

BA DIGEST

- Why the world needs cyber-aware BAs
- Scenario-driven approach to NFRs
- Using metaphor
- BA careers
- And much more ...

Your regular round-up of useful BA content

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Welcome

Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I could often be found in libraries browsing the 'computing' section. Information moved more slowly back then, and I spent many a happy hour typing hundreds of lines of code from a book or magazine into an Atari 8-bit computer. This was usually followed by many unhappy hours debugging and hunting for typos (I never did get checksums to work properly...).

Still, I learned a lot—not just about programming, but about logic, structure, and the consequences of making changes you don't fully understand. And when things went wrong, learning how to solve them was a slow, deliberate process. There was no Google. No ChatGPT. Just persistence, problem-solving, and occasionally, a bit of luck.

Today, we are awash with information and learning opportunities, and continuing professional development is crucial for BAs. But with so much information at our fingertips, the challenge today isn't access—it's intent. It's deciding what to pay attention to, and why. Throw in the provocation of procrastination that is social media, and it's so easy to get caught in a scroll hole... there are some excellent resources on there, but it's easy to lose a lot of time looking. Plus there are the 'unknown unknowns'—topics that you might not know that you need to know about!

Part of the underlying vision behind BA Digest is to provide a credible, curated, community-centric resource that is

free at the point of delivery (and free means 'unfenced', so there's no need to subscribe, unless you choose to). I hope that there will be an article or two in this edition on a topic that you weren't expecting, and hopefully you'll find this thought-provoking. I also hope BA Digest is useful for your (or perhaps even your team's) ongoing professional development.

As usual, you'll find a diverse range of 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 do connect with the author and let them know. Believe me, they'll appreciate it.

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

Until next time,

Adrian

Adrian Reed

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest

Principal Consultant, Blackmetric

PS: If you enjoy reading BA Digest, please share it with your colleagues and/or on social media. Every share really does help!

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OMG, Am I a Marketer?!

Jen Thai

I am such a sucker for good marketing. You know the kind—not the 'buy one get one free' deals or free shipping offers, but those messages that seem to read your mind. They articulate the exact pain you're experiencing, describe the precise lifestyle you're dreaming of, and somehow know that you only have 10 minutes to yourself each day. Seriously, how did they get inside my brain?!

I recently downloaded a meditation app. Their ad spoke directly to my overwhelmed self: "You're carrying the mental load. You're constantly planning, organising and worrying. And you have exactly 10 minutes a day for yourself. What if 7 minutes of guided mindfulness could transform your mental health, so that you can become more you?" I clicked so fast my finger cramped.

Behind every good piece of marketing or great product and service is a plethora of hours put into **understanding** the problem.

That's right, it doesn't start with features and what the product can do—it starts with deeply

understanding the human need.

When I started digging into what makes marketing so effective, I found that it wasn't creative magic but methods (with a good dose of neuroscience to boot). And I noticed something else too: that these methods are eerily similar to what we do in business analysis.

Smart marketers don't *sell products*; they *solve problems*. They know that understanding the underlying need is far more important than the features of what they're selling.

As Theodore Levitt famously noted, "People don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole."

Understanding the "Why"

At the heart of business analysis is people. Without people, there is nothing to try and solve. Even initiatives like "digital transformation" or "implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system" ultimately traces back to human needs. The problems we solve

as business analysts are the ones that impact people.

That's why so much of our discovery work focuses on understanding business context, processes and the people.

For example, when implementing a new invoice processing system, the real problem isn't just "it takes too long to process invoices"; instead it might be "our finance team is spending 30 hours weekly on manual data entry instead of financial analysis."

This people-centred approach explains why human-centred design practices from marketing and product design translate so well to business projects. Both disciplines begin with the same fundamental question: "What painful problems people wish would go away?"

Personas Are Not Just for Marketing

What I think is a problem for me may not be for you. So one of the very first things we want to know is who *exactly* are we trying to solve for?

Marketers pinpoint specific "target markets" because "if you're speaking to all, you're speaking to none." Great marketing knows exactly who they're addressing.

Enter personas.

But understanding someone goes beyond demographics like age group, location or job. What I find more revealing are psychographics—behavioural patterns and mindsets

that shape how people might perceive problems. For example:

- Are they time-poor executives who value efficiency above everything else?
- Are they detail-oriented specialists who need comprehensive information?
- Are they tech-savvy early adopters or tech-resistant traditionalists?

These behavioural traits tell us about how someone will perceive a problem and respond to potential solutions.

I see personas as essential tools for business analysis, far beyond just completing user story templates like "As a [persona], I want..."

When you understand the environment where your user will use your solution, you gain critical context. An "account manager" persona becomes much more meaningful when you know they're constantly on the phone, managing hundreds of clients (or is it thousands?) and frequently context-switch throughout their day.

And with this deeper understanding comes clarity about why their problems matter.

Being in the "Customer's" Shoes

In marketing, understanding the customer journey is everything.

Beyond knowing who your customer is, marketers need to know where

they are in their decision-making process, what they're feeling in that moment and what message will resonate right then.

Are they just becoming aware of the problem? Are they comparing solutions? Are they already frustrated by a failed attempt to fix it? Marketers craft messages that speak directly to both emotional and functional needs at each journey stage.

As business analysts, we do something super similar.

Instead of a purchasing journey, we see user journeys—how someone interacts with a system or how a task flows between people and teams. And even what they might be feeling at these points. By mapping these steps and identifying where frustration, inefficiencies, or workarounds exist, we uncover problems and opportunities.

For example, when mapping an expense approval process, we discovered that team members were submitting expenses without proper receipts and managers were approving them to avoid delays, only to have finance reject them later. The real problem wasn't a workflow problem; it was a problem of responsibilities.

Journey mapping reveals emotional touchpoints, delays, confusion and manual pain. These are examples of human elements that don't always appear in documentation but directly affect outcomes. How someone responds to a particular task gives you insight into what it means for their role, their job and their goals.

Journey mapping is a lens that helps us to understand what matters to the people we're problem-solving for—whether we're selling them something or building IT systems they'll use every day.

Embracing the Overlap

So there you have it. Am I secretly a marketer at heart?

Perhaps. Or maybe I've just recognised that between these disciplines is one stark commonality: how we approach human problems. Both share a desire to understand people and create solutions that genuinely meet their needs.

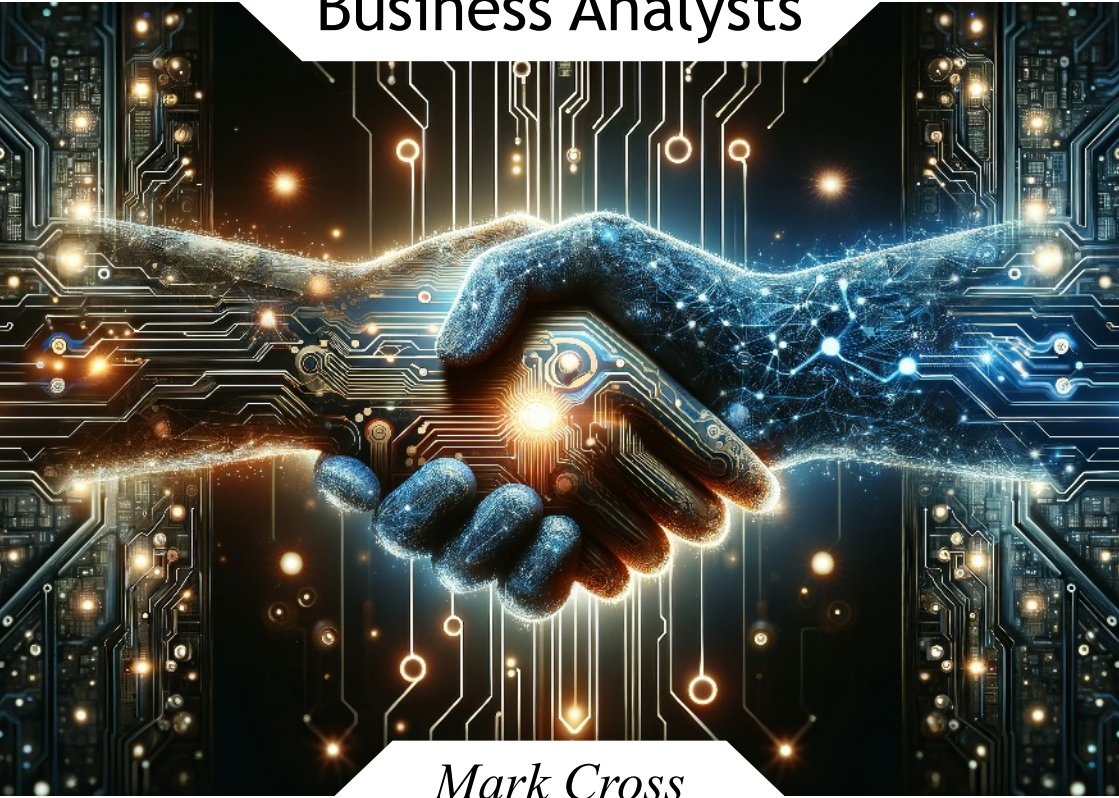
We borrow concepts from frameworks like Human Centred Design (HCD) because that's the connection between understanding problems and creating solutions that are impactful.

Now, when I find myself admiring a particularly effective marketing campaign (like that meditation app that my inner self has subscribed to), I chuckle and openly admire the analysis and problem-solving behind it.

Now if you'll excuse me, I might need to update my LinkedIn profile to "business analysis with marketing appreciation"—or is it the other way around?

Jen Thai is a business analyst who champions problem-first thinking in everyday projects. She helps teams uncover the real problems behind the process, one conversation at a time. Connect with her at:
www.linkedin.com/in/jenthai/

Why the World Needs Cyber-aware Business Analysts



Mark Cross

Trust is the new currency of business.

In a world stung by repeated data breaches, ransomware incidents, and digital outages, trust is now the measure of who people want to work with. We want to trust that our personal and financial information will be kept safe and handled respectfully. We want to trust that the services we rely on, from banking to healthcare to utilities, will be there when we need them. And we want to trust that we won't become victims of fraud or inconvenience through the negligence of others.

As the trusted advisors and influencers of stakeholders across the business, business analysts are perfectly placed to help cultivate a culture of trust and collaboration. We design processes, model responsibilities, and clarify expectations. And when we do that with security in mind, we help protect our customers, our colleagues, and our companies.

BAs Are Value Maximisers

BAs are trusted to optimise value: to make sure we're solving the right

problems, serving the right people, and using the right levers to achieve better outcomes. That includes understanding the threats to the value that we intend to deliver.

According to [Statista's forecast on the global cost of cybercrime from 2018 to 2029](#), the annual worldwide cost is expected to rise dramatically—from \$0.86 trillion in 2018 to \$15.63 trillion by 2029. This projection illustrates the accelerating financial threat posed by cybercrime to global economies. Yet security breaches often stem not from missing tools, but from subtle gaps in requirements: processes without governance, systems without secure baselines, interfaces without validation and unmanaged dependencies.

Security Is Now Part of the Definition of Value

Organisations increasingly recognise that value is not just about speed or savings. It's about trust, continuity, and resilience. That means security isn't a bolt-on feature... it's a foundation.

We can no longer afford to treat security as a non-functional requirement buried deep in the backlog. New regulations such as the [EU NIS 2 Directive](#), the [Cyber Resilience Act](#), the [Digital Operational Resilience Act \(DORA\)](#), the UK's [Cybersecurity and Resilience Bill](#), and the [EU AI Act](#) are raising the bar. Security needs to be addressed upfront, iteratively, and with full traceability.

For BAs, that means integrating security into the way we define scope,

model processes, prioritise change, and engage stakeholders.

A Seat at the Security Table

Within the wider change community, security often seems like "someone else's job." [Red teams](#) probe for weaknesses. [Blue teams](#) defend. Executives strategise. But who connects the dots?

That role naturally belongs to the business analyst. BAs bridge the operational and the strategic, the business and the technical, the requirements and the risks. We ensure that what's being protected aligns with business value, that controls are fit for purpose, and that everyone understands the "why" behind the "what."

Many of us have experienced the frustration of 11th-hour meetings, where a project team is racing to meet a delivery deadline, only to face last-minute objections from cybersecurity stakeholders. The project team exists to facilitate change and manage delivery risk. The security team exists to manage the organisation's exposure to information security risk. Both are doing their jobs. But when their needs are left unresolved until the end of the project, tensions escalate to senior leadership... and no one gets what they want.

It doesn't have to be that way.

BAs are in a unique position to anticipate and avoid these conflicts. By forming relationships and building trust between delivery and security

teams early, we can ensure that consultation happens efficiently and constructively. We can broker understanding, align priorities, and create shared goals... so that delivery isn't delayed, and security isn't compromised.

This also means anticipating the "how". And that's where our skills in change analysis, stakeholder engagement and modelling really come into play.

Operating Models and Supply Chains as Attack Surfaces

One of the most overlooked sources of cyber risk is the operating model itself. When business units change processes, restructure teams, or outsource critical services, those shifts create new dependencies and vulnerabilities. A change in who stores data, or where the access credentials live, can open a crack an attacker is ready to exploit.

Supply chain compromise is now one of the most common breach vectors, and it isn't just about shipping or procurement. It includes the platforms we integrate, the contractors we trust, the third-party APIs we rely on, and the open-source code in our software.

Business analysts are uniquely placed to map these dependencies early. We model who does what, when, and with what inputs. We trace information flows. We document assumptions. That's not just good analysis—it's preventative security.

Security Techniques in the BA Toolkit

Many BAs are already using techniques that can be extended to cover security, including:

- **Assessing Cyber Risks:** recognising when a change may impact sensitive systems or processes, and ensuring that cybersecurity consultation happens early.
- **Documenting Role-Based Access Needs:** specifying the access required for each role profile in a process, so that permissions align with the principle of least privilege and no user is given more access than they genuinely need.
- **Classifying Sensitive Information:** determining which data and assets need heightened protection and defining how they must be handled and stored.
- **Modelling Adversarial Personas:** anticipating behaviours and motivations of malicious actors to inform threat modelling and scenario planning.

And crucially, BAs can help move security left—integrating it early in the lifecycle, rather than treating it as a final hurdle. When security is not prioritised and defects make it into production, the organisation is not just exposed to unacceptable risks, it also incurs significant technical debt. It can cost significantly more to develop fixes for security issues in production than if they had been identified at the requirements stage.

By helping to get it right from the start, BAs reduce risk, save money, and preserve trust—integrating it early in the lifecycle, rather than treating it as a final hurdle.

Why We Need to Work Together

This isn't a solo mission. There's a growing movement of practitioners recognising that cybersecurity is a business problem as much as a technical one. We are already collaborating globally to explore how analysts can help make organisations more secure and resilient—not just through more controls and compliance, but by embedding a security mindset into the DNA of change.

This effort is now taking shape as the Special Interest Group for Cyber Security and Resilience (CyberSIG) within the IIBA®, a global community dedicated to exploring how BAs can help make organisations more secure, resilient, and future-ready. We'll be running tutorials, study groups, panel discussions and networking events focused on exactly these themes. If this is of interest and you'd like to be involved, visit cybersig.iiba.org to find out more.

Mark Cross is a cybersecurity consultant, business analyst and speaker. He is the Principal Consultant at Envista Consulting and the Regional Chair for EMEA of the IIBA®'s new Cyber Special Interest Group. Connect with him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/markcross.

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The Art of Influence

Part 1:

Structuring Analysis for Impact

Anna Rajander



This article stems from a question: If influence is a skill, and skills can be taught, *how do you teach influence?*

It sounds simple. Influence, after all, is recognised as an important skill for business analysts—without influence, insights from analysis are unlikely to be acted upon. But articulating exactly *how* business analysts use influence—let alone *teaching* influence as a skill—is a challenge. This is especially so when you consider business analysts generally do not possess the authority to make decisions regarding the acquisition and allocation of business resources.

This is the first of a series of three articles on influence and analysis. This first article explores the

relationship between influence and analysis, introducing a framework for structuring analysis to maximise its potential to influence business outcomes. Future articles will discuss when and how business analysts exert influence, and how analysts can plan and execute influential analysis using the framework.

1. Leadership, Influence and Power

When considering concepts like influence, it usually helps to start with a definition. Influence is the ability to have an effect on something or someone. In the context of business analysis, influence is the ability of an analyst to impact business outcomes,

or how a business achieves its outcomes.

Influence is commonly associated with leadership. Indeed, the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide defines *Leadership and Influencing* as a single underlying competency. However, while related, leadership and influence are different: Leaders need to be able to influence... *but not all influencers are leaders*.

Leaders use influence to guide people towards a common objective. In business, a leader's ability to influence is generally bestowed on them by way of title or position in the organisation's hierarchy, giving them authority to make decisions associated with the movement of resources. This is referred to as legitimate power, which (along with reward and coercion) is considered a [formal source of power](#).

As the job title "*business analyst*" rarely comes with any legitimate power in this sense, analysts need to find other ways to exert influence. Thankfully, not all power is acquired formally. [Informal sources of power](#) can be used to influence, including:

- **Expert Power:** Power that comes from the possession of skills and knowledge.
- **Referent Power:** Power that comes from being respected and having a good reputation.
- **Informational Power:** Power that comes from having access to information.

- **Connection Power:** Power that comes from having good networks and strong relationships.

In the absence of formal power, business analysts leverage these informal sources of power to influence business outcomes.

2. Influence and Business Analysis

When most analysts consider influence, they often think about stakeholder-centred activities, such as stakeholder identification, engagement and communication. Thinking in these terms assumes an analyst's ability to influence is limited to a narrow set of tasks performed at specific points in the analysis process.

If, instead, analysts consider influence in terms of the application of informal power, then influence becomes a skill that can be applied across a broad range of analysis activities. Indeed, influence permeates the entire analytical process—we can use our informal powers in every stage of analysis to maximise its impact. As such, we should be planning and executing analysis in ways that make best use of our informal powers.

3. A Framework to Influence

When trying to influence business outcomes, business analysts need to understand the informal power they hold and how to wield it. To do this, analysts should consider the entire analysis process. Figure 1 shows a

simple, generic process consisting of three phases:

- **Understand:** the problem, business context, stakeholders, and available business analysis information.
- **Infer:** ideate and draw conclusions.
- **Advise:** document and communicate results.

Most analytical efforts can be summarised by these three phases—regardless of the business context or delivery methodology.



Figure 1: Generic Analytical Process

This process is at the heart of the framework depicted in Figure 2. This framework connects informal powers with the analytical process. As the framework is underpinned by the generic analytical process, the framework itself can be adapted to apply to different business contexts and delivery methodologies.

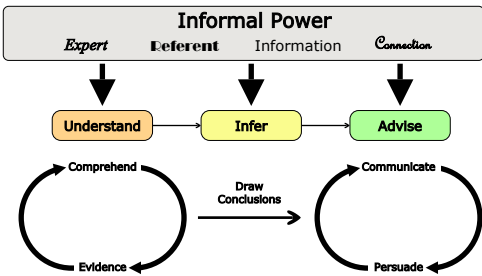


Figure 2: Delivering Influential Analysis

The framework can be used by analysts to support their understanding of when and how to

exert their informal powers. Once analysts understand their informal powers, they can start to plan analysis efforts to use them, maximising the potential for their analysis to directly influence business outcomes.

4. Conclusion

Influence is an important skill for business analysts. However, it is often only considered by analysts in relation to stakeholder-centred activities. Instead, if we redefine influence as the application of informal power, it becomes apparent that influence is a skill that is applicable to the entire analytical process.

This article introduced a framework to support analysts when considering where and how to use their informal powers to exert influence. The framework is underpinned by a generic analytical process, allowing it to be tailored to support different business contexts and delivery methodologies. *The Art of Influence Part 2: Understanding Your Power* will explore informal powers in more detail, while *The Art of Influence Part 3: Using Your Powers* will delve into the framework, explaining how analysts can use it to identify when and how they apply their informal powers to deliver influential analysis.

Anna Rajander is a Certified Business Analyst Professional with over 20 years' experience. She resides in Perth, Western Australia where she occasionally puts her thoughts and opinions about business analysis to paper. Connect with Anna on [LinkedIn](#).



The Impact You Deliver Is More Important than Your Title or Your Process

Kent J. McDonald

I can forgive business analysts if they put a little too much stock in the Joseph Heller quote from *Catch 22*: “Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you.” There have been a lot of career headwinds as of late.

First, some organisations removed the business analyst role based on ill-informed advice from agile consulting firms. Then companies woke up from their binge hiring and realised they had too many people who did “work around the work.” And now it's the assertion that AI can do everything that people do, until it doesn't.

It's tough to be a business analyst and feel secure in your career. Fortunately, there are some things you can do that—while they won't

guarantee complete security—will improve your chances of having a successful career. They aren't techniques as much as they are attitude and areas of focus. Here are three I've found helpful.

It's What You Do, Not the Title You Have

I started my career in IT, and later internal products, as an accidental business analyst. At the end of last century, I joined an IT consultancy as a project manager. My first role was as a business analyst so I could learn about IT projects.

After that role I did several gigs where I was a project manager/business analyst. I found I enjoyed the business analyst work

more and naturally approached things with that perspective on all of my subsequent gigs.

And that was true whether I was a business analyst, a project manager, a program manager, an agile coach, a product owner, or a product manager.

My title didn't matter. The work I performed and the results I delivered did.

So am I saying you shouldn't take pride in being a business analyst? Absolutely not. But remember that most people in your organisation couldn't care less if you're a business analyst. They're more interested in what you're going to contribute to the organisation.

Build up some evidence you can share to show why you should be on that strategic effort. Don't rely on trying to convince people you should be part of the initiative simply *because* you're a business analyst.

What You Do Is Deliver Impact

As for the results you use to show what you've done, it's not the requirements you've written or the workshops you've facilitated. Those things are important, but the people making staffing decisions in your organisation don't care about them.

Ok, that's a bit harsh.

I should say they care more about the impact your activities have on the organisation as a whole. And what they really care about is your

organisation's bottom line. So as soon as possible, get clarity on how your organisation makes money and spends money. And then figure out how what you do contributes to that.

For an example, look at the world of B2B product management. Rich Mironov reminds product managers that [business cases are stories about money](#). The first example he gives is getting support to work on an app that provides internal cost savings.

Doing Things "The Right Way" Isn't as Important

Let's go back to those organisations that got rid of the business analyst job title for a minute. In most of the cases I'm aware of, that move happened as the organisation went through some form of transformation.

It's easy to understand why organisations undergo transformations. They aren't getting the results they desire, so they know they need to change. They also realise that there are some fundamental issues with their organisation's structure and how it operates that prevents them from seeing the results they'd like. That shows a need for some substantial change.

Ok, I can buy that.

But somewhere along the way, organisations lost the plot. Their measure of success went from growth and improved financial results to "did we implement the process across the organisation?" That of course assumes that the measure of success

was improved financial results to begin with.

Perhaps those organisations got poor advice from firms whose entire business model is based on helping organisations adopt “The Process”. These firms sell “The Process” because it’s easier to measure and more likely to look successful than actually driving better financial results. Of course, some fault lies on behalf of the organisations because they buy the line that implementing “The Process” will lead to better financial results.

When implementing “The Process” becomes the goal, organisational decisions start centring on making that happen. People fill roles to perpetuate “The Process”, which is what the [Spotify CEO referred to as “work around the work”](#).

The problem is that when economic conditions sour and organisations remember about this thing called profit they look for places to save money. If you’re in a role that doesn’t contribute to generating a profit, you’re more likely to get laid off.

That’s why people that preach “The Process” are struggling right now. That’s also why you see all of those “agile is dead” articles. Agile as a means to an end is not dead. Setting your goal as making your organisation adopt agile probably is.

It’s tempting to experience a bit of schadenfreude for those people who built their career around “The Process” and told organisations they didn’t need business analysts. But don’t get too smug. The same thing

could happen to business analysts who can’t show their contribution to financial results.

So instead of worrying about “The Process”, focus instead on doing the work that matters for your organisation. Worry about the impact you have. Matt LeMay [in a recent talk](#) provided some brilliant questions to ask to make sure you let impact guide your actions, not “The Process”.

You Own Your Career

The person most likely to take an interest in your career is you. Instead of wondering why people don’t understand what business analysts do, or wonder why you didn’t get on that key initiative, take matters into your own hands.

Figure out what business impact looks like in your organisation, and find out how to apply your skills and background to deliver that impact.

And those organisations that got rid of the business analyst role? Most found they lacked clarity in what they were supposed to build and complained about the resulting gap. Often the people filling those gaps had business analyst backgrounds but were in different roles.

Kent practices and writes about software product management. He’s practiced his craft with teams in more industries than he cares to admit. While not freelancing as a product manager, Kent provides practical resources for people working on internal products at [insideproduct.co](#). Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).

A photograph of a car's dashboard. In the center, a map is spread out, showing various regions and roads. To the right of the map, a circular compass is visible, with its needle pointing towards the top. The background of the image shows a blurred view of a road and hills, suggesting a journey or travel theme.

Where to from Here for a BA Career?

Claire Pullan

Business analysts possess a diverse array of skills and expertise, enabling them to adapt and refine themselves for almost any engagement. They can then continually reshape and redeploy their skills as needed. It is one of our superpowers.

But what happens when a BA decides they do not want to be a business analyst anymore?

There is often a perception that the natural progression for a business analyst is to become a capability lead, or a project manager, or a change analyst, or even move into consulting. For some business analysts, this would seem completely reasonable and would fit with their expectations, but this won't fit the aspirations of all BAs.

It can be challenging for business analysts who want to move beyond traditional roles or project work to determine where to focus their learning. They may find it difficult to

visualise how to transfer their skills and what to study to diversify their career.

In addition, some hiring managers can overlook BAs who apply for operational roles because they struggle to identify transferrable skills that the candidate possesses, and cannot visualise how they would transition into an operational role. It's therefore incredibly important when applying for roles outside of your standard remit to highlight as clearly as possible which skills are beneficial and how they can be applied to the responsibilities and accountabilities of the role. This can often be easier said than done, but there are people out there who can help you, such as mentors, colleagues, and even professional recruiters.

Overleaf is a summary of some prominent business analyst skills and how they could transfer to non-BA roles.

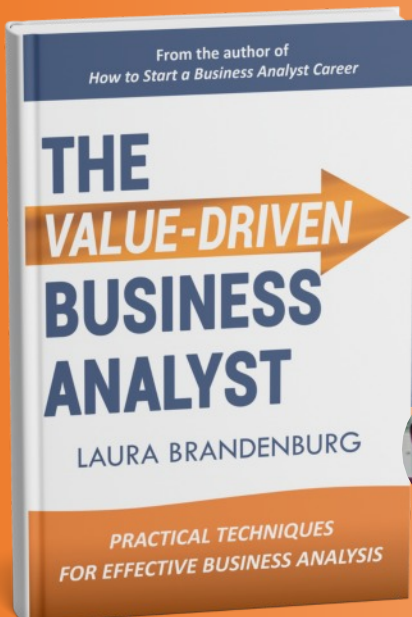
BA Skill	Transferable Roles	Skill Use Example
Data analysis & reporting	Operations analyst, supply chain analyst	Analyse trends and forecasting in inventory levels and use, delivery times, performance, and delivery.
Process mapping & improvement	Process improvement, quality assurance lead	Identifying pain points and other inefficiencies in processes that can lead to greater optimisation. Looking for improvement opportunities and guiding the iterations of process change and optimisation.
Stakeholder communication	Customer experience manager, compliance officer	Gathering input from departments and aligning operations with standards, dealing with regulators and ensuring compliance is embedded in process and operations. Customer experience is another form of stakeholder experience, looking at data and analysing feedback to improve service offerings and experiences through in person and digital channels.
Problem solving	Operations manager, procurement specialist	Identifying bottlenecks or issues in daily business operations and suggesting improvements. Know which activities are dependent on each other and how to optimise the operations. Applying sound commercial skills in negotiation, problem framing, and actionable solutions.
Documentation & reporting	Policy analyst, risk management analyst, document controller	Creating clear procedures or risk assessments for operational decisions, technical / non-technical writing, policy writing and more. Use of quality management systems.
Critical thinking	Strategy associate, business development coordinator	Evaluating business performance and proposing strategic initiatives. Future visualisation and planning with a holistic approach to how to achieve strategy objectives.
Collaboration & facilitation	HR business partner, vendor relations manager	Leading cross-functional discussions and mediating between stakeholders to achieve suitable outcomes for all stakeholders. Approaching problems in a collaborative way while having factual evidence and active listening skills.

Once you start thinking outside the box, there are lots of opportunities and avenues that you could go down if you want to. The suggestions above are just a starting point.

So if you are a business analyst thinking of a career change transitioning into a new role, consider all the possibilities, ensure you are highlighting your skills in your applications, and try not to get disheartened if it takes a while to find a company who shares your vision of your value.

Claire is an experienced and well regarded business analysis professional based in Adelaide, South Australia. Primarily in utilities and

State Government, Claire's worked across Australia and in the UK as a senior BA, BA Lead, and mentored and managed large business analyst teams. [Connect with Claire on LinkedIn.](#)



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Unpacking Reports for Better Business Analysis - from Outputs to Inputs

Jon Cook

It started with a report no one claimed to own.

Buried in a shared drive and emailed to leadership every month, the report was a patchwork of macros, manual exports, and embedded formulas. It wasn't pretty, but it mattered. When we proposed a new system to streamline operations, someone finally said, "We can't lose the quarterly performance metrics from that report." That report became the key to understanding the old system's heartbeat, and laid the groundwork for the new one.

When designing a new business

solution, it's easy to focus on future capabilities, the features, processes, and efficiencies we want to unlock. But often, the clearest window into what's truly needed comes from something already in place: existing reports.

Reports are more than just summaries of data. They reflect what stakeholders care about, the metrics they use to make decisions, and how they view the business. Analysing current report outputs can provide a shortcut to uncovering hidden requirements, legacy obligations, and essential data flows. By working backwards, from output to input, we

can reverse-engineer the necessary processes and ensure a smoother transition from old to new.

Greenfield vs Brownfield Contexts

Understanding the reporting landscape is particularly critical depending on whether you're working in a greenfield or brownfield environment. In a greenfield project, you're building from scratch, and that means you're likely working with assumptions, not artefacts. In contrast, brownfield projects offer a wealth of existing data and reports that can (and should) guide your design decisions.

Greenfield: Launching a Fintech Mortgage Platform

In a recent greenfield fintech project, I supported the UK launch of a new mortgage lender backed by a European parent company. As the business analyst embedded in a fast-moving startup team, I encountered the classic greenfield challenge: lots of ambition, minimal historical artefacts.

The commercial team stressed the importance of timely, accurate commission payments to mortgage brokers. But it was the compliance team who raised a vital nuance: commissions shouldn't be paid if a broker's professional accreditation had lapsed, even if years had passed since a mortgage started. This surfaced a requirement we might have otherwise missed: the need to track and maintain broker compliance status long after onboarding.

Especially because our product included staged commission payments up to five years after origination, it became clear that future reporting needed to be baked into the system from day one.

Brownfield: Finance Migration in the Waste Management Sector

By contrast, a brownfield project I worked on in the waste management industry involved migrating from an older on-premise ERP system (AX 2012) to the vendor's newer alternative (Dynamics 365). I focused on the finance workstream, particularly fixed assets. Here, our challenge was aligning local reporting with the expectations of a US-based parent company, while preparing for future rollouts to other European operations.

Unpacking the month-end close reports revealed pain points that weren't captured in system documentation, specifically the manual collation of data via spreadsheets and ad hoc SQL queries. By analysing the structure and cadence of these reports, we were able to identify changes to the enterprise structure and data migration routines. This helped us design a cleaner, more automated month-end process aligned to future group-wide reporting requirements.

Why Start with Reports?

1. **Legacy Relevance:** Reports represent the established language of the business. Disregarding them risks missing

long-standing requirements that are still in use.

2. **Stakeholder Alignment:** Reports show what's visible to whom, and what people track to determine success.
3. **Hidden Processes:** Some processes only exist to feed a report. If we don't analyse them, we risk eliminating a key driver unknowingly.

The Report Rewind Method: A Four step Approach

Here's a practical way to reverse-engineer existing reports to inform your business analysis. Each step not only uncovers critical detail, but also builds alignment, continuity, and stakeholder trust.

1. Identify Key Reports

Start by gathering reports used regularly by stakeholders. This helps define what's valued and where to focus analysis. Capture responses in a simple report matrix to identify where multiple teams rely on the same reports, or where different reports are used for similar purposes. This can highlight potential duplication, gaps, or misalignment in data use.

Ask:

- Which reports do you use most frequently?
- What decisions do you make based on them?

- Are there any reports you *used to use* but no longer do?

2. Deconstruct the Report

Understanding how a report is constructed helps reveal hidden logic, transformation rules, and assumptions. Break each report down into its parts:

- **Outputs:** What does the report show? (e.g., KPIs, trend lines, comparisons)
- **Metrics:** What are the formulas, groupings, and filters being applied?
- **Frequency and Format:** How often is it run? Is it emailed, exported, visualised?

3. Trace Inputs and Data Sources

For every output, identify the data journey behind it. This surfaces upstream dependencies and supports more accurate migration or system change planning. For each key metric, ask:

- Where does this data come from?
- What processes produce it?
- What systems feed into it? This uncovers essential upstream activities that your new system must replicate or replace.

4. Validate with Stakeholders

Present your findings and assumptions back to those who use

the reports. This invites challenge and insight, helping refine requirements and reduce blind spots. Ask:

- Do these outputs still reflect what you need?
- Is anything missing?
- Are there pain points or workarounds baked into current reports?

Scenario in Practice

On one CRM migration project, we uncovered an invoicing process that existed purely to populate a sales performance report reviewed quarterly by the board. No one had flagged it as a business-critical requirement, because no one thought of it as a process. Without tracing that report back to its source, it would have been missed.

Pitfalls to Watch For

- **Assuming Accuracy:** Not all existing reports are correct or relevant. Validate them.
- **Overfitting:** Don't rebuild outdated structures just because

they exist.

- **Neglecting Tacit Use:** Some users rely on reports in informal ways (copy/pasting into Excel, highlighting trends). Capture this too.

From Reports to Results

Reports are often treated as the end of a process. But for business analysts, they can be the perfect starting point. By unpacking outputs and tracing them back to inputs, we uncover valuable insights that de-risk our solutions and build continuity into change.

Next time you're designing a system, don't just ask what it *should* do. Ask what reports it needs to produce, and work backwards from there.

Jon Cook is an experienced contract Business Analyst who specialises in greenfield and transformation projects across fintech and enterprise operations. He enjoys unpacking complexity, aligning systems with people, and occasionally poking around in forgotten spreadsheets. Connect on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/jonmcook/

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Mastering Storytelling. Why Is It Important for Business Analysts?

Anastasiia Kraievskaa

... once upon a time

3pm. The fourth meeting today. Another two hours of discussion. I can barely focus, so I play with my phone. I scroll social networks, and don't even read the feed as I still can't focus. Do you see yourself in this description? Why are we wasting our time like this, with a lack of meaningful engagement? Can we fix this?

Every day we business analysts, work with people. We communicate, advocating changes and negotiate solutions. We want our stakeholders to listen to us, feel empathy with us and contribute during our calls. What if I told you that you can make people

care about a subject and raise their engagement to the next level through the art of storytelling?

The Relevance of Storytelling

The first story was probably told sitting around the fire in a cave and people have been telling stories ever since. It's a natural and evolutionary way to transfer information from one person to another, from one generation to the next. So what's the big deal about stories and how stories can help business analysts?

Storytelling is a powerful tool to amplify the message and convince the audience. It does this in several

ways, for example metaphors from everyday life help to understand complex context. Stories create pictures in people's minds, and pictures evoke emotions which drive decisions (even more than we acknowledge).

A good story helps to build closer relationships with a customer or stakeholder by developing empathy and sincere interest. Furthermore, an appropriate story can ease the tension, make people smile, they therefore regroup for better discussion.

How to Use Storytelling

How should storytelling be used, given that business analysts are typically not movie directors or professional writers? Here are some suggestions.

Firstly, use metaphors. Mother nature is a perfect source of well-recognisable metaphors. For example, data cleansing might be compared with cleaning up old leaves in a garden, so the new fresh plants (the new data model) can grow.

Cooking is another great source of metaphors. For example, if you were asked *"How many details to include into the feature description?"* you could respond with *"It's the same as how detailed a recipe should be—it depends on who will cook the meal."*

Secondly, don't be afraid to reflect on personal experience. Use a story from your professional or personal life. Don't be afraid to share something not related to work, for example something that would show what kind

of person you are and what your core values are.

Hobbies or parenting are great topics. Just imagine what a perfect match it would be if someone else shares the same passion or can relate to the same challenges!

However, there is always a balance between personal and professional issues so be careful and do not overstep professional boundaries.

Thirdly, use humour. This is my favourite one. Humour is one aspect that makes human beings unique. People might forget the good ideas you had, but they are unlikely to forget how you made them feel, good or bad. So make them feel comfortable.

I like to make jokes about myself. I love to use metaphors related to driving. It's easy to make jokes on this just because I'm the worst driver ever. However, be careful and don't joke about others. Who knows what kind of drivers they are.

Additional Tips for Successful Storytelling

Using metaphors, personal experience and humour can work well. However, there are other aspects that warrant attention.

It's important to be concise. A good story is also a short story. Use strong verbs. Show that you care about the time of your audience.

As well as focusing on brevity, be careful with slang. Slang or expressions which require pre-

existing knowledge (e.g. sport) can help *if* the other person shares that knowledge, and can help aid brevity. The issue is that if the other person *doesn't* have sufficient pre-existing knowledge about the topic then this may lead to misunderstanding. It makes sense to use slang if you are sure that everyone understands it. It's also useful to explain regional slang for an international audience.

A way of cultivating a shared understanding is to let your data tell the story. Numbers can be visualised as graphs and charts, but the graphics alone are unlikely to be compelling to all stakeholders. So tell a story which is behind the data. For example, pick a user or a user class who is most involved with or most interested in the data. And say how this user feels when entering or consuming the data, talk about his or her pain points, make your audience feel it. As you tell the story, decision-makers may become more open to discussing the issues.

Finally, be yourself and use your natural tone of voice. Find your own style. Authenticity is key.

An Example

Instead of conclusions, I'll tell you a story about something that happened to me many years ago, but which makes me feel good even now.

Once my Ukrainian dev team received a feature request for estimation. This was a completely new type of feature, so we didn't know how to approach it. Our US-based manager saw how puzzled the team was and said: "*Is it bigger or smaller than a breadbox?*"

We were even more puzzled. What did that mean?

The manager explained, "*Is it bigger than a breadbox?*" is a question from a popular 1950s-1970s US TV show. It was used to determine the size of an object being guessed. A breadbox is an everyday item used to store bread and one could be found in just about every kitchen. I personally use one even now! Crucially, everyone would know the approximate size of a breadbox, and would be able to answer the question.

In reality, we do not estimate features in "*breadboxes*". However, that question served us as an icebreaker and a dialogue opener. Somebody answered: "*Oh, it's definitely bigger than a breadbox!*", highlighting the complexity of the feature. This led to somebody else raising other issues that we'd need to consider, and this created the space for a broader discussion.

This seemingly humorous question did a great job. It broke the silence. Sincere laughter helped others to speak up. Since then the phrase "*It is bigger than a breadbox?*" was used and understood by our team without any further explanations.

I hope that this story has convinced you, and I look forward to hearing about how you are using storytelling in your organisation.

Anastasiia Kraievskaya, Product Owner and Business Analyst practitioner, CBAP and a mother of three wonderful kids, who like no one else knows that a well-told story can save the day. [Connect with me on LinkedIn](#)

Navigating Uncertainty: The Vital Role of Business Analysts in Enterprise Risk Management



Ken Mbuki

In the current [VUCA](#) business world, uncertainty pervades virtually every situation. Uncertain incidents have uncertain consequences. By the usual definition, a risk is an event that may or may not occur within a specific time horizon. If it does occur, there will be an associated negative impact on the aims, choices or some other key element of a business. Global economies, market dynamics, technology advancement, and surprise interruptions are some of those situations that presently threaten stability and success. Amidst all the uncertainties, the role of BAs within Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) is increasingly crucial.

The effect and severity of risks to an

organisation differ in weight and value. The severity of each risk needs to be evaluated to decide which risks to prioritise. As risks rarely have a definite consequence, BAs' knowledge on business functions and their analysis skills enable them to become a major asset for detecting, assessing, and mitigating risks that could impede organisational goals.

BAs serve as a link between an organisation's management and operations. Their ability to explain complex analysis clearly, identify inefficiencies, and put insight into action plans renders them extremely valuable when it comes to risk management. Traditionally, one of the principal ways that BAs identify

risks is through examining past and present trends. By utilising analytics tools based on statistical analysis, trend forecasting, and SWOT analysis, BAs can locate potential pitfalls before they become full-scale crises. In addition, with the expertise to conduct what-if analyses, BAs are able to model different business scenarios—such as scenarios involving conflicts, financial recession, disruptions to the supply chain, or changes in consumer behaviour—to estimate the likely consequences of each event on the organisation. This long-term strategy allows organisations to prepare for the worst so that they are not caught unprepared when adverse events occur.

Data-Driven Project Risk Management

Data analysis is a firm basis on which BAs can create risk management plans. Throughout the lifecycle of a project, BAs can monitor and keep watch on risks they have identified and keep the stakeholders continuously informed with periodic reports. Advanced analytics tools enable BAs to sift through large sets of data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends that may go unnoticed without them. Proactive risk management plans, developed by engaged BAs, align business demands with strategic risk strategies, ensuring project success. This allows organisations to allocate resources effectively to potential risks.

Besides the conventional methods of forecasting, BAs also leverage data visualisation tools, e.g., dashboards

and risk matrices, to clearly convey complicated details. These tools not only facilitate a shared understanding amongst stakeholders but also help with the decision-making process by offering a lucid representation of the risk landscape of the company. Interpretation and communication of these insights form a major area of strength for business analysts when it comes to ERM.

Revealing Trends That Business Analysts Could Overlook

While BAs can proactively identify risks, projects are large ventures and it's easy to get swamped. Integration of AI within risk management can help. AI applications are able to sift through large datasets on a real-time basis, detecting concealed patterns and relationships. Machine learning algorithms are capable of detecting unfolding risks by examining past incidents as well as predicting their propensity to happen again.

AI also helps facilitate automated risk analysis. While it could take human analysts days or weeks to analyse likely risks across a series of variables, AI tools can accomplish the same within a matter of hours and deliver accurate and current risk profiles. Real-time analysis ensures that organisations know about the risks they are facing and can make necessary adjustments. In addition, AI's forecasting function enables companies to respond to potential risks ahead of time before risk events occur. For example, AI can use market patterns and past performance to forecast fiscal risks

such as cash flow deficiencies or credit defaults. Likewise, AI could potentially predict supply chain interruptions by monitoring geopolitical events, weather, and other relevant external factors.

A significant benefit of AI for risk management is its ability to reveal patterns that may be missed by human analysts. Conventional analysis is based on past data and proven models, but AI is able to transcend those models to find nuanced, nascent risks. By feeding on current information and learning constantly from new inputs, AI is able to pick up on early signs of impending disruptions, whether they relate to market movements, cyber attacks, or internal inefficiencies. For example, AI-based systems may monitor activity on social media to gauge changes in public opinion or emergent trends that may reveal a reputational threat to the organisation. Likewise, machine-driven algorithms may sift through huge volumes of financial data to identify anomalies, or attempted fraud that a human analyst may not catch. Through the application of AI for pattern recognition and anomaly detection, companies may be able to keep a step ahead of threats and protect their operations.

Navigating Uncertainty

As the corporate world changes, so necessarily will the business analyst role within enterprise risk management. With escalating complexity and the rising need for evidence-based decision-making, the requirement for able business analysts will only grow. The adoption

of AI and other new technologies into risk management processes will enable BAs to be proactive and accurate when detecting and minimising risks. But although AI has the potential to improve risk management, it is not a substitute for human judgment. The best risk management methods will be the product of a partnership between business analysts and AI tools, where the analytic intensity of BAs is supplemented by the capabilities of machine learning and predictive analytics. This integration will allow organisations to not only survive uncertainty but prosper amid a rising tide of complexity and uncertainty.

Conclusion

In times of uncertainty, BAs serve a crucial function for organisations, protecting them from potential risks. Through the application of statistical analysis and forecasting methods, BAs can pinpoint risks before they occur, enabling organisations to take early measures to avoid them. When complemented with the capabilities of artificial intelligence, these functions are further amplified. As organisations encounter more and new challenges, the utilisation of business analysts for enterprise risk management remains crucial.

Ken Mbuki is a Technical Advisor at World Vision Somalia, specialising in data analytics, risk management, and compliance. He's also a certified trainer in data analytics and business intelligence. Outside work, Ken enjoys flying drones and engages in agribusiness. You can [connect with him on LinkedIn](#).



Prototyping at the Speed of Thought: How Low-code Is Changing the BA Game

Gabriella Lakos

In today's automation-driven environment, IT business analysts play a key role in ensuring that digital products align with both business goals and user needs. They work closely with stakeholders to identify pain points and translate them into clear, prioritised requirements. Their responsibilities also include spotting opportunities for automation and process improvements. By keeping teams aligned throughout the development lifecycle, they help deliver solutions that truly enable business value to be realised.

But where does Low-Code/No-Code (LCNC) come into play?

What Are LCNC Platforms?

In a 2014 Forrester report entitled '[New Development Platforms Emerge For Customer-Facing Applications](#)', Clay Richardson, John Rymer and colleagues coined the phrase "low-code". This phrase was used to categorise development platforms that speed up the process of application development with minimal

coding. Over time there has been increasing interest and adoption of these systems, with the Covid-19 pandemic acting as a key catalyst. During the pandemic, many businesses were forced to adapt and digitalise processes quickly. This urgency prompted a wider range of business professionals—analysts included—to engage more directly with LCNC tools. Now, with the integration of AI capabilities into these platforms, their potential continues to expand.

While they may not be “off-the-shelf” products in the traditional sense, as they offer customisation options tailored to specific user needs, their hybrid nature allows them to offer both configurability and rapid deployment. In a way, they bring together the speed of pre-built solutions with the flexibility of custom development.

How LCNC Tools Are Redefining the Analyst’s Role

From my own experience, LCNC tools have opened new doors for business analysts to work more iteratively and collaboratively. During a recent project, our team needed to optimise a manual customer process that spanned multiple departments. Using a low-code platform, we were able to model workflows, which enabled quicker feedback loops.

The ability to present a working prototype not only enhances communication with stakeholders but also accelerates validation of the proposed solution.

BAs can rapidly create prototypes, enabling faster feedback and iteration compared to traditional development with longer cycles. Low-code/no-code platforms enable quick modifications and testing, allowing analysts to refine solutions swiftly based on business input. They don’t need to build from the ground up and it’s possible to quickly prototype and demonstrate features, ensuring the final product closely matches business requirements. Analysts can focus more on optimising business processes and user experience, as the platform manages the technical aspects.

The Versatility of Low-code/no-code Platforms

One of the strengths of LCNC platforms is their versatility. Whether in banking, retail, or telecommunications, these tools can be tailored to support industry-specific needs without extensive custom coding. This lowers the barriers to entry for businesses in different fields to adopt these technologies.

The agnostic nature of these platforms allows organisations to avoid heavy investment in proprietary solutions, which may be costly or difficult to integrate with existing systems. Low-code/no-code platforms can often provide out-of-the-box integrations with various systems, reducing the need for complex, expensive custom development. Businesses can quickly adopt the platform, customise it as needed, and integrate with various tools and services, which helps meet the demand for new applications,

respond more quickly to customer and market needs, and reduce the workload of IT teams, which is particularly valuable in fast-moving markets.

LCNC platforms often feature drag-and-drop functionality, which allows users to visually design user interfaces, workflows, and data models without writing code. This speeds up the process and reduces dependency on developers. Many LCNC platforms offer pre-designed templates, widgets, and integrations. Users can reuse these components to build functional prototypes, eliminating the need to start from scratch. They also often include built-in automation tools that allow users to automate tasks like data entry, approval workflows, and notifications. The platforms typically offer a real-time preview of the application being built, allowing users to see changes instantly. This enables faster feedback loops. LCNC platforms often include connectors and integrations with third-party applications (including databases and cloud services, etc.)

Navigating Challenges & Limitations

Despite their benefits, LCNC platforms have limitations. While pre-built components simplify certain tasks, complex business logic or highly customised processes often exceed platform capabilities. Integration with legacy systems or third-party tools can still require developer involvement, especially when out-of-the-box connectors are insufficient. Moreover, limited visibility into the underlying code

makes troubleshooting difficult without technical support.

Business analysts may also need to acquire new skills to navigate these platforms effectively, for example through specific training. Despite their user-friendly design, LCNC tools still demand a structured approach, comprehensive analysis, stakeholder alignment, and clear documentation. These platforms enhance delivery speed, but they don't replace the need for sound business analysis. Effectively using LCNC tools requires a clear understanding of their strengths and limitations. Ultimately, success depends not just on the tools, but on how business analysts adapt and collaborate within these evolving environments.

Looking Ahead: Embracing the Shift

Low-code/no-code (LCNC) platforms are reshaping how business analysts contribute to digital solutions. By enabling rapid prototyping and agile iteration, these tools expand our role across the solution lifecycle. As LCNC becomes embedded in enterprise ecosystems, analysts who combine business insight with platform know-how will drive faster innovation and lasting impact.

Gabriella Lakos is a Business Analyst and IT Consultant, combining a strong technical background with a business-oriented approach. She's active in agile projects, international collaboration, and cross-functional teamwork. Connect with her on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/gabriellalakos

Using Metaphor to Pitch Your Proposed Change

Philippe Robitaille



Some of our most compelling business terms are formed upon metaphors. In seeking innovations, we like to speak of “blue sky” and “out of the box” thinking. In the pursuit of competitive advantage, we position ourselves for “leapfrogging” and “cornering the market”. We relate our process effectiveness in terms of a customer “journey”. And the shop floor is “where the rubber meets the road”. We have even borrowed from the sports and wartime domains in doing an “end-run” or “taking a beachhead”.

As a business analyst, you’re already familiar with the need for simplifying

the complex. In solution modelling, you’ve probably used abstraction to obfuscate the detail while portraying *just enough* information to make further elicitation comfortable. This is an important balancing act that avoids the analysis straying too deeply and bogging down the solution elaboration. Overall, the model needs to be both familiar enough and general enough to resonate with your stakeholders as they consider all relevant aspects of the solution.

Metaphor lends itself to the same need in pitching change initiatives with simplifications of the complex using familiar associations. The

human brain is very good at generalising. Instinctively, we put things into buckets so that we can treat similar things in the same familiar way. This is especially true in how we represent change initiatives to senior executives. A good metaphor will simplify the most nuanced and complex plans into terms that are accessible to decision makers.

The metaphor that you choose will need to bear sufficient nuance in a single phrase.

How To Create a Metaphor?

Metaphors do not “fall from the sky”. Use these steps to form your metaphor:

First, identify the object of the change initiative and its defining characteristics. For the sake of illustration, we can use a hypothetical case. Suppose your intention is to establish a charitable program to feed the hungry in your inner city. We could simply jump to an existing metaphor referring to the program as a food bank. But we need to take a closer look at its defining qualities.

- The food will be freely available to anyone who travels to the food bank.
- The supply of food will theoretically be boundless. The shelves will never be empty.
- The assortment of food will be wholesome and varied relative to the season.
- The food will be supplied from surplus produce at local commercial markets.
- The location will be comfortable, welcoming and secure.

Second, imagine a scene for this object and consider the mood you want to arouse with the metaphor. In this case, we can imagine a congenial site so wondrous that you would think it is a miracle. The bounty of food stands out and inspires hope and a sense of security.

Third, brainstorm other objects that share characteristics identified in the first step.

- A fountain seems to have an endless supply of water and could be used to represent an endless supply of nourishment. It is freely and easily accessible. However, it doesn't suggest the variety of produce that we are shooting for.
- A cornucopia implies a bounty and variety of nourishment. Somehow, it does not lend itself to a feeling of congeniality. Further, it does not provoke an immediate pause to reflect on the association with a food bank. It is too close to the real thing.
- A silo or a granary is used to store raw staples. They are so large that you can imagine the storage being endless. Again, it lacks a certain suggestion of variety.
- A pantry is used to store foodstuffs until they are needed. It conjures a relaxed accessibility and food variety. And yet, as we

know, a pantry is sometimes imagined empty.

- A harbour accommodates countless ships bearing food for distribution. It is typically safe although many harbours are situated on the docks characterised too often as the rough side of town.
- A warehouse is generally a storage depot used to distribute goods. As a metaphor, a warehouse is too close to our object initiative and lacks the mental separation needed for any good metaphor.

Finally, select a favoured figurative association and expand on it to symbolise the desired image beyond a single word drawing on the similar characteristics. Selecting the favoured association to use as your metaphor may involve a trade-off of characteristics you most want to emphasise. For instance, is food abundance more important than food variety? Is security more important than congeniality?

We'll decide on the use of "fountain" and compensate for its poor figurative association to food variety by expanding on the metaphor with word phrases. For instance, "Our food bank offers a fountain of nourishment with a variety that celebrates specific harvests throughout the seasons." And, "Quench your thirst for fresh produce at our fountain centrally located in the city centre. Our caring staff ensure that nutritious ingredients are outpouring morning, day and night."

Tips in Using Metaphor

1. Make sure the metaphor sets the desired tone. For example, a "journey" might feel jaunty and a "roadmap" helpful, but not if it is framed in an arduous wandering through the desert.
2. For the greatest appeal, look for a metaphor that is original. Be wary of the dead metaphor—a figure of speech that has become so commonplace that it no longer has figurative value. Just another "journey" will have no appeal.
3. Make the metaphor more impactful by appealing to multiple senses using vivid language and imagery. As in, "our journey will usher us through the four seasons of change".
4. Have the metaphor work for you. A good metaphor nudges your audience with a little jolt and moves them to stretch their imagination and see things in a new light. As an example, "our transformative journey starts in an ambulance".

The next time you need to simplify the complex, consider the use of metaphor. Follow these few steps and apply your creativity to devise a great metaphor.

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

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Ensuring Compliance Through Business Analysis in Healthcare Software Development

Iryna Sizikova

You're probably aware that medicines have to be approved before they can be administered, but did you know that medical devices and software needs approval too. This article explores the regulatory pathways for medical software under the [US Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) and [EU Medical Device Regulation \(MDR\)](#), highlighting the different classification systems and approval processes. It also examines the importance of data security and privacy, along with the role of business analysts in translating these regulations into actionable requirements.

Regulatory Pathways under FDA (USA)

In the United States the Food and Drug Administration classifies medical software based on the risk it poses to patients and users: Class I (low), Class II (moderate), and Class III (high). Depending on classification, manufacturers follow one of the defined approval pathways.

The [510\(k\) clearance](#) is the most common route for most moderate-risk medical devices. This is the FDA's standard process for products that

are not entirely new but are similar to something already on the market, known as a predicate device. Manufacturers must demonstrate that their software is just as safe and effective as software that already exists in the market.

But what happens when a company develops a truly new technology that doesn't have a clear predicate? That's where the [De Novo classification](#) comes in, which is designed for low to moderate risk devices that are novel but still meet safety and effectiveness standards. Instead of proving similarity to something existing, the company must demonstrate that the device is safe on its own merits. Besides giving clearance for the device, the FDA also establishes a new "predicate" for future devices of the same type.

Finally, for software that carries high risk, the road to approval is much steeper. These are products where an incorrect result could lead to serious harm or death, often involving autonomous diagnosis or treatment without a human in the loop. In these cases, companies must go through the [Premarket Approval \(PMA\) process](#), the FDA's most rigorous review.

Regulatory Pathway under MDR (EU)

In the European Union, the regulation of medical devices is governed by the [EU Medical Device Regulation](#). Under the MDR, the classification of medical software includes four categories: Class I (low risk), Class IIa (moderate risk), Class IIb (higher moderate risk), and Class III (high risk).

The EU MDR imposes a [General Safety and Performance Requirements \(GSPR\)](#) checklist that must be met. To bring a medical device to the EU market, manufacturers must also undergo a [conformity assessment process](#). For higher-risk classes (IIa, IIb, and III), this must be done in partnership with a ["notified body"](#)—an independent organisation authorised to assess whether a device meets all regulatory requirements.

The EU focuses on demonstrating compliance with essential safety and performance requirements, validated through technical documentation, risk management reports, clinical evaluation reports, and usability and cybersecurity assessments. Clinical data is central: manufacturers must provide sufficient clinical evidence proving that the device performs as intended and is safe for its target population.

Once a device is approved, it must receive a [CE marking](#), which signals conformity with EU health, safety, and environmental protection standards. But approval is not the end of regulatory obligations. Under MDR, manufacturers have extensive post-market surveillance and post-market clinical follow-up obligations. They must continuously monitor device performance, report serious incidents through the [EUDAMED database](#), and periodically update clinical evidence, especially for AI systems that may evolve over time.

Data Security and Privacy in the US and EU

Both FDA and MDR require that

devices must incorporate "privacy by design" and "security by design" principles, ensuring robust protection of health data throughout its lifecycle. This covers areas like data encryption, authentication, access controls, audit trails, and response plans for cybersecurity threats. Since threats evolve over time, manufacturers must describe how they will monitor, detect, and respond to cybersecurity vulnerabilities even after the device is launched.

Privacy practices must align with broader US laws like the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\)](#), and the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) in the EU. Although the FDA itself doesn't directly enforce privacy regulations, and GDPR is a separate legal framework from MDR, compliance with both is mandatory.

Role of Business Analyst in Translating Regulations to Requirements

To understand the regulations of a targeted market and translate them into actionable requirements a business analyst closely collaborates with regulatory affairs, quality assurance and risk managers. Here are some specific examples of regulatory requirements:

Requirement A. Anonymise data shared with third parties or stored for future research purposes

Associated Regulations: FDA Guidance on Medical Device Data Security. MDR Annex I – General Safety and Performance Requirements (GSPR) 17.2, Article 25, GDPR Article 5(1)(a), Article 9

Requirement B. Encrypt patient health data at rest and in transit using industry-standard protocol AES-256

Associated Regulations: FDA Guidance: "Cybersecurity in Medical Devices: Quality System Considerations and Content of Premarket Submissions", MDR Annex I – GSPR 17.2, 17.4

Requirement C. Obtain explicit consent for data processing, especially if used for secondary purposes (e.g., analytics, AI training).

Associated Regulations: GDPR Articles 6, 7, 9. HIPAA Privacy Rule

Requirement D. Provide users the ability to request deletion of their data

Associated Regulations: FDA 21 CFR Part 820 (Quality System Regulation - QSR). FDA Guidance for Cybersecurity. MDR Annex I – General Safety and Performance Requirements (GSPR) 17.2(b). GDPR - Article 17

Final Thoughts

Navigating the complex regulatory landscape for medical software requires a clear understanding of both FDA and EU MDR requirements. By ensuring compliance with data security and privacy standards, and translating regulations into practical requirements, businesses can successfully bring safe and effective products to market.

With 17 years of experience in the healthcare industry, Iryna promotes the Business Analyst role in regulated environments. She's an IIBA® member, podcast guest, presenter, and author of scientific publications.

Connect with Iryna on LinkedIn:
www.linkedin.com/in/iryna-sizikova-pmp%C2%AE-pspo-ii%C2%AE-4601646/

Movie Night: Doing Things with Words

Nick de Voil



The Second Fallacy of Communication

In the [previous article](#) we learned the first fallacy of communication—the idea that communication is about transferring information accurately from one person’s head to another. This is mistaken: it assumes there’s clear, pre-defined informational content, and it assumes the objective is to reach matching representations of that content in the participants’ heads. But in fact, much communication is interactive, many-sided and exploratory.

In this article, I want to look at the second fallacy of communication, which is more radical:

The second fallacy of communication

Communication is all
about information.



In fact, communication isn’t necessarily about information at all.

It’s Movie Night!

Let’s look at some examples of people communicating, and ask one of my favourite BA questions: “*What is it that’s going on here?*” Specifically, is information being transmitted, or is something else happening? Context is all-important, so to avoid lengthy descriptions of situations that are new

to you, I'm going to use quotes from films that you may be familiar with. Each one illustrates something about working with stakeholders.

Example 1. "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" (Clark Gable, *Gone With The Wind*)

Informational Content Rating (ICR): 2 stars out of 5

Rhett is making it brutally clear that he's lost interest in Scarlett, so yes, he is conveying information. However, by uttering this line, he's doing more than that: he's ending their relationship. Arguably, in addition, he's making the decision to do so as he speaks.

Stakeholders will often make a decision while speaking—it's usually a good idea to let them cool down and then check back with them later.

2. "They call me Mister Tibbs" (Sidney Poitier, *In the Heat of the Night*)

ICR: 2 / 5

Tibbs asserts his status and turns Gillespie's racist baiting back against him to change their relationship by demanding respect.

Sometimes the most important thing on a stakeholder's mind is to insist on respect—either from you, or from someone else. Until that's out of the way, you may not be able to have the conversation you need.

3. "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas any more." (Judy Garland, *The Wizard of Oz*)

ICR: 1 / 5

Since Toto is a dog, Dorothy can hardly be expecting him to extract any information from this message. By speaking, she's expressing her feelings and starting to make sense of an unanticipated new situation.

Some stakeholders tend to think by talking—we need to let them work through their ideas out loud without interrupting.

4. "Here's Johnny!" (Jack Nicholson, *The Shining*)

ICR: 1 / 5

Frankly, it's unnecessary for Jack to announce his presence outside the bathroom door in words, having just smashed through it with an axe. His aim is purely to celebrate his power in the situation and intensify Wendy's emotional reaction.

I'm sure many of us have known stakeholders who enjoyed showing off in this way. Be patient! Also notice the reactions of any other people who are present.

5. "May the Force be with you" (Harrison Ford, *Star Wars*)

ICR: 1 / 5

Saying goodbye is one of the information-free communication rituals we carry out daily. But, interestingly, by addressing this conventional phrase of farewell to Luke, Han Solo isn't just saying goodbye: he's also making a statement about himself, showing that he now believes in the Force.

This is a very common communication pattern—consciously or unconsciously, a stakeholder slips a key word into the conversation in order to say something

about themselves—maybe to let the listener(s) know that they know about a particular topic, or that they move in certain circles.

6. “I’m the king of the world!”
(Leonardo DiCaprio, *Titanic*)

ICR: 0 / 5

This is a factually incorrect statement, and nobody treats it as such. Jack is in fact a penniless stowaway. He just happens to be in a good mood.

People like to express their feelings. As a BA, it’s helpful to have as much knowledge as possible about the domain, the organisation, and the people in it, so that you know when a stakeholder is telling you something you can take at face value, and when they’re simply expressing themselves.

7. “You talking to me?” (Robert De Niro, *Taxi Driver*)

ICR: 0 / 5

If interpreted with the transmission model (see [article 16](#)) in mind, this could be seen as part of an orderly protocol whereby one party asks the other for information. In fact, Travis is not asking for any information: he’s practising the first moves in a homicidal encounter.

Sometimes, when interviewing a stakeholder, you’ll find they’re rehearsing arguments that they’d like to use later, in a different context. By acting as a sounding board, we’re fulfilling a useful function, but it may not be the one we expected. We can understand the situation better by asking questions like “Do you think this is an important message for people to take on board?” or “Who do you think needs to know this?”

If Not Information, Then What?

Whether or not an utterance contains information, the person saying it is often carrying out an action—affecting the state of the world in some way—by speaking. They are, in a very real sense, **doing something**, as J.L. Austin describes in his book on **speech act theory**, *How to Do Things with Words*. If a judge says “I sentence you to ten years in prison”, that is a speech act: by speaking, the speaker is changing the state of the world in a particular way. If you ask a stakeholder, “Are you happy to sign this off now?” and they reply “Yes”, then equally they are doing something with words.

As the examples above demonstrate, there are many ways of doing things with words. The overt, explicit content of a conversation is one part of the mix, but—as we saw with metaphors in [article 14](#)—it’s the *implicit* aspects of a conversation that often play a key role in developing group construct systems, by changing the frame (see [article 12](#)) without anyone necessarily realising what’s happening. You’ll be a more effective business analyst if you can stay one step ahead of the game.

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

Contact Nick via LinkedIn
www.linkedin.com/in/nickdevoil/ or
BlueSky @nickdevoil.bsky.social

From Business Constraints to Implementation: Scenario-driven Acceptance Approach to NFR Documentation

Nastassia Shahun

Non-Functional Requirements (NFRs) often determine a product's success or failure more profoundly than its core features. While functional specifications describe "what" a system does, NFRs capture "how" or "how well" it does it—covering performance, security, usability, and other critical quality attributes.

Neglecting or poorly defining NFRs can lead to performance issues, security risks, and user dissatisfaction. Addressing NFRs early helps reduce the potential future cost of rework and ensures that the product aligns with user expectations, even as business goals evolve.

Concept of Scenario-Driven Acceptance Approach

Often teams document NFRs as generic constraint lists that feel disconnected from real-world scenarios. This can be addressed by instead adopting a scenario-driven acceptance approach. This type of approach is beneficial as it

emphasises user-centricity, ongoing validation, and flexibility—three pillars that align NFRs with actual usage and stakeholder expectations. Each of these pillars are elaborated below.

Firstly this approach prioritises a user-centric mindset, focusing on real scenarios like Black Friday surges rather than just abstract performance thresholds. By imagining and benchmarking against specific events, teams understand the importance of each NFR and avoid vague constraints.

Secondly, it highlights that ongoing validation is essential. Incremental verification and validation can take place throughout the product or project lifecycle, with scenarios being linked to success/acceptance criteria for incremental testing.

Overall, this flexible method allows agile teams to integrate acceptance checks into sprints and waterfall teams to establish milestone

reviews, overcoming traditional documentation limitations.

Armed with an understanding of those three pillars, we can look at how this method brings them together by combining scenario thinking with acceptance criteria methods:

- **Scenario thinking:** Borrowing from techniques like embedded user stories, the approach identifies system stress points or key usage contexts—whether that’s sudden traffic spikes, strict data regulation environments, or specialised hardware limitations.
- **Acceptance criteria:** Rather than simply noting constraints in an Systems Requirement Specification (SRS) or repository, each scenario is given specific success measures and a method for testing. This format broadly mirrors some Behaviour-Driven Development (BDD) patterns but for non-functional needs.

Next, the approach leverages traditional tools such as requirements repositories and checklists to prevent fragmentation:

- **Central repository:** Teams can store these scenario-based NFRs in Confluence, Jira, or an equivalent tool. This ensures everyone stays informed in real time.
- **Checklists and templates:** Standardising certain items (e.g., encryption standards, response times) as templates or checklists ensures that no crucial requirement category is missed.

Finally, the method emphasises continuous validation, a notable departure from static, documentation:

- **Regular testing cadence:** Because acceptance checks happen every sprint (agile) or milestone (waterfall), issues seldom go unnoticed until late in the project.
- **Ownership and accountability:** Each row in the acceptance criteria table spells out exactly who is on the hook for testing and reporting. This structure combines the best parts of user stories and acceptance tests. It helps prevent requirements from being forgotten or ignored.

Benefits of a Scenario-Driven Acceptance Approach

With the main principles in place, it is easy to see why this scenario-driven acceptance approach excels:

- **Context-rich alignment:** By anchoring NFRs to real conditions, teams avoid over-engineering and can make more informed trade-offs.
- **Cross-team collaboration:** Inherently pulling perspectives from product owners, security experts, QA, and DevOps, the approach ensures everyone shares ownership of NFR success.
- **Seamless traceability:** A single repository update to concurrency limits automatically flags QA or security to run new tests—ensuring no hidden holes remain.

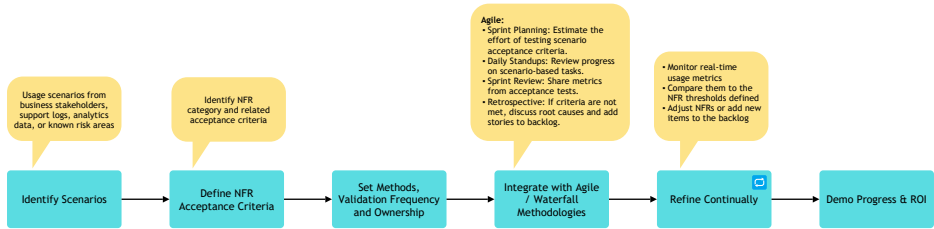


Figure 1. Application of the scenario-driven acceptance approach

- **Living documentation:** Far from static, the scenario-driven acceptance method evolves with changing conditions. If real metrics show performance drifting, updates can be quickly made, and new tests scheduled.

Implementation Steps & Practical Example

To help development teams adopt the scenario-driven acceptance approach effectively, above is a step-by-step guide (Figure 1).

The key stages are as follows:

1. Identify top scenarios: Start by gathering usage scenarios from business stakeholders, support logs, analytics data, or known risk areas (e.g. “peak traffic,” “critical compliance,” etc). Then prioritise scenarios with significant revenue potential, compliance obligations, or user experience risks.

2. Define NFR acceptance criteria: Next, for each scenario, list relevant NFR categories in rows. Write SMART acceptance criteria or use BDD-like statements.

3. Set test methods, validation frequency and ownership: Specify the exact tools or methods for testing (load tests, penetration testing, user surveys, synthetic monitoring, etc)

and assign a responsible person or team (QA, DevOps, Security Lead, etc). Then, decide on a validation frequency (every sprint, monthly, or per release milestone).

4. Integrate with agile / waterfall methodologies In agile contexts: integrate acceptance criteria verification into each sprint. In waterfall contexts: tie acceptance tests to major milestones (design completion, system integration, final UAT).

5. Refine continually: Monitor real-time usage metrics (e.g. “checkout average time was 3.8s for 1,500 users”). Compare them to the NFR thresholds. If discrepancies arise, create tasks to address them. Keep everything in one versioned repository, linking scenario items to any impacted user stories or code modules.

6. Demo progress and ROI: Present NFR compliance metrics to leadership or stakeholders regularly. Emphasise how meeting (or exceeding) performance/security/availability goals aligns with key business objectives like user retention, revenue growth, or compliance cost savings.

Below is an example illustrating how to document NFRs using the proposed scenario-driven acceptance approach.

Scenario	Scenario description	NFR category	Acceptance criteria	Test method	Validation frequency	Owner
Holiday Sale Checkout	High concurrency (up to 10,000 users) with rapid inventory turnover	Performance	- >=80% of checkouts completed in under 4 seconds - Error rate under 2% at peak load	- Load testing (Jmeter/Locust) - Error log monitoring	Every sprint (plus final load test pre-sale)	DevOps & Perf QA
		Availability	- Maintain 99.9% uptime from 6:00 AM-11:59 PM on Black Friday	- Synthetic checks (Pingdom) - Real-time dashboards (New Relic)	Hourly monitoring on sale day (plus test 1 week before)	DevOps Lead
Microservice Upgrade	Rolling updates to microservices without downtime in a containerised environment	Maintainability	- Complete upgrades to each microservice in <2 hours per release cycle - Maximum 2 integration test failures per upgrade cycle	- Blue/Green deployment strategy tests - Integration tests in staging	Each release cycle	DevOps & QA
		Availability	- Zero downtime for core services - Maintain 99.9% overall availability during upgrade windows	- Real-time monitoring (Prometheus, Kibana dashboards) - Synthetic checks	Each release cycle	DevOps Lead / SRE

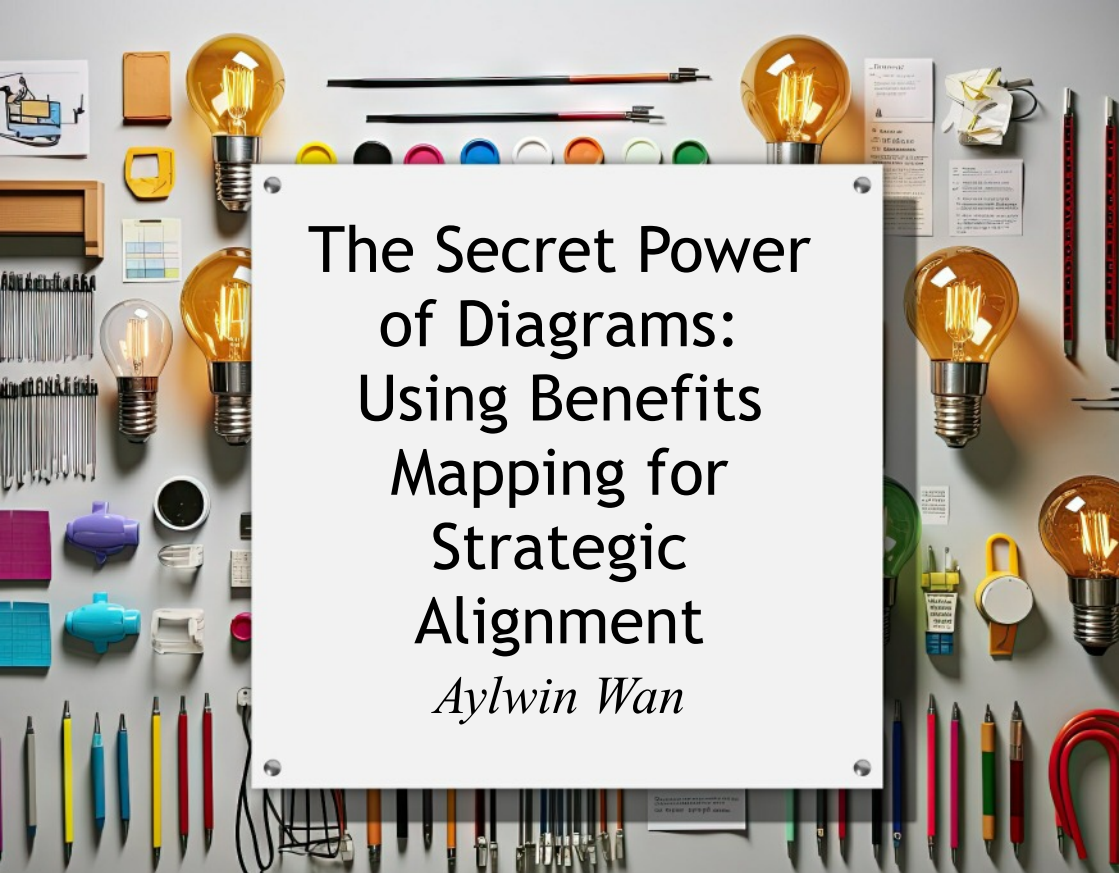
By splitting each NFR category under separate rows, it becomes easier to track distinct requirements, assign specific ownership, and plan precise testing schedules.

Conclusion

NFRs are crucial for product scalability, security, and user experience. By using a scenario-based acceptance approach, they shift from static points to actionable elements that promote regular testing and clear ownership. This aligns technical goals with business objectives, helping teams tackle challenges like traffic spikes and

compliance. Additionally, it creates a continuous feedback loop to monitor performance, security, and usability, ensuring NFRs stay relevant to user and business needs instead of becoming a forgotten checklist.

Nastassia Shahun is a Senior Business Analyst with expertise in business analysis, product management, and UX/UI. She drives user-centric innovation across FinTech, EdTech, and eCommerce. A dedicated mentor, speaker and writer, she shares insights on medium.com/@nastassia.shahun_72023 and connects on www.linkedin.com/in/nastassia-shahun/.



The Secret Power of Diagrams: Using Benefits Mapping for Strategic Alignment

Aylwin Wan

I have long been fascinated by diagrams. My interest began when I stumbled upon a book titled [100 Diagrams That Changed the World](#) by Scott Christian. The book highlighted iconic diagrams—simple, yet remarkably powerful representations—that reshaped various fields, from science to engineering. As I continued to explore, it became clear to me: diagrams do more than just look neat. They simplify complexity, and that is when I realised that business analysis and architecture operates in much the same way.

In business, diagrams are not merely decorative tools; they are essential

for unlocking clarity, alignment, and collaboration. While text-based communications—emails, reports, or memos—remain the norm, it is time we rethink how we communicate, particularly in today's fast-paced, ever-evolving business world. In this article, I will share with you a visual tool called **benefit mapping**. Upon strategic planning or formulation of transformation initiatives, this diagram provides a clear and concise visual representation that aligns stakeholders, simplifies complex strategies, fosters collaboration, and accelerates decision-making—ensuring everyone is on the same page and working towards common goals.

Clarity—the Foundation for Mutual Understanding and Meaningful Discussions

Diagrams help us map out complex business structures, illustrating how each piece fits together seamlessly. Picture yourself in a meeting with your executive team, discussing a critical initiative. A stakeholder explains the initiative’s purpose as follows:

“The new UI design aims to reduce the back-office handling time and optimise the online user experience, which will lower the handling cost and incompleteness rate, as well as reduce customer application time and improve tNPS. Additionally, we are automating the verification and

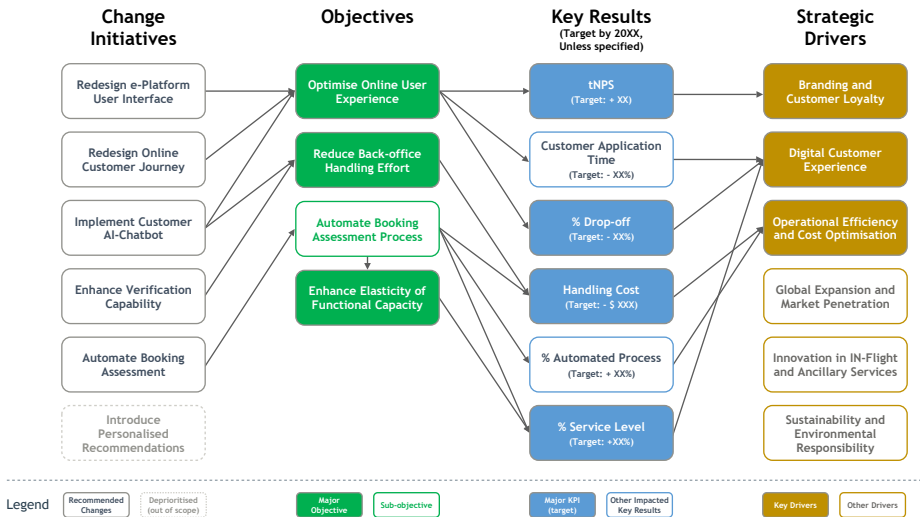
assessment process, which will reduce the handling cost by increasing the automation portion and improving service levels.”

While you may be able to comprehend the changes, objectives, and key results, the connections and interdependencies between them are difficult to discern. For someone unfamiliar with the context, they may easily get lost in the complexity, not to mention having no clear picture of the entire matter in their minds.

Contrast this with someone presenting the same contents, but with the aid of a diagram that clearly connects change initiatives, objectives, key results, and strategic drivers in one visual.

Booking System - Strategic Alignment (Benefit Mapping)

This diagram illustrates the strategic alignment and expected benefits of enhancing the booking system capabilities through the outlined change initiatives, highlighting how they fulfil their objectives and key results. It clearly demonstrates how each initiative contributes to the business goals driven by the strategic drivers.



An example of benefit mapping, illustrating the strategic alignment

Instantly, everyone in the room grasps what is going on, and with the clarity this diagram provides, we can swiftly align and achieve a shared understanding across teams.

Benefit mapping is a visual representation that links all elements and shows their interrelationships. It is akin to looking at a blueprint for a house—you see all the components, how they fit together, and how they contribute to the overall structure. With the diagram, where the initiative is heading can be understood in seconds, creating fertile ground for meaningful discussions. The example presented above is one possible format of benefit map, many others exist too. So you may come across maps that look different to this one.

In addition to the benefits map, it is also possible to produce a matrix that breaks down the benefit mapping in greater detail, illustrating how each change initiative contributes to each of the key results by a specific target amount and by when. This is valuable for the tracking and management of benefits.

Effective Communication and Engagement—the Ingredients for Successful Collaboration

One of the greatest challenges in business transformation is explaining not just what we are doing, but also how everything fits into the broader vision and how we communicate the initiative's value and strategic alignment.

Reflecting on my own experience, I have seen executives eager to delve into business strategy discussions, keen to understand direction and goals. But true engagement only occurs when we present complexities in a way that is easier to grasp. I recall presenting a benefits map to a C-level executive to explain why certain initiatives were crucial. What surprised me was not only her interest but also how she immediately began offering insightful comments. That was when the real discussion began. Compared to dense reports, the diagram allowed us to quickly connect ideas, and that moment of alignment felt incredibly empowering. This is the magic of visualisation—it accelerates comprehension, allows everyone to get to the heart of the matter quickly, and sets the stage for faster decision-making.

Diagrams are rarely the end product; rather, they act as a catalyst that stimulates thoughtful exchanges and provides the focus to engage in a meaningful and productive way. They take stakeholders on a journey. Imagine the stakeholders discussing the details of the project, sharing their thoughts, and reinforcing the understanding that everyone is on the same page. When you present a diagram, you are essentially guiding them through the steps, reassuring them that the strategy is well-aligned, empowering them to move forward with confidence, and giving them a vision of where they want to be—understanding that we are all headed to the same destination. This engagement is not just about sharing ideas—it is about building trust and setting the stage for successful collaboration.

Diagrams Speak

In business analysis and architecture, clarity and alignment are everything. Consider a construction project: creating blueprints certainly requires an investment of time and effort. However, there's nothing stopping architects from doing so to ensure every team, from electricians to builders, understands the final vision of what is going to be built and how everyone's work ties together. Crucially, every team needs appropriate blueprints to guide their work and show how their work contributes to the entire building.

When it comes to strategic planning, a benefits map ensures all stakeholders understand how their efforts contribute to the overarching business strategy. It visualises abstract concepts and fosters collaboration, keeping everyone moving in the same direction so that the associated teams can reach the destination together.

We are now in a world where rapid change is the only constant, and businesses are racing to adapt. The

rapid pace of transformation can sometimes feel like trying to catch up with a moving train—leaving us searching for clarity and alignment in a whirlwind of change. We need a way not just to keep up, but to lead ourselves to the right destination. That is where the power of visual tools like benefit mapping truly shines.

I hope you also see the power of the visual tool I have shared with you. If you have already tried it, or are planning to, I would love to hear how it has impacted your work.

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Aylwin is a certified TOGAF® and CBAP® professional with over 15 years of experience in business architecture and analysis. Passionate about digital transformation, he bridges business strategy and technology, turning complexity into clarity, uniting people, processes, and technology to drive innovation and deliver game-changing outcomes. [Connect with him on LinkedIn](#).

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Business Analyst and Product Owner: A Match Made in Heaven for Achieving Success

Ramya Kailashnathan

Exploring the synergy between the Business Analyst (BA) and Product Owner (PO) roles is a fascinating topic. These two roles, often seen as the Yin and Yang of project and product development, bring together a unique blend of skills and perspectives that drive successful outcomes. Here's a brief overview of how these roles complement each other, making them a "match made in heaven".

Shared Goals

In the world of product development, BAs and POs play crucial roles in

enabling value to be realised by stakeholders. Their collaboration is built on mutual understanding, continuous communication, and shared goals. The BA brings analytical expertise, diving deep into requirements, processes, and user needs, while the PO offers strategic guidance, ensuring alignment with business priorities. Working together, they help streamline development, reduce misunderstandings, and increase the chances of product success. Though their efforts often happen behind the scenes, BAs and POs are instrumental in turning ideas

into real, impactful solutions—one release at a time.

Complementary Skills

In the discipline of product development, product owners and business analysts bring their unique and complementary skills to the fore.

BAs are the meticulous detectives of the business world. With the precision of a Swiss watchmaker, they dissect business processes and requirements, ensuring nothing slips through the cracks. They can spot a gap in a flowchart from a mile away.

The BA ensures the PO's grand ideas are grounded in reality, while the PO ensures the BA's analysis doesn't extend so far into the depths that it approaches 'analysis paralysis'. It's a partnership akin to peanut butter and jam—each delightful on its own, but truly magical together. So, the next time you see a BA and a PO huddled together in a meeting room, know that you're witnessing the perfect blend of logic and imagination.

Effective Communication

BAs and POs are the guardians of clarity, ensuring that everyone from an intern to the boardroom is on the same page. Their communication skills reduce misunderstandings and improve project outcomes, transforming potential chaos into shared understanding and collaboration.

Picture a BA as the multilingual interpreter at a United Nations meeting, seamlessly switching between the languages of code and

commerce. They're adept at deciphering the cryptic notes scribbled by developers and turning them into polished presentations that key stakeholders can understand. If BAs had a superpower, it would be the ability to explain complex concepts using nothing but a whiteboard and a few well-placed metaphors or examples.

Enhanced Problem-Solving

In the realm of problem-solving, business analysts and product owners are like the Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson of the corporate world. While they may not roam the foggy streets of London, they certainly crack the toughest cases.

POs provide the strategic outlook, seeing the wood for the trees. A core part of their role is to connect the dots, turning a jumbled mess of challenges into a coherent plan of action. If POs had a motto, it would likely be: "Think big, act smart, and always keep a Plan B handy."

Together, they form an effective problem-solving team, combining detailed analysis with vision and strategy.

Agility and Flexibility

BAs are the nimble jugglers of the backlog, expertly refining items with the precision of a chef dicing onions. They ensure that user stories are prepped and polished, ready to be served up to the development team. With their eye for detail and knack for organisation, BAs keep things running smoothly, ensuring no story is left behind.

POs are the daring tightrope walkers, balancing priorities with grace. They orchestrate the flow of the sprint, deftly adapting to changes and shifting requirements. Their collaboration ensures that every sprint is a finely tuned performance. The BA refines and clarifies, while the PO steers and adjusts, ensuring the team is always ready to pivot at a moment's notice. It's like a well-rehearsed dance, where each step is perfectly synchronised to the rhythm of change.

At the end of the day, BAs and POs create magic together. When they team up, the BA brings the details, the PO brings the vision, and together they keep the project on

track. Together, they bridge the gap between stakeholders and development teams, translating ideas into clear, actionable requirements. They anticipate risks, adapt to change, and ensure that everyone's moving in the same direction. When BAs and POs truly collaborate, the result isn't just a well-managed backlog—it's a product that actually works and delivers real value.

Ramya is a Business Analyst and an avid reader. She is passionate about giving back to society through her volunteer work with various networks and by initiating the local IIBA® Chapter. Contact Ramya on LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/ramya-kailashnathan-b26240180



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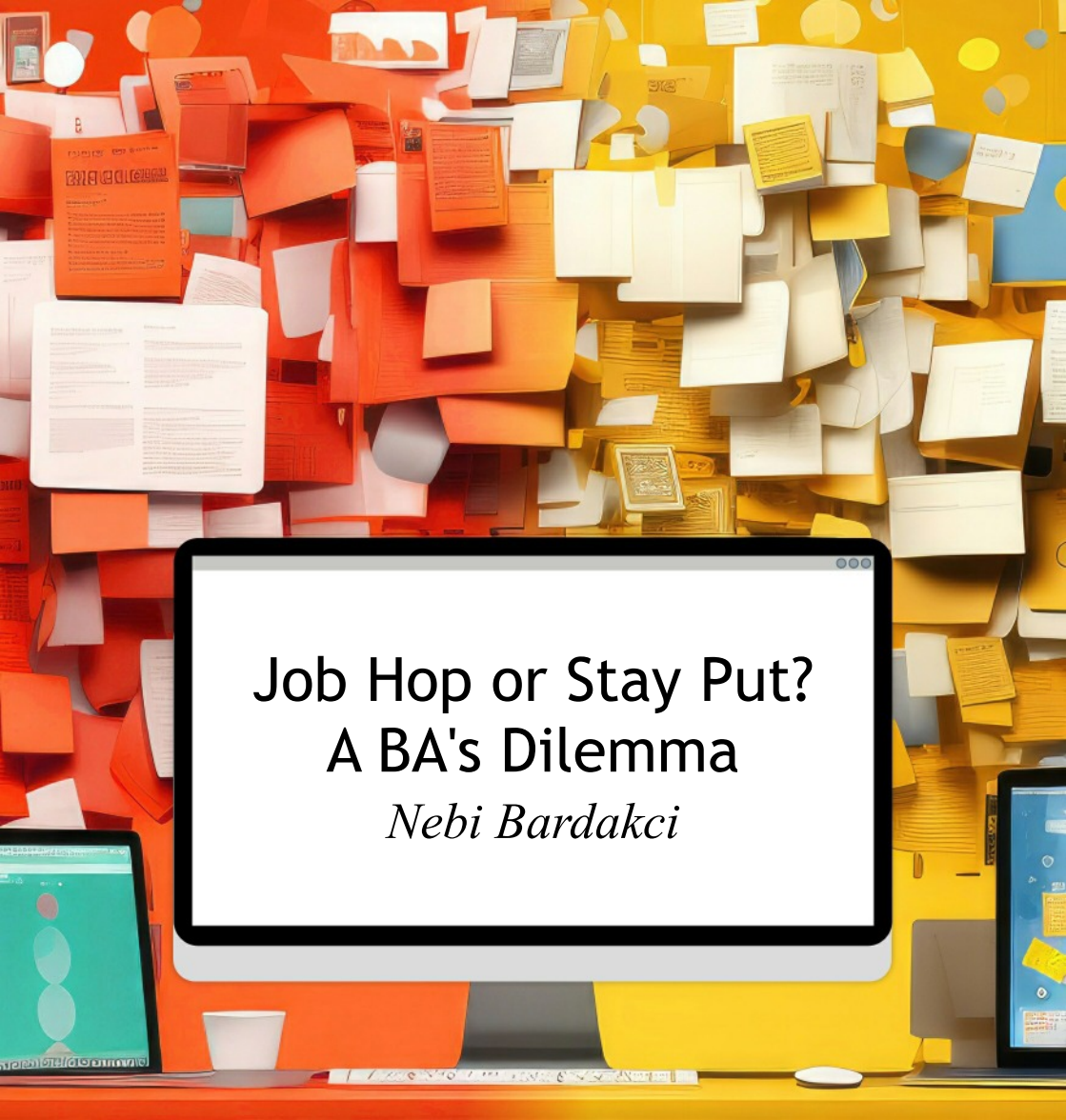
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4 INSPIRING KEYNOTES



Job Hop or Stay Put? A BA's Dilemma

Nebi Bardakci

Thanks to the advancement of IT, there's growing recognition of the business analyst role. With BA roles in many different industries, this means that at some point in their career, many practitioners face the dilemma of whether to stay within their current organisation, or 'hop' to

another job elsewhere. In this article, I would like to share my observations about the advantages and disadvantages of changing companies as a BA.

I have been working as a business analyst since 2016 and I've had the

chance to work for a range of different companies. Although all the companies that I worked for were financial technology firms, the roles were all subtly different. The ways of working and the interpretation of business analysis was different in each company, or to put this another way, each company had implemented their business analysis teams from a different perspective. IIBA®'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide defines business analysis as "The practice of enabling change in the context of an enterprise by defining needs and recommending solutions that deliver value to stakeholders". With this strong focus on change, I believe it is also important for business analysts to enable change in their career. I hope my perspective will be helpful for your career journey.

Advantages of Changing Company

Networking and interpersonal/soft skills are crucial in order to be successful in life and are equally important for business analysis. Changing companies presents an opportunity to grow your connections and challenge you, providing you with the opportunity to improve your soft skills such as communication. As a new starter, you need to prove yourself and build healthy communication with your new team in order to be successful. Whereas in your existing company you'll have an established support network, in a new company you have to build this from scratch. This can be daunting, but also means you get to reinvent yourself somewhat. It's a great way to practise (and enhance) those

stakeholder management skills that are so essential to our role.

A new job might also present new opportunities such as taking a part in a global project or leading the team. These kinds of opportunities help you to improve your leadership skills. Possessing leadership or global project experiences might open new doors in the future. If leadership is something you enjoy, it is worth grabbing these opportunities with both hands. It is also worth looking out for other formal and informal development opportunities.

Every company has different ways of developing their employees' skills and competencies. Starting a new job might bring new opportunities for personal development in a wide range of areas. Companies have a tendency to prepare skills development programmes based on their future strategies. Therefore, you might have a chance to observe different approaches and acquire different or modern practices quickly by participating in programmes within different firms.

Staying in the same role at a company for too long can diminish enthusiasm for new projects. A new job offers a fresh start, higher energy, and a positive attitude, which can attract new opportunities

Changing jobs also means changing one's environment and gaining new perspectives. You are not only changing your role but also you'll have a chance to meet new people with different backgrounds, work histories and lifestyles. This may help you to better understand your own

strengths and weaknesses, while also empathising with others and acknowledging that there are other ways of doing things in life.

Disadvantages of Changing Company

Every company has its own distinct culture. Even companies within the same industry may have vastly different cultures, this might cause anyone moving roles to experience a period of adaptation where there are feelings of stress or even anxiety. It's important to acknowledge this, and ensure that you have the 'head space' to cope with these completely normal emotions.

There can be differences in the ways that teams work, so as a new team member, you need to figure out how the work is done so that you can collaborate effectively. Human factors can be the main challenge, and it's essential to put effort in to build trust and healthy communication.

When joining a new company, you may feel like you are starting from scratch, and this can feel annoying. You might end up repeating a project you have undertaken elsewhere, perhaps seeing the same issues and challenges. Although initially this might feel demotivating, you should focus on the bright side. For instance, you may be able to bring effective solutions from your previous experiences (like lessons learned). These will be appreciated and will help to elevate your reputation.

Another challenge that new joiners face relates to progression and

promotion. Some organisations will prioritise those who are well-established within the organisation for promotion, and as the newest member you may not see opportunities for promotion for a while. It's important to be realistic and remember that there are other people waiting for that promotion too!

Finally, lack of domain knowledge is one of the drawbacks of changing company. Having sufficient domain knowledge is a critical element for a BA. Gaining domain knowledge might be stressful in the beginning of new job, but equally it is an opportunity to learn about a new context. This can be a challenge, however, and some companies do not have proper documentation or orientation process for new beginners. So you may have to act like a detective and follow a trail of clues, and this is a good skill to have as a BA!

Conclusion

In conclusion, changing jobs offers both advantages and disadvantages. While long-term tenure within a company can lead to promotion and leadership opportunities, it may limit personal growth. Periodically changing environments, whether within or outside the same company, fosters understanding, empathy, and life satisfaction. This change ultimately drives skill development and a more fulfilling career.

Nebi Bardakci, MBA, PSM1, PSPO1, is an Architect Business Analyst. You are welcome to connect with Nebi on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/omerbardakci/

Oh, it was by accident! As [Filip Hendrickx](#) likes to say!

actually just a little bit like Lee

from [BCS](#), from [HDA](#), from [Karl Wieggers](#), and others.

Well, first of all, [Karl Wiegers](#). That's because from the very first moment I joined the company where I worked for a long time, their education program was built around Karl's books including [Software Requirements, 3rd edition](#), and we definitely spent a lot of time learning from him. We even had a drinking game based on Karl Wiegers' webinars! We listened to his podcasts about requirements reuse, and every time he said the word "reuse", we were drinking! That's a fun side of things. Gosh, I hope Karl would not read this!

from [BCS](#), from [HDA](#), from [Karl Wieggers](#), and others.

How do you make sure that you keep learning?

I do that all the time. First of all, when I do my blog videos, it's not just sitting and talking; I do deep research on every topic. I do market research and apply tools like SWOT analysis for different things. I incorporate my own experience, and I talk to people. I attend a lot of business analysis conferences. I visited a lot of them last year, and this year I'm speaking at some of them. Last year I was at [BA & Beyond](#) and others. I had the opportunity to meet lots of great speakers. I enjoy speaking at conferences as well, which is an opportunity to share my skills and knowledge, to learn, and to meet people. And this year, I'm thinking about switching between BA professions or upskilling, so I'm looking for a good data analysis course. I found a Google certification in data analytics, which seems to be good. So, I'm going to try that!

Community is really important to you. Why do you think it's important for BA's to engage with the professional community?

It's absolutely so important to speak to people, to exchange ideas. For me, my community was mostly within the company I worked for. There were around one hundred BAs, a lot of people to exchange ideas with, but then it wasn't enough for me. So in 2019, I started doing my blog, which was inspired by Adrian Reed's BA Digest—the one you are reading this article in. I was doing that in the local Ukrainian language. Then I started in 2022, visiting the [IIBA® Brussels BA](#)

[Cafe](#) and the [IIBA® UK Brown Bag](#) lunches online. And now I'm leading two communities myself online, and I'm working on the third one.

So yes, I believe that every person has to be a part of a larger group because you never know how the network could help and support you. What would be the ideas people share? It's not a good thing to think you are the smartest person in the room and think you know everything. I'm willing to learn all the time; I'm hungry for knowledge.

Is there a piece of feedback or advice that has particularly stuck with you during your career?

There's been a lot of feedback, and I've learned a lot! I've made a lot of mistakes, and from every mistake I have learned something and brought it with me. One of the best things that happened was a mistake which cost my company money, not too much, but some money. There was a tough but fair conversation with the project manager. I was in a junior role, and they told me that I had to own my mistakes. Whatever happens, you shouldn't avoid feedback, you shouldn't try to hide it if something goes wrong, because we all make mistakes.

So, at every level, whatever you do or mistake you make, be open to feedback. Be open to becoming better. Because if you're not, you're just stuck in one place, and you can become arrogant, and at some point, people will stop enjoying working with you.

There are so many things and people that really inspire me. But what I want

to do is give a shout out to every person who really wants to achieve something. To their bravery, to their determination, to overcoming obstacles. Be bold enough to continue. So, it's a shout out to all the brave people throughout the world.

Check out the [Passionate BA](#) and connect with [Iurii](#) via LinkedIn.

About the interviewer:

Christina Lovelock is a BA leader, author, and coach. She's active in the Business Analysis professional community and champions entry-level roles. She's the author of two BCS books, [Delivering Business Analysis](#) and newly released [Careers in Tech, Data and Digital](#). She would be delighted [to connect](#) on LinkedIn!

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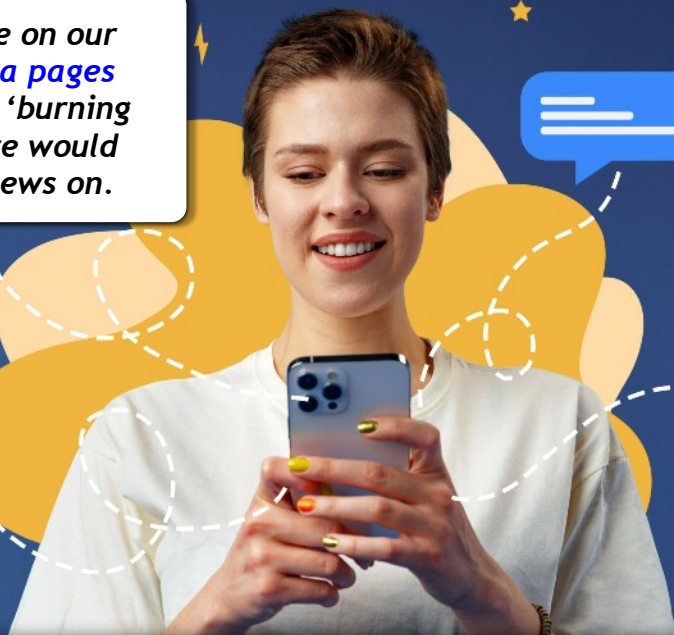
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VIEWPOINTS

On social media, we posed the question

***What's a lesson you learned
the hard way as a BA?***

Your carefully crafted business case, that can save money and improve the lives of customers and/or employees, can still end up in a drawer never to get pulled out or even be redone some years later with the same result. Just because it has lost the interest

of the person who gave you the assignment. (Hopefully it is a small consolation you've learned something that can be used in your next assignment)

Petra Vrieler

For years, I thought being a great BA meant capturing detailed requirements and writing spotless documentation. Then came the shift—AI, agile, rapid change—and suddenly, my neatly formatted specs weren't enough.

That's when I learned: we're no longer just translators between business and IT—we're strategic influencers. Welcome to the BA Renaissance!

I had to unlearn old habits and step into a new role: challenging

assumptions, shaping solutions, and guiding decisions with curiosity and courage. The hardest part? Realising that expertise isn't about having all the answers—it's about asking better questions.

Lesson: In this new era, BAs must evolve from documenters to critical thinkers and change navigators. The future doesn't need scribes—it needs strategic storytellers.

Erivan de Sena Ramos

Choose your words carefully! Facts and figures might not matter as much as you think they do when it comes to stakeholder management. You can have all the evidence to support your recommendations but if someone's attachment to their perspective comes from an emotional place - you need to be able to make an emotional argument not a data one, speak to them in their language not in yours and

influence in very soft ways to reach that point of consensus. One simple word used in a way that is perceived as "wrong" may lose your stakeholders completely. Meet your stakeholders where they are at, and take them along a journey through change - and even better if they feel they came up with all the good ideas.

Emily Saunderson

I learned the hard way that staying silent in the face of ambiguity helps no one. Clarifying early, even if uncomfortable, avoids rework later. Stakeholders

often appreciate proactive questions more than they fear minor delays.

ChatGPT

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allowed us to use their content.***

Jen Thai
Mark Cross
Anna Rajander
Kent J. McDonald
Claire Pullan
Jon Cook
Anastasiia Kraievska
Ken Mbuki
Gabriella Lakos
Philippe Robitaille
Iryna Sizikova
Nick de Voil
Nastassia Shahun
Aylwin Wan
Ramya Kailashnathan
Nebi Bardakci
Iurii Golmon & Christina Lovelock

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Matt Smart

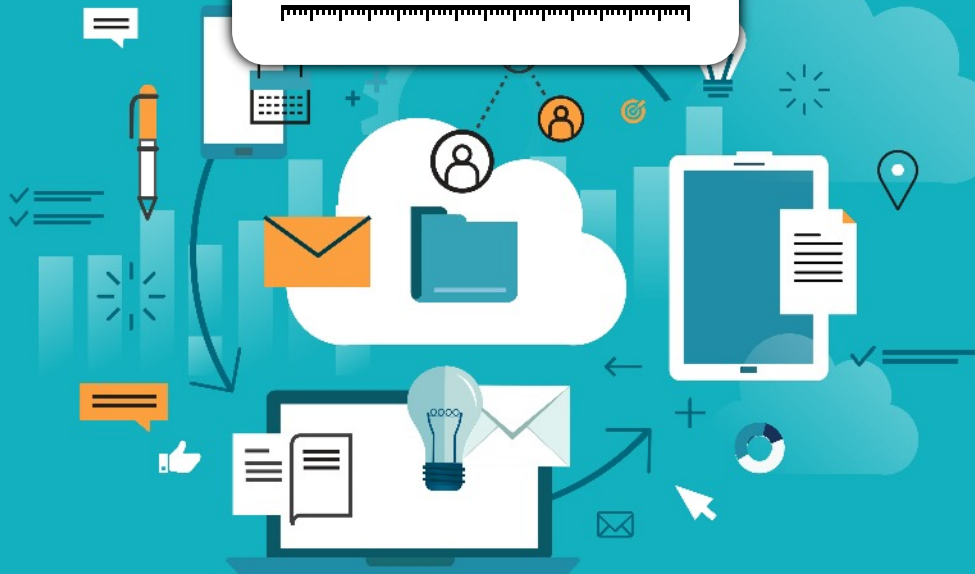
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