

BA DIGEST

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- Mastering the Product Mindset
- Agile Isn't Dead: It's Evolving
- Business Analysis, AI & Risk
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Your regular round-up of useful BA content

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Welcome

When my career first started, things moved around on paper a lot more than they do today. There were physical 'memos', and there was a lot of photocopying and other clerical elements to work.

I can't actually remember the last time I used a photocopier, and I certainly don't miss trying to 'unjam' those huge machines (and good luck getting them to do duplex copying)! However, I was recently thinking about how photocopying, printing, filing and other clerical activities used to build natural breaks into the day.

Now, I've always been a bit of a maverick. If I get 'stuck' working on a creative task, I'll just walk around or create a distraction (I am not a good person to sit next to in an open plan office. Luckily I work from home most of the time now!). Even when I was office-based, I'd just decide to explore another department or floor. It's amazing how, providing you're carrying a file or binder, you can walk around and nobody really looks or cares. But I digress...

With increased automation and efficiency, there seem to be less natural 'thinking breaks' built into our days. Those of us that have experienced 'back-to-back meeting days' know how unproductive that is long-term, the joke being that if you're in meetings all day there's no time to actually do the work during work hours...

I am increasingly thinking that slowing down a little, deliberately, to create space for creativity and thinking at work is so important. Whether that's marching to a different floor with a binder, or just staring out of the window. Yes, it's OK to pause and stare out of the window... it's kind of weird that more people in offices don't do it, when you think about it. But "hustle culture" has a lot to answer for.

Perhaps one of the reasons that BA Digest continues to grow (even though, as an 'old-school' magazine format, it is going against the grain) is that it provides an opportunity for some quiet thinking time. Some productive procrastination. And perhaps the corporate world needs more of that.

Whether you're skim-reading BA Digest, or reading from cover-to-cover, you'll find the usual mix of topics from a diverse array of authors. I hope that you enjoy it. And remember, if an author has written something that resonates with you, be sure to get in touch with them. Trust me, they'll appreciate it! Kudos to everyone who has contributed to this edition.

Until next time,

Adrian

Adrian Reed

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest

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Saying the Quiet Parts out Loud

Emily Tom

Disclaimer: Any advice and experiences in this article are provided by the author as an opinion only. The reader's situation might be different and the reader is encouraged to use their own judgment when saying the quiet parts out loud. After all, we don't want to get you fired!

What Does It Mean to Say the Quiet Parts Out Loud?

I'm going to go out on a limb and challenge the notion that the business analyst must always remain neutral when working with stakeholders. The neutral mindset is drilled into us because we are taught to objectively consider all appropriate options when

defining a problem and its potential solutions. The issue with constant neutrality is that it tends to hinder the sharing of any complexity and nuances related to a problem. If we don't express the details that *aren't* being said because we feel that it's not our place to do so, then our stakeholders can only work from the information that is explicitly known. We risk ignoring blind spots, and this could lead to poor decisions.

That's when we sometimes have to say the quiet parts out loud.

If we (the BAs) have done our analysis work, we would be aware of any specific details that could impact the success of a solution. If we have

done our stakeholder analysis, we would know who will really be impacted by a change and what the impact will be. We'd also know if a stakeholder is being neglected. If we have done our strategy analysis, we'd understand why we're doing this project in the first place. With all of the energy we put into the analysis work, wouldn't we want to share these findings?

When we work up the courage to say the quiet parts out loud, we are:

- Communicating things that other people might be thinking but are too afraid to say.
- Creating awareness of the details that people are blind to or are choosing to ignore.
- Advocating for stakeholders that matter, helping people be heard.
- Broadening perspectives and triggering more discussions that may lead to a better solution.
- Creating clarity on a problem at both the micro and macro levels.

If we don't say the quiet parts out loud, we run the risk of making incorrect assumptions based on the limited information everyone has. Certain stakeholders may also feel unheard, leading to their lack of future engagement.

No BA wants any of this to happen.

A Real-life (Anonymised) Example:

A brand-new case management system was being implemented. The

purpose was to centralise the intake of project requests, approval workflow and project assignment. Significant effort was put into change management and communication. The pilot group of users were eager to get their hands on the new tool, because it would automate much of their manual work. The executives were thrilled because this new tool would greatly improve operational efficiency and facilitate reporting.

Oops! No one thought to identify an administrator role for granting user access and setting up workflow paths in the system. It was *assumed* that the individuals who configured these items in the testing environment would do the same in production. I raised the point that for pilot testing, it might be adequate. But in production, this needed to be in someone's job description, given the amount of work and responsibility this would entail. It was a good thing that this was raised before going any further because the organisation needed to find funding to create the administrator role and hire the individual.

So if you see something, say something.

How Do We Say the Quiet Parts Out Loud?

It can be scary to say the quiet parts out loud. But I'm convinced that some of our inherent BA skills will give us the confidence we need. *Apply your BA skills and tasks* with the following tips:

- Work on your communication skills. A large percentage of communication is non-verbal. Pay

attention to what is not being said because that may give you clues on something that is important.

- Have a side conversation with an individual who's being unusually silent in order to get their thoughts. Do this outside the room, away from the bigger audience before you say something on their behalf.
- Watch body language and listen to the tone of the audience in reaction to what you said out loud. A look of boredom could indicate that the individual has heard this before; ask them to contribute *their* historical knowledge. A look of agreement means that they feel like someone is finally listening and expressing what they couldn't say before. A look of disagreement is also meaningful because you can use it to facilitate more discussion.
- Consider the target audience and tailor your message so that it's relevant to them. For example, are they more likely to listen if you talk about financial impact? Do they care about customer sentiment? You can use their own jargon that catches their attention, so that the message is relevant to them.
- Don't be a jerk. Practice communicating diplomatically. Use words that describe the situation, problem or solution without making it personal. You know how to do this; think about your stakeholder analysis.
- BAs love asking questions. You can communicate the "quiet

parts" through questions. For example, "Being devil's advocate, what would happen if we...." Or, "Could there be other people impacted by this change?" Or, "Should we talk to this other stakeholder since they might have additional information about this?"

- Practice with something small that has little risk of offending people. You can see how open they are to the discussion.

You (and They) Will Be Happy You Shared:

Our business analysis work is valuable. We see both the details and the big picture. So why not share our analysis with the team? It takes practice to identify the quiet parts and to communicate them in a way that creates a shared understanding. While we might be scared of offending people or stepping out of line, it is important to say the quiet parts out loud for the success of the project. It also helps build trust (even if you are revealing some uncomfortable details) because the odds are that someone else was thinking the same thing but was too afraid to say the quiet parts out loud.

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Agile Is Not Dead but It Is Evolving

Allan Kelly

I've deliberately avoided the click-bait "agile is dead" topic, until now.

For the last few years I've delivered a lecture on agile to Oxford University students and this year the tutor specifically asked me to say something about the state of agile. This article summarises my current viewpoint.

So, Is Agile Dead?

Clearly not. (Albeit agile mania probably is.)

Agile is all around us. Teams work in

sprints, hold daily "stand up" meetings, tools like Jira continue to sell, requirements documents are full of user stories, business journals regularly talk about "agile" and "agility" without any reference to software.

That doesn't mean the result is perfect. The "agile" which prevails today falls short of what I and others in the community dreamed. As I've said before, agile won the war but lost the peace.

Right now, agile isn't getting attention because AI is. AI is soaking



up all the discretionally time and budget so agile is squeezed out. Ironically, to get the most from AI you need the learning processes embedded in agile to find better ways. Right now we don't know the best way to use AI. We are in a vast experimental phase and we need more of the learning and feedback in agile.

Back to the Question, Is Agile Dead?

The common agile that prevails is a watered-down, corporately acceptable version that is still a lot better than what went before.

But then, most people don't remember the pre-agile era. The "Big Up Front" practices which gave massive requirements and functional specifications; the defined process and ISO-9000 process audits, the guilt of "not doing it properly" and the inability of those doing the work to influence how it was done.

While many of those problems have resurfaced under other names in the agile world, things are still a lot better. If we had stayed with that approach there would be no automatic updates to the apps on your phone, no digital business, and little of the other technology that surrounds us. Maybe Apple and Google would be OK, but legacy banks, airlines, telecoms and governments would likely be even worse than they are now... and a million start-ups would never have gotten off the ground.

In truth, many of the "waterfall" processes were never followed properly anyway. I worked on exactly

one project that did it by the book, some years ago. Officially it was a success, it went live. But what went live was a shadow of what was supposed to be delivered.

Other organisations did something that (kind of) worked and then felt guilty for not doing "properly". When I was at a news and information services company, management tried to force us to work by the book. In doing so they destroyed much of their own capability to deliver meaningful change in the process.

What Has Agile Ever Given Us?

Agile showed there was another way and added democracy by opening the debate on "how we work". The Internet helped agile spread and opened up the debate in a way that had never been possible before.

If nothing else agile gave us a better reference model, a better way of describing our work.

Actually, it gave us several reference models, Scrum, XP, DSDM, etc. Always, and everywhere, people adapt, when processes work they use them, when defined processes don't work they work around them. For a while, agile licenced that working around, experiments were everywhere.

Agile was not so much new in itself as a new combination of ideas which were lying around.

The engineering practices in XP descend from the 1970s quality movement based on the work by Phil Crosby and W. Edwards Deming.

The self-organising teams in Scrum drew on the sociotechnical systems. First recognised in the 1940s and 1950s by Eric Trist—then at P&G and Topeka and the genesis of Senge's organisational learning.

The inspect and adapt philosophy in Tom Gilb's Evo and then Scrum comes from Stafford Beer and management cybernetics.

Lean thinking draws on many of these ideas directly but lean also begat its own software process in Kanban.

As for the Frankenstein's monster that is SAFe... you can decide for yourself whether SAFe is agile but it is definitely not lightweight. Because of its size alone it is hard to adapt SAFe and involve the workers.

The Return of Agile?

Can we expect agile to return to its previous permanence? Will the day come when everyone wants to hire a Scrum master? No.

That has passed. Organisations have ticked the agile box—if only because they have moved on to AI. The days of big agile transformations are largely over because companies have declared success.

Put it another way: Management fads don't return.

Imperfect agile is here, hopefully enough of it has been adopted that companies will continue to improve.

More importantly, those ideas underlying agile—quality, socio-technical, cybernetics, learning—are still valid and will continue to have influence. Some companies will embrace them and get a lot from them, some will continue to reject and most will dip in and out. These ideas will return, albeit in a different package and with a different name.

But none of that means agile is dead. Agile mania might be over but agile is continuing to evolve out of sight. Agile wasn't the first coming of these ideas and it won't be the last.

A version of this article was [originally published on LinkedIn](#).

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It's Not Just a Puzzle, It's Parenting: How BA Managers Balance Complexity, Growth, and Organisational Needs

Ann Leemans

Jigsaw puzzles are toys which come in all shapes, colours, and sizes. They are enjoyed by both children and parents. As a parent, you watch your child grow and want to bring out the best in them. Pride can be clearly seen on the face of a toddler who completes their first puzzle, frustration is visible when a piece does not fit: some children persist patiently, others throw the whole puzzle across the room.

We don't know in advance how a child will react, how quickly they will learn, or when they are ready for a more complex puzzle. You don't want to give something too difficult, but boredom is also not an option.

This article explores how BA managers can use the analogy of a puzzle to think differently about assignments, shifting focus from short-term delivery to sustainable capability building.

The Puzzle Analogy

Assigning business analysts is not

simply a matter of matching competencies to initiatives and other assignments, it is a leadership responsibility that requires balancing challenge, support, and long-term growth. Like a parent guiding a child through a puzzle, managers must avoid overwhelming business analysts with assignments without adequate guidance. Too little challenge may lead to stagnation and disengagement; too much may lead to frustration and potential failure. Growth occurs in the space in between, and recognising this is where assignment decisions become strategic rather than merely box-ticking.

Complexity in analysis work is often intangible. It shows up in the number of stakeholders involved, the range of perspectives to reconcile, the quality and clarity of available information, and the pressure of time. Taken together, these factors can turn even a well-trodden assignment into something unexpectedly demanding.

The puzzle analogy helps to make this tangible. A puzzle with many small, irregular pieces requires a greater level of competency to complete than a simple four piece set. Similarly, an analysis assignment with multiple, conflicting stakeholders and time pressures demands more strategic thinking and adaptability to deliver a valuable solution.

Think Beyond the Task List

A common temptation for BA managers is to assign business analysts based solely on competency fit and availability. On the surface, this seems efficient: match an experienced analyst with a complex assignment, assign routine tasks to others, and check off the delivery list.

The approach described above overlooks deeper considerations such as organisational pressures, team dynamics, and individual career ambitions. These factors do influence how a business analyst experiences an assignment. Repeatedly assigning the same business analyst to high-level projects may seem efficient short-term but can eventually demotivate, while under-challenging others limits their growth.

Effective assignment decisions require managers to look beyond the task list. They must consider each business analyst's development goals, appetite for challenge, and long-term career trajectory. Strategic assignment involves balancing immediate business needs with the business analyst's growth, creating opportunities that foster engagement and capability over time.

It's a Dance

Mistakes and mismatches are inevitable because not every assignment will be a perfect fit, and some assignments simply must be completed regardless of enthusiasm. The difference lies in how BA managers respond to that kind of situation.

Timely guidance, mentorship, and structured support can turn a challenging or misaligned assignment into a valuable learning experience. This process benefits both the business analyst and the manager: the business analyst gains insight into their strengths and development areas, while the manager develops a deeper understanding of individual needs and even team dynamics.

Assignment management, therefore, is a continuous dance between organisational priorities and personal growth. When managers adapt thoughtfully, even imperfect assignments contribute to long-term capability building and team resilience.

In other words, just as a parent does not discard a puzzle when it becomes challenging, a BA manager should not discard the learning opportunity.

From Analogy to Action

The puzzle analogy is not meant to be symbolic only; it provides a practical way to reason about assignment decisions and complexity. As a BA manager, it is worth pausing to reflect on the puzzle you are about to hand over, by answering the following questions:

Question 1: Instead of asking "Who can handle this?", a more powerful question is "Who could grow into this, with the right support in place?"

Increasing the number of pieces is not the only way to raise difficulty. Changing the image, removing the reference picture, or asking the child to explain their reasoning all introduce new challenges. Likewise, a business analyst's growth can be supported by gradually increasing exposure to ambiguity, decision ownership, or strategic context without immediately increasing delivery risk.

Question 2: "What does this person need beyond their current competency to deliver valuable outcomes?"

Competency alone rarely determines success and business analysts may need additional support, such as access to key stakeholders, guidance in navigating ambiguity, or coaching at critical moments. Providing this support does not remove the complexity itself but it creates the conditions for learning.

Question 3: "How does the complexity of this assignment relate to the other assignments this person is carrying?"

Complexity is cumulative. An assignment that is manageable on its own may become overwhelming when combined with other demanding assignments, especially when several complex initiatives and projects must progress in parallel. Assessing complexity therefore requires looking at the full workload, not just the assignment at hand.

Question 4: "What is the impact if the assignment does not progress as expected and is that risk acceptable considering long-term development?"

Not all assignments carry the same risk, and that risk should be consciously weighed. High-impact work may require closer guidance, but risk alone should not block learning opportunities. Avoiding risk entirely may feel safe in the short term, yet it limits growth and capability building over time.

Conclusion

Assigning business analysts is not merely about allocating work. Like parenting a child through increasingly complex puzzles, BA managers must balance challenge and support. Imperfect assignments are unavoidable; what matters is recognising misalignment, adjusting course, and turning experience into learning.

When BA managers think beyond the task list and intentionally design complexity, assignments become a powerful tool for development. The result is not only better delivery of value today, but stronger, more resilient analytical capability for the future.

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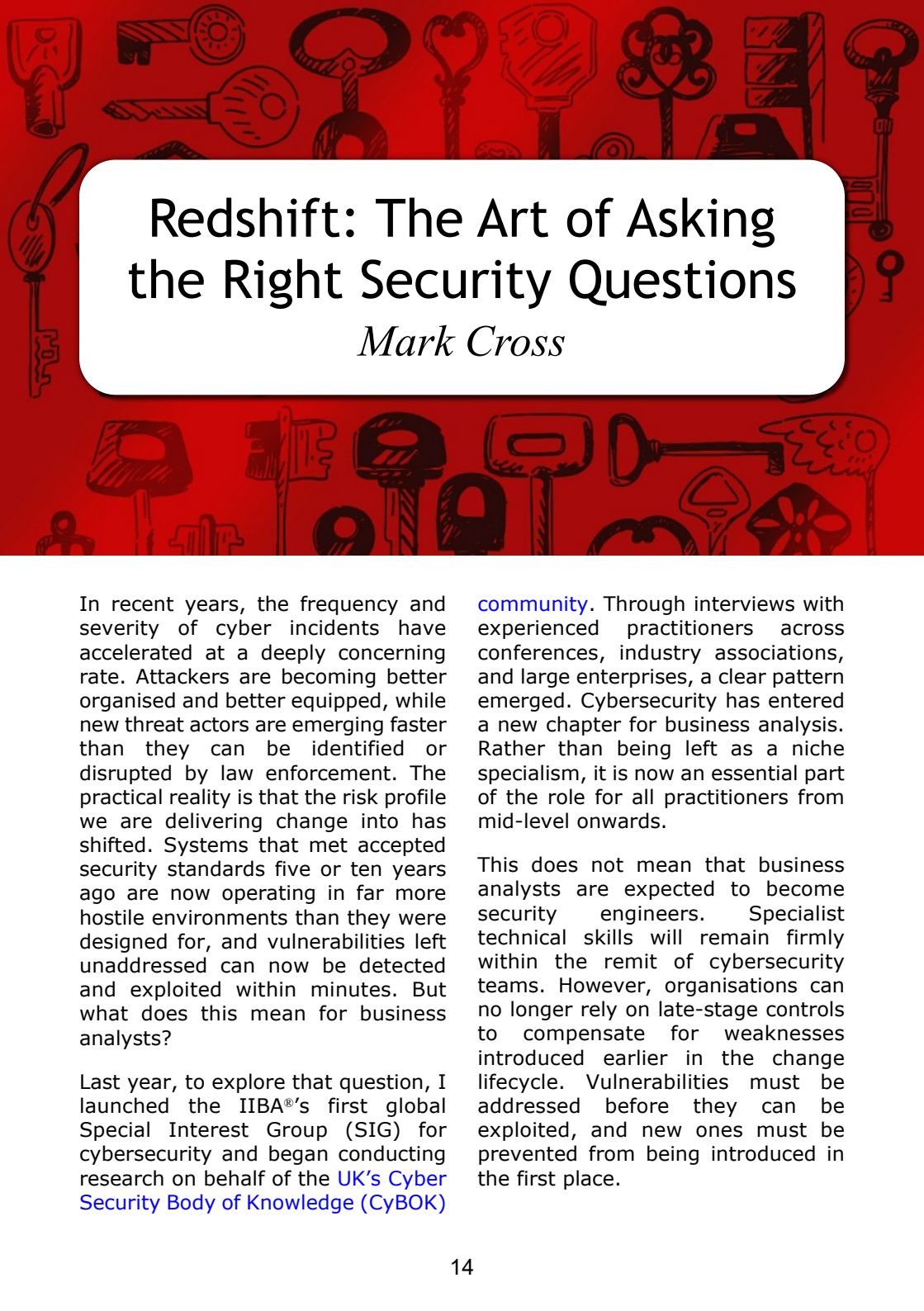
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Redshift: The Art of Asking the Right Security Questions

Mark Cross

In recent years, the frequency and severity of cyber incidents have accelerated at a deeply concerning rate. Attackers are becoming better organised and better equipped, while new threat actors are emerging faster than they can be identified or disrupted by law enforcement. The practical reality is that the risk profile we are delivering change into has shifted. Systems that met accepted security standards five or ten years ago are now operating in far more hostile environments than they were designed for, and vulnerabilities left unaddressed can now be detected and exploited within minutes. But what does this mean for business analysts?

Last year, to explore that question, I launched the IIBA®'s first global Special Interest Group (SIG) for cybersecurity and began conducting research on behalf of the [UK's Cyber Security Body of Knowledge \(CyBOK\)](#)

[community](#). Through interviews with experienced practitioners across conferences, industry associations, and large enterprises, a clear pattern emerged. Cybersecurity has entered a new chapter for business analysis. Rather than being left as a niche specialism, it is now an essential part of the role for all practitioners from mid-level onwards.

This does not mean that business analysts are expected to become security engineers. Specialist technical skills will remain firmly within the remit of cybersecurity teams. However, organisations can no longer rely on late-stage controls to compensate for weaknesses introduced earlier in the change lifecycle. Vulnerabilities must be addressed before they can be exploited, and new ones must be prevented from being introduced in the first place.

From Change Mindset to Adversarial Mindset

Addressing this challenge requires a shift in how change practitioners think about their work. I describe this shift as having two complementary parts, which I call the *red shift* and the *blue shift*.

In cybersecurity, blue teams build and operate defensive controls. Red teams adopt an adversarial mindset, probing those defences to identify weaknesses before real attackers can exploit them. Business analysts need to learn how to apply both red and blue styles of thinking to change delivery.

This article focuses on the red shift. The red shift is about asking better questions early, before scope, design, and delivery decisions harden. A subsequent article will explore the blue shift.

When User Experience Becomes Adversary Experience

A central part of modern business analysis is understanding and improving customer journeys and user experience. That will remain essential. However, it is now equally important to consider how products and processes might be used by people we do not intend them for.

We may design an application process to be simple and accessible, but have we considered how we would detect stolen identities being used at scale? Or a document upload feature being abused to distribute malware? We may design a collaboration platform

to support partners, but have we considered whether controls remain appropriate as usage patterns change or information becomes more sensitive?

The red shift complements user-centred thinking by introducing adversary-centred thinking. It asks how the same features that create value for legitimate users might also create opportunity for abuse.

Understanding Attackers and TTPs

Thinking adversarially does not require deep technical knowledge, but it does require clarity about who we are defending against. Not all systems attract the same attackers, and not all attackers behave in the same way. Some are financially motivated, some opportunistic, some insiders, and some highly resourced.

A useful concept here is that of “TTPs”: Tactics, Techniques and Procedures, which describe how attackers pursue their goals. For business analysts, their value lies in recognising that attackers often exploit systems exactly as designed. Features intended to improve efficiency or usability are frequently repurposed in unintended ways, so understanding common attacker behaviours helps to expose risky assumptions during ideation.

Reframing Non-functional Requirements as Adversarial Objectives

We are already comfortable working with non-functional requirements. We routinely explore qualities such

as availability, integrity, and confidentiality to ensure solutions meet organisational expectations. Traditionally, these qualities are expressed from the organisation’s point of view.

The red shift requires us to view the same qualities from the opposite direction. Instead of asking only what properties we want to preserve, we also ask how those properties might be deliberately undermined by an adversary.

One way to make this shift explicit is to combine two well-established security models. The [Parkerian Hexad](#), proposed by Donn B. Parker, describes six fundamental properties organisations rely on. The [Microsoft STRIDE model](#) describes common categories of attacker behaviour and the objectives they intend to achieve. Viewed together, they allow us to reframe organisational qualities as attacker objectives.

Defensive Qualities (from the Parkerian Hexad)	Adversarial Objectives (from STRIDE model)	Illustrative example
Authenticity	Spoofing	An attacker impersonates a legitimate user using stolen credentials, allowing them to submit requests or approve actions as if they were trusted.
Integrity	Tampering	Data is altered during a system handoff so that values appear valid but lead to incorrect decisions or outcomes.
Utility	Repudiation	A user denies having approved a transaction, and the system cannot prove otherwise, rendering the information unusable in a dispute.
Confidentiality	Information Disclosure	Sensitive information is exposed through an unintended export or inference, allowing access to data that should not be visible.
Availability	Denial of Service	A critical service is disrupted, preventing users from completing time-sensitive activities.
Possession or Control	Elevation of Privilege	A flaw in role design allows a user to gain broader access and take control beyond their intended authority.

This perspective helps move from abstract qualities to concrete adversarial intent. It provides structured prompts that can be used during ideation and discovery to challenge assumptions and prioritise risk.

Why Timing Matters

Attacks unfold in stages. Early stages are easier and cheaper to disrupt than later ones. Many of the opportunities attackers rely on are created during ideation, through decisions about scope, integrations, user journeys, and trust boundaries.

By applying adversarial thinking at this stage, business analysts can help eliminate entire classes of risk before they materialise.

Conclusion

The red shift does not produce controls or solutions. It produces

clarity; a shared understanding of likely attackers; explicit assumptions about trust and exposure; and better-informed prioritisation conversations.

By adopting an adversarial mindset early, business analysts help ensure that change is not only desirable and usable, but also robust in the environments it must survive.

In the next article, I will explore the blue shift. How this early thinking is translated into designs and deliverables that can withstand attack, detect failure, and recover when things go wrong.

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



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The Irony of Change: Thriving as a Neurodivergent BA

Helen Symonds

The business analysis profession was something I discovered later in life, but understanding my autistic identity came even later, and ultimately gave me a new lens through which to view my career. My recent diagnosis helped me see more clearly why my way of thinking and working aligns so naturally with the BA role. It helped me understand why I find the role so fulfilling and, in many ways, it fit the description of a “special interest” long before I knew the terminology.

The Perceived Mismatch

At first glance, autism and business analysis appear incompatible. BA

roles are often described as people-centred, socially dynamic and rooted in organisational change. Autistic traits are often described using the opposite language: social difficulty, sensory sensitivity, a need for routine. It’s easy to jump to the conclusion that someone with autism might struggle in a role like this.

And yet, that has not been my experience. If anything, the opposite has been true. Many traits that have caused challenges elsewhere have become strengths in my BA career. The disconnect lies in the assumptions, not in the capability.

Hyperfocus and Going Deep

Hyperfocus is a good example. When I become absorbed in a problem, I can move through complex processes and large amounts of data without losing direction. I'm able to sit with uncertainty long enough to resolve it, not because I enjoy ambiguity, but because my brain insists on clarity. That drive pushes me to dig deeper, ask better questions and understand the full picture.

Deep work comes naturally, and in business analysis it reduces rework, prevents missed requirements and helps build trust. I also protect my focus by avoiding unnecessary task-switching. Unless something is genuinely urgent, I stay with what I'm doing because sustained, uninterrupted concentration consistently leads to clearer thinking and better outcomes.

Often, issues that prompt requests for impromptu discussions either resolve themselves or are ultimately deemed unnecessary anyway!

Pattern Recognition and Making Sense of Complexity

Another trait that stood out during my diagnosis is pattern recognition. I often sense when something doesn't fit long before I can articulate why. A small inconsistency in a stakeholder's description, a missing supporting rule, a process step that quietly contradicts another, these things stand out to me even when I'm not consciously looking for them.

In the BA role, this ability to spot gaps and connections is invaluable. It helps create clearer pictures of how things truly work, not just how we think they work and results in fewer unpleasant surprises further down the line.

Clarity, Precision and the Discomfort of Ambiguity

Of all my autistic traits, the drive for clarity is the one that consistently steers my approach. Ambiguous wording and unclear statements are truly bothersome and can be quite irritating. For years, I thought this was a personal flaw and something I needed to soften. I'd curse myself for being 'too picky' and wondering why others were seemingly comfortable with letting the ambiguity hang around. But in business analysis, clarity is not a burden, it is a contribution.

Fairness, Logic and Integrity

A strong sense of fairness and logical consistency is often associated with autism... it is in our house anyway! For me, this shows up in how I approach decisions. I want to understand the rationale. I want rules applied consistently. I want to know we're making choices based on evidence, not hierarchy.

This approach can feel at odds with organisational politics, but it builds trust over time. Stakeholders learn that I will give honest analysis, hold conversations openly and advocate for what delivers value, even when it's uncomfortable.

It's amazing how the smallest broken rule can unravel me... and yes, someone hot-desking without a booking on a desk I booked absolutely counts! Broken rules create uncertainty, no matter how trivial that may seem to others.

Stakeholder Engagement, in a Way That Works

This is an area where autism is often assumed to be a barrier. Workshops, complex group dynamics and constant social interaction can be draining and unpredictable. I won't pretend this part is easy. I have limits, and they matter.

But effective stakeholder engagement isn't about charisma. It's about listening, understanding and facilitating clarity. I do that best by working in ways that support me: structured agendas, smaller groups where possible, shorter sessions with clear objectives and written follow-ups.

What I once viewed as "making things easier for me" often ends up making the work easier for everyone.

Craving Structure in a Role Built on Change

Perhaps the biggest irony is this: I work in change, but I crave structure and predictability. Change can be uncomfortable.

But business analysis doesn't require me to embrace chaos. It asks me to make sense of it. Breaking change down into steps, defining impacts, documenting decisions, these are the very activities that turn uncertainty into something manageable.

The job doesn't conflict with my need for structure. It gives me a framework that supports it.

The Realities: Burnout, Limits and Self-compassion

It would be false to say that autistic strengths tell the whole story. There are times when sensory overload exhausts me, when masking drains my capacity or when burnout makes even simple tasks feel impossible. In those moments, the traits I rely on become harder to access.

I don't spot everything. I make mistakes. I misunderstand people. For a long time, each mistake felt like evidence that I wasn't good enough, that being wrong once cancelled out all the times I was right.

It has taken time to learn that excellence isn't about being flawless. It's about being thoughtful, reflective and willing to learn.

Reframing Strengths

Many autistic traits map directly onto the work we do every day as BAs:

- Social-communication differences → clearer documentation and fewer assumptions
- Literal thinking → more precise requirements and reduced ambiguity
- Preference for structure → strong models, frameworks and traceability
- Sensory perception → noticing inconsistencies others miss

- Executive function scaffolding → well-designed tools and ways of working
- Deep interests → genuine engagement with complex problems

These are not side effects of autism, they're advantages. Used well, and supported properly, they elevate the entire team.

As I reflect on my diagnosis and my career, the conclusion is simple: I am a better business analyst *because* of my autistic traits, not despite them.

The irony of change is that a role centred on transformation has given me the clarity, structure and purpose

I need. And when organisations create space for different ways of thinking, not just accommodating them but valuing them, neurodivergent professionals don't just survive.

We help shape the change that others navigate.

Helen is a Senior Business Analyst at Close Brothers. Recently diagnosed as autistic, she is passionate about improving understanding of neurodiversity. She draws on her analytical strengths and lived experience to challenge assumptions and inspire more thoughtful, inclusive ways of working. You can contact her via [LinkedIn](#).



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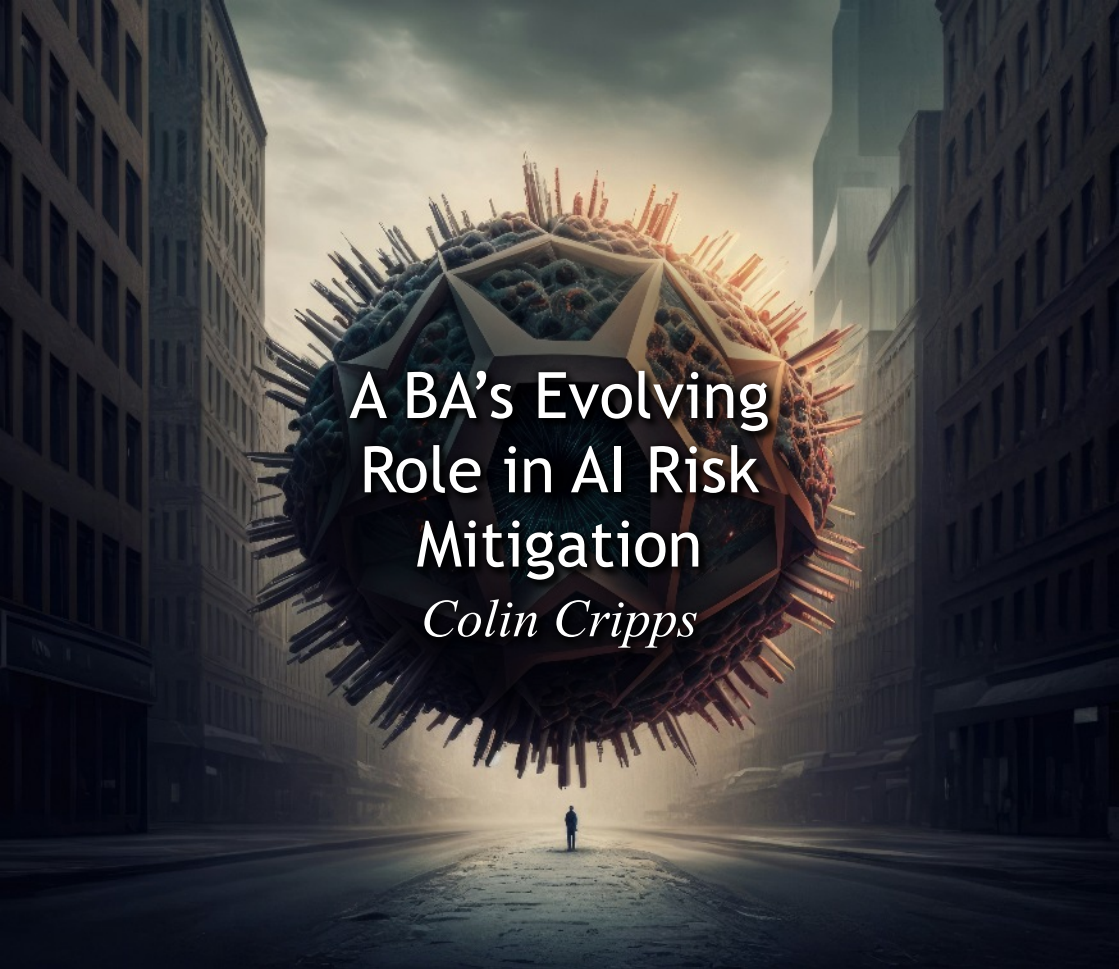
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A BA's Evolving Role in AI Risk Mitigation

Colin Cripps

2025 was another year of AI hype and momentum. Generative AI models of all types received masses of attention. And when you look at what you can do with free tools, that attention seems very warranted.

For example, Midjourney can create beautiful animation from prompts. Gamma can design presentations the envy of Soho design houses. ChatGPT can write you sophisticated research papers. Base44 can turn the brainstorm of someone with no coding experience into a live service in minutes.

But in the workplace, the use cases still evade most general professionals. Many of us are still working as we always have, perhaps with the addition of 'AI-ing' it instead of 'Googling' it. 2026 will likely be the year that starts to change and organisations learn the place for these new tools and their capabilities.

Beyond "AI as a Search Engine"

That shift could be accelerated through the adoption of agentic AI,

which is defined by Shavit et al in their paper “Practices for Governing Agentic AI Systems” as:

“AI models that can pursue complex goals with limited direct supervision”

This implies that AI capabilities could be used to automate workflows. This would profoundly transform ways of working but is still complex to set up and enable, requiring technical enablement skills as well as navigating ethical and legal risk such as privacy, accountability and explainability.

Another option is utilising ‘Retrieval Augmented Generation’ (RAG). RAG is a technique for improving AI model accuracy on domain specific information. It works by providing the AI a database of context specific material (e.g. insurance claims, or medical cases), which it then retrieves from to *augment* its existing *generative* capabilities as it answers. There’s also [evidence for this reducing hallucinations](#) (where AI makes something up) because answers are ‘grounded’ in context, mitigating a large risk for AI adopters.

Having domain specific information and context makes an AI more useful for a workplace. For instance, an employee-facing chatbot that uses RAG to reference your company’s HR policies and intranet could boost a company’s productivity by reducing queries to HR and line managers. With access to previously successful bids and projects it becomes a highly effective tool for sales and business development. An insurance company writing bespoke policies may struggle to benefit from a generalist model,

but RAG allows relevant nuances to be taken into account.

Risk and Reward

However, as it is with innovation, alongside productivity and benefit, there comes risk, which requires competence in mitigation and management.

Business analysts are expertly positioned to assist in this. Our role requires us to develop a specific set of skills for framing problems. We pull apart the ‘technical’ and the ‘business’ to navigate the balance between risk and reward. We help negotiate the differing priorities amongst stakeholders of all types.

As a BA and AI researcher the risks I’m actively thinking about for workplace AI are:

- Operational resilience and
- The ‘semantic gap’

I’ll explain both and how BAs can manage them.

Operational Resilience

A worry of automating workflows or heavily relying on generative content is the deskilling it potentially creates within teams. In operationally heavy or safety-critical environments this reduces resilience of teams to react in moments of stress. Teams lose familiarity with how to manually resolve issues efficiently, adding pressure to already pressured situations. This is worsened because the moments AI or automation fails are likely to be the edge cases that are already more complex.

BAs can mitigate this through traceable, useful, accessible documentation and processes that guide teams in how to manage unhappy and marginal cases. Accounting for the change in approach required to circumvent the previously AI-automated process. You should also bake in gateways that allow teams to practice and take ownership for ways of working, even though they could be automated. Just as there are phases within a DevOps pipeline available that enable teams to reclaim ownership.

Semantic Gap

If you've ever played the children's party game of *Telephone*, where someone whispers a phrase to the next person in the line, only to hear their phrase has been wildly changed with the final person's reveal, then you'll understand the 'semantic gap'. It is the misunderstanding and error caused by the space between a designer's intended functionality and the designer's specified functionality to an AI model.

This isn't a new problem for a BA whose large responsibility is reducing uncertainty and understanding of requirements amongst stakeholders. It's especially obvious to those involved in user-centred design, where the certainty your new prototype will work often crumbles on contact with the reality of user interaction.

Risks Differ, Foundations Remain

In the context of AI and automated, agentic workflows and RAG, the risk

and challenge take a different form. Yet the solution remains old fashioned. Traceable, transparent requirements and repeated testing all minimise this dissonance. But it requires BAs to step up and declare they can assist in the design of what is often considered incredibly technical, complex engineering. AI design does involve new complexities—manipulating training parameters, understanding vector similarities or the appropriate response 'temperature'. But these are learnable and unnecessary to know from an engineering perspective. BAs work in the realms of requirements.

To minimise the risk of semantic gaps, we must work with engineering teams to learn how to define what AI outputs are wanted and why, so that others with the machine learning knowledge can more closely design to the business's goals. Closing the gap and helping make solutions more useful for everyone.

The reality is AI becoming more prevalent, and the momentum will increase during 2026. That will come with risks. But the approaches to managing these risks are not so different from what we're used to. Therefore, for the best design of AI within the workplace, the workplace must remember the contribution BAs bring to that workplace.

Colin Cripps is an experienced Consultant, Business Analyst and AI researcher. He's interested in UCD and responsible design practices. You can contact him on LinkedIn at: www.linkedin.com/in/colincripps/

The Dessert Counter Dilemma: Short-term Choices, Long-term Consequences

Adrian Reed



I have recently returned from a nine-night holiday (vacation) in an 'all-inclusive' resort. If you're not familiar with all-inclusive resorts, they're places where food, drinks, and entertainment are included in the price of your stay. The food was excellent, the entertainment was great, and a good time was had by all.

Now, I'm back to the cold, wintry reality of the UK, one thing I haven't yet done is step on the scales. I know the 'all-inclusive' lifestyle I was temporarily living will have gained me some weight. After all, three courses every night alongside 'one or two' glasses of wine will have an impact...

But like most people, a holiday for me is temporary. I have no desire to eat and drink like that permanently. And I know I need to get back into my gym and (reasonably) healthy eating routine. It's always a bit of a shock to the system to start with, but over a few weeks things normalise and I'm pretty sure my weight will stabilise and my tan will fade...

Some Organisations Are Stuck in Holiday-Eating Mode

I had the inspiration for writing this blog at the dessert counter, while weighing up the pros and cons of two

cakes and deciding to just have a slice of both. This is definitely not to be recommended as a long-term strategy, but occasionally, it's probably fine.

I was reflecting on how organisations make decisions, particularly those that seem 'urgent', often knowingly implementing something that just about works but has lots of side effects as a 'temporary' fix.

We've all seen it: perhaps it's an Excel spreadsheet manually manipulating data (but increasing workload and latent risk). Or perhaps it's a poorly designed, rushed-out process that just about works (but really needs documenting and tidying up).

There's often genuine desire and intent to fix any deficiencies *at some point in the future*. It's really easy to loosely commit to a future action, isn't it... 'I'll join a gym in the future, when I get round to it' has likely been said by many people, many times.

But often, these loose commitments don't materialise into action. Organisational priorities change, the next crisis hits and everyone forgets. Those involved with managing the workarounds might not be in a position to mandate change, or might even fear that if work is simplified their role is at risk... So the workarounds stay.

Some days it feels like organisations are built on layers and layers of this type of organisational debt. But instead of taking remedial action, priorities simply shift to the next thing. Change then becomes harder and more complicated... and undoing

the years of (probably poorly documented) workarounds becomes tricky itself.

Who wants to face the 'cold hard facts' and do the best thing, when you can just buy and implement something new (good luck migrating the mess of data!) or jump on a passing bandwagon? At least that shows *action*, and organisations (and their stakeholders) seem to love loud noises and bold *action*! In some cases, the illusion of progress seems to matter more than actual outcomes.

It's like they're stuck in 'holiday eating' mode, but the consequences are just *waiting* to hit them...

You'll Pay the Piper Eventually

Back when I was young(er), some people used to pay for groceries with cheques (I know, I know, I only look about 27 but I'm secretly a *little bit* older than that). Cheques used to take a few days to clear, and were sometimes a way of paying for groceries at the end of the month when money was short. It gave a few days 'credit' while the cheque went through the clearing process.

Except, it didn't always work. If the supermarket banked with the same institution as you, then the cheque cleared the same day of deposit. Bam, overdrawn, fees! The 'tactical fix' didn't work...

I suspect some organisations are playing a similar game, with latent risk affecting their processes and IT systems through workaround and half-finished solutions that, at best,

are a risk to service availability, and more likely a risk to data integrity and customer security.

You can't carry on at the all-inclusive buffet forever without impacting personal health. Organisations can't binge on solutions and workarounds without affecting their ability to deliver services and, crucially, adapt and change.

Good Business Analysis Matters More than Ever

This is one of many areas where good business analysis helps a great deal. Often, as BAs, we see the workaround and can highlight the risks. Sometimes decision-makers may be

completely unaware. Continuing to ask 'why', understand the outcomes that are desired, and work with others to co-create those outcomes is key.

But crucially, I'm writing this as a reminder to my future self to lay off the cakes and Cava!

Adrian Reed helps organisations make sense of nonsense, one box and arrow at a time. He edits BA Digest and is Principal Consultant at Blackmetric. Curiosity fuels his thinking. Industrial amounts of caffeinated cola fuel the rest. Connect before the caffeine wears off: [linkedin.com/in/adrianreed](https://www.linkedin.com/in/adrianreed)

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I've Landed a BA Job. What's Next?

*Anastasiia
Kraievska*

Searching for a job is hard. Yet receiving an offer is not the end of the story. It's an enabler to start writing the rest of the story.

Imagine the scene: You spent hours polishing your CV, navigated through hundreds of vacancies, and invested a huge amount of energy preparing for each interview. And here you are! Finally the perfect match of values, financial reward, people, and technology. You definitely deserve it! You accept the offer. You experience satisfaction, recognition, and excitement. You're keen to start as soon as possible.

And then comes the cold shower on the first day. What worked in your previous company does not work in this new and different context. You feel like you're missing key details when others speak—there are subtle details that are unsaid and you are expected to read 'between the lines'. This job felt perfect, before you actually started. But now there is a feeling of reluctance and a crisis of confidence.

What's wrong? Why does it feel so uncomfortable now?

In most cases, nothing is wrong. It's a new place, new rules, new people. You are just starting over and experiencing "new joiner shock", which is perfectly normal when landing a new job. In this article I'll share what I think makes it easier for a BA to step into a new chapter of their career.

Trust Yourself

In 2023, I decided it was time to get my driver's licence. At that point, I was living in Germany. In my driving instructor's opinion it was the "perfect" country for a driving exam, because the exam is really hard. After all, most people would agree there shouldn't be an easy way to get onto highways with no speed limits.

Nevertheless, even though I was new to driving in Germany, in every difficult situation, my instructor kept saying, "Ich vertraue dir" — "I trust you" in German.

"I trust you" — when someone cut me off on the highway.

"I trust you" — when a truck driver flashed their lights but didn't actually stop.

And this is exactly what I'm saying to everyone reading this article, to everyone going through a turbulent time of change: *I trust you.*

Please, please trust yourself too.

You were the best candidate. You made it to this point. So trust yourself to write this story. Trust your instincts and your gut feeling.

Sometimes your experience kicks in, but you can't fully explain the

reasoning behind it. This is unconscious ("tacit") knowledge or intuition. Seasoned professionals can articulate the "why" behind that gut feeling. And that's what we should all be striving for—conscious knowledge.

My message here is simple. Whether it's unconscious or conscious knowledge, trust yourself and dare to speak up.

Build Trust Bridges

However, trusting yourself and even being a highly competent professional does not automatically make you successful in a new place. So what does? The most important thing in a new environment is to earn the trust of your team and your stakeholders.

Everyone knows that BA roles—unless they are Lead BAs or similar—are not usually managerial ones. In general, BAs do not have formal power or managerial responsibility over developers or QAs, and definitely not subject matter experts or other stakeholders. BAs cannot "order" people around and expect them to follow. BAs do not lead with formal authority. Trust is a key enabler that encourages people to follow you. Trust, however, should never be taken for granted.

The first and most important step in a new place is to build trustworthy relationships with your stakeholders. Easy to say, hard to do, right? There is plenty of advice circulating on the Internet about how to make a good first impression: dressing a certain way, nodding during conversations, mimicking your colleague's style, or repeating their name. All of this can be useful and may even work under

certain conditions. But I would definitely look extremely awkward and unnatural if I blindly followed such advice.

Here is what I would tell my younger self to help build new professional relationships in a new environment.

My Observations on What Works

We all come from different cultures and backgrounds. Just as the rings in a tree stump tell the story of the tree and the conditions it grew in, people carry their own life experiences with them. We should avoid judging individuals based on stereotypes or preconceived biases. As Erin Meyer explains in *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business* we live in a globalised world and cultural nuances differ. We choose partners from other countries, change our countries of residence, and raise children who are often bi- or even trilingual. This leads to mixed communication styles and a separation between how we behave at work, at home, and under stress.

Explore yourself first. Understand who you are, why you react to things in a certain way, which vulnerabilities drive your behaviour, and what truly matters to you. Awareness comes first. It will let you communicate your needs and set up the boundaries before it's too late.

Understanding yourself will also help you understand your stakeholders. By knowing their needs and drivers, you can shape communication around their values — making your message more relevant to them.

Credibility comes from knowing the context. Use the first, relatively low-pressure days to explore it as deeply as possible. Be careful, though: what is written in official documentation is not always how things actually work in practice. Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo or at least to ask questions.

Be helpful from the very first days. There is always something you can do. Even small contributions, like linking tickets, can be immediately valuable. Gradually, you will take on more important responsibilities.

Be professional. It's hard to trust someone who doesn't know the basics. Invest in your learning and self-development. Join global and local BA communities for inspiration and the exchange of ideas.

And last but not least, be yourself. Follow your own path and communication style. Authenticity is key.

From the bottom of my heart, I wish you a successful start to your new journey. May your stakeholders be supportive and your working relationships trustworthy. May they become the foundation for something bigger over time.

Anastasiia Kraievska, CBAP, PSPO I, PSM I, ISTQB – Product Owner and BA practitioner. I know what it takes to start over in a new company, in a new country, and even after a double maternity leave. Whether you're navigating change or not, I'd be happy to connect on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/anastasiia-kraievska-06a52a65/

Breaking the Rules

Nick de Voil

In the [last article](#), we looked at roulette diagrams, which help you to visualise the way individuals contribute to a conversation. Now let's talk about that a bit more. What do we mean by a "conversation"? Any situation where people are communicating. It could be a brief ad-hoc interaction, it could be a formal meeting or workshop, or it could be the ongoing discourse that unfolds over a long period of time in a particular organisation or a group such as a project team.

And what do we mean when we talk about someone "contributing" to the conversation? Again, this covers a wide range of things that people do. We can distinguish several different types of contribution. As a business

analyst, bearing this framework in mind can help you to understand what's going on.

Direct Contributions

First, there are things that people say which 'follow the rules'. The philosopher Paul Grice listed four 'maxims' describing some normally unspoken rules of conversation, which we generally assume will be followed in a work context. To a requirements engineer, these look rather similar to a list of quality criteria for requirements:

- **Quantity:** provide as much information as is needed, but no more

- **Quality:** only say things which you believe to be true
- **Relation:** only say things which are relevant at this stage of the discussion
- **Manner:** say what you mean clearly, concisely, unambiguously and in an order that makes sense
- Associating one person, event or idea with another
- Using a particular metaphor, [epithet](#) or nickname for a person, event or idea
- Joking about something
- Implying an evaluation (good/bad) of a person, event or idea

Usually, a Direct Contribution (DC) clearly follows some or all of these rules. The utterance is on topic; the nature of the contribution doesn't surprise anyone, even if its content might.

Examples might include:

- Suggesting an idea
- Offering an opinion
- Reporting some news
- Providing some factual information

Business analysts typically feel comfortable with contributions of this sort. However, just as not all conversations are the sort of orderly discussions described by Grice (as we saw in [article 17](#)), not all contributions are as straightforward as these examples suggest.

Oblique Contributions

Some other types of contribution are potentially just as influential but operate in a sideways direction. The speaker influences the other participants without necessarily furthering the objectives of the conversation in any obvious way. An Oblique Contribution (OC) is often contained within a DC. For example:

In a formal meeting, a DC is typically something that the minute-taker would consider including in the minutes. An OC would not be. This helps to explain why they are so effective: they can 'fly under the radar,' as we saw from the discussion of metaphors in [article 14](#). But they don't always go unnoticed by the other participants. Sometimes an OC is a way for the speaker to signal their position on something that perhaps hasn't yet been said, and/or to request support for that position from allies who are also part of the conversation.

Framing Contributions

A third category is even more indirect, but sometimes even more impactful: **Framing Contributions** (FCs). This is where one of the participants explicitly makes the conversation itself the topic of discussion. In other words, it's an instance of meta-communication: communication about communication.

FCs can either be made in an open and democratic way, or in a coercive and manipulative way. The first of these styles is a common feature of well-run meetings. It absolutely makes sense to start a meeting with

a discussion about its scope, objectives and process. In a well-facilitated workshop, it's even more important to talk about these aspects continuously. But the second style is also quite common: a participant takes it upon themselves to state what the subject matter of the conversation is, without consulting the others: "It's not about x, it's about y." Particularly when the individual is the most powerful person in the room, sometimes it's hard to push back. This is a recipe for bad decisions.

Other Types of Individual Contribution

There are other ways of contributing which challenge Grice's model of a conversation as an orderly, logical exchange of information. For example:

- **Asking questions:** this is an enormously powerful way of influencing a conversation, and can often act as an FC. In some situations, such as an interview, participants expect to be asked questions. In others, it can take a little more courage to do so, but is all the more effective because it's relatively unexpected.
- **Telling stories:** as we discussed in [article 18](#), stories are an effective though often underrated way of communicating on many levels simultaneously.
- **Power plays:** sometimes an individual will disrupt a conversation by taking advantage of the opportunity to send the captive audience a signal about

their power and/or influence. One extreme way of doing this is by saying something that both the speaker and the listeners know is untrue: when it goes unchallenged, a point has been made that no-one will forget.

- **Action:** as every parent knows, actions are more influential than words. Sometimes the most effective way of contributing to a conversation is to *do* something.

How Contributions Relate to the Group Construct System

In a DC, it's relatively easy to see what constructs are in play, because the speaker makes them explicit. By contrast, OCs are often expressed subtly, and you can only interpret what is being said if you understand the unspoken context that is shared between participants. There is always a frame: for every construct that is brought into play, there are many more that are left out.

Conversations are the mechanism through which Group Construct Systems (GCS) are created and maintained. In fact, arguably a GCS *is* a conversation: rather than being a thing, it's a process. Constructs, and relationships between them, are contributed to the conversation as inputs, and a modified or reinforced group construct system is an output. As well as the ostensible subject matter, this also includes a revised or re-entrenched set of norms for the group which will have a powerful influence on future conversational episodes.

Politics

When you were reading the examples given above, you might have found yourself recognising many of the devices that politicians use when debating, giving interviews or making speeches. That's certainly one context where they are found. But they're also used in the playground at school, and by many of us at one time or another in a work context – after all, as Adrian Reed has written, “where there are people, there’s politics.”

Nick helps organisations create people-oriented systems, products and services. He's trained thousands of professionals in business analysis, user experience, facilitation, systems

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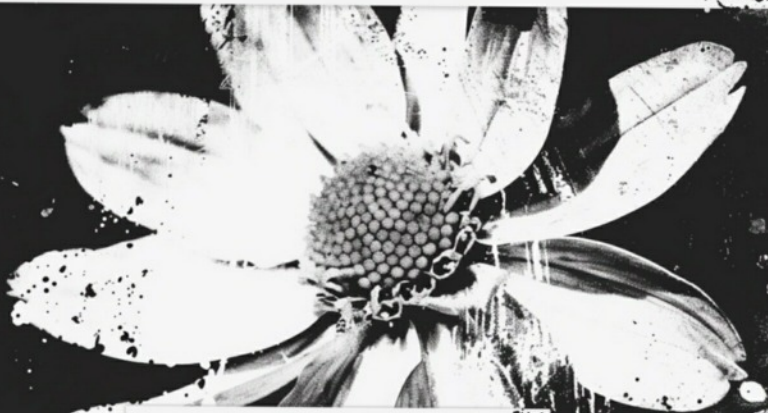
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Transferable Skills and Authentic Growth: Reflections of a Business Analyst



Farrah Pearson

I've often been asked how I became a business analyst. The honest answer is that it was not my original plan—the role found me, and I had no idea at the time how much it would teach me about myself.

What began as a challenging new role quickly became something much deeper. It came with recognition that the role reflected my way of thinking, my curiosity about people and systems, and my lifelong passion for learning. As my career has progressed, I have developed a range of technical and professional skills. On reflection, I am most proud of the skills I have acquired that are deeply human, deeply transferable and closely tied to who I am at my core.

What the Role Taught Me About Transferable Skills

I have always paid great attention to patterns, details, and connections. I notice the small things, inconsistencies and inefficiencies, and I've learned to turn that awareness into insight. In business analysis, having the ability to observe closely and think both systemically and systematically is invaluable. These skills have contributed to how I now communicate, collaborate and develop—not only in my career but also in my personal life. This illustrates how transferable BA skills really are!

When people talk about their transferable skills, they often list qualities and skills that might sound like corporate 'buzzwords' at first glance. However, it is important to remember that behind each of these 'buzzwords' there are relevant lived experiences. For example, as a business analyst I've learned to translate complexity in others' experiences into clarity, to listen deeply and bridge perspectives, conflicts, and manage resistance in teams of people who think and work very differently. These are skills that are crucial in the BA role, and also set practitioners up for a whole range of roles that they might want to move to in the future. However, these are not the only transferable skills worth discussing.

Additionally, like many BAs, I thrive in the role because of my natural curiosity. I believe the art of asking "why?" is something everyone should strive to perfect. It seems so straightforward, however in reality this question can be enlightening. Ask two different people "why?", and you may get two completely different (and equally valid) answers. It goes beyond words; there is often another layer of information in feelings and experiences that are unspoken but illustrated by tone, body language or other non-verbal communication. Again, while these skills are core to the BA role, it is hard to imagine many roles where they would not be useful!

I have found the transferable skills that I learned as a BA have been key to co-creating project success across projects within multiple roles. Strong communication and stakeholder management help in bridging the

gap between business needs and solutions, while also ensuring clarity and alignment. I apply core BA techniques such as stakeholder analysis, process mapping, requirements elicitation, gap analysis and root cause analysis to deliver meaningful, data driven outcomes. By combining these techniques with adaptability and analytical thinking I've helped drive successful project delivery and continuous improvement in a whole range of different contexts and roles (both inside and outside of a business analysis context).

Transferable Skills and an Authentic Mindset

In addition to the transferable skills mentioned so far, I would say one of the BA's most powerful tools is profoundly social. BAs typically work hard to understand stakeholders which enables them to communicate complex information in ways that they will find engaging. BAs facilitate difficult conversations, and how to read the room when stakeholders need some space to process and gather their thoughts. These are the skills that transcend roles, industries and careers.

Mindset and being true to personal values is important too. My work ethic regardless of role title strongly mirrors my core values of clarity, fairness, empathy and growth. I strongly value open and transparent relationships and believe this to be a catalyst for my own learning and empowering others in the professional and personal journey. I have mentored and coached many individuals throughout my career who often come to me trying to fit a mould

of what they perceive success to look like. I very quickly redirect this conversation with advice to be their authentic self. The diversity of others enables us to look through different lenses, enriching the conversation. As a business analyst, I believe you must be open to explore different perspectives and learn from them as you progress through future changes. Innovation and creativity are exciting spaces, when combined with inclusion, there is great opportunity in transformation. Once you have this mindset, doors open.

However, some of these doors might be unexpected...

Career Paths Are Rarely Linear

A common misconception is that career paths always follow a straight, predictable line. Reality is quite different, often they involve unexpected twists, turns and valuable learning experiences that lead to growth and new opportunities. I recently made a lateral move to develop areas I recognised to be gaps in my own development, during this

time my transferable BA skills were critical to getting grounded and taking on the new role successfully.

Through my experience as a BA, I developed confidence that wherever my path leads me to next I can add value through my core values and the transferable skills I have acquired. The role is more than understanding systems and data, there is a strong human element too. I would argue that it starts with *you*, the more you understand yourself, the more you can understand others, and have greater influence over outcomes.

After exploring alternative career paths, I've realised that my true passion lies in business analysis. Returning to this space has reignited my enthusiasm, and it's fair to say my spark is back. I'm excited for the projects and opportunities ahead, and for the chance to continue growing and making an impact.

Farrah Pearson welcomes all new connections; you can contact her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/farrah-jayne-p-847b6388/

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Blurring the Boundaries: BAs in User Acceptance Testing

Rakesh Patange

I work in a structured environment within a business improvement and legislation compliance program. The project team consists of a project manager, a business analyst, a test manager, testers, business stakeholders, personnel responsible for enforcing policy guidelines, and project sponsors. As a result, every individual has a defined role in the project from start to finish. The project's outputs are either a new or modified IT system.

As a business analyst, I often find myself crossing the role boundaries in projects. I am conscious of not stepping on others' toes, but you might wonder: Does anyone tell me to cross the role boundaries or expand my role into different areas?

The answer is a strong **"no"**.

The motivation behind crossing role boundaries is to achieve the best possible project outcome and ensure a smooth go-live of the solution. Let's explore some boundaries that I typically cross:

Boundary 1: Developing Business Test Cases

In my experience it's a widely accepted practice for a tester to be involved in most business discussions and to have access to specifications as they are developed. However, testers are often spread across multiple projects simultaneously, each with distinct and different business requirements. It's unreasonable to expect that each tester will have an in-depth grasp of the solution's functionality being delivered for every project, all the time. In this scenario, when a tester writes a test case, they will be basing it either on a requirements specification or a set of user stories. This carries an inherent risk of missing the business context and focusing on narrowly defined acceptance criteria, resulting in situations where the functionality implemented to fulfil a user story or requirement is incorrectly deemed to have passed testing, even though it should have failed. In this situation there's a real danger that the solution (or parts of it) will fail to achieve the overall business objectives.

For example: A business requirement that says: *A claim submitted by a client in a web-based system must be automatically approved based on a series of system logic in the background.*

The testers may write numerous test cases to validate this feature using an expected set of inputs, outputs, all of which are based on a set of acceptance criteria. However, real life can be different. People may submit all sorts of data, some of which is not easy to anticipate for those who do not know the context. This is precisely where I step in, crossing my role boundary to collaboratively develop test cases based on my interactions with business stakeholders. Since I have a deeper knowledge of the background and context, I can help to include or exclude scenarios and ensure that there's a good level of test coverage, covering exceptions and 'what if' scenarios.

Boundary 2: Specifying System Features

As a BA, I begin by eliciting and capturing the business needs and refining them into detailed requirements. Then comes a point at which all this documentation is provided to the design / development resources, who are responsible for designing, developing and delivering a solution to meet those requirements. According to the project's formal structure, I should stop here and wait until the solution is delivered and is ready for user acceptance testing.

But **no!** There is a possibility that something could go wrong if I

disappear once the requirements have been completed.

I am fortunate that the project execution method we follow involves regular discussions between our business and delivery teams, which leads to several system-related features being discussed to ensure the business needs are met. Some of you may say that the delivery team must have its own set of BAs and systems analysts to manage its documentation. While it is true that the delivery teams will have their own set of technical specifications (*which our business stakeholders don't need to know about*), some key system-related constraints and features must be highlighted, and every business stakeholder must be made aware of them. Ultimately, the documentation describing the IT-based solution design provides a demonstration of how a particular business requirement is addressed.

At this stage, I transition to the "other side" and remain business-focused. After discussing with the delivery team, I'll focus on a few key system features which are aligned to a specified set of business requirements. I then add this detail to the relevant user story / business requirements specification so that stakeholders can see what system behaviour they will experience.

This leads to a situation where a user story or business requirement no longer remains a business requirement alone. It morphs into a combination of system features, system validations, user interface requirements and system acceptance criteria. The business requirements documentation, as the project

approaches user acceptance testing, expands to include the following:

- **First level:** High-level business needs identified with a unique numbering series.
- **Second Level:** Business requirements for each of the business needs are identified with a unique numbering series and linked to the high-level business needs numbering series.
- **Third Level:** System modules that will be used/ developed to address each of the business requirements, again with a unique numbering series and linked to the business requirements numbering series.
- **Fourth Level:** System validations, User interface requirements, and acceptance criteria under each of the system modules, all linked to the third-level identification numbering series.

In its entirety, this is too much for business stakeholders to comprehend. They tend to be most interested in having their business needs addressed and documented in the project's early stages. However, as requirements are elicited and stakeholders' understanding of the business solution improves, the pool of stakeholders widens beyond those initial business stakeholders to include those from the solution delivery side as well. By crossing boundaries here, the objective is to develop a set of artefacts that serve as a reference for both business and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) stakeholders, providing a comprehensive context of both the

business and the system.

Benefits of Crossing the Boundaries

Based on my observations, personnel turnover has increased significantly. People no longer remain in their roles or jobs for five to six years, as was the case in the past. When a person exits an organisation or moves to a different role, scattered documentation can make it difficult for the next person to understand. A comprehensive, single piece of documentation, created by crossing the boundaries as described above, helps new stakeholders long after the original stakeholders have moved on.

Conclusion

As business systems become increasingly complex, and most business requirements are met through the implementation of business-oriented IT solutions, all necessary details must be gathered in one place. In the era of rapidly changing roles and people, businesses must maintain their knowledge base through fewer artefacts that can be referenced efficiently for future business and system improvement initiatives.

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'. Each project involves changes and improvements to the current business processes, supported by the ICT systems design.

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Snake Oil in Business Analysis

Ramya Kailashnathan

While reading [*AI Snake Oil: What Artificial Intelligence Can Do, What It Can't, and How to Tell the Difference*](#) by Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor, I was struck by how strongly the themes resonate beyond artificial intelligence and into the field of business analysis. The book critiques the technology industry's tendency to overstate the capabilities of AI, exposing inflated promises and flawed scientific claims while also offering a balanced view of the technology's genuine benefits and limitations.

What Is "Snake Oil"?

One key term that particularly stood out was "snake oil". Traditionally, snake oil refers to a product or solution that is heavily promoted and sold as a cure-all but ultimately proves to be ineffective or fraudulent. Interpreted through a business analysis lens, "snake oil" can describe overhyped solutions that promise exceptional outcomes yet fail to achieve them in practice.

Business analysts can encounter this risk in high-pressure environments, when working with unfamiliar teams, or when engaging vendors who overstate their expertise. In my experience, vendor engagements can be particularly challenging. During selection, suppliers may give strong assurances about team capability, delivery consistency, and progress reporting.

As the project progresses, these commitments may gradually fade away. Scheduled follow-ups fail to occur, code quality declines, and delivered software does not meet expectations. Ultimately, the gap between what was promised and what is delivered becomes evident.

This disconnect highlights the importance of critical evaluation, clear accountability, and realistic expectations—principles that are as vital in business analysis.

Why Does "Snake Oil" Thrive?

Why does "snake oil" continue to thrive in the field of business change? Often, it is driven by intense delivery pressure and misaligned priorities. I once worked in a project where the product owner was under significant pressure to meet an aggressive go-live timeline. While speed to market is often critical, it can unintentionally encourage decisions that compromise solution quality.

In situations like this, the role of the BA becomes especially important. It is our responsibility to raise concerns transparently and advocate for addressing critical issues before launch. In this case, several high-

severity defects required resolution. However, instead of being treated as essential fixes, these issues were at risk of being deferred and reframed as "future enhancements."

When delivery timelines consistently take precedence over product stability and user value, organisations create an environment where unrealistic assurances and superficial solutions are normalised. This is where "snake oil" thrives—when known risks are minimised, critical problems are reframed to meet deadlines, and the appearance of progress is valued more than actual outcomes. Over time, this approach erodes trust, increases technical debt, and undermines the long-term success and viability of the solution.

Ultimately, resisting "snake oil" thinking requires disciplined decision-making, honest and open communication, and a shared commitment to quality over short-term wins.

Why Does "Snake Oil" Persist in Organisations?

"Snake oil" persists in organisations when structural and capability gaps go unaddressed. In the example above, a significant portion of the team was relatively new and was still working through a steep learning curve in domain knowledge, processes, and solution context. This lack of familiarity can make it difficult to challenge assumptions, identify risks early, or assess the feasibility of proposed solutions.

Compounding this challenge, development was outsourced to a vendor who gave strong assurances

regarding expertise, delivery quality, and timelines. Over time, the vendor struggled to meet these commitments. The resulting gap between expectations and actual delivery led to inconsistencies in quality, including the acceptance of substandard code and incomplete functionality.

Without strong governance, clear quality standards, and effective feedback loops, these gaps create an environment where issues are normalised rather than resolved—allowing “snake oil” thinking to continue unchecked. Addressing this requires strengthening domain understanding, enforcing accountability, and aligning delivery expectations with working software.

How to Spot Snake Oil?

You can often spot snake oil when critical defects are consistently deferred or downplayed by labelling them as “nice to have” rather than acknowledging them as essential fixes. This behaviour typically signals a lack of accountability and an attempt to mask underlying quality issues instead of addressing them directly. There is a real risk that the solution delivered will be poorly received, and those using it may well feel that they have been sold “snake oil”.

Another clear indicator is when the product owner or delivery leadership is unable to prioritise the backlog effectively based on defect severity, business impact, and technical risk. When defects are treated with ambiguity or repeatedly reprioritised without resolution, it reflects weak ownership and poor decision-making,

increasing the likelihood of long-term instability in the product.

Drawing on extensive experience working with multiple vendors and delivery teams, recurring patterns become easier to recognise. These patterns often include misalignment between business goals and technical execution, unrealistic commitments driven by optimism rather than evidence, and persistent gaps in shared understanding across teams. Such conditions frequently lead to delivery delays, quality degradation, and stakeholder dissatisfaction.

When these warning signs appear together—defect minimisation, poor prioritisation, over-commitment, and misalignment—they serve as strong predictors of potential delivery failure. Recognising these signals early allows organisations to challenge unrealistic narratives, demand transparency, and take corrective action before small issues escalate into systemic problems.

How Can a BA Eliminate Snake Oil?

One of the most important contributions a business analyst makes is proactively identifying and closing gaps in requirements early. By engaging deeply with stakeholders, development teams, and product owners, a BA can ensure that expectations are clearly articulated, shared, and understood. This will help ensure that solution providers have a clear understanding of what is needed, and any capability gaps are highlighted early.

When misunderstandings, ambiguities, or inconsistent

interpretations of requirements surface, the BA should act as a central point of alignment. These issues are addressed quickly through clarification, validation, and documentation, preventing them from escalating into costly rework, delivery delays, or quality defects later in the development lifecycle. Early prototypes and proof-of-value or proof-of-concept exercises can ensure that crucial hypotheses are validated early. This makes “snake oil” visible for all to see.

Through structured analysis, continuous communication, and ongoing validation, the BA translates business needs into clear, actionable requirements. This early intervention

reduces risk, strengthens collaboration, improves predictability, and helps ensure solutions are built correctly the first time—creating better outcomes for the business and end users. And this may well involve exposing some “snake oil” along the way.

Ramya is a results-driven Business Analyst and board member of the IIBA® Denmark Chapter, bringing experience from global organisations to drive digital transformation and foster cross-functional collaboration. A published industry contributor, avid reader, and committed volunteer, she is recognised for her empathetic leadership, positive energy, and strategic perspective.

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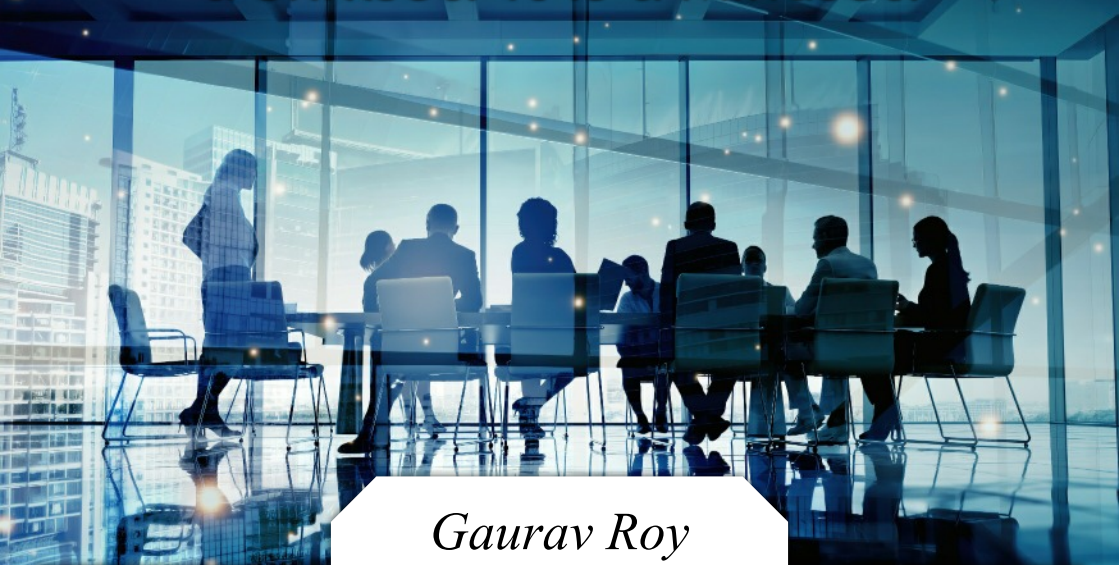


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Business Analysis Is Not Just a Skillset. It Is a Mindset.



Gaurav Roy

I didn't plan to become a business analyst. In fact, I explored several different paths before arriving in a BA role. At various stages of my life, I considered becoming a chartered accountant, prepared for government roles, thought about pursuing a PhD, and even imagined running my own business. Business analysis was not part of a carefully crafted roadmap—it was a Plan B, something I stepped into while figuring things out.

The first few months were confusing. Meetings were filled with terminology I had never heard before: user stories, sprint planning, backlog refinement, acceptance criteria, and so on. I attended meetings, documented requirements, and converted conversations into structured formats, but I often felt like I was translating words without

fully understanding their depth. Slowly, however, something began to shift.

As I started engaging more deeply with stakeholders, I found myself enjoying the complexity. This complexity involved understanding and reconciling multiple perspectives and conflicting priorities, often amongst a backdrop of ambiguous stakeholder expectations. I enjoyed asking questions, clarifying needs, refining ideas, and explaining user stories to development teams. Learning Scrum and agile practices added structure to what initially felt chaotic. I began to see how discussions evolved into deliverables and how those deliverables created impact. Then came a phase that changed everything.

Conscious Competence or "Copy & Paste"?

At one point, the work began to feel mechanical. A stakeholder would speak and I would document what they said. I would convert the stated requirement into a well-formed user story. I'd then move it to the sprint, and move on to the next. It started to feel like well-organised copy-paste work. That discomfort forced reflection. I realised I was using tools, but I was not fully using my mind. That was the turning point.

Instead of treating requirements as transactions, I began treating them as potential future lived experiences for users and stakeholders. I started imagining myself inside every feature. If I were the end user, would this flow make sense? Where might confusion arise? What assumptions are we making? What risks are hidden beneath this requirement? Most importantly, what real value does this deliver?

The questions became more natural and more frequent. I stopped asking, "Is this documented correctly?" and started asking, "Is this meaningful?" That shift transformed my understanding of business analysis.

Beyond Tools and Templates

Business analysis is often described in terms of tools, templates, frameworks, and certifications. But those are enablers. In my view, the core of the role is a *mindset*—one rooted in curiosity, structured thinking, empathy, risk awareness, and continuous value evaluation.

Once I recognised this mindset at work, I began seeing it everywhere in life.

One evening, I walked about a kilometre to buy groceries, carrying only my mobile phone because digital payments are widely accepted where I live. I consciously left my wallet at home, assuming digital payments would work as usual. After selecting everything I needed, I reached the billing counter, only to find the payment server was down.

No cash. No backup.

As I walked back home, slightly frustrated but amused, I realised I had skipped basic risk analysis. I had assumed availability. I had not planned for failure scenarios. A simple backup option carrying minimal cash would have prevented the inconvenience. It was a small incident, but it reinforced a larger lesson: analytical thinking is not confined to meeting rooms—it also shapes everyday decisions.

A more significant example came during my own wedding. It was a three-day event with multiple ceremonies, vendors, guests, logistics, and expectations. In many ways, it resembled a complex project. The stakeholders were not product owners or developers, they were family members, guests, caterers, decorators, photographers, and organisers.

Each night before the next day's events, I would mentally walk through the entire flow. What happens first? Who is responsible? Where could delays occur? What expectations are unspoken? What

gaps exist between the plan and reality? Risk management became real. Factors that we considered included:

- What if food runs short?
- What if a key vendor is delayed?
- What if guest counts exceed expectation?
- What is our immediate contingency?

This led to risk management activities such as:

- Ensuring backup arrangements for raw materials.
- Identifying alternative contacts.
- Confirming buffer timings.
- Clarifying roles.
- Anticipating points of failure.

The goal was simple: make the event seamless for everyone attending. Looking back, I realise I was applying the same mindset I use professionally like stakeholder alignment, gap analysis, contingency planning, proactive communication, and continuous monitoring.

The BA Role Is Broad

Being a BA does not mean staying confined to a narrow set of defined tasks. It often means stepping in when needed, and doing valuable analysis work to ensure the best outcome is achieved. At work, this has sometimes meant facilitating discussions in the absence of a Scrum master, acting as a proxy product owner to clarify priorities, or understanding configuration changes just enough to unblock progress. Not

because the role demanded it, but because the outcome did.

When the focus shifts from "What is my responsibility?" to "What is the problem we are solving?", boundaries become flexible and ownership increases.

The same principle applies in personal life. Whether managing a wedding, planning finances, helping a friend make a career decision, or simply organising daily responsibilities, a structured, problem-solving mindset reduces chaos and increases clarity.

Skills can be learned. Tools can be mastered. Templates can be downloaded. But mindset is cultivated. It grows through uncertainty, reflection, mistakes, and experience. It strengthens each time we pause to ask better questions. It matures when we anticipate risks before they materialise. It deepens when we focus on value rather than activity.

I entered business analysis accidentally, however I continue in it intentionally. Not because of the title, but because of the way it has trained me to think. Perhaps that is the true essence of the profession: You do not just practise business analysis at work. You live it.

Gaurav Roy is a Senior Business Analyst with experience in digital transformation and data-driven product initiatives. He specialises in bridging business needs with practical technology solutions, focusing on value creation and stakeholder alignment. Connect with him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/gaurav-roy-797b58169

From Backlog to Business Value: How BAs Can Master the Product Mindset

Anurita Ruscoe



I used to think my job was refining the backlog. Over time, I realised the more important work was having the discipline to decide what shouldn't be there.

Business analysts have always cared about outcomes, but as

organisations shift toward product-led thinking, that focus is becoming more explicit. We're no longer just translating ideas into well-formed requirements; we're actively shaping the purpose behind the work.

Adopting a product mindset doesn't

make you a product owner overnight. But it does change one habit: moving from outputs to outcomes. Instead of asking, “Is this requirement ready?” start asking, “Will this help us make money, save money, or build long-term value?”

What Is Business Value? – Truly

Business value is simple. Most backlog items should do one of three things:

- **Make money:** revenue growth, retention, or increased engagement.
- **Save money:** efficiency, automation, risk reduction, or reduced operational effort.
- **Enable intangible benefits to be realised:** customer satisfaction, brand reputation, or stronger market position.

When BAs view backlog items through these lenses, the narrative shifts, and backlog items move from feature requests to business decisions.

Using OKRs to Guide Analysis (Not Just Reporting)

Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) aren’t purely theoretical, they have a definite practical application. For BAs, they can be useful in filtering out backlog items that are not aligned with the overall product objective. To compare backlog items against OKRs, ask questions such as:

- Which objective does this backlog item support?
- What metric will tell us if it worked?
- If we removed this feature, would any key result change?

In a new HR platform implementation I led, the objective was to improve onboarding efficiency, with a key result to reduce manual HR administration by 25%. Our analysis focused on the smallest changes that removed friction, not on building the most feature-rich onboarding portal. Simple automation of document workflows and clearer data capture delivered far more value than a heavily customised interface.

Metrics shift the tone of conversations. Instead of debating opinions, BAs bring clarity by asking one question: *How will we measure success?* That question moves analysis from documentation to decision-making.

Value Slicing and MVP Thinking

One of the biggest traps in backlog management is trying to deliver everything at once, which often leads to overloaded roadmaps and little real value being unlocked. Product-minded BAs focus on value slicing by breaking work into the smallest increments that prove whether something works.

Minimum Viable Product (MVP) thinking isn’t about cutting corners. It’s about testing assumptions early.

Rather than documenting a fully defined solution, a backlog item can become a hypothesis:

"If we introduce automated onboarding reminders, we expect manual HR follow-ups to reduce by at least 15%."

This mindset keeps analytical rigour intact while encouraging faster learning. Techniques like [AssistKD's POPIT™ model](#) can help here too. Sometimes the biggest opportunity isn't new technology, but clearer information or a simpler process.

Case Study: Turning a Requirement into a Product Hypothesis

Here's a personal example from a transformation project I led that shows how shifting from features to outcomes can change not just the direction of delivery, but ultimately the value achieved.

A delivery team received a request to build a complex approval dashboard as part of a new HR system implementation. The initially stated backlog item focused on layouts, permissions, and multiple reporting views so managers could track employee actions in one place.

Rather than jumping straight into requirements, we paused to explore the real problem. Why did stakeholders want a dashboard? The answer wasn't simply "better visibility." Managers were struggling to keep track of pending approvals and were spending too much time

chasing updates through emails and spreadsheets.

Using OKRs as a guide, the team linked the request to an objective focused on improving operational efficiency, with a key result to reduce manual follow-ups by at least 20%.

Instead of delivering a large dashboard, we proposed an MVP: automated approval notifications with a simple prioritised task list. The hypothesis was clear:

"If managers receive timely, structured reminders and can see their priority actions in one place, this will reduce manual chasing and delays."

The MVP went live quickly and showed immediate impact. Approval turnaround times improved, email traffic reduced, and managers reported less administrative overhead. Only after validating the value did the team consider expanding reporting capabilities.

By reframing the request into a product hypothesis, we shifted the conversation from features to outcomes, delivering measurable value without unnecessary complexity.

Thinking Like a Product Owner Without Losing Analysis

The table below shows some key differences. Of course, these are generalisations, and the best approach will vary depending on the context:

BA in a Project / Change Initiative	BA in a Product Operating Model
Clarifies the problem and agrees outcomes early	Keeps revisiting the problem as learning emerges
Works toward a defined scope and plan	Works in smaller slices, iterating based on evidence
Strong focus on completeness, traceability, sign-off	Strong focus on feedback loops, metrics, and learning
Validates requirements and acceptance criteria	Validates outcomes using measures and experiments

Crucially, operating with a product mindset doesn't mean abandoning structure. It means applying analytical skills with clearer intent.

Practical habits that help include:

- Linking every backlog item to an OKR or measurable outcome.
- Asking whether work helps make money, save money, or enables intangible benefits to be achieved.
- Framing requirements as hypotheses instead of fixed solutions.
- Using MVP thinking to learn before over-investing.

The modern BA still writes strong requirements, facilitates workshops, and supports delivery. The difference is perspective. Instead of managing a list of features, we help teams understand why something matters and how success will be measured.

From Backlog to Impact

Backlogs will always exist. But when analysis is guided by OKRs, grounded in business value, and shaped through MVP thinking, delivery becomes more focused and outcomes become visible.

When every backlog item connects to making money, saving money, or achieving value elsewhere, analysis becomes more than delivery support. It becomes strategic direction. You don't need a new job title to create that shift. You just need to start asking better questions!

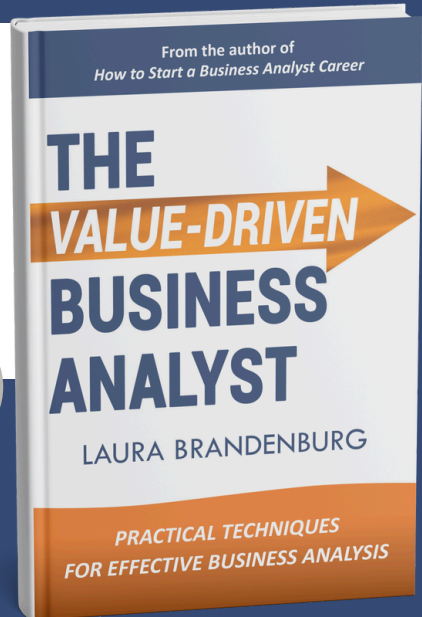
Anurita Ruscoe was a finalist for the BA of the Year Award 2025 and Founder of The Business Analyst Confidence Studio, which empowers BAs to lead with confidence, influence, and purpose. She leads a team of BAs and is passionate about redefining the profession in an AI-driven world.

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BA Back Stories

Agnieszka Balcerzak



Interviewed by Christina Lovelock

Agnieszka supports organisations to design and embed business analysis capability. She was among the first professionals in Poland to obtain IIBA® certification and currently holds multiple international IIBA® credentials. Agnieszka is also a trainer and mentor, and the President of the [IIBA® Poland chapter](#).

What else is going on for you this week? What would you be doing right now if we weren't having this discussion?

There's a lot happening this year. I feel like 2026 exploded not only in the BA community, but also in my life. At the moment I would be working on two new training courses, I'm also working on a prototype of a Virtual Reality (VR) app for BAs to support the BA role. That's on my mind and on my list. And, of course, the [IIBA®](#)

Poland Summit is starting and we are having discussions, we are working on posts, so that's my plan for now!

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

I'm very interested in the ownership of the BA process—how to measure that and what the KPIs are. AI can really support BAs in many ways. I'm thinking about where the exact value of the BA is in the whole process, how we can measure effectiveness. I'm passionate about business analysis planning and monitoring. I've always been interested in this, but nowadays it feels even more important. So having this ownership, understanding the value, understanding who I am as a BA, being clear on the value I bring; these are the topics I am exploring.

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there several times, I got certified with CCBA®, and got to know IIBA® and the BA community more. The first time I was asked to deliver training was a key point in my career as well, and becoming chapter president was another turning point.

Many BAs struggle with perfectionism. How do you decide when your analysis work is good enough?

That is a good question! Especially for me, I am a bit of a perfectionist. I discovered that it's important to share your work as fast as you can, to get feedback and discuss it with people. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. If you wait too long, you get emotionally involved in your work and it's harder to correct it. However, taking time to work on your own is also important. How I manage it—that came with time and practice and with being tired of perfectionism! I got to a point where I had so many things to do that I had to let go. Life pushed me. Otherwise I probably wouldn't have changed. But still, there are areas where I'm a perfectionist (like structuring processes!)

Are there any small habits that make a big difference in your work?

I structure a lot of my work and name what I do. I try to be very conscious of my decisions. I'm very focused on business analysis planning and monitoring. I start by getting to know stakeholders, understanding what tools I have, what's expected of me, what the rules of the game are. I prepare the environment for myself. That helps me switch between

different projects or topics because I keep everything in one file—creating a frame for each project—so I can switch contexts quickly. I'm very conscious about dividing different areas, having different environments, and setting my time intentionally.

How has engaging with the professional community shaped your thinking or practice?

It was a big change for me because I was always a stand-alone expert. I never wanted to be a leader. But I discovered that early in my career I had to do all the digging on my own—I had no one to learn from. That motivated me because I know how much faster your career can move when you have support. You always get to that “valley-of-despair” point when you want to turn back, and you need community. You need people who also want to do great things. Otherwise it's easy to get lost and resign. Having support changed a lot for me. I have mentors, supervision, a global community, and local networks including a women's entrepreneurial network. I care a lot about exchanging ideas, being triggered to think differently, being pushed out of my comfort zone. When you stay in the same community all the time, you start thinking the same way, so you also need to consciously step out sometimes.

Is there a particular skill or trait that has helped you in your career?

Perseverance and determination. I won't stop until I find what I'm searching for. I know small steps take you a long way. Sometimes you need big actions, but in the background





there are small steps that build something. It takes time, patience, and dedication. Once I decide I'm doing something, I'm dedicated to making it happen and making it happen with good quality.

Have you received any advice or feedback that has stuck with you?

Don't do everything alone. That's the biggest one. I'm the kind of person who thinks I can do everything alone, and that wasn't helpful. I had to deal with that. So don't do everything alone. Talk with people, ask, share ideas, be humble. My mentor taught me the idea of "empathy houses": first go to the empathy house of the person you're talking with, then to yours, then to common ground. Assertiveness, being kind, being courageous, and taking care of yourself—that's important for me as an empathetic person who likes to give a lot. Taking care of myself is something I am still learning from others.

Is there a topic you wish more professionals were talking about?

Not being afraid of taking action and trusting yourself, trying different things, not asking others all the time what to do. I know we talk about this, but I still see it as a problem in the BA community. I'd like people to have fun during the process—enjoying trying new things, learning lessons quickly, not delaying the learning, taking ownership of both failures and successes and having fun in the process.

Finally, is there anything you'd

like to give a shout-out to, anything that has inspired you?

Recently I attended training about AI in marketing and AI in project management. I learned a lot about using [Miro and its AI](#) aspects for modelling and processing sticky-note content. That inspired me. [Adrian Reed's AI and BA forum](#) is also a big source of inspiration. Conferences like [BA & Beyond](#) or the [IIBA® Poland summit](#) we are planning—I know they will be amazing events.

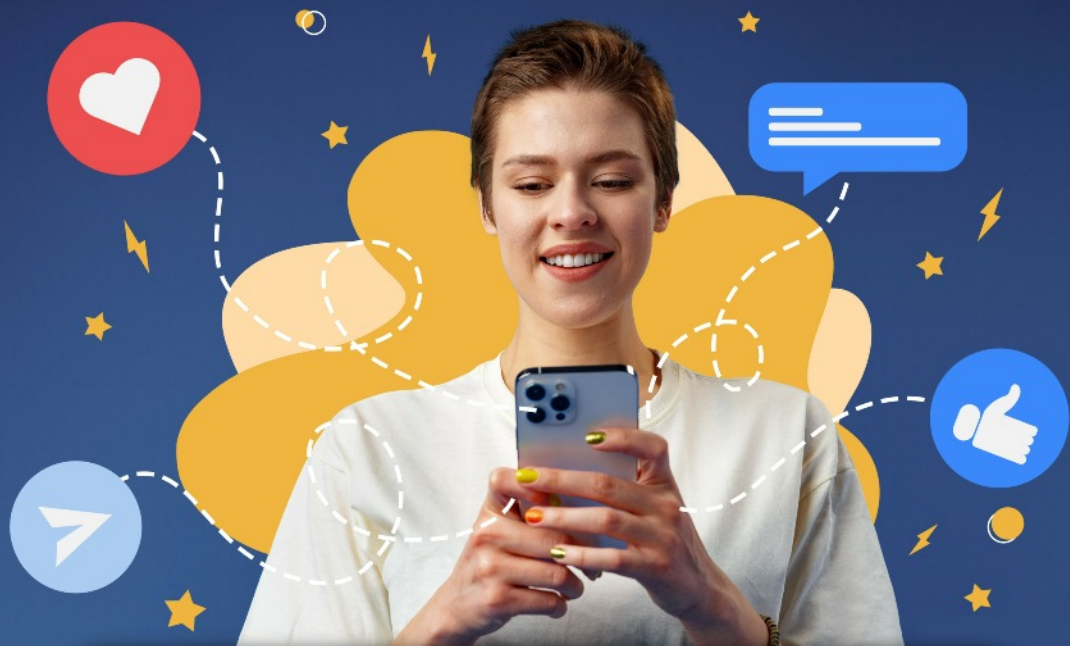
The VR community too—I'm interested in new ways of triggering people. I engage with entrepreneurial and start-up communities, and I was at a start-up conference recently with very innovative ideas that build business acumen. I also have regular discussions with people from [PMI](#) about cooperation between PMs and BAs and why they sometimes don't understand each other. I have many points of discussion across different backgrounds, including [IIBA](#) of course! Mentoring and coaching communities also inspire me—[clean coaching](#) ideas, supervision, all of that. I am grateful to be a part of so many different communities and have a lot of great people around, that I can learn from.

Connect with [Agnieszka via LinkedIn](#)

About the interviewer:

Christina Lovelock is a digital 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

In the last magazine, we posed the question
What's the best professional advice you've ever received—and did you follow it?

Here are some of the replies:

When I was 22 I was fortunate enough to work with a guru from MS and she told me "Let your work do the talking". I didn't get it then but over the years I remind myself of this line

multiple times. I have shared it with all my IIBA mentees. Short but powerful

Rushma Panchal

My boss said: “Il ne faut pas informatiser les mauvaises habitudes du client.” This means: “Do not automate the customer’s bad habits”.

If the customer asks you to write a program that automates a task that was previously done manually, don’t rush. Ask questions about the whole business process. Check if it needs improvement. Can you make it work better? Faster? Cheaper? If you think so, discuss this with the customer. Keep in mind, once the new software is written, it is too late to change - the business process is “frozen”.

(also) My British colleague said: “If it hasn’t been tested, it doesn’t work.”

He means, whatever program you write, whatever batch job you create, whatever backup formula you use, you ALWAYS have to test it. If anything at all can go wrong, it absolutely will. And you will be standing there, amazed, bewildered and helpless. Swearing won’t help. Preventing problems is the only way.

Christiane Vandepitte

The best professional advice I’ve received was surprisingly simple: ignore the hustle and focus on the work.

As a Business Analyst, I was told that my real value doesn’t come from being the loudest in the room or constantly “busy”, but from the quality of insights I deliver and how effectively I influence outcomes. The chaos around you is temporary; good analysis has a much longer shelf life.

I learned to trust my judgment, step back for an eagle-eye view during elicitation, and then zoom in on the nuances that actually matter.

Did I follow this advice? Mostly especially after realizing that hustle fades, but thoughtful impact doesn’t.

Usha Fofliya

The best professional advice I've ever received was: "Don't wait to be fully ready; step into the opportunity and grow into it."

At the time, I thought readiness was something you earned quietly in the background. But the truth is, most meaningful roles, projects, and stretch moments don't arrive with perfect timing or perfect clarity. You step forward, you learn fast, and you build the confidence as you go.

Did I follow it? Absolutely, and it changed everything. It pushed me to take on bigger responsibilities, lead in spaces where I once felt like a guest, and trust that capability grows through action, not hesitation.

It's become a guiding principle: progress over perfection, curiosity over fear, and saying yes to the things that feel just slightly out of reach.

Christina Tan

The best advice I have been given is to always be your authentic self, stay true to your own values, then no matter the

outcome you will have no regrets.

Farrah Pearson

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

What's one skill every BA should master?

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

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

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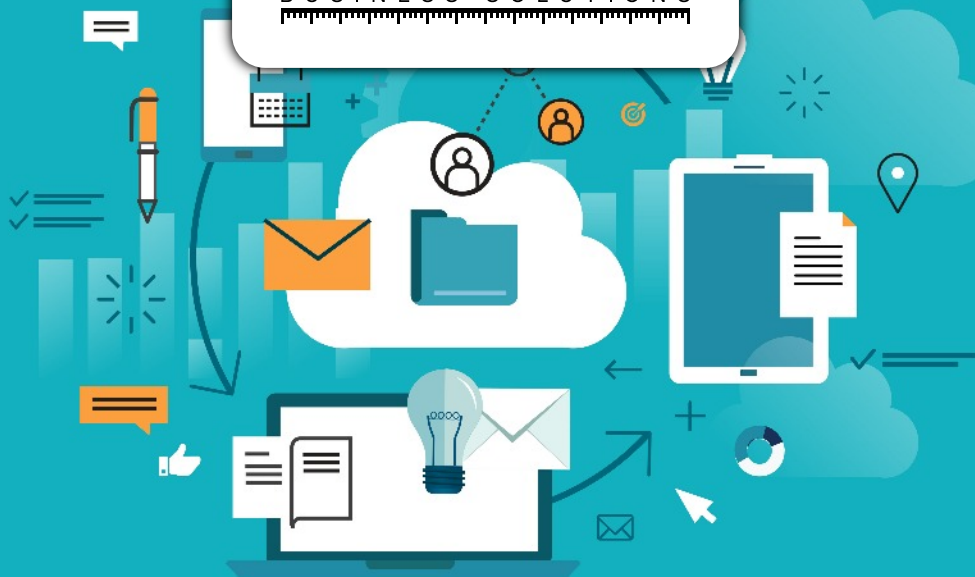
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