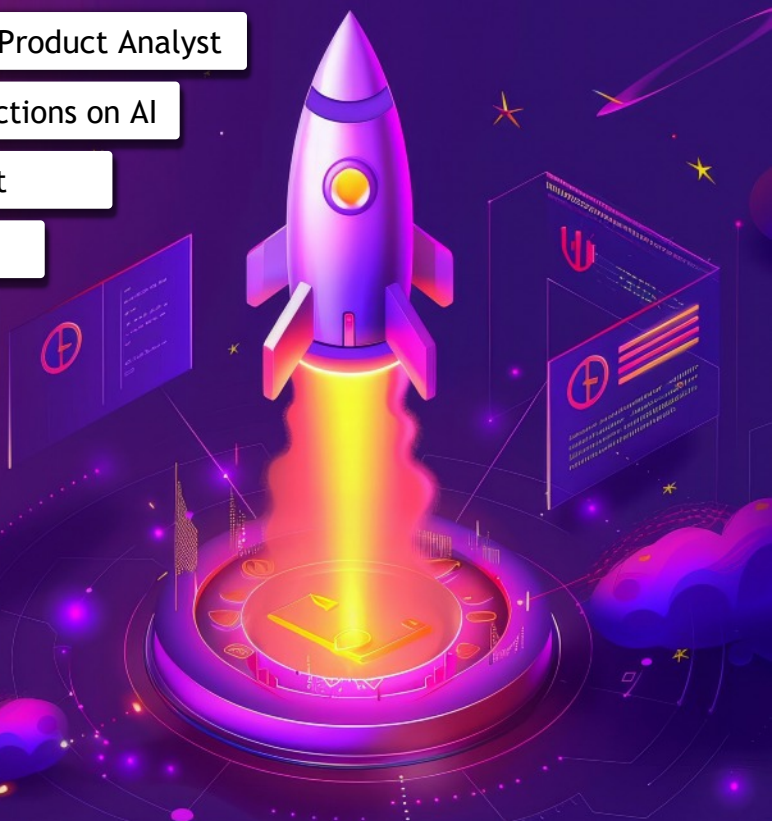


BA DIGEST

- From BA to Business Product Analyst
- Adapt or Fade: Reflections on AI
- When data falls short
- Intent is the Glue
- And much more ...



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Welcome

Welcome to the Q1 edition of BA Digest. As we step into a new year, it feels like a natural moment to pause, reflect and look ahead at how our profession continues to develop. One theme that is of perennial importance is staying connected and learning from one another, which links directly to a topic that is mentioned by some authors in this edition and is close to my heart: communities of practice.

You'll notice the deliberate plural here: "communities". You might have a BA community within your organisation, belong to a professional association, and also take part in webinars or events organised across the wider professional landscape.

All of these involve practitioners coming together to discuss, learn, share tips and insights. There's no single 'community' of product and change practitioners; rather, we learn from a constellation of loosely connected groups. The boundaries often blur, giving us opportunities to learn from adjacent professions and absorb fresh perspectives.

In recent years, social media has been a powerful connector between these communities. Yet its usefulness seems to be fading. Platforms where practitioners used to have spirited debates are now seemingly prioritising exposure of 'rage bait' posts that maximise 'dwell time'. After all, if the aim is to get you to click on an ad, then it doesn't much matter whether you feel fulfilled by the process or not. And rage sells.

Perhaps I'm being pessimistic, and I hope at least some social media platforms manage to turn the tanker. However, I'm increasingly wondering what a post-social media world will look like. That may seem crazy, but communication and networking changes. I have no idea what follows, but creating and maintaining connections is important.

Perhaps the answer lies in more decentralised, grassroots ways of staying connected. Events, networks and collaborations that grow directly from practitioners might offer a more open and democratic way of maintaining our community ties.

I hope you find inspiration and ideas in this edition of BA Digest. As always, a huge thank you to our contributors and advertisers. Their support helps keep BA Digest free, so please take a moment to explore their work.

And if you have an idea for an article, we'd love to hear from you. Visit BAdigest.link/write for details on how to get involved. You only need a proposed title and short abstract to start.

Enjoy this edition, and thanks for being part of the BA community.

Adrian

Adrian Reed

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest

Principal Consultant, Blackmetric

Contents

- 4 Architecting Knowledge: How Business Architecture and Agile Thinking Transformed Our BA Sharepoint Site - *Doris Kimball*
- 8 Adapt or Fade: Reflections on the Coming AI Onslaught - *George Folley*
- 10 How BAs Can Succeed in Highly Technical Agile Teams - *Irena Cvetic*
- 13 Intent Is the Glue - *Rob O'Leary*
- 16 The Art of Influence Part 3: Using Your Powers - *Anna Rajander*
- 20 How to Obtain a Sign-off on a 200-page Requirements Specification Document - *Rakesh Patange*
- 23 Transition Requirements: The Bridge Between Legacy and the New Solution - *Volha Pasvistselik*
- 27 The Missing Middle: The Gap in Our BA Community - *Stu Mullinger*
- 31 AI as a Stakeholder in Business Analysis - *Ramya Kailashnathan*
- 35 Using Group Construct Analysis to Understand Stakeholder Worldviews in Ambiguous Situations, Part 19: "This Meeting Could Have Been an Email." Really? - *Nick de Voil*
- 39 When Data Falls Short: The Missing Pieces in Decision Making - *Agnieszka Balcerzak*
- 42 From BA to Business Product Analyst: When Analysts Drive Product Strategy - *Anurita Ruscoe*
- 46 The Invisible Business Analyst: The Strategic Force Driving Real Business Change - *Sadia Riaz*
- 49 Power of Natural Language - Traps and Treasures - *Łukasz Lechert*
- 53 Tracing Requirements - the Ultimate Business Analysis Superpower - *Christina Kumar*
- 56 BA Backstories Interview: James Dean - *Interviewed by Christina Lovelock*
- 61 Viewpoints

Architecting Knowledge: How Business Architecture and Agile Thinking Transformed Our BA Sharepoint Site



Doris Kimball

Every business analyst team I've worked with has shared the same goal: to realise value by connecting people, processes, and data. But ironically, we often struggle to apply that same discipline to how we manage our own team knowledge.

Not too long ago, our team faced that very challenge. Our SharePoint site—intended as a knowledge hub for our BAs—had grown into a tangled web

of folders, outdated documents, and good intentions. New team members couldn't find what they needed. Senior analysts stored templates locally. Lessons learned were buried in meeting notes. It was clear we needed a change.

Instead of jumping straight into a redesign, we decided to take a different approach: we used business architecture to design the structure,

and the agile mindset to guide the process. The result? A SharePoint site that works the way BAs think.

From Scattered to Strategic

The problem wasn't technology as SharePoint is a flexible platform. The problem was structure and ownership. Without a shared model for organising content, everyone created their own folders and naming conventions. Our site was fragmented, redundant, and hard to maintain.

We needed a framework that would scale with our team, make sense to both new and experienced BAs, and reflect how we actually do our work. That's when we turned to business architecture.

Business Architecture as a Knowledge Framework

Business architecture helps organisations align strategy with execution. It defines the capabilities an organisation needs, the value streams it supports, and the information it relies on. What if we used those same building blocks to organise our knowledge base?

We started with business capabilities—the "what" of the BA role. For example:

- Business case and value assessment
- Decision management
- Information analysis
- Process modelling

- Requirement elicitation and management
- Solution assessment
- Stakeholder engagement

Each capability became a section of the SharePoint site. Under each, we included:

- Tools and templates
- How-to-guides
- Examples and case studies
- Lessons learned
- Links to related systems or artefacts

We also included value stream views to provide a visual "front door" for new users—mapping BA involvement from product intake through delivery. This gave context to the capabilities and helped new team members understand how our work fits into the bigger picture.

This structure felt intuitive. It wasn't just about storing documents—it was about organising our knowledge in a way that reflected how we think, deliver, and collaborate.

Applying an Agile Mindset: Experiment, Learn, Refine

Business architecture gave us the structure, but agile gave us the approach. Rather than trying to build the perfect site all at once, we treated the redesign like a product.

Our mantra: experiment, learn, and refine.

We created a minimum viable version (similar to a minimum viable product, or “MVP”) of the new structure with just two capabilities populated. We invited feedback from the team in short, focused review sessions. We learned quickly that:

- People loved the capability-based structure, but wanted search to be easier
- Some templates were outdated, so we created a review process
- “One-pagers” were a hit—quick summaries of key tools or techniques

We didn’t aim for perfection, we aimed for usefulness. Every two weeks, we added new content, cleaned up old material, and adjusted based on feedback. The site evolved through real usage, not assumptions.

Getting the Team Involved

To avoid falling into the old trap of “one person owns everything”, we made the site a shared responsibility. We hosted informal “BA sandbox” sessions, where team members could suggest improvements, share documents, or walk through how they used a particular template.

We also identified knowledge champions for each capability area—people passionate about particular domains (like process mapping or stakeholder communication) who could help curate content and answer questions.

This shifted mindset from compliance (“put your docs here”) to community (“let’s build something useful together”).

What We Learned

What worked:

- + Starting small with a pilot section
- + Organising by capabilities
- + Making it easy to contribute
- + Embedding visuals and examples (not just documents)
- + Using feedback to drive evolution

What didn’t:

- Trying to roll out too many sections at once
- Underestimating the time needed for content cleanup
- Ignoring search configuration until too late (we fixed it later)

Real Results

Since launching the new site, we’ve seen:

- **Improved onboarding:** New BAs report feeling more confident and equipped in their first 30 days.
- **Reduced duplication:** Fewer “where’s that template?” messages in chat.
- **Greater collaboration:** More team members contributing updates and sharing examples.
- **Sustained momentum:** Monthly review cycles and champions keep the site fresh.

The biggest shift? Our knowledge base feels like a living resource—

aligned with how we work, evolving as we grow.

Call to Action: Architect Your Own

If you're a BA leader or practitioner struggling with knowledge management, consider this:

- Don't just organise by department or document type, organise by capability
- Don't build a static site, create a learning product
- Don't wait for perfection. Start small, learn first, and refine often

Using business architecture to frame your knowledge and agile thinking to

evolve it can turn a chaotic file system into a meaningful, usable, and strategic asset.

After all, knowledge is one of your team's greatest capabilities. It's time to treat it that way.

Doris Kimball is a passionate, accomplished, forward-thinking business analyst. You can contact her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/doris-kimball.

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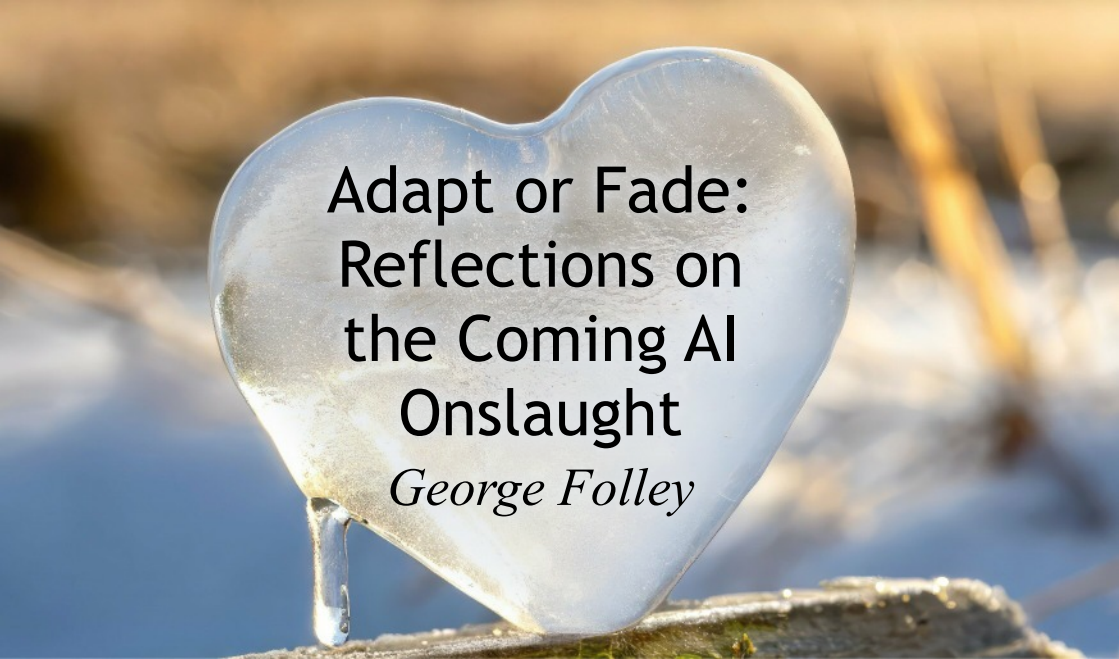
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Adapt or Fade: Reflections on the Coming AI Onslaught

George Folley

I love being a BA.

So much of the role appeals to who I am as an individual, what my values are and what gives me energy. Curiosity, drive, ambition—all crucial attributes and skills of a successful BA as they navigate cross-functional complexity, build relationships with key stakeholders and drive value for the end user.

I've been in this space for nearly a decade. Through that time I have observed significant changes in the arena that BAs operate in. Change in business and user expectations, change in technology, change in regulatory requirements. These, however, pale in comparison to the potential impact of the technological change that we are currently in the midst of. How we embrace and adapt to artificial intelligence in the years ahead will shape the business analysis space for the coming decades, with early action

and adoption becoming a key differentiator for BAs in the modern workplace.

It is worth examining some statistics to back this claim. According to a survey cited on the [Business Insurance website](#), 29% of companies have already replaced entry-level workers with AI, and 34% are considering doing so. [According to Business Insider](#), over the past three years, hiring for AI-exposed roles has dropped around 31%.

The figures are stark. As the technology continues to improve in the years ahead, to what extent will this trend continue? We may see the dystopian scenario predicted by the head of AI start-up Anthropic that the technology [could wipe out up to half of all entry-level jobs within five years](#). Personally, I prefer not to unquestioningly accept the opinions of CEOs who have a vested interest in hyping up their product and their

industry. But one cannot argue with the stats on the ground. Entry-level roles are at risk. And not just the roles, but the knock-on impact of lost pipelines of talent. Companies must not make the error of overlooking this key cohort in the years ahead. The entry-level hires of today are a cohort of future leaders and managers. As graduate hiring eases for repetitive, operational tasks, organisations must pivot to hiring young professionals for strategic input, unique perspectives and energy. Hiring not for clerical output, but for thinking, adaptability and bespoke contribution that a senior analyst wouldn't bring. This is a key moment for organisations. They must meet it.

What has this looked like for me so far? The answer is quite different depending on whether I look at this question from a personal or professional standpoint. From a personal workflow perspective, AI tools are entrenched in my day to day. ChatGPT is essentially a personal assistant to me now. Career advice, interview preparation, personal therapist, holiday planning, recipe ideas, or just 'someone' to bounce ideas off—it's all there. Professionally, my usage has seen more limited gains. Copilot is the tool of choice in my workplace. Does this have benefits? Of course. Output a draft set of requirements on the back of meeting output? Check. Receive input from a 'data warehouse expert' on the intricacies of data design for an upcoming project. Check. Receive a fully formatted slideshow ready to go for an important presentation from just a single prompt? Check.

This is all great, but I'm impatient and I want more! I want a personal

assistant that can automate my administrative tasks for me. I want an AI co-worker to join my team to give expert analysis before it's even asked for its opinion. I want AI to take over complex data interpretation, generating polished reports and presentations just from raw input. With current trends and the rapid pace of development in the field, we can soon expect AI to handle these for us. And more. It's coming...

But it isn't all negative. The future-facing, progressive, strategic BA will become ever more valuable in the change and transformation world of tomorrow. Where today's BA carries out a set of operational tasks and actions, tomorrow's BA will bring huge value by defining how organisations will operate strategically in an AI world. Where today's BA writes up a set of user stories and acceptance criteria from the output of a meeting, tomorrow's BA will be valued for their ability to manage cross-functional complexity and achieve buy-in from senior leadership on key initiatives. Where today's BA draws up a process map to act as a clear visual aid for decision-making, tomorrow's BA will lean into orchestrating transformation programmes across teams, silos and systems. 'Soft' skills, human skills, will define the BA of tomorrow. The forward-thinking, strategic change agent that organisations will seek out more than ever.

The future is clear. The future is bright. Adapt or fade.

George Folley is a Business Analyst with a keen interest in the impact of AI on the profession, operating in the London Market at Tokio Marine Kiln.

How BAs Can Succeed in Highly Technical Agile Teams

Irena Cvetic



Working as a business analyst in an agile environment often means moving between the worlds of business and technology. But what happens when the work shifts more towards the technical side? Even the most experienced BAs can find themselves at a loss in conversations filled with unknown words that seem to cause a headache after every meeting.

You Don't Need to Know Everything

Entering a new product domain, especially if it's mainly technical, can feel intimidating. Technical terms such as "endpoints", "payloads" and "properties" might be part of each conversation, and it's easy to feel like

you are the only one who doesn't have a clue what they mean.

Being a BA in a technical team is less about having all the answers and knowing every technical detail. It's more about wanting to learn new things and being prepared to ask the right questions. Admitting that you don't understand something is fine. Even the technical team members don't understand everything all the time. The more conversations you have with your colleagues and stakeholders, the better understanding you will have over time. The biggest advantage in this situation is your mindset, which will help you make huge progress and gain the amount of technical knowledge you need to be a great BA.

Redefining Your BA Role

What does the BA role look like in highly technical teams? Instead of being the perfect translator between business and technical team, you should shift your perspective from having all the answers to creating a space where there is shared understanding. Sometimes this means asking for a summary in plain language and sometimes it's just rephrasing technical details back to be easily understood.

Your strength lies in ensuring that nobody walks out of a meeting not knowing what was agreed. Including yourself!

How You Can Add Value As a BA

Even without deep technical expertise, there are different ways you could facilitate conversations and add value. Start by gathering available documentation of how things work currently. Look for any unknown technical words or phrases and make them clear to yourself. Create a small dictionary or glossary where you capture notes about various technical topics. That way you will start building your technical knowledge each day.

Document assumptions and decisions, including why the team decided to do (or not do) something and what the impact was on the product.

Create a list of open questions and identify who the best person to talk to is. Start building documentation around those conversations, these

artefacts will later transform into the backlog.

Even when conversations get technical, don't forget about the actual (business) requirements. People might have issues articulating them, but that doesn't mean the requirements are not there.

How You Can Help Developers Write Better Product Backlog Items

Let's assume you are the BA who is responsible for writing product backlog items within a product team. In some highly technical teams, it's not unusual for developers to create their own backlog items. Sometimes, they're the only ones who know the details of a task that needs to be done. This doesn't mean the BA should stand aside. Your role is to add the structure and context that ensures the backlog item is meaningful, not just to developers, but to anyone who is reading it. Even for deeply technical tasks, you should be able to add context and business value. Otherwise start questioning why the team needs that task in the first place and what is the benefit of doing it.

If the developers start writing backlog items that have similar structure, create templates or work with the team to standardise them, so that you all spend less time on administration and more on discussion.

How to Grow Confidence as a BA in a Technical Team

You can go further as a BA and

not limit yourself only on discussion, facilitation and creating documentation. Explore tools the team uses, play around with [Postman](#) or [Swagger](#) just to see how the system behaves. Many BAs, especially those that come from a purely business world, don't want to do anything with the systems directly. If you are one of them, think about shifting your perspective. Put in recurring sessions with developers to go through workflows, available endpoints and what they are used for. Ask them to show you how things look in code. Not to understand how coding works, but to visualise things within a technical context to foster a better understanding. Try to connect your technical learnings with business goals.

The more comfortable you become with the technical topics, the stronger your ability to link it back to business goals will be. And that's where the BA mindset makes an impact.

Conclusion

Working in highly technical teams isn't always comfortable for BAs—you

won't always understand everything. What matters is how you use your skills to create clarity, facilitate different conversations, and keep the team's work connected to business value.

By having a growth mindset, collaborating with developers on backlog items, and building technical confidence, you will become a better BA and feel more relaxed in everyday work.

So if you ever feel overwhelmed in a deeply technical project, just remember that the starting confusion will pass. Your strength lies in asking the right questions, and ensuring that you as a team keep moving forward together.

Irena Cvetic is Lead Business Analyst who also works as Engineering lead on her project. Besides having knowledge in business analysis, she is also certified professional scrum master, facilitator and coach. You can contact her on LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/irena-cvetic-9a3966124/

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Intent Is the Glue

Rob O'Leary

General Al Gray, the 29th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, was known for his sharp leadership insights—often captured in what became known as “[Grayisms](#).” One that struck me in particular was, “Intent is the glue that holds everything together.” He followed it with another: “People know what they like doing, but they don’t like being told how—telling them how restricts creativity.” This resonates deeply in my current role, where I work with very talented software engineers. While they look to me—as the BA and product owner—for guidance on how a particular rule or requirement should be implemented, I need to remember to focus on capturing the “what.” I thought about the connection to the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)’s Business Analysis Core Concept Model ([BACCM™](#)) and the bridge between needs and value.

In business analysis, it’s easy to get caught up in what stakeholders say they want or how a solution should work. But without a clear sense of

why, requirements quickly become fragmented, disconnected, or even isolated—existing on their own and difficult to trace back to the overall business goals. This is where intent becomes the glue.

Intent and the BACCM™

The BACCM™ gives us six building blocks to anchor our practice:

- **Change:** the act of transformation.
- **Need:** the problem or opportunity to be addressed.
- **Solution:** the specific way we meet a need.
- **Stakeholder:** the people impacted by or involved in the change.
- **Value:** the benefit that justifies the effort.
- **Context:** the circumstances influencing the work.

In my view, intent is the glue that binds these concepts into a coherent story. Needs without intent turn into wish lists that can't be prioritised, and value without intent becomes superficial—the metric becomes the goal, and we lose sight of true business outcomes. Intent provides the navigational “north star” that prevents requirements from becoming disjointed and helps business analysts continually ask:

- What outcome are we really trying to achieve?
- How does this story or backlog item serve that outcome?

When we frame analysis through the lens of intent, we transform our role from documenting needs to actively shaping value. If we do this correctly, the business requirements we work on become the bridge between needs and value for our stakeholders.

Intent Enables Clarity and Conciseness

When writing requirements, as in most forms of writing, simplicity is essential. I've struggled at times with over-explaining or including extraneous details when creating user stories. Often we're under time pressure to have user stories ready for the next sprint and I will end up doing a brain dump of what I've learned from the business into the user story, only to end up forgetting why I wrote something when asked a question during sprint planning or backlog refinement. It reminds me of the quote often [erroneously attributed to Mark Twain](#): “If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter.” This is why having

structured frameworks for capturing software requirements is useful.

A common way of capturing backlog items is the classic user story format: As a [user], I want [capability], so that [value]. It's simple and familiar, but the real power lies in the final clause. Without the “so that,” stories often read like technical tasks. With it, they express intent. Compare: “As a customer, I want two-factor authentication” versus “As a customer, I want two-factor authentication so that I can feel confident my financial information is secure” or “As a CISO (Chief Information Security Officer), I want two-factor authentication, so that we're in compliance and don't incur fines or reputational risk”. The difference is subtle but transformative—developers, testers, and stakeholders all align on why the feature matters, not just what it does. In fact, it's likely that by knowing the intent these stories could be iterated and improved further (the ‘solution’ that had been proposed here is two-factor authentication, but the *outcome* that is desired is around security, compliance and reputational risk. It may be that two-factor authentication alone cannot achieve these outcomes, or there may be other alternatives entirely!)

Not every team you work with may be as prescriptive in their documentation, and sometimes trying to fit a requirement to the user story template can feel clunky. A communication framework I've adapted for my requirement writing is the “[What, So What, Now What structure](#)” from Matt Abrahms' podcast, [Think Fast Talk Smart](#). The product backlog item will have a

simple title, the “What”, the first part of the description will be focused on the “So What” or the intent, and the “Now What” is the meat of the requirements, what the team needs to action the work.

Different formats serve different needs, but they all share one essential trait: they connect functionality back to purpose. That’s why intent is the glue. It ensures every backlog item—no matter how it’s written—points back to the outcome it is meant to achieve.

At its core, business analysis is about creating clarity and connection—and Al Gray’s reminder that “intent is the glue” captures this perfectly. Whether we are applying the BACCM™ to frame a change initiative or writing

a simple backlog item, intent keeps the work aligned to purpose. It binds stakeholders to outcomes, links features to value, and transforms user stories from tasks into meaningful commitments. By continually asking why, and ensuring every requirement points back to intent, business analysts do more than capture what is requested—we help deliver what truly matters.

Rob O’Leary is a Senior Business Analyst with experience in hedge funds and private equity technology. He specialises in bridging business strategy and technical delivery to drive value through clear, intent-focused analysis. Connect with him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/robcoleary.

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The Art of Influence Part 3: Using Your Powers

Anna Rajander

Part 1 of The Art of Influence discussed how informal sources of power are used to influence, while Part 2 explored informal sources of power in more detail. In Part 3, we consider how analysts can consciously develop and leverage informal power throughout the analysis process, improving the capacity for their analysis to influence.

Influence—in the context of business analysis—is the ability to impact business outcomes or how outcomes are achieved. As business analysts do not tend to have formal power, an analyst's ability to influence lies with their informal powers: expert, referent, informational and connection power. These types of power are described in [Part 1 of this series](#). Analysts should consider how they employ informal powers throughout the analysis process to maximise their potential to influence.

A Framework Influence

Influence is a skill. As with any skill, it can be employed consciously or unconsciously. Conscious influencing requires planning from the very beginning of an analysis initiative.

Figure 1 depicts a framework introduced in [Part 1](#). It is based on a simple analytical process consisting of three stages: Understand, Infer, and Advise. The framework can be adapted to support different business and delivery contexts.

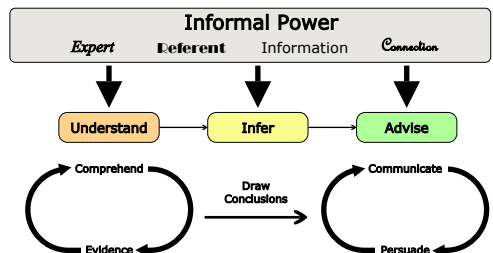


Figure 1: Delivering Influential Analysis.

The idea behind the framework is to support analysts in planning and executing analysis to consciously build and leverage informal sources of power, maximising its capacity to influence. The following provide some examples of how analysts can use their informal power at each stage of the analysis process.

Understand: Building Your Powers

Understanding involves locating, organising and synthesising business analysis information to make sense of the situation. During this phase analysts define and plan analysis, allowing them to engage the right stakeholders and set expectations. It is also when analysts should consider how they build informal power.

Broadly speaking, the Understand stage is separated into two interrelated phases: Comprehension and Evidence. Comprehension involves understanding the business context, the problem (or opportunity), and identifying stakeholders. Analysts consider the outcome they need to achieve and create a plan to achieve it. It is also when analysts start identifying and connecting with key stakeholders, and in doing so they build power through these connections.

This is also when analysts start collecting business analysis information, or evidence. Evidence may include source material, requirements and models elicited, documented and developed using a variety of techniques. When considering what evidence is

required, analysts should consider who they will need to influence. This allows analysts to build informational power by collecting evidence that will have the greatest impact. It is important for analysts to understand that what they consider to be compelling evidence may be different to their stakeholders. Analysts can factor this in when considering what and how much evidence is required. Analysts should also consider when and how they present evidence to stakeholders. Early and transparent stakeholder engagement—when done well—may provide an opportunity to further build referent and connection power.

Finally, analysts should use the early stages of the analysis to identify gaps in their knowledge. This gives analysts an opportunity to bridge any gaps, either through gaining knowledge themselves or leveraging available specialist expertise, building expert power with respect to the subject matter.

Infer: Exploring Your Powers

Once analysts have obtained a good understanding of the situation and collected suitable evidence, they can start to draw conclusions. This may involve reporting findings, building business cases, and making recommendations. When drawing conclusions, analysts need to be impartial, using techniques that consider different stakeholder perspectives and needs, while satisfying constraints and aligning to organisation objectives.

By this stage in the process, analysts should be aware of different stakeholder concerns and opinions, and any misalignment with analysis objectives. This allows analysts to take stock of the informal power they have and consider, *is it enough?* Analysts can use techniques such as personas and scenarios to predict and understand how their analysis and conclusions may be received:

- Who is likely to agree with the conclusion?
- Who is likely to disagree?
- How could the analysis be challenged?
- Are the arguments sound?
- Are they backed up by evidence?

This allows the analyst to consider strategies to either a) further build informal power, or b) effectively use the informal power they possess.

Advise: Unleashing Your Powers

The final stage is Advise, where analysts use the informal power they have established. The Advise stage can be divided into two interrelated phases: Communicate and Persuade. Effective communication and persuasion greatly enhances the chances of conclusions being accepted, while bad communication and persuasion can result in analysis being challenged or overlooked.

Communication and persuasion are inherently linked, but it helps to consider them separately.

Communication can be considered more formal and coordinated, whereas persuasion is more organic and ad-hoc.

Good communication requires two main things: clear and consistent messaging, and an understanding of the intended audience(s). When considering what and how to communicate, analysts should consider the audience(s) and their preferences. Effective communication may involve crafting separate communications for different stakeholders and delivering communication through multiple channels to target different audiences. When communicating analysis, analysts need to present facts clearly in a language the audience understands.

Persuasion, on the other hand, may be planned or unplanned. Analysts need to be prepared to engage with stakeholders at short notice or to respond when approached unexpectedly. To be persuasive, analysts need to draw on their informational power:

- Understand stakeholders, their needs and perspectives
- Articulate key messages clearly, and
- Be ready to share relevant information and evidence.

When considering how and who may need to be persuaded, analysts should consider when and how they share results with key, supportive individuals. This may allow analysts to leverage the formal and informal

powers possessed by others to improve their ability to influence.

Finally, it's important to remember communication and persuasion happens throughout the analysis process, it is not limited to a particular phase. Consistent communication and engagement can build referent and connection power. Analysts should consider including communication activities in their analysis plans and always be prepared for ad-hoc questions and challenge.

Conclusion

This series of articles started with a simple question: If influence is a skill, and skills can be taught, *how do you*

teach influence? The answer lies in understanding informal power—expert, informational, connection and referent power—and how we use them. To use our powers, we need to understand them and plan to leverage them throughout the analysis process. This maximises the chances that the analysis we deliver is seen, accepted, and ultimately influences business outcomes.

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](#).

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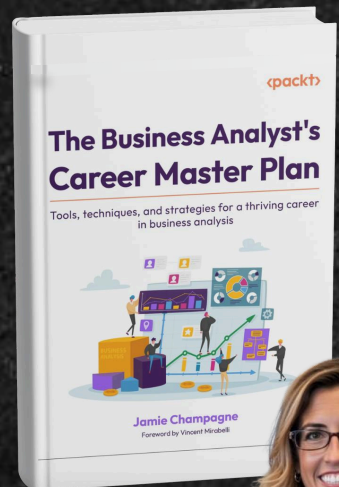
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How to Obtain a Sign-off on a 200-page Requirements Specification Document

Rakesh Patange

When it comes to requirements documentation, a question that may come to mind is: *Who writes a 200-page specification in the current era of AI and Agile?*

But believe me, that is the reality in my world.

As a business analyst working with the legislative reform section of an Australian federal government agency, I am part of a team responsible for delivering IT-enabled business solutions that comply with changes in the country's legislative system, all while navigating a tightrope of limited time and resources. Additionally, we are tasked with partnering with other

government agencies to develop and deliver these business solutions. This leads to a situation where a single piece of the requirements specification document serves as a linchpin in defining the scope of delivery, scope of testing, and ultimately, ensures full compliance with the changed legislation.

The process we follow, from a business analysis standpoint, is to embed all necessary business needs into a single specification document. In some organisations this may be referred to as a business specification, solution specification, business requirements document or something else... the name really doesn't matter! In our organisation,

this is also supported by a complex set of documented logic, business rules, and validations. The overall requirements package is therefore a combination of system-based rules, validations, user interface requirements and system testing verification criteria. And here lies the problem: a document like this often spans more than 200 pages. It does not matter whether we follow agile or waterfall for delivery thereafter, in our highly regulated and legislative context the solution requirements specification must be signed off before work can begin.

Now put yourself in the situation of a stakeholder who is responsible for signing off on such a massive document. Would you read all the 200-plus pages, or would you rather have a high-level understanding of what's been specified? And if so, what is the best way to do that? Do you have a whole day available to sit with the BA who wrote that document, to get a high-level understanding?

As a business analyst, in my opinion, an effective solution is to adopt new methods for obtaining requirements sign-off.

Case Study: A Proven Approach to Achieving Sign-off

Over the last few years, I have successfully implemented a sign-off approach which has led to a significantly better success rate in engaging key stakeholders and conveying the key details to those who are most impacted. My approach is as follows.

As soon as any specification document exceeds 50 pages, I immediately start working on a separate presentation file, where each slide or two conveys a distinct high-level requirement, supported by a combination of pictures, flows, spreadsheets, and schematics. The goal here is not to present every detail on each slide, but to entice the audience to read more or ask questions about a specific element of interest and discover the details, which are already documented in detail within the requirements specification. This will prove useful later when I present the requirements to stakeholders.

Crucially, it's important to remember that however compelling a specification document is, many key stakeholders will be "time poor". What works best here is building a human connection, and therefore, I take a couple of additional steps as follows.

Step A: Meet and present rather than email: Rather than send out the document via email and hope that people will read it, I send meeting invites to relevant stakeholders to attend an online or face-to-face session where I speak to them and present the slides before handing over the actual specifications document. This way, everyone gets an opportunity to ask questions and stay engaged. A document of approximately 200 pages can be easily condensed into 20 slides by keeping the content concise and engaging.

Step B: Allow time for reflection: People often need time to formulate their ideas, and I like to allow

time after the presentation for questions to emerge. After about a week, if there are no questions or clarifications, I email the comprehensive documentation to the relevant stakeholders. This serves two purposes: Firstly, they remember that a session or sessions were held sometime the previous week, and they have a task to validate the requirements. Secondly, they have all the details and documentations to hand to enable them to conduct a final review and confirm their sign-off. In this way, although the final sign-off on the requirements specification occurs through an email exchange, it is based on a solid understanding of the business and system requirements that was established through earlier discussions and presentations. The email sign-off is then just a formality... just the way it should be.

Gaining Shared Understanding

Based on my observations over the years, requirements often change during development, sometimes necessitating significant rework and this can be expensive and time consuming. One common root cause of this issue is that requirements are signed off without sufficient understanding of the overall impact on the business and IT systems. Something that sounds like a good idea on paper may cause downstream impacts if it is put into production without sufficient thought.

In an environment where IT solution development work is carried out through iterations, sprints or any form of hybrid or agile methods,

having an appropriate initial understanding of the breadth of the requirement scope provides an early opportunity for the team to split their work based on the complexity of the requirements. Clearly this won't always involve 200 page specifications, it will involve having 'enough' of an understanding for the specific context. Having this understanding ensures it's possible to take a deep dive into the specific sections of the requirements specification, clarifying any ambiguity and creating a shared understanding. And most importantly, it allows stakeholders to see how requirements align not only with their own area of business but also with other business processes/ IT systems.

Conclusion

In some contexts, long specifications are necessary due to the regulatory or legislative environment. However, it's important that we communicate the information in those specifications in a way people can consume. The approach presented in this article helps to make stakeholders' lives easier, ultimately benefiting the project and making the whole project team a winner.

Rakesh is currently working as a Business Analyst with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Australia and is engaged in various projects under the 'Legislative Reform Program'.

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Transition Requirements: The Bridge Between Legacy and the New Solution

Volha Pasvistselik



The world is changing constantly. Besides the creation of new solutions, very often we help organisations implement modern solutions that will replace and improve existing systems. This is often in order to provide users with the ability to undertake their business activities in a better way, which may involve introducing new functionality while ensuring the system is fast and accurate while providing a good overall user experience.

But how can we, as BAs, handle these types of changes, while ensuring that our stakeholders get the outcomes that they need? This is an area where transition requirements take centre stage.

What Are 'Transition Requirements'

According to the International Institute of Business Analysis

(IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide, transition requirements "describe the capabilities that the solution must have and the conditions the solution must meet to facilitate transition from the current state to the future state, but which are not needed once the change is complete. They are differentiated from other requirements types because they are of a temporary nature."

It is common to utilise transition requirements when one or more legacy systems is being replaced with a new solution. This might involve transition requirements around data migration, temporary shifting of work from one system to another to test performance, or temporary parallel running (where two systems are utilised for a period of time). Often with parallel running, there will be requirements around ensuring the data is kept up-to-date on *both* systems for a period of time.

Alongside other requirement types, transition requirements are an essential tool. This ensures important areas are captured including:

- One-off adjustments and features that are temporarily required when the new solution is launched (but will not be required permanently).
- Initial training and communication to help staff shift from the old system to the new one.
- Data migration requirements.
- Data cleansing, transformation and mapping requirements.
- Data synchronisation requirements if the two solutions will run in parallel. Alternatively, data archiving requirements if existing production data is not being transferred.
- Backward compatibility between old and new systems and how to support smooth processes during the parallel work of two systems.
- Decommissioning requirements for the old system.
- Any final, one-off, temporary adjustments in a new system after the legacy solution retirement that are not required on an ongoing basis.

How to Elicit and Analyse Transition Requirements

Transition requirements elaboration often relies on reverse engineering of a current system and its associated

processes. To understand what we take into a new solution, we need to first identify how the existing solution works, what features it contains, how data is stored, and the data structure. Once this is done we'll need to work with stakeholders to validate this information and prioritise the features we are going to keep in the new solution. At this point, we can also gain a better understanding of the data (and data migration) requirements.

When describing the features required in a new solution, a BA must be very careful with backward compatibility. For as long as the existing legacy system is in use, it's often the case that data will be stored in both the new and legacy systems. That means that the systems need to be kept in sync, and any enhancements in the new system should ensure that any required data can still be passed and stored in the legacy system.

For example, imagine an email address is a mandatory data item in a legacy system, but it is optional in the new system. If we make email addresses optional and create an entity without it, when we send data back to the legacy system, it will return an error. It is easy to overlook such cases, and it's important that BAs consider them.

To avoid such unpleasant surprises during the testing, I use the 'data definition' approach. To do this, I create a grid where I list all attributes of an entity, and their characteristics for the old solution and characteristics we expect for a new solution. A partial example is shown on the next page:

New Solution							Legacy Solution								
Attribute name	Type	Max length, allowed char	Req- uired	Unique	Lookup values	Rules	Attribute name	Database name	Type	Max length, allowed char	Req- uired	Unique	Lookup values	Rules	Comment

A grid such as this allows an easy comparison to be made, and differences and potential discrepancies can be spotted.

Other Transition Requirement Considerations

Requirements that cannot be implemented right away because of backward compatibility issues must be collected and stored separately. This way, after legacy solution retirement, they won't be overlooked, instead they can be actively planned and implemented.

Once we know about the features and attributes, it's time to think about what we plan to do when the key features are available in a new system. Often, the easiest and cheapest approach is to disable a feature in a legacy system. In this case, the functionality is available in a new solution only, and it is no longer available or supported on the legacy system.

However, this approach is rarely possible, especially if the majority of the features the end users need for work still rely on utilising the old system. In this case, users are working on the legacy system on a regular basis, and it will make their life difficult if we insist on using specific features in a new solution

right away. This is one reason why a limited period of parallel running may be necessary.

In such cases, it is important to agree where the 'master' version of each data item is stored. It would be preferable if this is in a new system database. But there could be situations where things are not so straightforward. If the legacy solution is very old, organisations don't always want to pay for further development. In this case it may be necessary to store the existing data in the legacy system, while creating and storing a unique ID and some additional attributes for an entity in a new solution. That means making a request to retrieve the entity data, your system makes a request to two databases. Clearly this is not ideal, and it can be important to point out any performance implications or requirements.

When deciding which system will be used to support the business during different parts of the transition between solutions, *data* is crucial. If we provide access to the data via one system, it'll be important to sync it back to the legacy system, fully or partially. Typically, if a legacy system is still in use, up-to-date data should be available there.

Once we plan the retirement for the legacy system, we should be sure all the data is migrated to the new

solutions, and we have all the features that will allow the new solution to replace the old one. At this point, the new solution should not refer to the legacy system to retrieve the data.

After a legacy system has been decommissioned, the key concern is to make sure everything is up and running. As a next step, the team should implement any required changes that have been collected as backward compatibility issues. At this point, with a single system, the core consideration is business needs so any final adjustments can be made. Often teams learn more once a system is put into use, and users will often come up with enhancement

ideas at this point. It's important to have a way of capturing these so that the users feel heard.

Conclusion

Although teams typically gravitate towards business and solution requirements, transition requirements are an important consideration. By ensuring they are front-and-centre of our thinking, we can maximise the value that we achieve for our stakeholders.

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The Missing Middle: The Gap in Our BA Community

Stu Mullinger



What Is the "BA Community" and Why Is It Important?

The business analysis community is an amorphous collection of formal and informal groups, as well as broader connections. It includes practising BAs, thought leaders, content creators, recruiters, training organisations, and those looking to join the profession. It's found in many places: conferences and events, webinars, websites, publications,

WhatsApp groups, and even conversations in cafés and pubs.

These community spaces foster the sharing of knowledge and experiences, enable the development of ideas, and provide a platform to shout about the value of great business analysis.

Who's Engaged, and Who Are We Missing?

In my experience, there are three groups that are most likely to seek

out their peers in the BA community:

- **New and aspiring BAs** come looking to grow their knowledge of business analysis, and seek opportunities to develop their skills.
- **Managers and leaders** typically want to share ideas around growing high-performing BA practices.
- **“BAs in crisis”** are those experiencing a lack of traction and buy-in within their organisation, suffering impostor syndrome, or facing threats to their role boundary or job security.

There is a cohort of business analysis professionals that are under-represented in our BA community—a group I call the “Missing Middle”. These are experienced professionals who are mostly just getting on with the job, but who don’t connect with their peers or engage with the wider profession.

I think this Missing Middle contains a huge number of great BAs with a wealth of wisdom, ideas, and creativity—and bringing them into our community could unlock great benefits to them personally, and to our profession as a whole.

Business analysis has developed and matured through sharing ideas and experiences between peers, and this must continue for the profession to adapt and thrive in the future. When experienced practitioners don’t (or can’t) engage, the collective learning diminishes and the profession risks stagnating.

Why Don’t BAs Connect with Their Professional Community?

So why are these experienced BAs missing from the conversation? I think there are three broad reasons:

- **Lack of perceived value:** Some practitioners don’t think the community offers anything they need. Perhaps whatever the community is offering just doesn’t look valuable. It’s understandable, after all if a practitioner is comfortable in their role, happy with their professional development, and feels like they’ve got enough friends in their life, does the BA community offer anything worthwhile?
- **Practical obstacles:** For some, there are obstacles preventing engagement. Daily life can be quite taxing enough, with work, family, and caring commitments all placing demands on our time.
- **Unawareness:** Others just don’t know there’s a community out there. Those that don’t spend time on LinkedIn and don’t hear about community opportunities from elsewhere may be oblivious to what’s available.

There are various ways that we could bring people in, including those described below.

Refining the Value Proposition

If we hypothesise that some of the Missing Middle think their professional community offers them little value,

we need to look at the value proposition.

We might assume when we design an event, write an article, or host a podcast, that it'll be packed full of useful knowledge, or will be a fun and exciting experience. We might also assume that any BA would love it if we can only reach them—but unless we talk to our Missing Middle, we can't truly know what they want or need.

We need more conversations to understand what's important to BAs and what they feel is worth making time for in their lives. Importantly, we need to test our assumptions.

Armed with new insights, we can consider the suitability (pricing, features, quality), convenience (choice, availability), and personal affiliation (image/brand, relationship) elements of our community offerings, and tailor content and events around pain relievers and gain creators. Luckily, our profession already has some tools to tackle challenges like this!

Removing Obstacles

If people want to engage with their community but can't, we must try and address any obstacles in their way.

Accessibility may be a key factor. We can look at where events happen: it doesn't always have to be in big cities, or even in-person. We can consider event timing: over breakfast, during the working day, later in the evening, or even at weekends!

Many people struggle to find time in their lives, and trying to attend an

event around work and family life could be an unwanted headache. If people aren't able to join real-time events, we should consider whether asynchronous communication—such as email, text/WhatsApp, LinkedIn comments—could be used to better effect, enabling people to join the conversation but at a time and cadence that works for them.

Cost might be a factor for some. Conferences can be expensive, and even membership of a professional body could feel like one bill too many. We must create plenty of interaction opportunities that won't break the bank.

We need to keep in mind that meeting strangers can fill people with dread. When first attending an event a practitioner's inner monologue might start racing: "I don't know anyone—will I be accepted? Is this a clique? What if I've nothing to offer, or end up looking stupid?"

In response to this, we have to make sure our community is as welcoming as possible. Thankfully, BAs are generally lovely people, but it's worth remembering that we can always do more. Be sure to introduce yourself, introduce people to each other and bring people into the conversation. Connect on LinkedIn and follow up with a message. Use the chat during a Zoom webinar. Put your camera on in a group discussion. Create a WhatsApp group. Meet for a coffee.

Building Community Brand Awareness

For those of us actively promoting events, articles, and news within the BA community, we need to look at

new and creative ways of reaching people. Not everyone spends time on LinkedIn!

But marketing is something we all need to do. If you know an event is happening, tell other BAs in your organisation. If you're attending, bring along a buddy. If you attended an event, tell people what you thought of it. Share the article you've just read. Recommend that podcast.

In Conclusion

Connecting with fellow BAs has given me a support network and access to the "wisdom of the hive", kept me in touch with how the profession is changing, and led me to a bunch of

brilliant buddies. It's helped build my BA skills, confidence, and personal brand. It's even opened up new career opportunities.

As our profession faces the future, we need to connect, share, and collaborate to ensure business analysis is at the heart of how businesses achieve great outcomes—and this needs all of us.

Stu is a trainer and mentor at Assist Knowledge Development, and has worked in business analysis for over 20 years. He is a former Community Director with IIBA®'s UK Chapter, and continues to be a proud cheerleader for the BA profession. Please connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).

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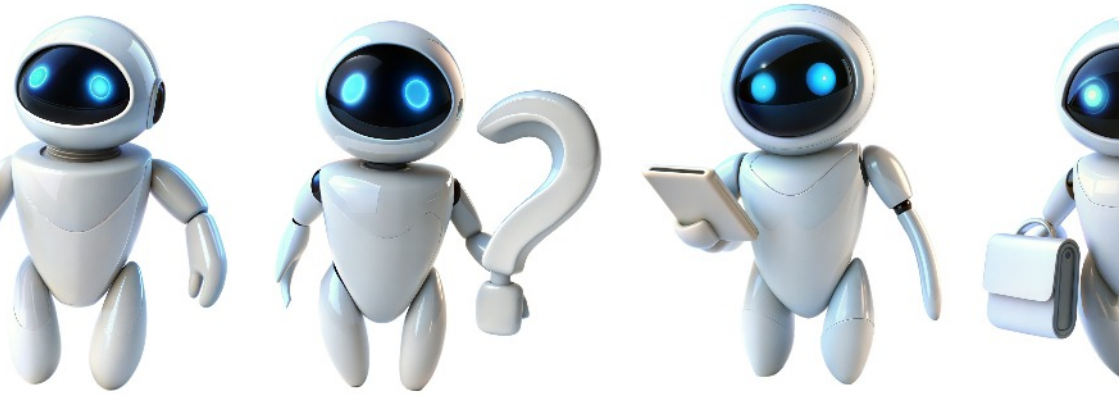
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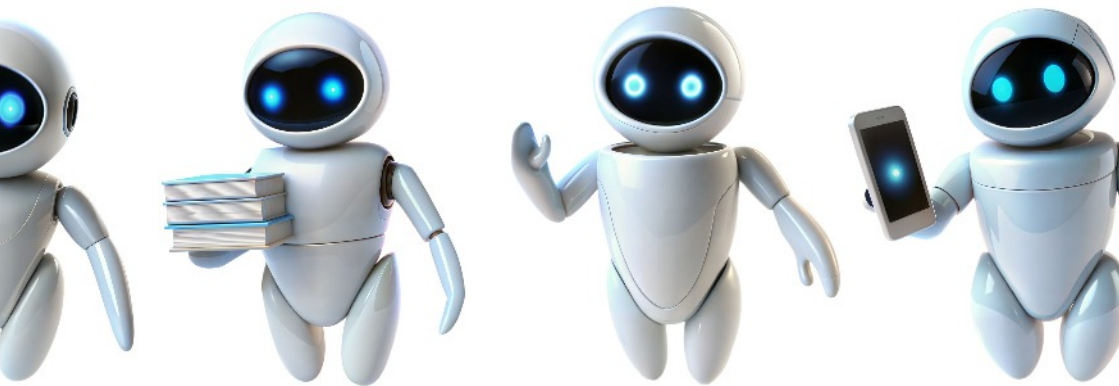
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AI as a Stakeholder in Business Analysis

Ramya Kailashnathan



The rapid evolution of technology has brought AI to the forefront of business analysis, transforming traditional approaches and introducing new dimensions to stakeholder engagement. Historically, the stakeholders that receive the most attention when undertaking business analysis have been humans, including clients, team members, and executives.

These individuals have shaped project direction and outcomes through their interests and contributions. However, arguably AI is emerging as a new type of stakeholder, reshaping how business analysts approach projects and make decisions.

What Is a Stakeholder?

Before continuing, it is worth reflecting on what the term

'stakeholder' actually means. IIBA®'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide defines a stakeholder as:

"A group or individual with a relationship to the change, the need, or the solution."

This is an extremely broad term. IIBA® provides further guidance in its core standard, but reminding us that:

"A stakeholder is an individual or group that a business analyst is likely to interact with directly or indirectly." and "Any stakeholder can be a source of requirements, assumptions, or constraints."

Arguably, if AI is used by the team that specifies the requirements for a project or product, then a stakeholder relationship exists. AI is *impacting* the product or project, and is a potential source of draft requirements that are then refined and augmented by humans. AI may also be *influenced* by the project outcomes, if the project builds or provides an AI model with data.

Understanding AI as a Stakeholder

Unlike human stakeholders, AI does not possess consciousness or personal interests. AI systems provide valuable insights that can help to drive business decisions. As Large Language Models (LLMs) evolve, they bring with them shifting capabilities, potential biases from new training data, and risks such as "hallucination"—where incorrect responses are reported to the user with confidence—necessitating a nuanced understanding of their role.

AI can identify trends and patterns that may not be immediately apparent to human analysts. This capability allows AI to recommend actions, forecast outcomes, and optimise processes, thereby becoming a critical participant in the decision-making process. The ability of AI to process vast amounts of data quickly and accurately positions it as a valuable tool in business analysis.

Impact on Business Analysis

The inclusion of AI as a stakeholder alters the dynamics of business analysis in several ways, including those listed below:

User Story Enhancement: AI acts as a stakeholder in the development of user stories, interpreting requirements and user interactions to shape functional specification documents and generate relevant stories. These stories can then be refined through human judgment, guided by insights that emerge from AI's analysis. In this role, AI influences how closely projects align with user needs and expectations, with its ability to parse requirements and anticipate patterns thereby enhancing the accuracy and relevance of user stories as a foundation for project development. Think of AI as a BA peer, helping you spot gaps and coming up with a starting point for potential user stories.

Improved Requirements Gathering: As a stakeholder in the requirements process, AI contributes by analysing feedback and historical data to refine and prioritise needs. Its

involvement helps ensure that the most critical requirements are addressed and optimised for project success. By shaping focus on the areas with the greatest impact, AI streamlines development and strengthens overall outcomes.

Also, AI can provide an additional layer of assurance by conducting a 'peer review' revealing potential gaps or oversights in requirements, influencing project planning in meaningful ways.

Enhanced Collaboration: AI participates in the collaborative process by offering real-time insights and visualisations that shape how projects are understood and managed. For example, a prototype can be quickly spun up to visually demonstrate how a solution might look and work. Its contributions help other stakeholders grasp project statuses, identify issues, and co-create solutions more effectively. By influencing a shared understanding, AI fosters stronger collaboration, accelerates decision-making, and improves the quality of outcomes.

Ethical Considerations: The integration of AI as a stakeholder necessitates careful consideration of ethical implications. AI does not have a moral compass, and BAs are well-positioned to ensure that AI systems are used responsibly, maintaining transparency and accountability in decision-making processes. The ethical use of AI involves addressing concerns such as bias, privacy, and the potential for misuse. Analysts must be vigilant in ensuring that AI's recommendations and actions align with ethical standards and organisational values.

Challenges and Opportunities

Integrating AI as a stakeholder in business analysis presents both challenges and opportunities. Analysts must navigate issues related to data privacy, bias, and the need for continuous learning to adapt to AI advancements. The challenge of ensuring AI systems are free from bias is significant, as biased AI can lead to skewed insights and flawed decision-making. Additionally, maintaining data privacy in AI-driven processes is crucial to protect sensitive information and maintain stakeholder trust.

AI can help BAs write a user story, but it cannot tell which stakeholder is quietly panicking. AI cannot read the room and weigh priorities across teams. It cannot spot the simple workaround that will break six other things we duct-taped last quarter.

At the same time, AI offers opportunities to enhance analytical capabilities, improve project outcomes, and drive innovation. The insights provided by AI can lead to more informed decisions and innovative solutions, positioning organisations to better meet the needs of their stakeholders.

Conclusion

AI's role as a stakeholder in business analysis is an exciting development that holds the potential to transform the business analysis field. By embracing AI technologies, business analysts can unlock new levels of efficiency and insight, ultimately leading to better decision-making and

improved business outcomes. But just like any other stakeholder, AI does not have the whole picture. Its input into projects will be valuable, but should not be seen as conclusive.

Business analysts who can effectively integrate AI into their processes will be well-positioned to leverage its capabilities for strategic advantage. As organisations continue to explore the potential of AI, business analysts will play a crucial role in ensuring these technologies are used ethically and effectively to meet stakeholder needs.

In summary, AI as a stakeholder in business analysis represents a paradigm shift that demands new approaches and considerations. By understanding and harnessing AI's

capabilities, business analysts can drive more impactful and innovative projects, ensuring their organisations remain competitive in a rapidly changing landscape. The future promises further advancements in AI technology, offering business analysts even greater tools for enhancing stakeholder engagement and project success.

Ramya is a dynamic Business Analyst and board member of the IIBA® Denmark Chapter. With experience across global organisations, she excels in digital transformation and cross-functional collaboration. A contributor to industry publications, avid reader, and an active volunteer, she is recognised for her empathy, positive energy, and strategic insight.

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“This Meeting Could Have Been an Email.” Really?

Nick de Voil



In January 2023, the COO of e-commerce systems company Shopify announced on Twitter:

“Meetings are a bug. Today, we shipped a fix to this bug at Shopify... Companies are for builders. Not managers.”

With that, the company cancelled all meetings with more than two attendees and shut down its public Slack channels. They were tapping into a belief that’s widespread amongst not only developers, but many other professionals too, that meetings are a waste of time.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It’s in conversations between people that “social reality”, i.e. the set of all our shared beliefs about the world, is created and sustained. Of course it’s true that some meetings are not as well run as they might be, but that’s a separate issue. Meetings are the most important thing that happens in an organisation.

Group Construct Systems (GCS) are created by interactions between people. For a business analyst, any conversation between stakeholders, such as in a meeting or workshop, is an opportunity to deepen your understanding of each Individual’s Construct System (ICS) and see what happens when those construct systems come into contact with each other—in other words, how the group construct system is created and maintained. Even if the meeting is boring or seems to be badly organised, there’s still a wealth of learning that you can take from it.

Group Construct Analysis (GCA) includes some techniques that can help you think about and visualise this. You can use these techniques in real time, as a way of taking notes during a meeting. But they’re also useful for visualising the macro-conversations that go on within an organisation over a period of days, months or even years.

Construct Diagrams

We've discussed construct diagrams in several earlier articles in this series. A construct is a subjective concept, idea or category that forms part of someone's conscious or unconscious thought processes. A construct diagram shows each relevant construct as a bubble or other shape. These can be joined together with lines showing relationships between the constructs. Relationships can be of various different types (see for example [articles 2](#), [3](#) and [11](#)). The relative locations of shapes on the diagram is not significant. It's an informal type of diagram which you can customise in any way you find helpful.

How ICS and GCS Are Related

A key concern for GCA is to

understand how the construct systems of relevant individuals feed into the emergent group construct system, and how they in turn are shaped by it. This is difficult, because:

- All construct systems are constantly evolving;
- Each individual's ICS both influences and is influenced by the GCS;
- The GCS is only accessible to each individual via their perceptions and hence their own ICS.

Fortunately for us as analysts, communication largely takes place in the objectively real world, which means we can observe and analyse it. And since it's in communication that the GCS emerges, the only difference between our perception of the GCS and the group members' perception of it is that we have different ICSs.

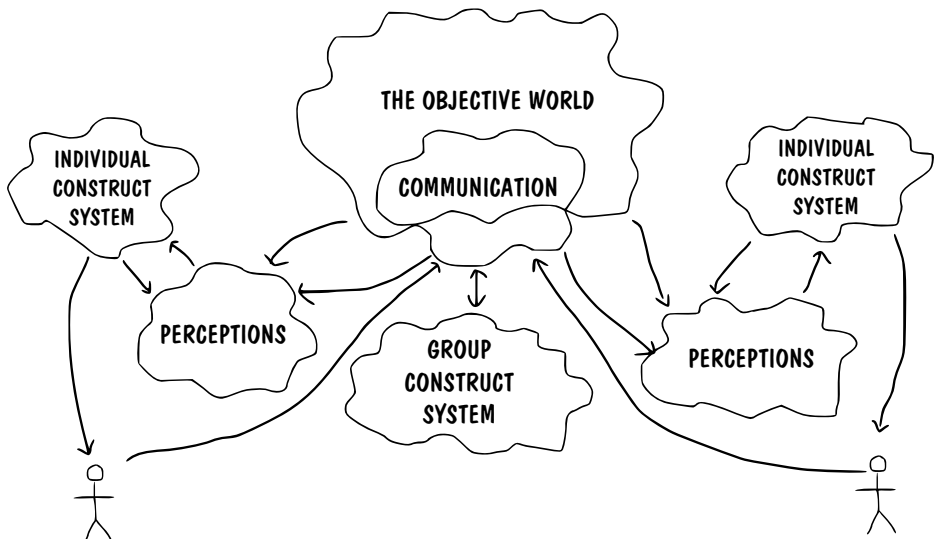


Figure 1: how ICS and GCS are related

A tool that can help us understand the emergence of the GCS amongst a group of stakeholders is the roulette diagram.

Analysing Conversations with Roulette Diagrams

In the gambling game of roulette, the croupier spins a [roulette wheel](#) and simultaneously spins a small ball round a track surrounding the wheel. The track slopes inwards, so that as the ball slows, it will settle in one of the numbered niches around the edge of the wheel.

Conversations are similar. Instead of a circular wheel, we have an arena—a forum for interaction, such as a meeting or an informal discussion. Each participant can act like the croupier in roulette, dropping their own constructs into the conversation. The wheel is constantly turning. Some constructs will “win”—they will become taken up into the group’s GCS—and others will be ignored or eventually rejected. Each individual’s contributions are informed by their own ICS, their own private thoughts, and by their unique perception of what is going on in the conversation.

Roulette diagrams are based on this analogy. The arena is shown as a circle in the centre of the diagram. The area outside the circle is divided into segments, one per participant. Each segment can show a construct diagram representing that participant and “where they’re coming from”. When a participant contributes a construct to the discussion, this can be shown by reproducing the construct from the outer segment inside the arena and linking the two with a line.

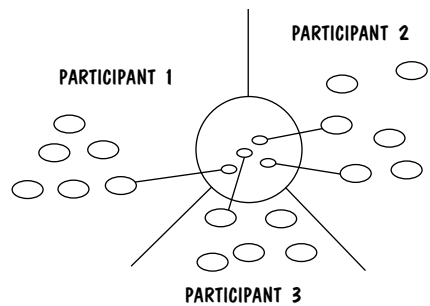


Figure 2: a roulette diagram

In a “zoomed in” version of the diagram you can look at the arena in isolation, and examine the ways in which the constructs are compared, categorised, evaluated and linked to each other or rejected. This might include using any or all of the ideas that we’ve looked at in previous articles, such as:

- Frames, including the universe of discourse
- Metaphors
- Construct coalitions
- Indirection (the use of signs)

If the conversation is long or complicated, you can draw a series of arena diagrams showing the phases through which the interaction passes. It’s also interesting to understand how the ICS of the different participants is “rewired” by the conversation, but this is hard to evaluate at the time and usually only becomes clear later.

Conclusion

Making textual notes, or structuring them with a mind map, is often a good way of recording what is said in a meeting. But supplementing this

with a roulette diagram helps you to tune in to how the participants are influencing, or not influencing the conversation. This includes your own contribution—the diagram will show whether your ideas resonated, and with whom. You can use it afterwards to help you reflect on how you might be able to get your message across more effectively in future.

In future articles we'll look at some more techniques for visualising interpersonal dynamics.

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When Data Falls Short: The Missing Pieces in Decision Making

Agnieszka Balcerzak



In today's era of AI-powered business, data is omnipresent. Organisations tirelessly collect and transform massive streams of data into information, all in pursuit of the 'data-driven' ideal. However, data that isn't translated into concrete decisions and purposeful actions amounts to little more than digital clutter. The reason we analyse data is not simply to accumulate facts but to make faster, more confident, and more effective business choices—so we can act, adapt, and deliver real impact. For leaders, the true challenge is to extract deeper insights, convert knowledge into meaningful action, and ensure decisions genuinely move the organisation forward. Ultimately, it is the thoughtful application of data—guided by context and purpose—that transforms information into results.

What Is a Decision, Really?

A decision is rarely just a

mathematical calculation or the product of a dashboard. It's a conscious commitment to act, made within a landscape of alternatives, motivations, and constraints. Most business choices begin with framing the problem—clarifying what truly needs to be resolved—then sifting through both measurable factors and subtle influences that affect the outcome. It's like assembling a jigsaw puzzle: most of us start with the outer frame before working through the complex details inside.

True decision support—as at the heart of any business analysis role—goes beyond structuring information. It involves setting the environment where decision makers understand the full story and can connect the dots. While repeatable, clearly described elements of a decision can sometimes be delegated or automated, there is always vital space for human experience, intuition, and contextual awareness—

none of which fits neatly into a spreadsheet. Or does it?

Framing the Puzzle: Delegation and Automation

AI and automation excel at handling routine, rule-based processes. But before any decision can be entrusted to technology, leaders must ask themselves which factors are constant, and which change with context. Only elements that can be captured, modelled, and replicated reliably are candidates for automation. Everything else—from swiftly-shifting market signals and competitive moves to emotions and social dynamics—cannot be fully delegated. This makes context indispensable even in the most digital environments.

A common fallacy in business is believing that more data automatically means better outcomes. Decision models can automate approvals, predictions, or operational responses, but their output is only meaningful when contextual understanding—the true shape of the puzzle—is established before any system is switched on.

The Changing Understanding of Data

Traditionally, the word “data” referred to structured records: customer details, orders, sales figures. Today, business data is a blend of structured and unstructured sources: emails, images, conversations, process documentation, and social media. While new streams add dimensions, simply having more data does not guarantee smarter decisions. Raw

data, no matter how detailed, is inert in isolation. Its value is only realised when interpreted through context—viewing data not just as numbers but as information about how business works, from its mission, values, and culture to underlying systems and processes.

Much of this business context can now be captured and delivered to AI solutions as written information: documentation, mission statements, or procedures. Yet, critical knowledge often remains unwritten—living in employees’ minds and shaping culture through invisible rules and stories. This is something AI still cannot access or replicate.

When it comes to decision-making the essential purpose of data is to reduce uncertainty, inform choices, and underpin agility. Even the most accurate datasets lose value if disconnected from the conditions they were gathered in or the goals they were intended to serve.

The Critical Role of Context in Decision-making

Context—comprising timing, environment, external and internal motivations, trends, and social dynamics—surround every decision. Numbers only become meaningful when interpreted within this bigger picture. Think about how your lunch choice goes beyond nutrition facts—expiry dates, recent cravings, marketing, and even childhood memories might guide your selection. The same principle applies in business.

For organisations, context incorporates history, values, mission,

culture, communication styles, and current developments. A sales report tells part of the story, but without understanding a product launch or an emerging market trend, strategic decisions risk being technically precise but fundamentally disconnected from reality.

Supporting Decisions: Synthesis, Not Just Calculation

Genuine decision support goes far beyond generating more dashboards or endless reports. At its best, high-quality support helps leaders articulate their objectives and set decisions firmly within a well-understood context. It guides them to recognise what can be measured and automated, and where the nuances of human judgment remain critical. The most effective outcomes arise when quantitative analysis is integrated with qualitative, emotional, and cultural understanding, ensuring that every perspective is considered. When organisations move away from chasing raw numerical accuracy and focus instead on cultivating meaningful understanding, the quality of their decisions improves—even if the underlying data is imperfect or incomplete.

Why Context Beats Even the Best Data

One of business's most pervasive myths is that abundant, accurate data alone ensures better decisions. In reality, organisations with partial or flawed data often outperform those with perfect metrics—provided they possess deep contextual awareness

and interpret their facts wisely. Failed decisions occur more frequently because people neglect context, failing to tell the story behind the numbers, rather than because they lack data.

When organisations foster dialogue, challenge prevailing assumptions, and situate information within a broader narrative, they become more adaptive, resilient, and creative. In summary: perfect data without context produces poor decisions, while lower-quality data enriched with context often leads to actionable, superior outcomes.

Conclusion

The quest for better decisions in the age of AI is not a race toward purity or statistical perfection—although high data quality does matter. What matters even more is framing the right problem, distinguishing what can truly be measured from what requires human interpretation, and always embedding data within context. Leaders must consistently clarify intent, question assumptions, and value human insight as the anchor of every effective choice. Ultimately, it is still people who assume responsibility for decisions, not AI. Sustainable business success, meaningful innovation, and adaptability depend not only on what organisations can measure, but on how well they interpret and act on data within the complex realities of their world.

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From BA to Business Product Analyst: When Analysts Drive Product Strategy

Anurita Ruscoe

Agile approaches such as Scrum are frequently favoured by organisations that set out to deliver change. However, the [Scrum guide](#) doesn't formally define the role of a business analyst within its framework. With product owners typically owning the "what" and Scrum masters driving the "how", many BAs have found themselves wondering, "Where do I fit in now?"

I've seen it first hand on transformation programmes: talented BAs feel trapped in a hamster wheel and seen as glorified scribes, churning out user stories and acceptance criteria while real decisions happen elsewhere.

For some, unfortunately, that's the reality. But the best-in-class BAs are evolving, ready to lead the next chapter.

I call this evolution **the rise of the Business Product Analyst (BPA)**, a new breed of BA who fuses business acumen, product strategy, and analytical depth to deliver measurable value in an AI-driven world.

Why This Conversation Matters Now

The pace of change is redefining every industry. Organisations are

racing to digitise operations, automate workflows, and deliver more personalised customer experiences. Banks now deploy AI-powered chatbots to handle customer enquiries, while retailers use real-time analytics to tailor product recommendations. Agile delivery has become the norm in many contexts, AI is reshaping how we specify, design and deliver solutions, and roles that once sat neatly in silos are rapidly blurring.

Rather than a 'traditional' BA, I believe the BPA is at the heart of this transformation. The BPA is a hybrid strategist who fuses business insight, product thinking, and analytical expertise.

Their value lies in ensuring every change initiative is anchored in measurable outcomes, bridging the gap between what the business aspires to achieve and how technology brings those ambitions to life. However, before exploring the role of the BPA, it is worth busting some agile myths...

Mythbusting: Common Misconceptions About BAs in Agile

Myth 1: "Agile doesn't need Business Analysts."

Truth: Some agile approaches may not specifically name the BA role, but they desperately need the capability. Every agile team still needs someone who can connect customer insight, business value, and delivery priorities, someone who ensures the team builds the right thing, not just builds fast.

Myth 2: "BAs just document stories."

Truth: The best BAs shape product direction. They translate strategy into roadmaps, spot dependencies early, and challenge assumptions that could derail delivery.

Agile without analytical rigour, such as careful planning, data driven decision making, and thorough review, leads to chaos, resulting in missed deadlines, poor product quality, and miscommunication among team members. The BPA brings structure, insight, and value focus.

From Requirements Elicitation to Product Thinking

A BPA blends the best of business analysis and product strategy. Instead of asking, "What do you need the system to do?", a BPA asks: "What problem are we solving?", "Are we making money or saving money?", and, "What's the real value we need to achieve and why does it matter?"

A BPA doesn't just document what stakeholders request. They challenge, prioritise, and shape what actually gets built, ensuring every story links back to a relevant set of Objectives and Key Results (OKRs).

In my experience of leading transformation programmes, the most successful BAs aren't the loudest in the room, they are the ones who quietly connect the dots others don't see. They read the room, spot misalignment early, and

translate complexity into clarity. That's where real influence lives, not in volume, but in value.

Evolving from BAs to Product Strategist

BAs can expand their remit into true product strategy by influencing roadmaps, championing customer value, and shaping decision making. They:

- Translate business strategy into product goals, identify where customer value and commercial value overlap.
- Use data and insight to influence priorities, not just refine them.
- Partner with UX and data teams to uncover friction points and ensure the roadmap reflects outcomes, not outputs.

Apply frameworks like Weighted Shortest Job First (WSJF) to deliver the highest-value work first and align sprint goals to OKRs so everyone understands how their work ladders up to strategy.

Techniques of a Strategic BPA

Top performing BPAs use a toolkit that goes far beyond documentation. They use journey mapping to reveal value gaps, OKRs to tie every epic and story to measurable outcomes, WSJF to prioritise high-value, low-effort initiatives, hypothesis statements to replace "the business wants X" with "we believe X will achieve Y for Z", and value-stream thinking to identify where value is created or lost. These aren't nice-to-

haves, they're how modern analysts stay relevant in a product-led, AI-driven environment.

Making the Shift: Building a Product Mindset

If you're ready to evolve from BA to BPA, start by joining product roadmap sessions, even if you're not usually invited and observe how decisions are made. Speak in customer and value terms, replace requirements with problems, outcomes, and hypotheses. Learn product concepts such as Minimum Viable Product (MVP), as well as broader marketing and business concepts such as Net Promoter Score (NPS), and customer lifetime value. Partner rather than compete with product owners, bringing the validation and insight that make their vision achievable. And experiment with AI and automation, let technology handle the admin so you can focus on strategy, judgement, and influence.

The AI Advantage

AI is changing how we work, and speed at which we work. Tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, and Miro AI can already draft acceptance criteria, generate test cases, and even suggest process optimisations. But they still need a human analyst who can ask the right questions, validate assumptions, and understand the organisational context. The BAs who will thrive are those who co-pilot with AI, using it to enhance insight, not replace thinking.

AI won't replace BAs but I believe BAs who use AI will replace those who don't.

Why This Matters: The Future Is Business Product Analysis

In my experience the most successful transformations today are product-led, outcome-focused, and increasingly AI enabled. BPA sits right at the intersection of business ambition, product direction, and intelligent delivery. AI can optimise workflows, but it can't replicate curiosity, empathy, or strategic judgment. That's where the evolved BA shines.

The BA role isn't fading, it's transforming. The next generation of analysts won't be known for writing perfect user stories, they'll be known

for shaping the right ones. The title may evolve, but the mission remains the same: **To turn business intent into real-world value.**

Maybe it's time we stop asking if BAs fit into agile and start showing how BPAs redefine it.

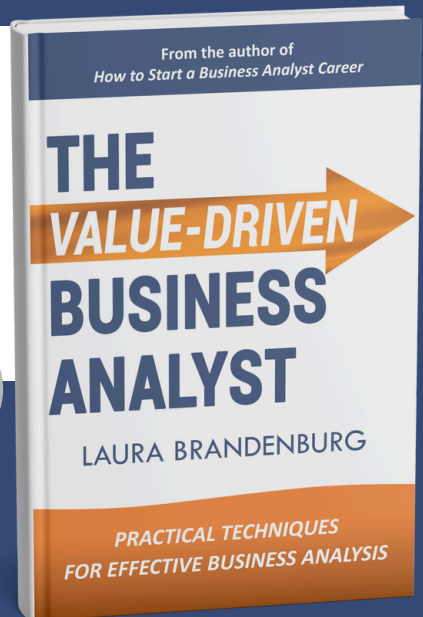
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The Invisible Business Analyst: The Strategic Force Driving Real Business Change

Sadia Riaz

What if the most influential person on your project was not your CEO or product owner but someone you rarely notice? Business analysts may not always be front and centre, yet they are indispensable change agents who shape strategy and deliver measurable results. BAs help instil holistic thinking that gets to the root of the problem, and ensures the most appropriate change is delivered, maximising the chances of the desired business outcomes being achieved.

While BAs uncover insights that transform organisations, unless visibility is sought, their contributions may go unrecognised. This article outlines practical ways BAs can overcome invisibility, demonstrate impact and secure recognition for their strategic role.

Why BAs Remain Unseen and Why It Matters

BAs do not take problems at face value or settle for surface symptoms. By digging deep to identify root

causes and repeatedly asking 'why', they ensure solutions align with organisational objectives. Despite this, their work is often unnoticed beyond the core team.

Invisibility can lead to critical business thinking being undervalued. Decisions made without BA insight risk solutions that miss the mark, scope creep that undermines delivery and missed opportunities for transformation.

It is worth examining some examples of the type of value that BAs can add. Here are just a few examples. I have seen BAs that have:

- Mapped processes in a supply chain, identifying and plugging a gap that saved the company thousands of dollars each month. Without the BA's persistence, this issue might never have been discovered and few outside the team knew of her contribution.
- Analysed reporting processes and found redundant data requests. Through consolidation, they cut

reporting time in half whilst also freeing up colleagues' time.

- Mapped cross-departmental processes, allowing unnecessary hand-offs between marketing and sales to be identified and reduced. This enabled a streamlined approach to be implemented, enabling faster campaign launches and improved customer experience.

These micro-stories show that a BA's contribution is extremely valuable, even if it is not always visible. Raising the profile of business analysis will enable us as a community to get *more* opportunities to help drive organisational success.

The challenge is *how...*

Turning Recognition into Influence

Becoming visible starts with telling the story of your work in a way that resonates with decision-makers. Rather than focusing only on outputs such as requirements, process maps or user stories, BAs should demonstrate how these directly connect to organisational goals. Framing work in terms of business value, cost savings, risk reduction or customer benefits shifts perception from "note taker" to "strategic enabler".

To achieve this, BAs must develop a focused skill set and actively participate in strategic conversations, rather than simply reacting. By identifying opportunities, validating assumptions with data and presenting clear, evidence-based recommendations, BAs position

themselves as drivers of change rather than recorders of it.

Consider a BA I saw leading an AI-powered ticketing system. They found the AI was unintentionally favouring certain requests. They worked with the technical team to remove bias and coordinated with legal and compliance teams to ensure fairness. The result was a system that served all users effectively, clearly showing how strategic BA involvement creates visible, measurable outcomes.

Key Skills for Visibility and Impact

BAs need a mix of technical expertise, analytical insight and interpersonal skills. Analytical insight validates assumptions, technical expertise simplifies complex systems, and interpersonal skills build trust and influence. A holistic approach ensures solutions address both organisational objectives and human impact. Prioritising user experience and service design helps ideas translate into meaningful, adopted outcomes.

Building Visibility in Practice

Visibility is less about self-promotion and more about linking BA work to outcomes that matter. Tracking benefits after implementation, sharing results with senior leaders and facilitating workshops that connect strategy to execution make impact tangible. Quantifiable outcomes give stakeholders clear evidence of the value BAs contribute.

For example, on a recent CRM upgrade, one BA noticed sales teams

were duplicating data entry. By redesigning a single workflow, the BA cut administration time by around 40% and freed teams to focus on customers. Such small, measured interventions demonstrate how invisible contributions become visible when outcomes are tracked. Visibility not only accelerates career growth but also extends a BA's influence beyond the immediate project.

Other practical steps include volunteering to present at town halls or internal events, contributing to communities of practice and using visuals such as infographics or concise summaries to communicate results. Collectively, these actions reinforce the BA's value and reduce the risk of invisibility.

While visibility secures influence today, preparing for the future ensures BAs continue to lead tomorrow.

Preparing BAs to Lead the Future

The future demands BAs stay ahead of change by strengthening skills in data analysis, AI literacy, cybersecurity awareness and customer-centric service design. As AI adoption accelerates, BAs must evaluate opportunities, manage risks and address ethical implications while working with compliance teams to ensure responsible use. Cybersecurity expertise is equally essential for protecting sensitive data and meeting regulatory standards.

Emotional intelligence, empathy and cultural awareness remain crucial as BAs work across virtual and global teams. These skills strengthen

collaboration and ensure technology and process-driven changes deliver real benefits for both people and organisations.

From Invisible to Indispensable

Invisibility is not inevitable. By linking work to measurable outcomes, engaging in strategic conversations and combining technical expertise with human understanding, BAs can secure recognition as essential drivers of change. By applying the strategies outlined above, BAs can ensure their work is recognised and valued at every level. Increasing visibility not only benefits the organisation but also accelerates the BA's professional development.

In a world of disruption and opportunity, the BA's role is more vital than ever. They are the quiet architects of success, turning unseen influence into visible impact and ensuring change is not only delivered but truly transformational. Invisible yet indispensable, BAs guide organisations towards sustainable transformation by combining insight with empathy, making their impact clear and measurable. It is time for BAs to step into the spotlight and claim their strategic place within the organisation.

Sadia Riaz is a Business Analyst who specialises in driving strategic change through insight, empathy and collaboration. With experience across digital transformation and stakeholder engagement, Sadia advocates for the often unseen yet essential role of the BA. Connect on LinkedIn:

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Power of Natural Language - Traps and Treasures

Łukasz Lechert

"Kto mówi językiem
niezrozumiałym dla nikogo
poza nim, nie mówi wcale"

("One who speaks a language
that no one understands, speaks
nothing at all" – Unknown author)

Requirements in Natural Language

Business analysis and data analytics are based not only on numerical data, but also on information written in natural language such as emails, customer conversations, project documentation and sets of requirements. Natural language documentation seems easy to write because most people can read and write in their native language. It could be said that no special knowledge or skills are needed to elicit and document requirements. However, this is far from the truth.

In this article, we'll examine aspects of incorrect requirements that were

captured in natural language. The aim of the article is to demonstrate how rules for writing requirements statements add value to a project and foster shared understanding.

That Is Simple. Before We Get into Trouble

Natural language—the raw material for building relationships—is a great tool for communication, but a weak foundation for an unquestionable source of truth. It is weak because it is based on human nature and a wide range of assumptions and limitations. The [International Qualification Board for Business Analysis \(IQBBA\)](#)'s ['Certified Foundation Level Business Analyst' \(CFLBA\) Syllabus](#) defines a number of business analysis related traps including the following: unclear business objectives of the initiative, communication problems and knowledge barriers, no baseline for requirements, frequent and uncontrolled changes in

requirements, and from my point of view, many dangerous assumptions which assume that the issue is obvious and simple.

Without care, every uncontrolled sentence written in natural language can become incomprehensible to someone who does not understand the context in which it is written. Slang, single words as requirements and grammatical defects are common issues that require further explanation and additional effort. Words like "fast", "simple", "intuitive", and "responsive" sound trendy and cool but they require effort to explain their meanings. What does "save data" mean? For a key user, it may simply mean saving the data. For an analyst, it might refer to extracting and saving data to a local file in text format. For a software developer, it means saving the data to a database. A poorly and ambiguously established description will create issues that will be more a source of lost profits and misunderstandings than clear guidelines helping achieve the goal.

Examining Defects in Requirements

Business goals without a time horizon, a complex user story impossible to estimate and solution requirements without priorities are just some examples of poorly created analysis artefacts. In each of the listed elements, various rules can be applied that will improve the quality of the description. Let's review some hypothetical functional requirements.

Imagine we were defining a system that would capture information about

a project practitioner's experience of the Scrum framework. Here is a natural language statement, including several hypothetical requirements:

"The form must provide an editbox to enter the age of a person, a drop-down list to select the name of the last role played in Scrum and a drop-down list for Scrum skills self-assessment. The role field must include typical Scrum roles: Scrum master, product owner and developer. The drop-down list self-assessment must include entries such as: No experience/Beginner/Skilled/Advanced. The system must allow the data entered to persist and be stored".

Starting with general static analysis and applying the rules proposed by [INCOSE](#) in their [document "Guide to Writing Requirements"](#), this example contains many defects. Firstly, the sentence is long and unwieldy. It breaks rule number 1, in that a requirement should be a structured statement.

The requirement also asks for an age of the data subject to be entered, this sounds simple but may not be so obvious. This requirement does not define the unit of age, and breaks the rule known as "common units of measure". The sentence is not clear and we don't know how precise the entry should be. Should it just be in years? Years and months? Or even more granular than this. Furthermore, the requirement breaks the rule range of values. It is unclear whether the survey is targeted exclusively at individuals of working age (e.g. 18–65 years old) or also includes respondents who have reached retirement age. The requirement for the *role* field is

formulated vaguely, illustrated by the use of the dangerously vague term “typical”. [The Scrum expansion pack](#) also lists the roles of stakeholder and supporter. There is no chance to expand given drop-down because of the closed list of entries and its inflexibility.

Additionally, this requirement creates a survey that relies on the user providing a self-assessment of their abilities. This is frequently a component of many surveys but often difficult to conduct independently. The requirement for a drop-down list for self-assessment also violates the rules of vague terms, using the sentence “must include entries *such as*”, this implies that the list provided is not extensive. Additionally, using the oblique symbol (“/”) creates ambiguity as to whether this is a separator or should appear on the list. The oblique (“slash”) symbol has many possible meanings and it is best avoided. Sometimes the term “and/or” is used, however it is not specified whether it is in fact an alternative or a logical conjunction, which will cause confusion.

Not only this, the self-assessment field contains a significant defect in that the drop-down list item has no defined logical relationship to the role field. If the user selects “No experience” does the role field have to be blank? Or are there other logical or conditional relationships? Nobody knows that.

Finally, all the data entered by the person surveyed must be saved. It’s really simple. Why is that mentioned? The sentence “all the collected data” breaks the rule of universal qualification. In this case use the

word “each” instead of “all” when universal quantification is intended and define the required fields and the point at which it should be saved. After all, it might not be necessary to save the data upon each keystroke, perhaps it is only required once a valid entry has been entered.

Even after this analysis, the data storage is also unknown. We don’t know whether there are any non-functional architectural requirements, whether the data should be saved to a database or to a given file format.

With all of this in mind, it seems likely that these ambiguous requirements will lead to problems if they were implemented. Let’s have a look at some types of failures in the context of the age field. We will likely see failures related to data entered that breaks business rules. For example, is the intention for the respondent to enter their current age, or the age at the time they first started to participate in Scrum? There will also likely be failures related to data format, unit of measure, number range, mismatching data types, data validation, usability and even user frustration. And finally, how much will it cost to fix this? It is worth spending time reflecting on this to avoid future technical debt and expensive repairs.

Summary: Five Main Thoughts

There are a number of ways that requirements can be improved. Five key considerations are to:

- Think like a customer, empathise with them and try walking in their shoes.

- Establish a basis using dictionaries, glossary and a shared standard set of business terms as reference.
- Avoid waste, use short sentences and sentence patterns.
- See the whole, express yourself concretely and precisely.
- Use guides because they make things simpler.

Conclusion

Natural language is a powerful tool. A specification including good requirements can build bridges between people and foster true shared understanding, but incorrect documentation can create a fog in a project. You can significantly improve the quality of requirements by using

the INCOSE rules. Additionally the INCOSE rule number 23 can be used in an optional way (e.g. supporting diagrams, models), improving the communication and trying to present complexity of the problem in a more comfortable visual way. Please, remember this. When requirements are handled loosely and mixed with pseudo-knowledge, the consequences may be costly. Good luck!

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Tracing Requirements - the Ultimate Business Analysis Superpower

Christina Kumar

When talking about business analysis, a number of activities typically spring to mind. These might include problem definition, elicitation, requirements gathering, current state analysis, future state definition and solution design, development and test, facilitation and more. All of these activities are fundamental to a project, however, one discipline that is often overlooked is *traceability*. After all, traceability is critical to “joining the dots” between activities, ensuring there is a logical connection of requirements from start (problem statement) to finish (solution components and test cases). In fact, I consider requirements traceability so useful to any project that I refer to the tool as the ultimate business analysis superpower.

The Power of Traceability

IIBA® defines requirement traceability in its Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide as: “the

ability for tracking the relationships between sets of requirements and designs from the original stakeholder need to the actual implemented solution”. BABOK® also describes how traceability involves tracing relationships between requirements. As a business analyst, this is a weapon against scope creep and gaps in functionality. Requirements traceability allows you to make sure that every part of the project is useful and can be traced back to some part of the problem statement and that the underlying business need is completely satisfied by the designed solution. By ensuring and clearly tracing requirements in an easy-to-distribute format, the business analyst is building trust and a shared understanding amongst the business and technical teams who now know that every project component is being created with purpose and for a reason. Now that’s what I call a superpower!

Building in Traceability

Now that we are aware of how powerful requirements traceability can be, we need to be able to harness that power using some kind of structure. A common and practical way of demonstrating that all requirements are traceable is in a straightforward matrix, as illustrated in the example below. I've provided a list of columns that I think should be included in such a matrix. Of course, you will want to adapt these to fit your organisational context:

- **ID:** A unique identifier that allows you to easily refer to the requirement.
- **Description:** A detailed summary of what the requirement is.
- **Source:** Where the requirement was identified. Examples include legislation, a stakeholder meeting, an internal procedure etc. It's critical to identify the source of a requirement so that it is clear how it was identified, particularly if questions arise later down the track.
- **Business problem addressed:** How and what part of the business problem is being addressed.
- **Solution design component:** The solution component designed to meet the requirement and therefore address the underlying business problem. In the matrix below, I've referred to the component by its reference ID to be detailed further in a separate design document.
- **Test case:** The test case(s) that will be used to ensure the solution meets the requirement. In the matrix below, similar to the solution design component, I've referred to the test case by reference ID to be detailed further in a separate test document.
- **Status:** The stage which the requirement is at i.e. validated, approved etc. This column—while not strictly related to traceability—is really important as part of the maintenance of project requirements and making sure they are up to date.

ID	Description	Source	Business problem addressed	Solution design component	Test case	Status
R1	The system must display an alert if a student's attendance rate for a term is below the legislative limit.	Legislation (see BRD Section 1.2)	Educators need to be made aware of students who are at risk of not meeting school attendance requirements.	D1	T1, T2	Approved

Table 1: Example of a requirements traceability matrix for a system to address the lack of visibility for educators over a student's school attendance.

Alongside this, you may also want to include columns showing relationships between requirements (e.g. related requirements, or where high level requirements are decomposed into more detail). Also, where other artefacts are created (e.g. process models, journey maps etc), you should ensure that there is a column allowing these to be cross-referenced. For simplicity, I haven't included these in the example above, however this highlights how important it is to adapt this example to your individual context.

The Advantages of Traceability

Sometimes business analysts are met with resistance when trying to introduce change, particularly around the creation documentation and often under the guise of "being agile." So, let's build the case for requirements traceability by summarising the key benefits:

- **Eliminate scope creep:** Traceability helps keep us on track. By ensuring the lineage of requirements is captured, we are ensuring that all requirements address the defined problem statement, and all solution components must meet the requirements. No fluff needed.

- **Identify gaps:** Traceability helps us ensure that every part of the defined problem statement and underlying business need is covered by the requirements and the solution, ensuring 100% coverage.
- **Create shared awareness:** Additionally, good traceability practices ensures that project team members are aware of the scope of the solution. This provides a further sense-check that no gaps exist and that every component is addressing the defined problem and the underlying business need.

Conclusion

Traceability is sometimes seen as an overhead, however it could equally be reframed as a superpower. By 'building in' traceability to what we do, we help to eliminate scope creep, identify gaps and create shared awareness. In doing so, we help deliver better outcomes for our business stakeholders, avoiding costly mistakes. It is an investment in time that is well worth making!

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BA Back Stories

James Dean



Interviewed by Christina Lovelock

James is a business analyst who has worked across a range of sectors. He is the President of the [IIBA® Ireland Chapter](#), and was a finalist for IIBA® Volunteer of the Year 2025. (Congratulations James!)

What else is going on for you this week? (What would you be doing if we weren't having this conversation?)

A lot of things! I'd probably still be working on the next phase of a product we just launched. I led the planning and coordination—running workshops, discovering needs, and making sure everyone stayed aligned. The product helps people track how well they respond to energy events

and see the impact on their earnings. It was exciting to see it go live, especially because I got to demo it for the marketing team, and they ended up sharing that demo on social media.

Secondly, I'd be working on planning initiatives for IIBA® Ireland chapter. We have upcoming events and an ongoing series which is "A Day in the Life of a BA," that I created. The idea came from noticing how the current market often expects BAs to be "experts" in specific domains, technologies and tools, even though the true role of a BA is to work *with* experts, not to be one. I wanted to help reduce these misconceptions, so I organised a series where BAs can talk about what their day is actually



like. They share the terminology they use, the processes involved in their sector, and the tasks they perform. This way, BAs interested in transitioning into that domain can gain insight into the real day-to-day work, the stakeholders involved and the challenges they face.

At first, I thought the series would only run for two or three sessions, but it gained a lot of interest. It's brilliant, because it's not just BAs from Ireland; people from all over the world join. I wanted to give something back to the community, especially because it can be hard to understand what a BA does in a particular sector without actually working in it.

So that's what's been going on and that's what I would have been doing!

What topics are you interested in learning more about at the moment?

There's a few. I've been a BA for eight years, and I find I'm at the point in my career where I don't want to be solely focused on just functional or non-functional requirements, like user stories and features. I love them, but I need to grow! And to grow I feel like I need to be more strategic.

I'm exploring more strategic business analysis and how it overlaps with product management. I work closely with product managers, so I'm observing what they do day-to-day and trying to see how my skill set aligns with that role. I'm not saying I'm moving away from business analysis, because BA work isn't defined by a job title but by how we work, but product management has become a real interest of mine. It's also a hot topic within the BA

community, and there are so many different paths within it that I can explore.

Business architecture is another area I'm interested in. The more I work with data and data requirements, the more I want to understand how data fits into our broader architecture. For example, when I'm creating an Entity Relationship Diagram (ERD), I want to understand how the data feeds into our overall architecture and how that links to strategy. I find that really fascinating.

I also have a five year goal to gain my CBAP®, and this is my fifth year, so I'm studying for the exam while working. As I go through the CBAP® material, I'm looking at how I can incorporate that knowledge into my day-to-day work and identify areas where I want to grow.

What led you to business analysis?

When I graduated from college, in IT Management, I wanted to be an Oracle database administrator because I fell in love with databases in college and I loved SQL. I thought that was the best career path for me.

However, I realised that there weren't a lot of opportunities out there for that particular type of role. I got hired as a system analyst and developer in my first company and the plan was for me to take over their internal database system and support other applications using programming languages. I found I really struggled with programming. I could read code, I could understand it, but writing code to fix the problem, it just wasn't for me. It was six months later that an opportunity came up as a business





analyst for a project. They didn't have another available business analyst at the time. So, they're like, "Oh, we'll just put James on this project", where I was like, "'Yeah, sure, cool, let's do it.'" But I was also thinking "What is a business analyst?"

They assigned a senior business analyst ([Rob Ryan](#)) to show me the ropes, and they had several templates that we used to capture the requirements, which I eventually learned how to use, but as I progressed as a BA on the project I wanted more structure and additional ways to "capture" requirements, so I started Googling and researching and I came across the [IIBA®](#) and the [BABOK®](#) guide.

That helped me validate a lot of what I had been doing as a BA, and allowed me to take the knowledge and content from the [BABOK®](#) guide and see how I could align it with what I was doing whilst working on that project as a BA. A lot of people, especially aspiring or junior BAs, they see the [BABOK®](#) guide as "this is exactly how I should do my work as a BA", but what we know as experienced BAs is that it's never black and white, it's always about adapting to the situation, scenario, context and stakeholders.

Is there a philosophy or mindset that you bring to business analysis?

That's a brilliant question! I'd say "question everything" because at the start of my career I didn't really ask many questions. I was a junior BA and expected requirements to simply be handed to me. But the real art of requirements lies in elicitation and discovery. You have to ask the right questions to uncover the right

information, to then analyse and break down requirements.

I remember reading some articles online where it said if you're in a workshop, you ask the stakeholder "what do you want the system to do?", but it wasn't until later on that I realised, that's not the right approach because we need to separate wants from needs and we as BAs need to understand the business need (problem or opportunity to be addressed).

I always try to keep the mindset of "how do we deliver the best value with the minimum business analysis work?" and "how do we measure success?". It's about not doing too much analysis upfront, but also doing enough to avoid rework. That's why I like to break the analysis into smaller chunks. Whether I'm doing a waterfall project or using agile, in terms of mindset, I apply the same thinking: try to break down the details iteratively, analyse, design, experiment, test, feedback all in a loop, but not sequential and try to question everything as I analyse, even assumptions, we always need to validate assumptions!

What's a skill that you're still working on?

Oh, it's imposter syndrome. Yeah, that's the stickler and it's a hard thing to overcome. When I first experienced imposter syndrome it was because I didn't validate what I was doing as a business analyst and I didn't really know if I was on the right track or if I was doing the right thing.

But I've completed so many training courses that have helped me realise that I'm doing good work. My problem





seems to be that I always feel like I'm never doing enough and I'm always trying to get to the next level. If I can't get to that next level, then I'm like, "What is holding me back?". Then I automatically think, "Oh, I'm not good enough" and start doubting myself. So now I keep an album on my phone, and I call it "Positive BA Feedback". Any feedback that I get from a mentoring session, like a testimonial or feedback from a stakeholder or a colleague from a project, a post on LinkedIn or anything positive people say about working with me, I screenshot it and I add it to the album.

And when I have imposter syndrome, I look at the album and I think "Oh, well, look at these nice things that people are saying about me helping them or supporting them" and "look at all that I've achieved and how I've helped people", I must be doing a good job, right? I might not be the best BA out there, but I'm doing my best, supporting the community as best as I can and continuously improving and I think that's the most important thing.

How has engaging with the professional community shaped your thinking and practice around business analysis?

Coming into IIBA® and setting up the IIBA® Ireland chapter has brought so many opportunities to connect with lovely professionals like yourself, Christina.

It's so valuable hearing other people's perspectives—I find all BAs, they don't work the same way, and we shouldn't all work the same way. We all have our own approach. We have our own process. But we can learn from one another. We can share knowledge,

and we can share stories.

Through "A Day in the Life of a BA" I've learned how BAs operate in sectors I never even considered, like law enforcement in other countries. It highlights the universal value that BAs bring. Having that community there, as a support, to build yourself up and to meet like-minded individuals is something really special. I love talking to other BAs and I love being in a room with BAs. There's so much support there. The community is a supportive network of like-minded individuals. It doesn't matter what time zone someone is in. The support is always there. Business analysts stick together.

What's a topic that you wish more professionals were talking about?

The market is changing, and the idea of BAs needing to be "experts" can be misleading for aspiring or junior BAs. They start thinking they need deep technical knowledge of tools like SAP or SQL. While these skills are helpful, they don't make someone a good BA. If you're too technical, you might lose the ability to connect with business stakeholders and speak their language. To be a good BA, you need empathy, collaboration, communication, active listening, analytical thinking, systems thinking and critical thinking skills.

I think the community should focus more on building the right mindset and skill set rather than overemphasising tools and techniques. Tools are useful, but they're not meaningful if you aren't thinking things through or breaking down requirements effectively. We should talk more about how the





community can support BAs in developing these core skills and shift away from the “expert” mindset. BAs are meant to work with experts. We bring the outside-in perspective that helps teams see the bigger picture and ask the right questions at the right time.

Is there a skill or trait that you have that you think has helped you be a successful BA?

Adaptability. I’ve had to adapt constantly as I’ve moved across industries: corporate business registry, life sciences and now energy. Each sector operates differently. Some have structure, some don’t. Some have defined processes, some don’t. But at the end of the day, every organisation has people, processes, technology/systems and data. Adaptability has helped me tailor how I approach BA work within those four dimensions.

I observe how a team currently works, where they’re struggling and how I can help. Then I adapt my approach to fit what they need while managing expectations. If you start dictating, you lose trust and rapport. Adaptability helps avoid that.

Finally, this is your chance to give a shout out to something that has inspired you and you think might help or inspire others.

The thing that’s inspired me most recently is Laura Brandenburg’s book - [The Value-Driven Business Analyst](#). When I started my career as a business analyst I didn’t know what a business analyst was or what business analysis was. But alongside discovering the IIBA®, I was gifted

Laura’s first book, [How to Start a Business Analyst Career](#), and that gave me valuable information and so much background about Laura and the BA role. That led me to [Bridging the Gap](#) and later gave me the confidence to join the Business Analysis Blueprint® programme. I learned so much that I could immediately apply to my project work, but also to everyday life. For example, when I was applying for a mortgage with my partner, I realised I could even apply my BA skills to that process.

The programme improved my thinking, challenged me in new ways and helped me perform stronger BA work. It also opened up opportunities like writing business cases, evaluating solution options, leading initiatives and implementing BA processes.

The important thing is remembering that Laura’s framework is meant to be adapted. Just like the BABOK®, it’s a guide. You take what you need and apply it based on where you enter a project. Sometimes you join at the beginning, sometimes at the middle or end. You have to figure out where you are and decide how the framework can help you do better work.

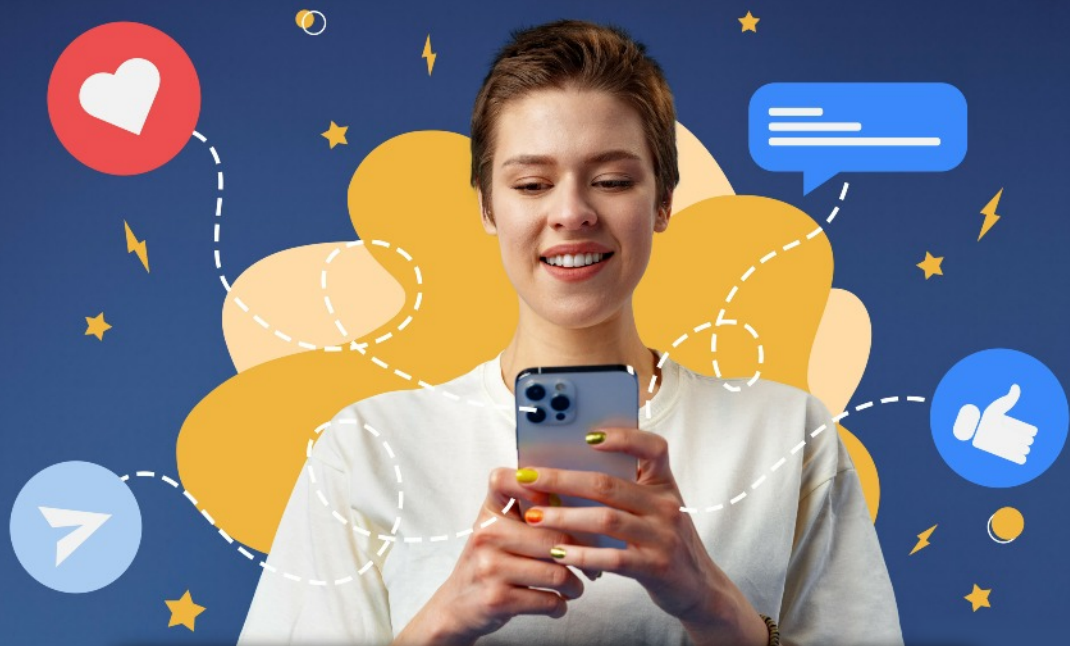
That’s how you grow as a BA: by continuously learning and adapting

Connect with [James via LinkedIn](#).

About the interviewer:

Christina Lovelock is a BA leader, author and coach. She is active in the Business Analysis professional community and champions entry-level roles. She is the author of two BCS books: [Delivering Business Analysis](#) and [Careers in Tech, Data and Digital](#). Connect with [Christina on LinkedIn](#).





VIEWPOINTS

For the next edition of BA Digest we'd like to hear your thoughts on the question.

What's the best professional advice you've ever received—and did you follow it?

Submit your thoughts (in 150 words or less) on the [Viewpoints form](#)

(We'll publish a selection of answers in the next edition of the magazine.)

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