active listening and ask questions to gain insight into opinions and perspectives.

- **More innovation:** Approaching change with an open mind leads to a willingness to experiment, take risks and push the boundaries of what's possible. This fuels innovation, as it frames challenges as opportunities to find creative solutions.

Tip: Explore design thinking as a way to frame challenges as opportunities in order to find creative solutions.

As you can see, curiosity is a powerful force. It drives us to ask questions like “Why?" and "What if?" It encourages the search for new perspectives and exploring possibilities. We can learn much from a company like Airbnb, which is founded on the curiosity to explore new ways of accommodation, and which went on to disrupt the traditional hotel industry. Another example is Netflix, which continually adapted to customer preferences by being curious and innovative, transitioning from video rentals, to DVD rentals, to streaming and content creation. When curiosity is fostered in business analysis, it encourages an eagerness to explore possibilities and find opportunities to drive value for our organisations.

When we approach change curiously, we actively participate in our adaptation process, ensuring not only our survival, but also our success. By cultivating curiosity in our approach to business analysis, we can unlock new possibilities and drive innovation for our organisations, while remaining professionally relevant.

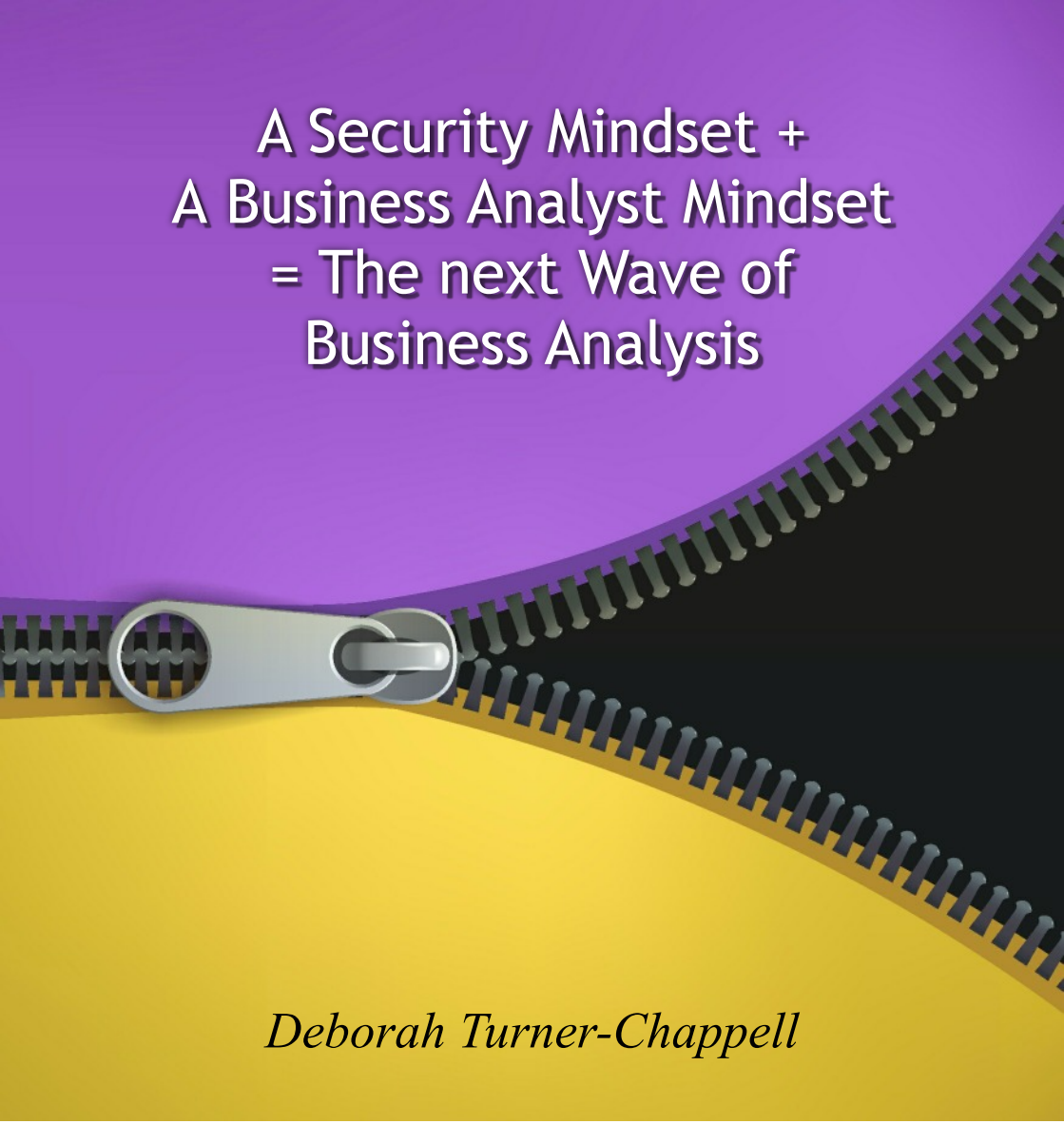
So, why not start today? Be curious, embrace change, and watch your career thrive in the dynamic landscape of the future.

Kyle Roycroft is a business analyst at Haefele Software. You can reach him on LinkedIn.

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A Security Mindset + A Business Analyst Mindset = The next Wave of Business Analysis



Deborah Turner-Chappell

The first time someone referred to me as having a 'Security Mindset' I was confused. They explained that it describes someone who, in the context of security, develops an awareness of potential risks and explores ways to mitigate those risks to support the business in becoming more secure and resilient via their people, processes, data and technology.

My BA mindset was ignited, especially when I heard the words 'context, people, processes, data and technology'! These are core analysis concepts. We were speaking from the same lexicon but with

a different lens. To discover that these transferable skills could be applied to the context of security was exciting, especially since I'd frequently heard that technical knowledge was necessary to understand cyber security.

As I learned more about cyber security principles and ethical hacking, it became very clear that someone with a BA mindset could easily adopt a security mindset and by pairing the two, could contribute directly to the practical implementation of cyber security. I firmly believe that this pairing represents the next wave of business analysis and there's a growing number of BAs who recognise the need to participate directly in the race to secure the business, data and technology. If we don't, BAs will get left behind as someone else takes on this responsibility.

Bridging the Cyber Security Gap

'Shifting left of boom' is a cyber security term which originated from military culture to describe proactive actions taken to reduce the risk of a crisis. Security leaders and their teams are constantly looking for ways to 'shift left' and implement controls sooner. **In BA terms, controls can be considered requirements already in place or planned for a future-state, to mitigate security risks.**

As more BAs across industries adopt a security mindset, we can support security leaders and their teams of SMEs, becoming a 'voice for the business' that champions cyber security within the organisation (and the wider world!)

As BAs, we often ask questions that the business may not have thought about before. In the context of security, this is an incredible opportunity to increase the level of security awareness throughout the organisation. This is especially true for smaller organisations where there are few or no dedicated resources covering security.

'Get Down to the Brass Tactical': Examples of Opportunities to Integrate Security into BA Techniques

Example A. Integrating a Roles and Permissions Matrix with a State and Status Diagram

Many BAs have had exposure to basic security principles without realising it.

Some fundamental security principles can be applied in solution design and configuration stages such as:

1. **Least Privilege:** limiting or restricting access privileges of users (or processes acting on behalf of users) to the minimum necessary to accomplish the required tasks.

2. **Role-Based Access Control (RBAC):** assigning and limiting users' access permissions based on their role within an organisation.

3. **Separation (or Segregation) of Duties:** a fraud prevention approach requiring more than one user to

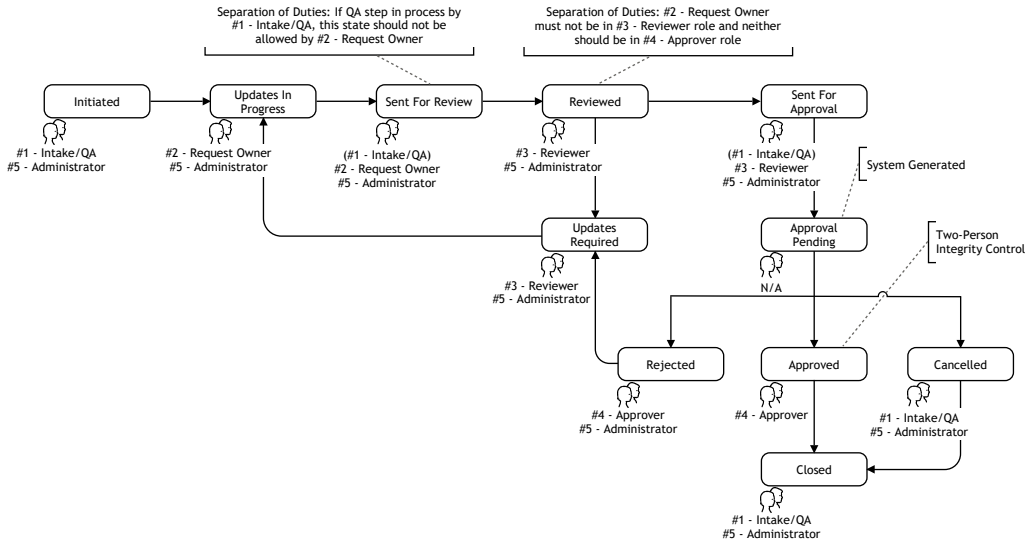
perform critical tasks for example, the same person who creates purchase orders should not be permitted to approve purchase orders.

4. **Two-Person Integrity/Dual Control:** a fraud prevention approach that requires more than one person to perform or approve critical sensitive tasks.

Sample Table 1: Business / Configuration Rules Aligned with Security Principles

Business / Configuration Rules	Security Principle	BA Technique
• Request Owner cannot be Reviewer nor Approver role. • Reviewer cannot be Approver.	• Least Privilege • RBAC • Separation of Duties	• Roles and Permissions Matrix • State Modelling Transitions Diagram
• Initiated and Cancelled states permitted only by Intake / QA role. • Multiple Approvals required to move through the workflow.	• Two-Person Integrity/Dual Control	

Sample Diagram 1: Integrated Roles and Permissions Matrix with a State Transitions Diagram (High Complexity & Rigour)



Sample Table 2: Integrated Roles and Permissions Matrix with a State Transitions (High Complexity & Rigour)

State	Roles				
	#1 Intake / QA	#2 Request Owner / Delegate	#3 Reviewer	#4 Approver / Delegate	#5 Administrator
Initiated	Allow	Deny	Deny	Deny	Allow
Update In Progress	Deny	Allow	Deny	Deny	Allow
Sent For Review	(Allow)*	Allow	Deny	Deny	Allow
Reviewed	Deny	Deny	Allow	Deny	Allow
Updates Required	Deny	Deny	Allow	Deny	Allow
Sent For Approval	(Allow)*	Deny	Allow	Deny	Allow
Approval Pending**	Deny	Deny	Deny	Deny	Deny
Approved	Deny	Deny	Deny	Allow	Deny
Rejected	Deny	Deny	Deny	Allow	Allow
Cancelled	Allow	Deny	Deny	Deny	Allow
Closed	Allow	Deny	Deny	Deny	Allow
State Override	Deny	Deny	Deny	Deny	Allow

*If Quality Assurance (QA) step in process

**System Generated Only

If It Looks, Walks and Quacks like a Duck, It Just May Be a Duck.

Example B. Flipping the Non-Functional Requirements Narrative

Frequently in IT initiatives, security requirements are not written by a BA. Instead, they are based on one of many recognised cyber security frameworks with general or prescriptive requirements and controls, without any guidance as to how they can be

incorporated into the business processes or technical workflows. This has the potential to lead to gaps in security not being identified earlier as there may be a lack of alignment to the way the business operates. This is a great place for a BA to participate in closing that gap.

Whether they are elicited or are handed over 'as is' to the BA, these requirements tend to automatically be designated as non-functional requirements. Too often they are neglected, left by the wayside once functional and UAT testing has been completed and those specific test results are accepted.

What if we re-frame those 'non-functional requirements' and could hang some functional positive or negative test cases off one of those security requirements to check that the control is functioning and in place? That would pull things 'left', bring visibility to that requirement sooner vs later in the project lifecycle process.

An example of this is Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). An internet search of any variation of the words 'lack of MFA' will show multiple high impacting breaches and ransomware attacks which are attributed in part or in whole, to a lack of implementation of MFA.

In my view, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) could and should be included with other functional requirements along with positive and negative functional test cases. When eliciting requirements, a BA could and should be asking questions such as:

- How does the user or administrator log into the application, cloud service, etc.?
- Is MFA in place or should it be, regardless of the sensitivity or classification of the data?
- What about access from a remote location or mobile device?

When a BA incorporates a deeper understanding of basic cyber security principles and requirements (in security language, controls) and seeks opportunities to incorporate that knowledge into their work, they become co-champions in socialising, educating and building a culture of awareness for cyber security resilience and risk management. By adding a security mindset to a BA mindset, we can participate directly in helping to protect not only the organisation but also ultimately, our world.

Deborah Turner-Chappell is a Senior Business Analyst and a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) with over 15 years of experience on large, complex transformational programs. She has chosen to write under a Nom De Plume to share and inspire other BAs to catch the Cyber Security Bug.

Using Group Construct Analysis to Understand Stakeholder Worldviews in Ambiguous Situations, Part 14



Metaphors in GCA

Metaphors play a crucial part in interpersonal communication, in language and in thinking itself. Group Construct Analysis (GCA) recognises this. Getting to grips with metaphors will help you understand stakeholders better and communicate with them more effectively.

What is a metaphor?

A few minutes' walk from my house is London Road, the A315, which follows the route of one of the roads built by the Romans in Britain two thousand years ago. I often notice the intriguing object shown in Figure 1, which indicates the next important town in each direction. This is a *milestone*, a stone inscribed

with distances measured in miles—useful information for the traveller who wants to know when they might arrive at their destination.



Figure 1

In project planning, we often use the word *milestone* to refer to an event which will occur, or has already occurred, during the course of a project, such as the completion of a stage or the creation of an important deliverable. Milestones help us to track progress and identify potential delays.

Milestone in this context is a **metaphor**—a word with a concrete meaning rooted in everyday experience, which we use to illuminate another, completely different domain. Introducing a new metaphor into a conversation shines a light on the subject matter from a new angle, allowing you to see things that weren't previously apparent and generate new ideas.

How Metaphors Are Used

Imagine that you were familiar with the object in Figure 1 and knew its name, but had never seen the word *milestone* applied in the context of a project. If you heard someone say,

> *"The first milestone on this project is delivery of 'software release one'",*

you would be struck by the way they were using a vivid, concrete image to convey something relatively abstract. You would immediately sense that the referent—a software release—must have a significance for the speaker that was in some way similar to the stone on London Road, and that the speaker wanted you to share in this attribution of significance. Part of your mind would set itself the task of resolving the puzzle:

> *In what way could a software release possibly be like a stone?*

As we saw in part 13, humans are extremely good at spotting similarities and differences between things. The context of the conversation would help you to see immediately that the speaker is making an analogy. They are asserting that a project could be thought of, and perhaps *should* be thought of, as a shared journey to a desired destination.

A project is a journey to a destination

There is a mini-"aha!" moment when you make the connection. You feel that

you have somehow expanded your horizons and "tuned in" to a new way of thinking which you now share with the other person.

A Metaphor Provides a New Frame

This equation of one thing with another, different thing is a type of **framing construct** (see part 12). When two or more people communicate with each other, they are continually offering each other framing constructs for taking the conversation further. Each time one of the participants offers a new frame, the other has a choice: they can either ignore the frame, or they can integrate it with the previously established frame(s) and build on it. Healthy, energising communication tends to involve:

- the shared use of frames between participants
- a relatively frequent cycling between frames, rather than getting stuck in a rut of using only one frame.

A Metaphor Is Participative

The successful use of a metaphor in a conversation is an interactive process, with the following stages:

1. Participant A proposes a metaphor by using a word like *milestone*.
2. Participant B interprets the metaphor. They may understand the implied analogy in the way that A intended, or in some other way; or, if the metaphor is not a good one (see below) or B is not attuned to a metaphorical way of thinking, they may not understand it at all.
3. The metaphor will now inevitably influence the way that both A and B think about the subject matter, regardless of what happens at step 4.
4. B may pick up the metaphor and run with it. That may include rejecting the previously established frame(s) or integrating the new one in some way.

A Metaphor Is Oblique

The user of a metaphor normally doesn't explicitly draw attention to the fact that they're introducing an analogy. On the contrary, it's introduced by stealth. Participant A induces B to think about the topic in a different way without necessarily being aware that it's happening. This is a crucial aspect, which I think accounts for much of the power of a metaphor and explains why a business analyst should pay attention when it's used: it's a kind of control mechanism.

Good and Bad Metaphors

In part 11 we saw how a sign can lose its vividness with repeated use and degenerate into an apparently arbitrary symbol. We often use metaphorical figures of speech which are so familiar that they don't have a huge impact. In this article I've used several of them—take a look back at the text and see how many you can spot. A good metaphor makes the listener stop and think for a second.

Alternatively, a metaphor may also fail to resonate simply because it doesn't do a very good job of conveying the essence of the referent. For example, the agile approach called *Scrum* is so named because it's supposed to convey the idea of a rugby team running swiftly up the pitch passing the ball amongst themselves; but anyone familiar with rugby knows that a scrum is in fact a static affair where a huge amount of energy is effectively wasted by antagonists shoving against each other with all their might. Similarly, in Scrum, a *sprint* is a short period of time dedicated to delivering a solution to a defined problem in a collaborative and controlled way; yet the metaphor suggests a set of individuals each running as fast as they possibly can. In each case, the metaphor fails to suggest an analogy which is useful in thinking about the topic.

Next Steps

In a future article we'll see how metaphor fits in with other techniques for directing conversations. For now, I suggest cultivating the ability to:

- Notice which metaphors people use in your organisation.
- Analyse which ones seem to resonate, and which ones don't. Why?
- Get ideas across by using metaphors consciously in your communication.
- When facilitating workshops, consider including activities where people develop shared understanding by discussing metaphors explicitly.

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.

Contact Nick via LinkedIn

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Lessons Learned from Navigating Enterprise Change Management



Kateryna Stryhunivska

"*The Only Constant in Life Is Change.*" Heraclitus, an ancient Greek philosopher.

The article you're about to read is my reflections and lessons learned on the delivery of an enterprise change management project.

According to the APQC, the change management workflow involves four high-level stages:

- Plan for Change
- Design the Change
- Implement Change
- Sustain Improvement

On reflection, I cannot stress enough how important planning is. I remember when I stepped into the BA field and read my first book by Karl Wiegers, I learnt the simple truth about the cost of quality. As Karl also wrote in his article *The Cost of Quality in Software* "When it comes to software quality, you can pay now, or you can pay more later. A lot more."

In the software development context, this means that identifying and fixing the missing or incomplete requirements will cost less during the concept or requirements stages than it does when the software is in production. The same is true for the change management side of the project. In this context, inaccurate change planning can cause strong resistance and even prevent sustaining the improvement if miscalculations are discovered during the implementation stage.

Hence, it is no surprise that all three lessons that I've summarised below are focused on change planning.

Based on my observation, the *plan for the change* stage involves the identification of the IIBA® Business Analysis Core Competency Model (BACCM) components for the change project as well as the assessment of other, equally important aspects, which include:

- **Organisational readiness for changes** that helps to determine the level of preparedness of the conditions, attitudes, and resources at all levels in the organisation needed for change to happen successfully.
- **Identifying the barriers to change** focuses on acknowledging the circumstances, obstacles, individuals and resources resisting change.
- **Determination of the change enablers**, opposite to change barriers, the enablers help to identify the factors that make the change possible.

Here are three critical lessons I gained that should help to address the above aspects:

Lesson #1: Always Think about the "Big Picture"

An enterprise can be thought of as a system. But what is a "system" in this context? A system is a group of interacting or interrelated elements (departments, teams, functions) that act according to a set of rules (processes, procedures, policies, bylaws) to form a unified whole and produce certain value in synergy.

The mistake I made was to isolate my change project from the rest of the "system" and to focus purely on the project scope. This approach led to ignorance of the upstream and downstream impacts and only increased the resistance of stakeholders to contribute to the project, while also slowing down the change implementation.

I like to think about this lesson from the enterprise butterfly effect point of view. Even if you're working on improvements in your sales process with the business goal of increasing revenue, you should also check whether your manufacturing has enough resources and capacity to produce increased volume and if you have a supply chain to support it.

Understanding the "big picture" and as

a result gaining knowledge on how your "system" is made up can help to achieve both short-term goals (e.g. change management project goals) and long-term goals (e.g. company goals) as you will know which knot can be undone. As a side effect, this knowledge will help you to build a long-lasting and trustful relationship with the stakeholders which is the key to the next lesson.

Lesson #2: Feedback Is Everything

The absence of feedback, resistance to change, as well as escalations are all feedback variables and are perfect examples of symptoms showing that there is a problem with the project.

Six months after the project was kicked off, I felt like we were going round in circles and not moving forward. At that moment, I didn't realise that I was not on the same page with the rest of the stakeholders. Reflecting back, the disconnect was partially related to the project isolation (see lesson #1) but it also has been caused by not introducing opportunities for the stakeholders to provide feedback, so-called "feedback loops".

Like the acknowledgement of mistakes helps to unblock the energy, asking for feedback helps to ensure that the change initiative is on track. The trigger that made me challenge the initial approach was an escalation of the problem to the project sponsor. This was an "aha" moment that outlined the gap and inspired me to change the tactics. Since the escalation, I started to contact the stakeholders individually after our fortnightly project meetings to request feedback.

Lately, this change helped me to get clarity on the real project progress, gather invaluable insights into the "big picture" and reduce the change resistance. Eventually, the feedback loop has played the role of the change enabler force which we are about to discuss next.

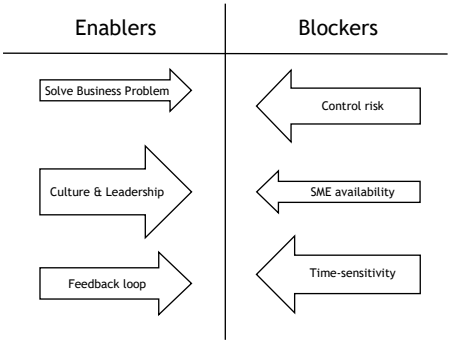
Lesson #3: Measure Field Forces

It's important to understand all factors that influence your change management project. Interestingly, these factors might not be limited to stakeholders power and interest in the project, that is typically captured as part of the stakeholder map technique from IIBA®'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK) Guide. When I came across the organisational consulting and change management implication of Kurt Lewin's psychological field theory, I immediately knew it could be a great add-on to the BABOK® technique.

Lewin's field theory refers to a dynamic representation of the field forces (factors) that influence a situation at a certain point in time and affect the person or system's behaviour. Probably the most well-known idea from field theory is that every person experiences the same situation differently.

How to apply the force-field analysis principles to the change management project? Create two columns—one to

capture project enablers and another for the blockers—and list down all factors (see the following diagram). The arrow size represents the weight or force of each factor. The weight can be used for ranking the factors later, and deciding what action should be taken to maximise the enablers, and minimise the blockers.



This last lesson helps highlight areas for improvement that can significantly boost the success of your change initiative.

I hope these insights, drawn from my own experiences, will help you to avoid some mistakes and smooth your enterprise change management journey.

Kateryna Stryhunivska is an experienced Senior Business Analyst based in Scotland. Her mission is to design & optimise processes to enable business growth by utilising BA innovation tools and techniques. Connect with her on LinkedIn at: www.linkedin.com/in/kateryna-stryhunivskaBA

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Strategic Business Analysis: How International Professional Associations Can Increase Their Reach

Stefan Bossuwé



I suspect many people reading this will be a member of one, or several, professional associations. Wikipedia defines a professional association as:

> "A professional association (also called a professional body, professional organisation, or professional society) is a group that usually seeks to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals and organisations engaged in that profession, and the public interest."

There are many professional associations out there, and it seems that many of them are seeking growth. In my experience, there is an assumption that growth is equated with increased revenue through membership fees.

Over the years, I've had numerous conversations with volunteers and representatives from varying professional associations all around the world. I have come to the conclusion that there may be other ways of growing a professional association. Not only this, but there are different cultural norms and biases that professional associations

need to keep in mind, and I believe there are other, compelling, models to be explored. In this article, I want to explore these ideas further. Specifically, I will examine professional associations where membership is not mandatory, as opposed to compulsory membership that exists in professions such as medicine.

The Value Propositions of Membership (for Associations)

Membership in itself is just a "container concept" largely defined by its content. Whether or not membership is considered desirable will depend very much on the strength of the value proposition offered to members. Additionally, membership often generates value for an association, for example by bringing in membership revenue or by increasing the association's credibility by having a large number of members.

It's important to note that, in my experience, membership fees are a very important (if not the most important) source of revenue for many professional associations. Most of them probably couldn't survive without it. In my view it's precisely this dependency that could jeopardise their reach.

With this in mind, if such an association were to announce 'membership growth' as part of its strategy, I can only assume that a key driver is increasing its revenue stream. For clarity, it would be beneficial for the organisation to make this distinction.

Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast

International organisations will always have to deal with cultural differences, which they should incorporate in their strategy. Let's illustrate that with the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis P**:
>
> "*In much of Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia, paid membership of a non-mandatory professional association is not part of the culture.*"

The problem with this claim is that it can never be completely and categorically proved or disproved. So much will depend on the context of the country, culture and industry. At best, you can support or counter it with evidence and data… which might be challenging in this case.

However, it's the conclusion I draw from the many conversations I've had with people from all over the world, who have told me: "it's not common here", "we don't do that here", or "it's not part of our culture", or… "that won't work here".

I have reviewed the above claim with people from all over the world, and the few that disagreed with it often used the argument that if a product is good, it will always sell itself. This can be easily debunked by the example of a company that sells the juiciest and tastiest organic beef steaks in the world, trying to sell their so-called awesome product in a country such as India where a large majority of the population don't eat beef for religious reasons.

Cultural specifics reflect a context, and unless you are someone like Steve Jobs introducing the iPhone into a smartphone-less world, you cannot change a context.

So, if the assertion above were to be correct, you won't acquire a lot of members in large parts of the world, no matter how "awesome" your value proposition is or how big the marketing effort you make.

With this in mind, I now believe that the representatives of global organisations who live and have grown up in parts of the world where a non-mandatory membership model is normal, might find it difficult to understand and empathise with different cultures and alternative business models. This is not a criticism, after all, we are all a product of our upbringing, and we tend to think the cultures we have grown up in are "normal".

However, it highlights the importance of cultural awareness and deliberately challenging ourselves and each other to ensure we get the best outcomes. Curiosity, openness and innovation are key.

The Whole Community vs Members-Only

Continuing in this spirit of curiosity, it is worth noting that even without the multicultural aspect, membership doesn't always seem that popular. Here's my next hypothesis:

Hypothesis Q:

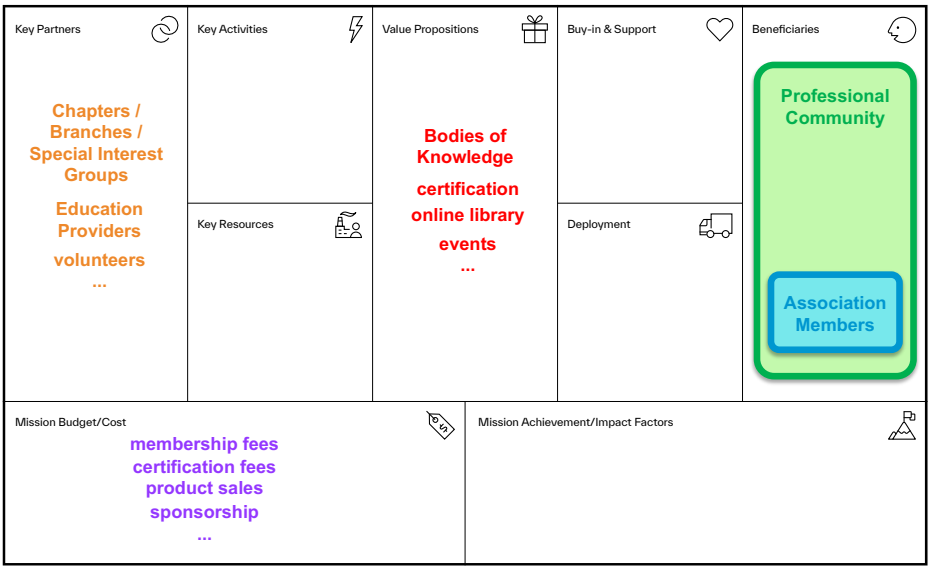
"*Many of the international professional associations with non-mandatory membership attract only a marginal proportion of the community as members.*"

Again, this is difficult to prove, but a quick global search on LinkedIn (for the professions that are well represented there) might give a strong indication. For example, in August 2024 I found 16.6 million project managers and 5.5 million business analysts on LinkedIn, where PMI and IIBA claim to have 700,000 and 30,000 members respectively. The data appears to support the hypothesis.

If this is indeed true, and given that many of these organisations have been around for decades, I would argue that those hoping to attract a significant proportion of their professional communities as members need to adopt an alternative strategy.

Arguably, the relevance of a professional association is strongly related to its exposure, acceptance, appreciation and respect within the community. Depending on the organisation's mission, a balanced distribution of its value propositions between members and non-members is crucial.

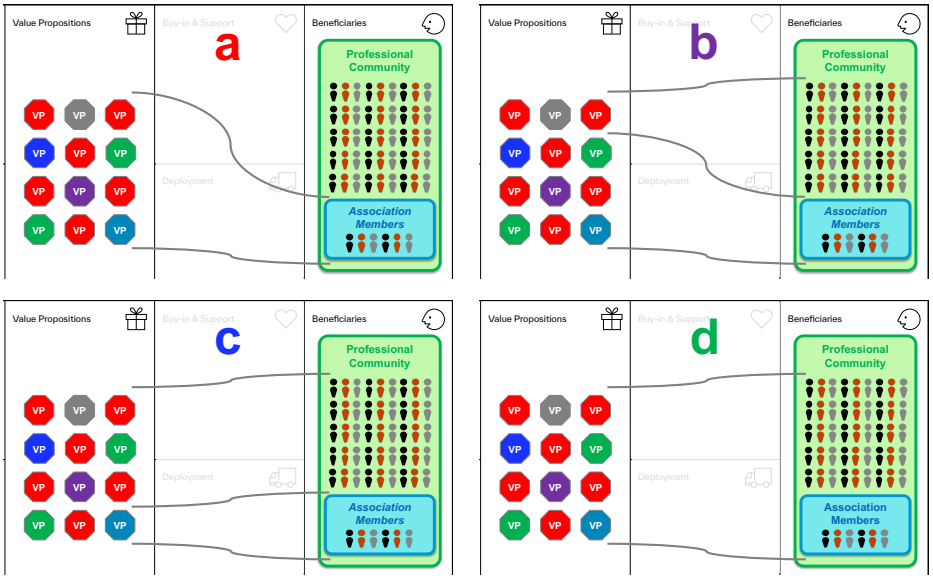
This can be very well demonstrated with the use of a ***Mission Model Canvas***, the (altruistic) twin sister of the ***Business Model Canvas*** for mission-oriented organisations. You can find an explanation of the differences between the two on the Strategyzer website.



Mission Model Canvas with some Key Elements for a Professional Association

The Mission Model Canvas is designed by Strategyzer AG & Steve Blank, the makers of Business Model Generation & Strategyzer, and is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/

Zooming in on the sections "*value propositions*" and "*beneficiaries*", we can identify several dispersion schemes:



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***a. members-only*:** the approach of a guild, which serves only its members (this is only a marginal subset of the whole community)

***b. members get the most*:** close to the previous one, but non-members get a few teasers (presumably in the hope that they will join)

***c. members get some extras*:** the whole community is served, but members get a few extras

***d. serving the whole community*:** the whole community has full access (though members may pay less)

Professional associations whose mission is to serve the whole professional community should— taking into account the hypotheses P+Q—only use the last two schemes (or a combination of both), otherwise they are unlikely to fully achieve their stated purpose.

Conclusion

Given all this, it's clear to me that international professional associations wanting to serve their whole community, should seek other sources of income than membership fees to fund their activities… or maybe even abandon membership completely. In my opinion, there is no alternative.

I sincerely hope that professional associations that are serious about being the professional body for their entire community will find the courage to do whatever it takes to live up to that mission (even if that requires them to leave their comfort zone and fundamentally change their business or operating models).

Stefan is co-founder, former president and current ambassador of the IIBA Brussels Chapter. Passionate about business analysis, he shares his knowledge and experience as a speaker at various international conferences and seminars. He's also known as #TheHolisticBA and can be contacted via LinkedIn.

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Elicitation Ingredients & Spices for a Tasty Business Requirements Document (BRD)

Immaculata Ojadi



Take a moment to recall the last expensive and fancy restaurant you walked into, with its exotic name, colourful setting, and state of the art seating arrangement. Relive the excitement with which you walked up to the counter, placed your order and the eager anticipation you had while waiting for your meal to be served. However, imagine rather than the wonderful flavours you were expecting, you were met with disappointment at the food's awful taste. Just imagine the taste of sea urchin sushi with a side order of jelly mixed with salad. Yuck redefined!

Compare that experience and sensation to that of a local eatery or take-out (we call them mama-put here in Nigeria) which doesn't come with all the abracadabra or majestic bravados but serves you meals that are a 10/10 — the total package! I'm thinking along the lines of Ofada sauce with smoked fish, asun etc.

Now in the grand scheme of things, the detail of how the food is prepared and served may seem auxiliary. After all, we're all just end users, consuming the efforts of a fistful of chefs or cooks, completely oblivious to the scurrying and chaos that go into producing our sumptuous delights. However, equally we may place very high expectations on our deliverables in terms of the value we expect!

Realistically, how are these two seemingly contrasting experiences related to the practice of elicitation? They aren't. Except for the fact that, like the unassuming end users in these instances, it would be easy to forget that

elicitation is an activity which can take precarious twists and turns, producing unpredictable outcomes even when utmost diligence is put into planning. It would be easy to go onto autopilot, forgetting the different needs of different stakeholders, which would lead to a solution being delivered which does not meet their needs. To draw on our food analogy, we may end up delivering (metaphorically) bad food!

In this article, I'd like to give us a peek at one of the elements capable of producing a good experience for our stakeholders, particularly when we seek to provide our stakeholders with a tasty business requirement document.

Context Is Everything

The business analysis core concept of **context** is defined by the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide as:

"The circumstances that influence, are influenced by, and provide understanding of the change."

Like the eager customers we mentioned earlier, many stakeholders are unaware of the complexity involved in elicitation. There are a wide range of elicitation and similar techniques, however what is crucial is the BA's ability to critically analyse the surrounding context to choose the best tools and techniques for the situations. It's crucial to consider the ultimate business goal, as well as the goal of individual stakeholders, and try to strike a balance.

Requirements elicitation is defined by Wikipedia as:

"The practice of researching and discovering the requirements of a system from users, customers, and other stakeholders"

This is clearly an activity which cannot be productive without an appreciation of context. Context embodies knowledge, promotes understanding and drives engagement. It enables or constrains the pace during elicitation sessions, affects what techniques will work best and inadvertently contributes as the secret to a great documentation.

Combine the Ingredients

Now, I'm no chef de cuisine, but now that we have one major ingredient (context), I think it's safe to say the next course of action is to identify the various spices that help us produce a unique taste only to be found in our kitchen. In essence, what do we combine with context during the elicitation exercise to produce a great requirements document? I would argue that we need to consider:

- **Formal documentation:** it goes without saying that a good BRD is written with an appropriate amount of formality (depending on the context), with adequate document controls, versioning, highlights, and signatories. Unlike other elicitation outputs, the BRD thrives in the formal glory it brings with it whenever called upon.

- **Great Storytelling:** everyone appreciates a good story, a story that

captivates and leaves no room for misinterpretation. Likewise, a great BRD should enable a stakeholder to clearly understand the plot and setting behind it.

- **Clarity**:, when paired with context, an elicitation exercise translated into documented requirements produces clear, unambiguous, and detailed information on what is within and beyond scope and is also able to answer key questions.

- **Implementation Free:** with output in this context being the business requirements document, contents of this document should be elicited primarily to answer the question of "why" and not "how".

- **Traceable:** by adopting adequate traceability we can very well say that we're brewing a pot filled with delicacies. Traceability can be achieved using a matrix, or using links and various other cross-referencing styles.

Working in the Requirements Kitchen

Like any great chef I know, you also want to make sure your ingredients and spices come in the appropriate sizes, variations, and proportions. Achieving this requires considering several factors which affect your final selection. In the same manner, business analysts must consider certain factors when deciding their preferred approach to the activity of elicitation. Some of these factors include:

1. The availability of users/stakeholders
2. Domain knowledge of each/key stakeholders
3. The adopted project strategy in use
4. Existing organisational/business rules
5. Stakeholders' motivational level
6. Stakeholders' commitment level
7. The BA's knowledge of different elicitation techniques
8. The project duration allotted to the exercise of elicitation.

Wow, I daresay we're putting together a very delicious and tasty business requirement document when the right ingredients are combined in the right quantities. What's left is to sit back and let the pot steam up a sumptuous delight.

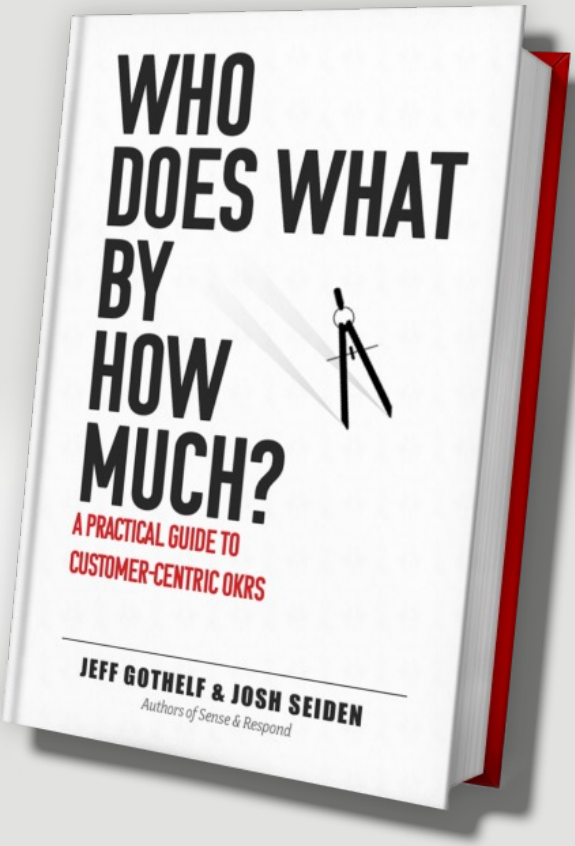
I leave you, dear business analysts and BRD chefs in the making with the words of Thomas Keller, American chef and restaurateur, which reads – "**A recipe has no soul; you, as the chef, must bring soul to the recipe."** Likewise, the application of context, alongside the other factors mentioned in this article, give soul to the practice of requirement elicitation.

Immaculata Ojadi, is an innovative business analyst, certified Scrum master and founder of I.M.P.A.C.T, specialising in process re-engineering, scrum, and continuous improvement initiatives with interests in mindfulness, classical music and abstract art.

Connect with her via www.linkedin.com/in/ojadi-immaculata/

Who Does What by How Much? An Interview with Jeff Gothelf and Josh Seiden

Adrian Reed



It's rare to find a book that is so compelling it could be described as a 'page turner', doubly so with non-fiction. However, I recently picked up the book *Who Does What By How Much? A Practical Guide to Customer-Centric OKRs* by Jeff Gothelf & Josh Seiden, and I found it so compelling I read it in two or three sittings.

Being the adventurous person that I am, I decided to contact Josh and Jeff to see

if they'd consider being interviewed, and to my surprise (and delight) they said yes! What follows is an edited summary of our conversation.

There are so many topics you both could have written about. What particularly inspired you to write about Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)?

Jeff: We've been telling some version of this story for over 15 years. Our first book *Lean UX* took a tactical and practical approach to design in agile software development. Since then, the 'flight levels' in our conversations have gotten higher: from design to the entire team, through to leadership and aspiring leadership. As the conversation increased through the flight levels, we bumped up against the same obstacle: goals.

We could tell a team how to work differently. We could encourage them to design the organisation differently. We could talk about organisational agility all day long. But if the goal, the success criteria, the incentive for the teams that we worked with contradicted that, it was always going to struggle.

OKRs provided a vehicle for us to have a conversation about goal setting in a way that supports a customer-centric organisation; an organisation that learns and collaborates.

Josh: Our first book *Lean UX* very much highlighted changes that can be made by individuals within teams. Individuals can agree to change the way they work together. Instead of starting in Photoshop, they can decide to start at the whiteboard. Instead of starting at their desks, they can decide to start with conversations with colleagues.

We got feedback from readers who highlighted that there's individual change, and then there's organisational constraints that individuals have little control over. Jeff talked about goals, that's a prime example. The feedback was "please write a book for our bosses that explains how to work this way!",

So that led to the second book *Sense and Respond*. That was more of a book (or even a philosophy) around an agile management approach. But it's not an instruction manual, it's not a framework.

That's the thing that excites us about OKRs. This provides a way for organisations to think about agility beyond the team level. Agility at scale. Of course, the team level is still important, but OKRs work effectively as a system for helping organisations to be more agile, more customer-centric, more aligned and more focussed. So this book complements our previous two books: it provides a 'system' you can put in place to help achieve some of the benefits.

Where did the title of the book come from?

Jeff: In terms of where the title came from, one of the things we realised when we were teaching is that people struggled with the concept. We talked a lot about outcomes as key results, as in changes in human behaviour. People still struggled with that.

At some point Josh realised that if you distil it even further, people really start to get it. So the question we used to teach it was "who does what by how much?". We didn't even get to the 'how much' part at first, but it was a start and it clicked. People really got it.

How would you describe the concept of an OKR to someone unfamiliar with it?

Josh: An OKR is a simple framework for goal setting: Objective, and Key Result.

The objective is your aspirational statement. It's where we're going. For each objective, there will typically be two to four key results. These help answer the question "how do we know we've achieved our goal?".

So if you have three key results, and you achieve them, then providing you've written them correctly then you know you've achieved your aspirational goal.

So in essence, OKRs are a flexible way of saying "here's where we're trying to go, here's how we know when we've achieved it". Of course, there are lots of subtleties in the structure—crucially an OKR doesn't tell you *what* to do. Because of that it has the ability to unlock creativity and good solutions. Because it's a simple statement it's accessible and creates alignment, transparency and all kinds of good benefits.

Another concept that has been around for a long time is the concept of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). How do OKRs differ from CSFs and KPIs?

Jeff: I get this question a lot! Typically KPIs are what we call impact metrics or the high level measures of the health of the business. They are directional in the sense that they tell us which direction we're heading and which direction we'd like to go. OKRs function as the *leading indicators* into those KPIs. They tend to measure what people are doing in the products and systems that we're building, so they give a sense of how we're faring in that direction. They help determine whether we've gone far enough, or whether it might be time to change course.

I've been thinking about this a lot recently, and often you have the KPIs at the very top of the organisation: revenue, profit and so on. At the tactical level you have the outputs. OKRs sit between those two levels. They help determine what people are actually doing in the system due to the stuff that we've put out into the world, and whether that's driving corporate success.

How aware of organisational strategy do people need to be when setting OKRs?

Josh: Another important aspect that we talk about at the very beginning of the book is that OKRs can work as an alternative to traditional 'command and control'. In a traditional 'command and control' organisation, whoever is in charge says 'this is what we're

doing' and the order cascades strictly downwards.

In the modern economy we're trying to enable people to *think* for a living! We're trying to unlock the productivity of thought workers, we *want* people to bring solutions to the table. OKRs can play an important part of this.

OKRs frame the work as a problem to solve. Additionally, OKRs enable strategic coherence. A key organisational question is "how do I keep a big organisation aligned; how do I keep everyone focused on working on the right stuff?" OKRs have the ability to create that kind of alignment. We set an organisational OKR and we ask teams to set their own OKRs in support of that.

Strategy answers the question: "what do we align around this year". Good OKRs express coherence towards this.

How many OKRs should a team have?

Jeff: In an ideal world, at a team level there'd be one objective and no more than three key results, maybe four KRs at a stretch. That's ideal because OKRs are intended to highlight *the* most important thing that we need to focus on.

If you had seven objectives, then that implies that you have seven number one priorities. That's just too many.

At an organisational level you'll have multiple objectives: one or two for each strategic priority. Business units will then perhaps address those OKRs vertically.

What pitfalls or anti-patterns should people look out for when implementing OKRs?

Josh: You see a lot of what I've heard described as 'language engineering', where people continue to do the same thing but just label it as OKRs. None of this is valuable if you don't actually change what you do!

Jeff: Another issue is when organisations do set OKRs correctly, in the way that we prescribe in our book, but then place obstacles in the way. Perhaps they'll train their team in research and discovery, but then the teams get prevented from actually deploying those new capabilities. That becomes problematic because teams will just default to their first idea and they'll build it regardless of their OKR goal, because they don't have access to test those ideas.

What should BAs and other change professionals take from reading this book?

Josh: One of the hard problems we face, that I think BAs see all the time, is the need to separate the conversation about the *problem* from the *solution* we're implementing. Sometimes we just get lost in implementing "the stuff". Every good BA I've ever met knows that.

For me, OKRs are a way of having a conversation about the problem, to capture that in a way that's lightweight and lets the team continuously refer to that. It provides a powerful touchstone to come back to.

Jeff: I think the biggest takeaway would be a reinforcement that the systems we're building today are continuous systems. Over the past few decades work has typically focussed on delivering features to the market, and continuous systems fundamentally change the value equation. Because you can deliver so fast and regularly, it's an organisational choice on how fast they want to put new stuff out into the market.

The value of the work we do has shifted. While it's important to work towards putting the best possible features out there, the definition of success, the definition of done has shifted from achieving technically accurate deployment to actually impacting the experiences of the people we serve.

I can't help but ask: what human behaviour do you hope to change by writing the book?

Josh: Well, we did write some OKRs for the book…

Jeff: I blogged about them, you can read the blog here.

Our thanks go to Josh and Jeff for being interviewed and for sharing such practical perspectives. Be sure to check out their latest book on Amazon:

- Who Does What By How Much? A Practical Guide to Customer-Centric OKRs

You can also find out more about Josh and Jeff's work by:

- Reading Jeff's blog: jeffgothelf.com
- Subscribing to Josh's substack: joshuaseiden.substack.com
- Following Jeff and Josh on LinkedIn

About the Interviewer:

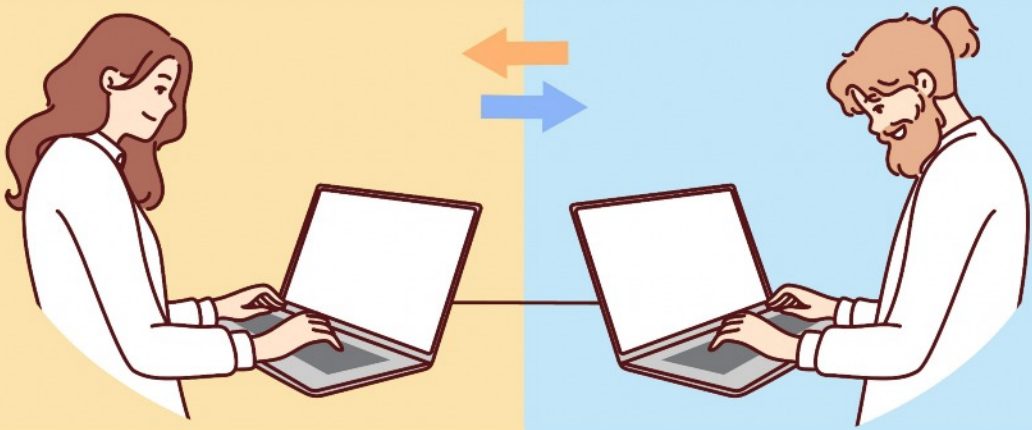
Adrian is principal consultant at Blackmetric which provides BA consultancy and training solutions. He is editor-in-chief of BA Digest, and speaks internationally on topics relating to business analysis. Adrian wrote the 2016 book 'Be a Great Problem Solver… Now' and the 2018 book 'Business Analyst'.

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Business Analyst and Product Owner Partnership as a Key to Product Success



Irena Cvetic

Even though the roles of a Business Analyst (BA) and a Product Owner (PO) have distinct responsibilities and focus areas, the roles often overlap, especially in agile environments. It is crucial that they work closely together. Before we discuss this, it is worth examining the core parts of their role.

A primary focus for a BA is to elicit, analyse and document requirements. During that process they usually communicate with business stakeholders and technical teams ensuring the solution delivered meets business needs.

A product owner typically defines the product vision, roadmap, and backlog. They work closely with business stakeholders to gather input and feedback, and the development team to ensure the team delivers maximum value to the business. The PO represents the voice of the customer in the development process.

In reading these definitions, you are probably already starting to see the areas of overlap and collaboration. This is why a partnership is so crucial.

Benefits of Business Analyst and Product Owner Partnership

There are many reasons why BAs and POs should become partners in successful product delivery. Some of the benefits include a better understanding of work items, enhanced communication with stakeholders and the development team, a faster response to change and increased stakeholder satisfaction.

The BA's ability to undertake detailed analysis goes hand in hand with a PO's high level vision. To ensure that both tactical and strategic aspects are well managed, the PO's primary focus should be on strategic decisions and backlog prioritisation. The BA should provide necessary information to the team to enable them to implement the product vision correctly, in line with the PO's vision.

Must-have Skills for Product Owners

A PO's effectiveness has a major impact on the product's success. They need to be able to align the product roadmap with the business strategy, and have a strong and clear product vision enabling the team to always work on the most valuable items. Their mindset should be customer centric which usually comes from a deep understanding of the product and the customer's needs. Here, a BA can often help too. Sometimes a PO may struggle to articulate their product vision or roadmap. Often a BA can help them lay out and articulate the vision, and can ask probing questions to truly understand the aim.

Communication skills and the ability to make quick and informed decisions are the important skills for a PO. Technical understanding is becoming more important in some contexts, as this helps the PO mobilise the development team and provide help when needed.

How BAs Help Product Owners Create More Value

Using their analytical and communication skills, a business analyst plays an important role in supporting the product owner in their day to day work.

The collaboration between a BA and PO ensures the product development process is well managed and documented. A good BA helps the PO break down epics and user stories into actionable items, and also create acceptance criteria which contain details needed for successful implementation. In doing so, important conversations are facilitated that ensure there is a shared understanding of the detail.

By being able to analyse existing processes, BAs can suggest improvements to the current development and release process with the goal of having more efficient delivery.

Effective communication with the development team ensures requirements are clear enough before development starts, and that any questions are resolved quickly and efficiently.

Impact of BA Mindset on Team Agility

The analytical, detail oriented, and problem-solving BA mindset helps in various aspects of agile development.

The BA helps the PO prioritise requirements based on business value, user needs, and technical feasibility. This ensures that the team focuses on the most important tasks first, maximising the potential value delivered in each sprint. By clearly defining requirements and acceptance criteria, a BA helps in preventing scope creep, allowing the team to keep their focus and deliver increments on time.

BAs are skilled in facilitating workshops and meetings that encourage collaboration and collective problem solving. During refinement, BA can help the team recognise unclear areas which require more discussion. Facilitating the sprint planning session helps the team understand priorities and deliverables for the next sprint.

Additional BA Skills to Improve the Partnership with Product Owner

Some of the additional skills a BA could learn might be getting deeper knowledge in technical, business or agile acumen, developing mentoring and coaching skills or being able to do data analysis or mock up designs.

Deep understanding of agile acumen and agile frameworks like Scrum and Kanban allows the BA to better support the PO in managing and prioritising the backlog, and facilitating agile ceremonies. Understanding and using agile metrics, such as velocity and burndown charts helps tracking the progress and identifying areas for improvement.

Learning technical acumen, and understanding technical feasibility and terminologies helps BA recognise technical constraints and possibilities, which is an important part of the communication with the development team.

Business acumen empowers a BA to propose the priority of features and initiatives, based on those that deliver the highest value. Although this is ultimately the PO's responsibility, having a starting point for prioritisation can be very helpful when the PO is temporarily away or busy. By understanding the language of business, BA can better communicate the value of proposed solutions to stakeholders and executives.

Coaching Skills as Part of BA and PO Collaboration

A BA's coaching skills can significantly enhance a partnership with the PO and lead to higher success in developing a valuable product. When the PO needs to

decide which feature to prioritise next, a BA can help by enabling PO to get another view on the current situation.

Empathy, powerful questions and partnering as key coaching techniques encourage open conversation between BA and PO, which leads to better decision making and problem solving. By using active listening techniques a BA can help the PO clarify requirements and detect areas which need more discussion and research.

Conclusion

The powerful BA mindset—with its emphasis on detailed analysis, clear documentation, effective communication and decision making—complements the agile principles of collaboration, adaptability, and continuous improvement. By incorporating the strengths of a BA into the agile process, the PO and the development team can enhance their agility, respond more effectively to changes, and deliver a high quality product that meets business and user needs efficiently.

Irena Cvetic is Lead Business Analyst holding Scrum Master, Facilitation and Coaching certificates. She uses BA mindset and agile knowledge to support agile teams in their successful delivery. You can contact her via LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/irena-cvetic-9a3966124/

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Choosing Elicitation Techniques Effectively

Giorgos Sioutzos



A key business analysis task is eliciting requirements. Elicitation is not just simply gathering requirements, rather it's about understanding the business situations and often involves providing additional meaning and restructuring the information that is communicated. Performing this task effectively means you are able to determine the real business needs and guide the stakeholders to reveal their real aspirations about the future state. By exploiting a specific set of tools and techniques to uncover and analyse the needs or potential opportunities for end-users business analysts can add value. Blending the tools and techniques effectively, given the context is necessary in order to maximise the results.

There are many factors that should be considered when choosing which blend of elicitation techniques are best for a particular context.

Stakeholders

Firstly, it is crucial to consider the stakeholder landscape. Ask questions such as "who will be involved in the elicitation activity? What are the characteristics of the stakeholders?"

Stakeholders are individuals, groups or organisations that may affect, be

affected or perceive itself to be affected by the project in which the business analysis activities take place. Identifying and understanding those stakeholders enables the BA to determine the best ways of engaging, eliciting, communicating and collaborating. As stated by Greta Blash in her LinkedIn Learning course: Business Analysis Foundations: "The more involvement that stakeholders have with the work to deliver the outcome, the better chance we have that they'll be supportive of the result. I can't stress this enough. And I know that it can be tiring."

When considering which elicitation techniques to utilise, it is important to consider the following stakeholder-related aspects:

Level of Knowledge and Expertise

If the level of expertise and knowledge of the stakeholders is limited, then perhaps a focus group or a workshop is not the most appropriate technique. When you face a case like that, systems archaeology or documents analysis may reveal insights that can be discussed during a later workshop.

Type

Given the role and the type of stakeholders different needs and expectations arise. For example, executives tend to be interested in the high-level detail. They typically require concise, easily readable formats of documentation in order to assist and inform their decision making. Long workshop sessions are rarely appropriate for them.

Elicitation Preferences and Communication Needs

You have to take into account the communication needs and elicitation techniques preferences of your stakeholders. They will be more engaged and productive when they participate in an elicitation activity they prefer. They will feel familiar and comfortable and it is more likely to provide the insights necessary.

Maturity

Less guided and less structured elicitation techniques may be not appropriate when the stakeholder teams are less mature. For example if you send a requirements document via email and you expect comments and inputs from stakeholders who have never seen a similar document before, you are unlikely to receive quality feedback. A guided walkthrough would be a more appropriate option.

Elicitation Objectives

Before choosing a set of elicitation techniques it is important to analyse aspects of the situation and set goals. Additionally, assessing the future desired relationships between you and the stakeholders will help you understand if the elicitation process is progressing effectively and efficiently.

Finding out each stakeholder's logic and differing points of view, assessing real

objectives and probing for individual interests will help you to determine potential conflicts and dependencies. This will shape the elicitation techniques that are used, as priority will be given to those techniques that will be most likely to provide common areas of agreement.

Expected outcomes should be considered once you choose your elicitation techniques. If the expected outcome is to gain the acceptance of a specific design element from a stakeholder with increased influence, then an interview or a 1-1 meeting may be preferred as opposed to a workshop with multiple stakeholders.

Additionally, the project or product management approach being followed could affect the types of elicitation activity that are appropriate. Progressive elaboration of requirements means you can begin with higher level requirements and then subsequently figure out the details. When working in an agile environment, continuous feedback and adjustment are essential. With this in mind, a workshop (with an extended stakeholder group present) might be used to elicit initial business and stakeholder requirements. Subsequently, demo sessions and feedback through prototyping may be effective elicitation techniques for capturing stakeholder's views on the design aspects.

Experience of the Business Analyst with a Specific Technique

The level of experience of a business analyst with a particular elicitation technique can impact the techniques chosen. If you feel familiar and comfortable with a specific elicitation technique and it is appropriate taking into account the context you have to exploit it.

It's important to consider the business analyst who will perform the elicitation. Everyone has a set of skills, attitudes and aspirations. However, it is crucial not to fall into the trap of *only* considering your favourite techniques. As professionals, we should be constantly looking to upskill. If there is a technique you haven't tried before, do not discount it. Perhaps you can seek the support of a colleague and utilise it as and when appropriate.

As well as the BA practitioner, there may also be organisational limitations and other factors that should be taken into account. This includes the type of project and other considerations.

Project Considerations

The type of project and approach used, time and budget constraints, and requirement documentation type and detail required should be also considered when choosing elicitation techniques.

Strict budget constraints will reduce the flexibility of choice. For example, it may be impossible to choose techniques with high associated costs, like a cross-functional workshop in a hotel conference room. Instead you might choose to present a prototype via zoom meeting.

If detailed requirements documentation is required, it could be necessary for multiple reviews with the stakeholders, leading to multiple elicitation and review sessions. Equally, if there is no need for detailed documentation there might be less need for formal document review sessions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is crucial to highlight that planning and estimating the requirements elicitation can be challenging. How long the effort will take is highly dependent on the content of each requirement and the effort needed for understanding and consensus. It is not just about the expected size of the outcome.

Elicitation activities take up project resources, so choose wisely. This way, you will ensure that your time is spent appropriately defining the product or project's solution. The tools and techniques which can be applied for performing elicitation are numerous and business analysts should exercise judgement when choosing them.

Giorgos Sioutzos is a Senior Business Analyst and you can contact him on LinkedIN at
www.linkedin.com/in/gsioutzos



What Does It Take to Become a Business Analyst: From Chemical Engineering to Business Analysis

Razelle Naidoo

It feels like just yesterday when I graduated from university with an engineering degree. When I embarked on my degree, I never imagined that I would begin my career as a business analyst in foreign exchange (forex) at a bank. I knew very little about the financial services industry. I didn't even take a commerce related subject in school! So how did I end up as a BA? Well, just like you I was surprised to find out that there was an increasing trend of engineers working as business analysts. They were sought after for their ability to work well under pressure and their out-of-box thinking.

Transition to Business Analysis

And, just like that I threw caution to the wind, traded in my safety boots for a pair of high heels and took on the challenge. I figured that if I didn't like it or couldn't fit in, I would just jump ship and go back into engineering. Almost thirteen years later, and I am still in the industry, loving it and still wearing my heels! So how did I make it this far? And how was I able to work as a business analyst without any prior knowledge about business analysis? Well, since you asked, here goes.

The Competencies of a Business Analyst

The International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide lists six categories of underlying competencies that every business analyst should possess and develop. These include but are not limited to analytical thinking and problem solving, behavioural characteristics, communication and interaction skills, tools and technology and business knowledge. Well, it turns out that much of my degree was preparing me with the competencies I needed to work as a business analyst. The engineering programme is one of those degrees that equip you with skills that can easily be transferred to many industries, including finance.

Chemical engineers are logical and analytical thinkers. They are known for their problem-solving abilities which develop through courses like advanced mathematics, science and process design. The degree trains one to develop well thought-out processes based on research and to be able to improve existing processes through critical analysis. As a result, they frequently collaborate in teams and must communicate effectively both verbally and in writing. The laboratory experiments in subjects like chemistry train one to be observant and rigorous. Are you starting to see the parallels now? In short, my degree equipped me with a foundation on which to build my business analysis career.

But What about Business Knowledge?

One area that I did not feel competent in was business knowledge. However, it's not uncommon for a business analyst to walk into a completely new environment without any prior knowledge of the industry or domain. Many BA's in the consulting world frequently face this challenge. One simply learns how to 'learn quickly'. Once again, because of my degree, which was both extensive and challenging, I had learnt how to learn new content in a short space of time. So naturally when I entered the workforce, rather than feel anxious, I focused all my energy on acquiring new business knowledge. And, as time went by, I continued to further my education to empower myself in this area.

What Else Is Needed?

Despite possessing the competencies required for the making of a good BA, there is one other thing that I believe has made the greatest impact in my professional and personal life. And that is my mental attitude. It was apparently Henry Ford that said, "whether you think you can or you think you can't—you're right". This was most certainly true for me! One can possess all the competencies and qualifications for the making of a great business analyst, but without a positive attitude and growth mindset, you are still limited in your ability and career. Business analysts are known as change agents or change enablers and to be one you must have a vision for the future. This starts with believing that you bring something of

value to the table. For me, I simply just believed in myself.

Conclusion

The point I want to make is that engineers can make good business analysts. But more so is that a business analyst doesn't always come neatly packaged with some formal business analysis qualification. I often see job specifications requiring some form of formal BA qualification, and that is great! But could this approach be limiting employers from attracting other applicants who can demonstrate the competencies but without formal BA qualifications? And what about attitude? How important is that in the recruiting process? My challenge to future employers is to look for candidates who demonstrate the competencies of a business analyst and who have the right attitude. The rest can be learned, and I am testament to this. And to all aspiring business analysts, don't waste a minute doubting whether you can do it. Do what you can to hone these competencies, don't stop learning and never stop believing that you can!

Razelle Naidoo is passionate about servant leadership and works as a Senior Business Analyst in Cape Town, South Africa. Outside of the business analysis world, you can find her in the kitchen cooking up a storm or spending time with her family. Feel free to connect with her on www.linkedin.com/in/razelle-naidoo/



Using AI to Develop System Requirements

Rod Simpson



I would like to start with a disclaimer. It's important to note that no large language model will produce perfectly accurate or usable responses. Whether you are using ChatGPT, or one of the many other options out there, it's important to thoroughly read and verify the reply before sharing it with others.

So, with this disclaimer in mind, how can ChatGPT or any other large language model help us with our analysis work? As a starting point, it can take the project's Terms of Reference (ToR) or charter and be asked to suggest some potential solution requirements. As always, it will not create a perfect set of requirements, but it will give a good number of suggestions. I've tended to find asking for system or solution requirements rather than specifying functional requirements works better,

however this will lead to the large language model suggesting both functional as well as non-functional requirements. Here is a possible prompt to use, after pasting in the ToR or project charter.

Prompt: *Based on the above text create the system requirements required for a new project*

We can also ask ChatGPT for user stories, and it will create them in the 'As a' 'I want' 'So that' format.

Prompt: *for the functional requirements suggested create all the user stories in the "as a" "I want" "so that" format*

In addition to all this, we may ask it to suggest acceptance criteria. I recommend asking for one requirement or user story at a time.

Prompt: *suggest test scenarios for the following user story…..*

What if your developers need it as a behavioural acceptance criteria. No problem, all we do is ask ChatGPT to list acceptance criteria in the Given… When… Then format. We can even ask for the output to be in a Gherkin acceptable format.

Prompt: *suggest some BDD test criteria for the users story:..... in the format of given… when… then. As well as to be acceptable into Gherkin.*

The code that it pushes out will need to be copied one section at a time and dropped into Gherkin after each section has been checked by a real person.

I often find myself wishing I had the time to create my CRUD (Create, Read/reference, Update, Delete) matrix. Luckily, we can let ChatGPT do the work for us. You will need to list all of your classes in the class model as well as all of your functional requirements then ask for it to produce the CRUD matrix in an appropriate format (CSV or Markdown table or ODS) and you can export the results into the spreadsheet of your choice.

Prompt: *Create a CRUD matrix based on the following classes: ".....", "....." etc using the following functional requirements: ".....", "....." etc In a ODS format.*

This will create a downloadable file that can be opened in a spreadsheet. Of course, you still have to figure out the missing functional requirements. However, ChatGPT can help with this too:

Prompt: *suggest missing requirements based on the above CRUD matrix*

I hope that this article will save you some time and make your job easier when it comes to your system requirements.

Rod Simpson is an independent trainer working with Metadata Training Ltd. If you are interested in learning more about how BAs can leverage ChatGPT, Metadata Training offers free lunch-and-learn sessions on a regular basis covering this subject. Please visit the Metadata Training website for more details.

BA Back Stories

Elizaveta Ivankova





Interviewed by Christina Lovelock

Elizaveta is a lead business analyst who lives in the Netherlands and volunteers for the IIBA® Brussels chapter. She has spoken at several conferences, most recently as one of the keynotes at BA & Beyond, discussing business analysis and fire dancing!

What would you be doing now if we weren't having this discussion?

I would be working with my team, helping people figure out what's going on with the project and looking at which tickets have highest priority. I would



also be supporting my new product owner with his journey on the project, preparing some new requirements and facilitating discussions. So, it's a very busy day!

How do you describe your role to your friends or family?

I say that I reduce uncertainty. I really like how Laura Brandenburg from Bridging the Gap mentions that "out of chaos, we create clarity". I think that BAs really reduce uncertainty and bring clarity to the team and to stakeholders. And with that, we can bring true value to the businesses we help.

Do you think the value of business analysis is recognised?

In the companies where I have worked and where I'm working now, it definitely *is* recognised. I know this because since I joined, I've felt that people really listened to me. Of course, it took time before I could really influence decisions, but now people see that if I recommend something, it's worth thinking about. They can consider it and perhaps they would come to the same conclusions based on the analysis. I feel appreciation from my team members because they also see the difference when they have a business analyst who is involved in the project, who is really trying to figure out the purpose of the initiative.

What led you into business analysis?

It came very naturally, as Filip Hendrick says, many people become business analysts "by accident". I say that we are BAs "by attitude"!

When I started at university, I knew that I wanted to work with computers, but I didn't want to become a developer. In my country at that time, around 2009, the BA role wasn't even a thing. There was no such profession. I was lucky to find a university that had a programme which mixed economics, computer science, mathematics and some programming. It gave me a lot of skills, and through group work we got to explore different roles. I was working with a classmate, he became the developer, and I became the business analyst. We were doing tasks together and he was more like, "OK, let's jump into the coding.", and I was like, "Come on, let's figure out what we actually need to achieve!"

How do you ensure that you keep learning in your role?

Continuous learning should be very easy for business analysts, because every new project is like a completely new job even if it's within the same organisation. It will involve different people, different processes, and different terminology that must be learnt. So working on different things helps me to learn, but also learning from people in the industry and linking up with the BA professional community. This is what keeps me up-to-date and brings me the most understanding of the knowledge needed right now.

When I was a very junior BA, in the second and third year of my career, I thought that I knew quite a lot, I knew my area, but then I went to job interviews and understood that my



knowledge was actually very narrow! I discovered that looking outside your organisation, reading books and hearing about new concepts and ideas is so important. That was something I realised I was missing. So, since then, I try to keep in touch with other business analysts because they share knowledge, and we are all able to learn from each other and as a community.

Have there been any turning points in your career?

There have been several. The first one was transitioning from working on projects only internally and within one country, to moving into outsourcing companies which work internationally. I worked for companies from the United Kingdom, then from the United States, and later I worked in distributed teams. That was a really big shift from just working with two or three people in the same room, in the same building and in the same country!

The next shift for me was when I relocated to the Netherlands, because this is when I moved from working in outsourcing companies to being an in-house business analyst. That's the next level of my transition, but everything that I learned from outsourced development applies to in-house development as well.

Is there any advice or feedback that you've been given in your career that particularly sticks with you?

That there is no such thing as a stupid question. There have been so many times when I have asked a question and you can literally feel the relief in the room! Sometimes people can struggle and suffer for years, sometimes they are too afraid to ask a question. But I can go in as a BA, with a fresh perspective, and a really important question is finally asked.

What advice do you have for new or aspiring business analysts?

Be curious. Because curiosity, as Kathy Berkidge says, is our main superpower. We can be afraid, or something might not be clear to us, especially if we are young or new business analysts. Everything can seem scary and unknown, but if we come from the perspective of curiosity towards the problems, then we come from a more productive angle, and this really helps to identify and solve the issues.

Are there any skills or traits that have helped you succeed as a business analyst?

Probably my love for technology because, we say that we improve processes, but very often it's related somehow to IT systems and automation. It helped me a lot that at university I studied computer programming so I can better understand how computers work and that actually, they're very simple! Whatever you put in, you get out. They cannot do magic and this helps me with a lot of stakeholder conversations.

Also, having genuine curiosity and some level of self-confidence. I have learned to have confidence, and I have noticed that business analysts often face imposter syndrome. I have noticed that

a lot of people who feel this way are practitioners who really try to get to the essence of things, to really understand problems. If I meet people who are very self-confident, who have absolutely no doubts and no questions, then I worry there is trouble coming! So, I always try to be self-confident, but not selfish. That means I can be curious and point managers and stakeholders towards the right direction without being offensive.

Is there something that you are particularly proud of from your career?

There is, but it's not a particular project, or something I have done. It's when business analysts or clients come back to me and say that I helped them either to learn something or helped with the project. Those comments, letters of appreciation and feedback from my colleagues, are really what boosts my motivation! I especially enjoyed mentoring two young junior BAs on my project, watching as they grew in their careers to become mid and then senior business analysts. Later they came back to me and said, "I learned so much from you and it helped me", and I am really proud of that, that was amazing.

This is your chance to give a shout out for something, anything that has inspired you that you think will help others.

A book I'd like to highlight is Software Requirements by Karl Wiegers, which is a must read. The BABOK® Guide is important, but sometimes it's quite difficult or perhaps you're not at a level of experience where you can really grasp all the concepts, but the software requirements book is really helpful and very practical.

And, there are several people I'd like to mention too. First of all, Olga Cherkasova. She is now the president of IIBA® Belarus Chapter. She was my manager for a couple of years and with her guidance I grew as a BA and she helped me tremendously. She was a brilliant role model, a very skilful person who really helped me grow. More recently, Filip Hendrickx and Stefan Bossuwé from IIBA® Brussels chapter have both really supported me, and now I'm a volunteer for IIBA® Brussels, thanks to their motivation and support.

Connect with Elizaveta via LinkedIn.

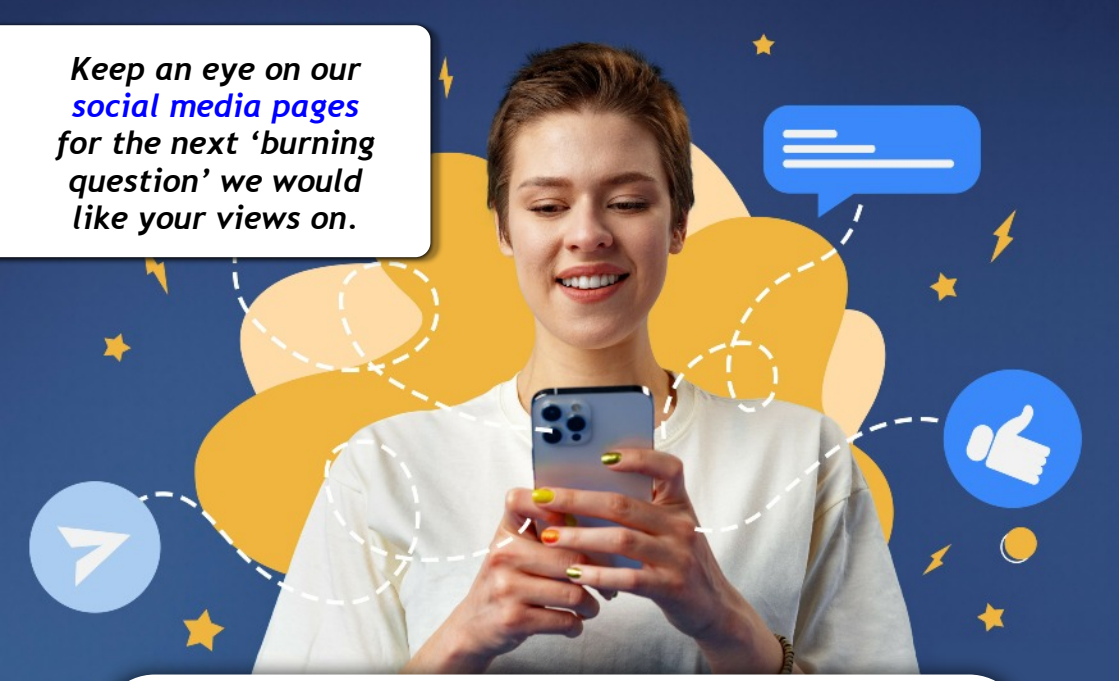


About the interviewer:

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 the BCS books, Delivering Business Analysis and the new release Careers in Tech, Data and Digital.

She'd be delighted if you'd like to connect!
Linkedin.com/in/christina-lovelock

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

Are you using AI tools in your role as a business analyst? If so, how are you using them and how successful has this been?

I tested AI for many uses. For the most part I have found it useful having it create complex excel formulae for me, not as I am unable to but it is in many cases quicker and I can refine as necessary. I have also used it to condense text and summarise long text extracts, primarily for the purpose of seeing how the tool interprets the text and whether it agrees with my interpretation.

George Briley

AI in the general sense has long been part of my toolkit. Be it as OCR for recognising text in images, classifying data using deep learning or translating texts.

But what's new with LLMs is the ability to perform everyday tasks. LLMs can not only generate code, but as a DDD enthusiast I can generate a (rough) domain model from textbased requirements. I can then use this model in the form of a technical description (e.g. JSON schema) to automatically generate test data, for example.

But since a big part of the role of a BA includes communication, I find the support of modelling languages such as PlantUML or Mermaid fantastic, which can also be directly used in many collaborative tools such as Miro or Confluence.

The complete chain from idea to visualisation is supported by current LLMs and assists me basically daily.

Gottfried Szing

ChatGPT has become my strong everyday BA Assistant.

We spend hours in conversations, considering various internal and external projects.

Within seconds, she (yes, I even gave her a name—Alice) can outline and provide the structure of my ideas for my BA and management job, outline, and draft artefacts and templates.

She could easily turn a piece of code into a table, code, or diagram I need (Mermaid, PlantUML). AI enables me to save hours. But don't rely on it for 100%—that's why we have conversations, as I'm steering the process of such collaboration. Always.

Nevertheless, my work will never be the same after this technological revolution.

Yevhen Kliukin

I love using AI tools for my job, from written communication and negotiation to research and dealing with complicated situations. I have recently shared my experience of proven and repeatable use cases for AI in this video - youtu.be/dWUx0bh68KM. Unfortunately, modelling requirements are still a problem with AI, with many limitations and issues regarding results and repeatability. From what I learned, creating style guides and instructions increases repeatability a lot, as you can re-educate the model using the same instructions.

Iurii Gomon

As a Business Analyst, I've seen firsthand how AI has transformed data and project management. In my current role, AI tools are indispensable. They serve as a catalyst of possibility in analysing meetings/inputs, extracting action items, formulating action plans and timelines, and generating final reports. A BA can follow projects from inception to completion, ensuring efficiency and accuracy at every stage.

One can quickly identify key points, decisions made, and tasks assigned without manually combing through notes or recordings, saving time and reducing the likelihood of human error.

When creating action plans and tracking project progress, AI provides real-time updates and predictive analytics. This helps anticipate potential roadblocks and adjust strategies accordingly. Finally, use understandable insights to communicate progress and outcomes more easily to stakeholders.

In essence, AI enhances Business Analyst efficacy by automating routine tasks, enabling a more strategic focus on project outcomes and decision-making processes.

Ashley Cruz-Singh

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Karen Newnham
Eric Jager
Christine Savriacooty
Kent J. McDonald
Ashley Cruz-Singh
Kyle Roycroft
Deborah Turner-Chappell
Nick de Voil
Kateryna Stryhunivska
Stefan Bossuwé
Immaculata Ojadi
Jeff Gothelf, Josh Seiden & Adrian Reed
Irena Cvetic
Giorgos Sioutzos
Razelle Naidoo
Rod Simpson
Elizaveta Ivankova & Christina Lovelock

Layout & Design

Matt Smart

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