

BA DIGEST

- Business Analysis & Sustainability
- Hot and Cold Collaboration
- Cyber-resilience
- Business Rules
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Welcome

Welcome to the Q2 edition of BA Digest. I can't believe it's Q2 already, time really is flying by. I hope you're having a great 2024.

I've been thinking a lot recently about the value that business analysis can bring to organisations. If you're reading this, you're very likely an advocate of business analysis and you will have seen this first-hand. There's value in good quality business analysis throughout the project or product life cycle.

Yet, not everyone sees it that way. We've probably all come across stakeholders who are sceptical, or (if we're really unlucky) downright resistant about the whole idea of analysis.

It is easy to frame this as being their problem. "Oh, they don't get us", "if only they engaged us earlier", "why do they always think in solutions and not problems?" Yet to do so leads us down a dangerous path. Extrapolated too far the argument starts to sound like a stereotype of a teenager arguing about how the world doesn't get them, and how everything feels unfair...

I'm not suggesting that any of us would think that, of course (nor that all teenagers are stereotypical!) But I do think there is a harsh truth: if stakeholders don't see the value of business analysis, then that is on us. It is

on us as individual practitioners, as teams and practices, and as a wider community to convey our value: collectively and individually. Crucially, we need to convey it in a way that other people actually care about. This subtle but important shift to our customers changes perspectives.

I really hope that BA Digest, and the variety of articles that are written by the authors, can be a part of this conversation. I always find I learn something new or hear a new perspective by reading the articles, and I hope that the same is true for you. If you do see something that particularly resonates, be sure to drop the author a line. Trust me, they will appreciate it!

As always, a massive thank you to the authors who have allowed us to publish their work. We couldn't publish BA Digest without you. Also, thank you to our advertisers. It is the advertisers who enable us to keep BA Digest free, so please do support them and check out their services.

Until next time,

Adrian

Adrian Reed

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest
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Business Rules, Who Cares & How to Communicate?

Li Yang



A recent rather frustrating experience with my cell phone service provider trying to resolve an issue made me think about business rules. How do business rules affect customers? Should customers care about all the business rules that an organisation or business follows? How clearly are business rules communicated to customers?

But first, what are the business rules?

According to the [Business Rules Group](#), a business rule defines or constrains some aspects of the business. It is common sense that rules remove some degree of freedom. [The Object Management Group \(OMG\)](#)'s definition adds that a business rule is a "rule that is practicable and that is under business

jurisdiction." Practicable means the rules can be put into practice without the need for further interpretation. Under business jurisdiction means that the business can decide to adopt, change or discard the rules. According to [Gladys Lam](#), business rules are criteria used in business operations to guide behaviour, shape judgements and make decisions.

Customers generally don't concern themselves with the inner workings of a business, but sometimes they care a great deal about elements of business operation. But what are these? Customers care about the:

- Products and services that a business offers

- Terms and conditions associated with acquiring the products and services
- Support that a business offers after acquiring the products and services.

Do business rules come into play in all these? Perhaps.

The Products and Services That a Business Offers:

Sometimes the only rule is about price: those who can pay for the products and service can get them. Some products, such as alcohol, have additional age-related rules. All businesses have rules on the payment methods that they accept. These are usually relatively straightforward.

Other times, the rules are more complicated, such as getting a loan or an insurance policy. A customer needs to apply for such products, and loan or insurance companies generally qualify customers first. While customers are likely advised of eligibility criteria beforehand, the loan or insurance companies seldom explain the details as to how they reach the qualification decisions. Eligibility and qualification decisions are examples of business rules that a business may or may not choose to communicate clearly to its customers.

The Terms and Conditions Associated with Acquiring the Products and Services:

Terms and conditions are rules about the

rights of a business and the rights of a customer, such as a:

- Return policy defines whether and when a product can be returned; whether the product needs to be in a particular condition; how the refund will be processed, etc.
- Cancellation policy defines whether a lease or subscription can be stopped; whether there is any penalty for cancelling, etc.
- Warranty policy defines the conditions for repair, replacement, or fixes if the product or service fails to perform as expected; conditions when a warranty is invalidated; the cost for extended warranty; the length of time that a warranty is in force for a product or service, etc.
- Reward program defines the specifics about the program, how a customer accumulates rewards, and how rewards may be redeemed, etc.
- Shipping policy defines the shipping mode, priority, shipping cost, and estimated delivery time, etc.

Likely many more rules exist than those listed above. For customers, having a clear understanding of the rules is desirable. But the reality is that most of the time, customers are made aware of these rules only when they purchase big-ticket items, such as cars, appliances, or enter a contract for long term services. The documents containing the terms and conditions are often large and in fine print. Accordingly, customers may instead rely on a

salesperson to interpret and highlight the rules. Most of the terms and conditions are not communicated as practicable business rule statements.

The Support That a Business Offers after Acquiring the Products and Services:

This includes the channels through which customers can get support from a business, such as phone, email, online form, online chat, testing, etc., the operating hours, and the expected response time. Generally, businesses communicate these very clearly on their websites. However, in seeking support, the most important thing customers care about is getting timely assistance and resolution.

- Being on hold for hours or not getting any response from email or online enquiries is bad customer service.
- Being advised of different things at different attempts to try to resolve a problem may reflect the lack of knowledge and training of the customer service representatives or unclear or conflicting rules as understood by them.
- Not being able to resolve issues is the worst of all, which likely result in very frustrated customers, risk to the business' reputation, and loss of business.

Getting support from a business may or may not be related to warranty. Whether the customers' issues can be resolved

promptly may not be entirely about business rules.

In the book "[Rules, Shaping Behavior and Knowledge](#)", Ronald G. Ross explains that there are two types of rules: behaviour rules and definition rules. Behaviour rules can be violated, and definitional rules can't be violated. Ronald offers five violation questions to use to analyse behaviour rules:

1. How are potential and actual violations detected? (Automatic detection or by human intervention are possibilities, and real-time detection is highly desirable.)
2. What enforcement level? ("Strictly enforced" and "guidelines" are two opposite extremes of the levels.)
3. What guidance message? (The guidance message can be the business rule statements or alternative messages.)
4. What special violation response? (As an option, special actions, processes, or procedures may be invoked.)
5. What applicability conditions? (Whether a business rule is enforced all the time or selectively under different situations.)

For non-Amazon Prime subscribers, Amazon has done an amazing job to foster its customers' understanding of its free shipping rule: in Canada, an order of \$35 or more eligible items qualifies for free shipping (this varies by country). Let's examine how the first three

violation questions are handled on Amazon's website.

Real-time detection occurs any time a customer looks at an item. A message on the right of the screen automatically indicates the expected delivery date of free shipping if the item is over \$35 or the shipping will be free on orders over \$35 if the item is less than \$35.

On the checkout screen, any order of less than \$35 is always associated with a shipping charge. Violation is strictly enforced.

Consistent guide messages on different screens: once a customer adds an item to the cart, a coloured bar visually indicates whether order size has reached

the free shipping threshold and whether the order qualifies for free shipping.

Come to think of it, I can't remember the last time I placed an order on Amazon for less than \$35. My behaviour was shaped.

I wish all businesses communicate their relevant business rules so consistently and clearly.

Li Yang, CBAP, a top-notch business analyst and aspiring business architect, instructor, and speaker, brings her multi-industry experience and passion of delivering value to every engagement. You can reach Li at [linkedin.com/in/li-yang-cbap-3733a21/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/li-yang-cbap-3733a21/)

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Building a Cyber-resilient Future: The Journey of a Cybersecurity BA Team at Health New Zealand

Daniel Jang

In the wake of COVID-19, the world witnessed an alarming spike in cyber threats, challenging the resilience of global healthcare infrastructures. New Zealand's healthcare system was no exception, experiencing a significant cyber attack in May 2021 that crippled [Waikato Hospital's information services](#). This incident underscored the critical need for a robust cybersecurity framework, leading to the government's initiation of a three-year Cyber Security Uplift programme (CSU) aimed at fortifying New Zealand's health system through threat-informed, intelligence driven defences, enhanced risk

management and incident response capabilities, as well as fostering a skilled cyber workforce.

The Genesis of a Cyber BA Team

My journey began with the Ministry of Health New Zealand in 2020, amidst the throes of the pandemic. Initially contributing to the Digital Enablers Programme for COVID-19 Response, I soon became involved with cybersecurity projects, leading me to work on the BA component before the inception of the CSU.

With the CSU, my role expanded to recruiting and leading BAs working across various projects and workstreams. Tasked with the challenge of assembling a specialised BA team when the country closed its borders, I delved into the recruitment process with zeal. Over time, sifting through 120 resumes and conducting 40 interviews, we curated a cadre of 12 exceptional Senior BAs, each bringing a unique blend of skills and a shared commitment to cybersecurity excellence.

Embracing the IIBA® Cybersecurity Analysis Framework

As a Certified Business Analysis Professional (CBAP®), I recognised early on the importance of not only leading with expertise but also fostering a culture of continuous learning within my team. My pursuit of the Certificate in Cybersecurity Analysis (IIBA®-CCA) in 2022 was driven by a passion for lifelong learning and a desire to bolster my credibility in this domain. I was delighted to see several BAs also followed suit. The IIBA's cybersecurity analysis materials were helpful, offering solid frameworks and concepts for the development of BA Practice Guidelines.

Lessons Learned: Building and Leading an Effective Cybersecurity BA Team

Leading the cybersecurity BA team at Health New Zealand has been a journey of discovery, challenge, and profound

learning. The experience has reinforced several key lessons:

1. **Focus on core BA skills:** When hiring cybersecurity BAs, it's tempting to over-index on niche cybersecurity skills versus foundational competencies. Our recruitment philosophy centred on the belief that while cybersecurity knowledge is valuable, the foundational BA skills of communication, problem-solving, and teamwork are paramount. We've had great success nurturing some talented BAs from other backgrounds into cybersecurity experts. While cybersecurity knowledge can be gained on the job, innate analytical thinking and adaptability are much harder to instil.
2. **Foster collaboration through a BA Forum:** We instituted a monthly BA forum to create a space for knowledge sharing and collective growth, culminating in a 20-min "deep dive" presentation from a different BA each month. This rotating spotlight helps other BAs to stay abreast of wider programme initiatives, while breaking down silos. We also opened up the forum to others across CSU who are interested in learning about the work of BAs.
3. **Customise guidelines, not straightjackets:** With a dispersed team, standard templates like job description, requirement tables, example process maps, and delivery trackers promote consistency.

However, every cybersecurity initiative has quirks requiring adaptable application. Rather than enforcing rigid templates, I developed a set of general guidelines with room for situation-based customisation. Balance is essential—guidelines that are too loose create chaos, overly regimented rules stifle productivity. Empowering BAs to address their own project needs is the key.

Looking Ahead

As we continue to navigate the complexities of cybersecurity in healthcare, the journey of our BA team underlined the importance of

adaptability, continuous learning, and the pursuit of excellence. Through a committed focus on people, process, and technology, guided by BA best practices, we are not simply responding to cyber threats but actively shaping a secure, future-ready healthcare system for New Zealand. Technology is crucial, but the real strength of cybersecurity lies in the people who wield it.

Daniel Jang, CBAP is a versatile pathfinder with experiences in both public and private sectors across Australia and New Zealand, specialising in strategy, cybersecurity and AI innovation. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#)

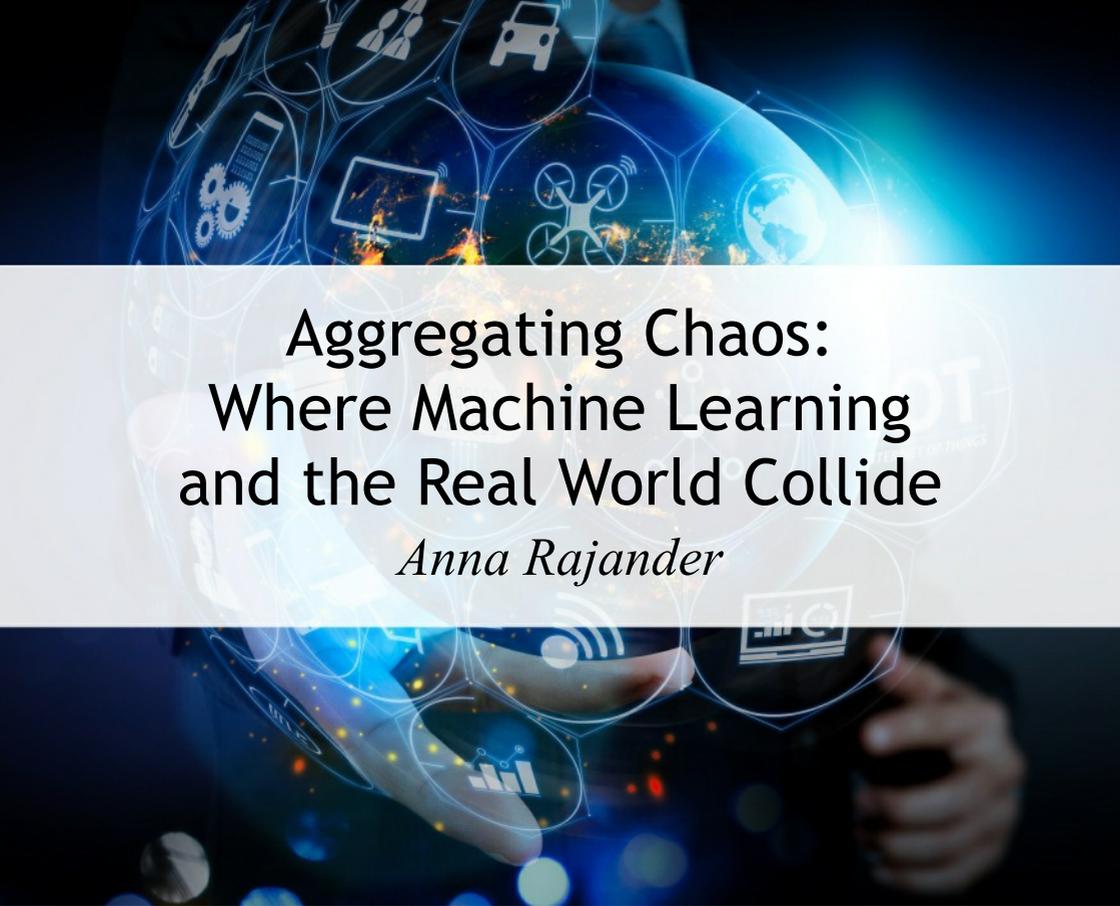
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Aggregating Chaos: Where Machine Learning and the Real World Collide

Anna Rajander

With the advent of ‘big data’, the use of machine learning models has become more prominent as organisations look to use the large amounts of data they hold. From monitoring patient health to predicting credit card fraud, machine learning has been applied in many different industries. When applying predictive analytics and machine learning models to the real world, it is important to consider the data on which models have been developed to identify any limitations or risks associated with their application. This article looks at things business analysts should consider when applying machine learning models

to the real world.

Understanding Machine Learning

For many, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies have come out of the blue, yet ML has been around for many years. The terms AI and ML mean different things. AI technology enables systems to reason, act, or adapt like a human, while ML is an application or subset of AI that allows systems to learn from prior data.

Developing a new ML model requires 2 things: an ML algorithm and data. ML algorithms find patterns, correlations and anomalies in existing datasets to create models that can be applied to new information. These models are used to predict outcomes, inform courses of action, and automate activities. The data used to create a model is critical—the same ML algorithm applied to different datasets will produce different models.

When applying ML models, business analysts should consider:

- *Appropriateness*: Was the model developed on appropriate data?
- *Representativeness*: Was the model developed on representative data?
- *Changes*: Has there been any changes in the real world that may impact the fitness of the model?
- *Application*: What is the impact of applying model outputs?

Appropriateness

When looking to apply ML in the real world, it is important to understand what the underlying data was collected for and whether it is fit for use. ML is often used opportunistically, with models developed on data collected for other purposes. In these cases, it is important to consider whether data is suitable to be used in the model.

Take the hypothetical example of a publicly funded hospital. The hospital wanted to analyse patient admissions to identify patients that were likely to be

readmitted to hospital after discharge. The hospital hoped the resulting model could be used to allocate patients to a readmission prevention program.

When patients are admitted to the hospital, their marital status is recorded alongside other personal information. Modelling of the data showed that unmarried men were more likely to be readmitted to hospital compared to married men. Models that included marital status were much better at predicting readmission. However, correlation does not imply causation—it was unlikely patient marital status was preventing readmission. Rather, being married likely correlated with a patient having support at home, and it was access to support after discharge that prevented readmission (for men at least). This led to conversations regarding the ethics of using marital status in a readmission model, such as whether it could be viewed as discriminatory. Patient marital status was never collected for the purposes of developing a readmission model, so its use needed to be carefully considered.

Representativeness

Another important question to ask is whether models have been developed using data representative of the context to which the model is being applied. There are many examples where models have failed because the underlying data used to train them was not representative of the application context—[medical diagnosis tools developed in the US misdiagnosing Africans with flu instead of tuberculosis](#), and [self-driving cars](#)

developed in Europe being confused by jumping kangaroos. This is known as unconscious bias—the data is biased towards a certain situation or population. When considering applying ML models, it is important to consider if the data used to develop the model is representative of the situation or population to which the model is being applied.

Changes to the Real World

It's important to understand any changes in the real world may change the relevance of the underlying data. This includes changes to how/when data is collected impacting its accuracy and/or timeliness, as well as changes to policy/regulation/legislation that may change the meaning of data. For example, the analysis for the public hospital mentioned previously was conducted prior to changes to the Australian marriage act, where the marriage act was changed to recognise same sex marriage. The hospital didn't change its systems or processes - they just started to recognise and record same sex marriages the same way they had always recorded marital status. If you looked at the underlying data, it would not have been obvious that anything had changed. However, given previous analysis showed a strong association between sex, (heterosexual) marriage and readmission, it is reasonable to assume this change in definition may impact the ongoing effectiveness of any models developed using this data. Business analysts need to be aware of real-world changes that may impact the underlying data used to develop ML models.

Application

Finally, it is important to consider how any ML model is being applied. ML models can be used to automate activities based on the latest available data—such as recommending a song based on previous listening history, accepting an application for finance based on credit history, or triggering an alarm when patient vitals show signs of deterioration.

When used in this way, ML models are effectively making one or more binary decisions. The accuracy of these decisions can be categorised as follows:

- True Positive: the model correctly assigns a positive outcome.
- True Negative: the model correctly assigns a negative outcome.
- False Positive: the model incorrectly assigns a positive outcome.
- False Negative: the model incorrectly assigns a negative outcome.

When applying ML, it is important to understand the risk posed by false results and any required level of precision and/or accuracy. For example, the impact of a false positive in a patient monitoring situation—alerting the nurse unnecessarily—is likely to be more acceptable compared to a false negative—failing to alert a nurse when necessary. It is also important to consider what checks and balances will be in place to manage and/or prevent any false positives/negatives should they

arise, such as manually intervening in borderline cases.

Conclusion

At a time when the application of ML seems limitless, it is important to consider context. ML models are developed on data collected under certain conditions. When applying ML models to specific situations, understanding the origin of the data used to develop the model is key to understanding any limits associated with the models' application. It is through understanding these limits that business analysts can prevent ML from introducing unintended bias and unnecessary risk into an organisation.

Anna Rajander is a Certified Business Analyst Professional and the 2022 recipient of the IIBA Australia Chapter Dr Cecily Macdougall Business Analyst of the Year award. She resides in Perth, Western Australia where she occasionally puts her thoughts and opinions about business analysis to paper. Connect with Anna on [LinkedIn](#).

Further Reading

[Machine Learning vs. AI: Differences, Uses, and Benefits | Coursera](#)

[Can AI really save the World? ft. Bill Gates \(youtube.com\)](#)

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BRDs in Agile?

Thomas Bowskill



Once upon a time I needed to build upon a part of a long-standing application that I hadn't worked on before. It would have been useful to review the requirements that informed the solution, but that proved to be impractical, as there were 217 user stories involved—each containing varying degrees of context about the various features. This got me thinking that, as a business analyst, I need to easily know what an application does and why it does it, so that I can ensure my future analysis is effective.

Now, the yarn I'm spinning here isn't that user stories are bad and Business Requirements Documents (BRDs) are good—it's more that I feel that user stories have the potential to create legacy issues, and BRDs can protect from these. There's a harmony to be had beyond the narrative that you're either agile or waterfall—hopefully I can convince people that the BRD can co-exist and

add value into the agile world we live in.

First, let's establish that user stories are the best format for your stakeholders' requirements—I think that's pretty indisputable. When writing a story you are solving for a problem that's clear and well-defined in business terminology. BRDs on the other hand are intimidating, but (plot twist!) may be what the requirements engineering process needs.

With several hundred stories, you end up in a tangle where stories conflict and lack coherence. This causes issues for future analysis; if you cannot see previous thought processes easily, then you run the risk of repeating past mistakes. BRDs, however, present the opposite issue: they are comprehensive tomes that contain all the requirements that make up the solution in one place, but can be pretty inaccessible.

The challenge I've been working to solve is how to benefit from the value BRDs can bring, without sacrificing the flexibility that stories give us. My solution? Hire good storytellers, who can take the BRD and play it back to stakeholders in an understandable way.

But Isn't the Code the Documentation?

At this point I will highlight that this all boils down to worldview. My worldview is that, yes, well-written code can be very good as a means of self-documentation, which is great for the *how*, but the *why* is where business analysis plies its trade. We are in a profession where our mistakes can cripple solutions, so it's of paramount importance that a lot of effort goes into analysis, and the BRD is a fantastic device for ensuring thorough analysis.

When I ask my team to create a BRD, I am asking them to embark on a process where they take statements from stakeholders and break them down into a document structure that splays everything out and allows us to see what inter-dependencies exist. This process creates something alien to most stakeholders, yet has been the force for strong analysis.

Front and centre to a BRD must be the *why*: the BA needs to start with a few succinct sentences that explains why the requirements exist—not the *what* or *how*, but the *why*. It's a challenging process to get right, but when done correctly it frames the context for the entire analysis.

A Core Principle: As Simple as Possible (but No Simpler!)

I'm not a believer in overly-complex requirements structures; I feel that only the core things are needed: an ID, version info, title, description, priority, source, and links to other requirements, assumptions or constraints. Each requirement should contain its own *why*—the rationale for how it contributes towards the overall *why*—and should be atomic. By atomic I mean a requirement that cannot be partially met: either the requirement is met or not met.

As a piece of technical literature, this has many benefits: from enabling easier work with quality assurance teams, to providing opportunity for developers to make precise references to requirements in comments. There's other benefits to BRDs, but the one I want to focus on is how they are the single place to see all requirements of a solution—including those that were consigned to “won't have”. This aspect of BRDs is crucial to their benefit: having a single place to understand a solution is a massive value-add for BAs; it's like giving a structural engineer a detailed plan of your house prior to them doing their work—you immediately save them considerable time.

Similar to an artefact produced by a structural engineer, the BRD is a work of technical literature that isn't easily digestible to those outside the profession. What we seek to create is an artefact that benefits the BA's critical thinking first and foremost. I am fully

aware that stakeholders will struggle to read BRDs, and I am fine with that... because I won't make them read it. Just like when a structural engineer plies their trade, I accept they've produced something to a technical standard that I cannot understand without them talking me through it.

Take Stakeholders on a Tour of the Requirements

If a BA has gone through the process of creating the BRD the right way, then they will be more than capable of summarising it and taking stakeholders on a curated tour of the requirements. The emphasis on stakeholder sign-off should be whether they consider the BA to have comprehended their “asks” and played them back sufficiently—the quality of individual requirements should be signed off by BA peer review, not the business. If we ditch the notion of signing off an unwieldy document verbatim, then we allow for a narrative the business can understand without creating an isolated story.

In some BRDs, I have created sections that I (as a slight misnomer) dub ‘use cases’, which emulate stories in many ways. They are a structure that allows a statement of business value to be tied to a combination of requirements. This can be a handy mechanism to comprehend what requirements impact certain business activities. Whether or not a BA does this, I leave down to their professional judgement.

It should also be made clear that a BA can work on a BRD iteratively. Nothing

prevents certain aspects of a solution being analysed and shipped onwards while the rest of the BRD is still a work in progress. Just like a story, iterative delivery is the goal, and the BRD can be an effective means to understand the dependencies that get created as the requirements grow. Through evolving the requirements in one place you are encouraging a process where the bigger picture is understood, and plot holes less likely to occur.

BRDs are a specialist form of documentation for a specialist trade focused on *why* we need things from a solution, and how these requirements interact with each-other. They encourage critical thinking and lasting legacies that allow others in our profession to build upon previous analysis in the most informed way possible. With the right processes, BRDs can be used as a substitute for stories to prevent the narrative thread unravelling over time.

Whether or not I've convinced you, I hope this tale has given food for thought. This is a topic that I expect will elicit a range of different views that I'd love to chat to people about; I'm eagerly awaiting the person who can convince me to close the book on BRDs.

Thomas is a neurodivergent BA in the financial services sector, leading a team of BAs across a broad range of business areas. His special interests are board games and business analysis. He has two children, three cats and three chickens. Connect to him on [linkedin.com/in/thomasbowskill](https://www.linkedin.com/in/thomasbowskill)



No Fangs or Full Moons: The Twilight Saga of Hot and Cold Collaboration in Business Analysis

Retha De La Porte

Alright, before we delve into business analysis and its chilly friendship with hot and cold collaborations, let me confess something; I'm not sure if I should admit this publicly, but reading [Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series](#) is a secret guilty pleasure of mine. You might wonder what vampire romance has to do with business analysis, but bear with me. In the last book of the series, [Breaking Dawn](#), Meyer wrote:

"Fire and ice, somehow existing together without destroying each other..."

While she was referring to an unlikely romance, deep within this quote lies a wisdom that resonates with our topic: the unexpected but fruitful alliance between "hot collaboration" and "cold collaboration". These seemingly adversarial forces can coexist and work in perfect harmony to boost innovative problem-solving, without a hint of fangs or sparkle. So, let's brave this

metaphorical rabbit hole and explore how this fire and ice combination can bring about a revolution in the world of business analysis.

Hot Collaboration: Igniting the Expertise Inferno

In this corner, weighing in with experience and deep know-how, we have "hot collaboration." This is like the werewolves of our story, strong and specialised. Hot collaboration brings professionals together, each wielding their specific knowledge. As a business analyst, it's like running with a pack of experts who are as prepared as werewolves under a full moon.

Example - Market Tampering and Sales Data Anarchy

Imagine a task where you need to shake

up a company's market foothold. It's like sending your expert werewolf pack into the fray. You've got your data analytics alpha wolves, the market research beta wolves, and the consumer behaviour specialists forming the pack's backbone. The moonlit result? Data-driven insights ready to cause a market revolt.

Cold Collaboration: The Frostbite of Unbiased Creativity

Next, we have "cold collaboration." This is like the vampires of our story, always ready to bring a fresh, crypt-chilled perspective. Cold collaboration invites uninfluenced creativity to glide in on silent wings, unfettered by biases or traditional domain knowledge. For a business analyst, it's an invitation to join the ranks of the undead in exploring a world untouched by the sun's rays.

Example - Evaluating Customer Feedback from the Shadows

Take the mission of analysing and improving customer feedback. It's like asking members of your vampire coven, who've never been involved in customer service, to come out of their coffins and offer insights. They cut through the noise with their sharp, unbiased fangs to provide innovative and unconventional initiatives. enhancing customer satisfaction levels since their thinking is untainted by preexistent customer service beliefs or biases.

Moonlit Decisions: Identifying the Right Collaboration for Desired Feedback

The trick to conjuring innovative business solutions? Finding a twilight balance between our supernatural metas—hot and cold collaboration. Neither werewolf-driven hot collaboration nor vampire-guided cold collaboration should dominate but should instead coexist in a state of harmonious duality.

For a business analyst, knowing when to engage the werewolves or summon the vampires is crucial. This not only bolsters their mystic arsenal of methodologies but improves the quality of results. It's necessary to grasp the intricacies of hot and cold collaboration to ensure they bring forth the desired feedback.

Hot collaboration, with its enchanted domain expertise, provides highly refined feedback, especially useful when dealing with intricate business problems demanding specialised understanding. Anytime you require experienced wolves howling wisdom into your operations, hot collaboration is a trusted ally.

On the other hand, cold collaboration, with its ethereal and unbiased creativity, can unravel innovative solutions to otherwise elusive problems. When a new, unblemished perspective is desired, cold collaboration emerges from the shadows, ready to inject some vampire-like ingenuity into your work.

	Hot Collaboration	Cold Collaboration
Basic Concept	Collaboration among specialised experts	Collaboration among individuals of varied experiences and backgrounds
Key Strength	Leverages specialised knowledge and expertise to generate ideas	Encourages out-of-the-box thinking and innovative ideas
Influences	Influenced by advanced knowledge, expertise, and professional bias	Uninfluenced by biases related to specific domains
Quality of Ideas	Ideas founded on professional experience and specialised knowledge	Ideas that are uninhibited, fresh and unconventional
Ideal for	Complex issues needing specialised understanding	Broad issues that benefit from diverse perspectives

So, as a business analyst, it's important to complement your knowledge of business stats and figures with an understanding of those you collaborate with. Assess the challenge at hand—and consider whether you need the brawn of expert werewolves, the enigmatic creativity of diverse vampires, or a twilight balance of both.

Example - Disentangling a Sinister Web of Processes

When given a quest to simplify a convoluted process, you need both supernatural entities. Your vampire coven, with their untouched creativity, can suggest radical ideas from the shadows. Meanwhile, your werewolf pack can use their specialised knowledge to define these ideas, sculpting them into practical, feasible solutions under the moonlight.

Conclusion

So, like how I secretly revel in reading Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series, a business analyst too can revel in the blend of hot and cold collaboration. Let the fire of hot collaboration heat up your solutions while the ice of cold collaboration cools down biases—together creating perfect harmony. And don't worry, there's no need for glitter or transformation in this process!

Retha De La Porte is an experienced business analyst with a knack for implementing data-driven solutions and simplifying complex processes. Passionate about fostering collaboration and harnessing team potential. Let's connect on [LinkedIn](#) to exchange insights and opportunities.



Inclusive Insights: Exploring the Impact of Colleague Networks on Business Analysis

Josh Hyland

My first experience attending an ethnic and cultural diversity network meeting surprised me. I was warmly invited to a conversation that featured some everyday situations, in the same organisation in which I was employed, that were unlike mine in some ways. I heard about people failing to publicise secondment opportunities to *all* eligible colleagues. I heard about implicit and explicit uses of language that seemed calculated to dismantle a person's professional ambition. I heard hurt and disappointment. The more I listened, the more I learned.

I approached the group for two main reasons. Firstly, I grew up in a near-monoculture—according to the [UK Data Service](#), the 2011 census showed that our local area was made up of a 96% white population. I knew I could learn more than I already knew about the people with whom I worked, and one of my motives for moving to live in a city

in the mid-2000s was to meet and learn from people from across the world. Secondly, as a parent, I wanted to ensure that my children had a better appreciation of cultural diversity than was present in my East Kent town in the 1980s and 90s.

As people shared their stories during meetings and events, I learned about history, religion, family, food, hair, music, and fashion. My appreciation for the cultures of those around me grew—the time dedicated to a new hairdo and frustration at products designed for a majority of consumers; the deep symbolism of a religious event; exclusionary implications behind language prevalent in managerial conversations. I reflected on my assumptions of others. I tried to be more considerate before I spoke. I wanted to support my colleagues in being treated fairly by addressing inequalities with our organisation.

I joined the ability network to learn more about challenges and opportunities encountered by individuals with diagnosed or self-recognised disabilities, which relates to my previous article for BA Digest regarding [neurodivergence in business analysis](#). Here too I heard about experiences unlike my own, which helped me to become empathetic and curious about the people in our workplace.

Naturally, an overlap arose between my learning and my business analysis practice. I had to question my own assumptions of who a user may be, and connect the human stories with the business process, data generation, and application design. I began to dismantle some of the defaults that had previously informed my practice; which assumptions of a generic user were informed by my own life, and which were considerate of colleague experience?

The sensitivity of what is shared during these network meetings, and the protective context in which it must take place, was something I had to learn. Previously in my day-job as a BA, I would routinely navigate nuanced distinctions between information deemed confidential and what could be shared openly. This allowed me to effectively communicate with key decision-makers, highlighting dysfunctions or inefficiencies that served as underlying causes of business challenges. Now, I have gained a silent understanding of how a system may be built *against* people—loyal colleagues who keep the business moving—a system designed in isolation from their

actual needs, or else presuming that anyone confused by arcane jargon or illogical navigation needed to read the manual or find another job.

Working on an accessibility review was a great way to start learning about assumptions in web design. Starting with the [WCAG 2.0 guidelines](#), I undertook manual tests on a web application and relayed feedback to a software developer. We collaborated on refining the page template and test, then used some [Google Lighthouse tools](#) to further test and refine the templates. This experience helped me to understand that there may be hidden user requirements that we are not necessarily primed to investigate, such as keyboard-only navigation, contrast control, or logical tabbing.

Thanks to joining colleague networks, I have been able to combine my belief in working towards a fairer workplace with my love of detail in business analysis. Now, rhetorical questions I raise in my mind when getting to know a process, system, or dataset will include higher standards of attempted fairness:

- Would your page controls make sense to a new starter?
- Are your images in your documentation representative of the people using your system?
- Are there text entry fields which lack spelling support?
- How is the change management plan for introducing the replacement application accommodating anxious persons?

- Are the lookup options on this form accommodating all colleagues or customers, and how do we know?

I know we are far from a truly equal workplace, and we are all able to make contributions to making it so, some of which are so relatively small that they might not be noticed at all. Yet the consideration behind them can be sincere, and the gradual sense of familiarity with what you hear and see can help you make better decisions or recommendations, coupled with evidence of real-world experience that can complement them. I have since contributed to two Ability conferences: presenting during one and coordinating the tech for another, attended three incredible Black History Month events

and cultural workshops, and joined webinars arranged by our gender equality and LGBTQ+ networks to continue my learning. Being scribe for a session about the experience of women in our workplace was, again, transformative to my grasp of the context of my BA interactions.

I remain grateful to all of my friends and colleagues who have shared their experiences and helped me to be a more considerate analyst and collaborator. I will not become complacent in our work together.

Josh Hyland is a Business Analyst in the UK social housing sector and would love to hear from others via [linkedin.com/in/hylandjoshua](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hylandjoshua).



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Business Analysis for Good

Victoria Banner



I'd like you to think, what do you care about?

Have you ever thought about what truly matters to you? It could be your family, friends, a busy week ahead, or a cherished hobby. Perhaps there's a charity or non-profit organisation close to your heart.

Imagine if we could harness the power of business analysis for good. While what we do is not inherently bad by any stretch of the imagination, many of us work for larger, privately or publicly owned organisations. Some might work for non-profit entities or even fewer for the charity sector. Interestingly, [96% of UK charities are classified as small](#), with an annual income of less than £1 million. These smaller charities often don't have the funds to spend on great business analysis like our larger private sector firms do.

For those of you employed by large

national or international organisations, I bet you have a day, perhaps more than one day a year, dedicated to corporate social responsibility activities. While activities like volunteering at a homeless shelter, painting, fixing things, maybe clearing the gardens at a local hospice or hospital are commendable, their benefits are often short-lived.

What ties all these activities together?

They don't fully utilise the professional skills and expertise we've spent years cultivating. They don't tap into our highly educated professional selves or contribute to long-term organisational improvement and realisation of purpose.

Personally, I believe I'm better at business analysis than painting or DIY, and I suspect many of you feel the same!

Find Your Cause

We all have a charity or community

group close to our hearts, something beyond our work commitments. It could be a local club, nursing home, animal charity, children's charity, or an organisation supporting various causes. We all possess a passion that ignites a fire in our belly and determination in our hearts.

Now, picture merging that passion for a charitable cause with your day job. Consider the impact your business analysis skills could make in a micro-charity. Many small charities are founded by family members or friends, driven by passion and a desire for positive change. These organisations often lack the resources to access highly trained and experienced professionals like you.

My call to action is to go beyond using Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) days for painting and weeding. Let's channel that energy into making a positive, lasting impact on the smaller local charities we all care about.

Furthermore, supporting a local charity with business analysis skills benefits not only the charity but also the business analysis profession. It aids in the development of less experienced BAs, fosters a sense of community within your practice, contributes to organisational CSR outcomes, and provides charities with skills and knowledge they might not afford otherwise. In the words of [Stephen Covey](#), "Think Win-Win."

A small group of us is currently exploring this idea as a movement, and

our working title is 'Business Analysis For Good.' We have successful examples from the past, ranging from process documentation and improvements to data analysis, guidance and procedure writing, automation of tedious tasks, fundraising ideas, and events planning, among others. In the [2022 Charity Digital Skills Report](#) sponsored by Comic Relief, all these skills and more are in high demand by small and micro charities and the business analysis community is perfectly placed to help!

If you're interested to learn more – Please visit www.BA4Good.org and have a look around the site. Feel free to drop us a line and we will keep you posted on the ideas and activities in the coming months. On the site you will see a number of case studies where other BAs and BA teams have used their CSR or community/charity days to do something long lasting and impactful for a range of different charity and community organisations. You'll also find ideas and links to help you get started. In fact there is a brilliant example of this in a previous issue of [BA Digest](#) from Sarah O'Neil.

Go on make 2024 the year you join the movement and use your Business Analysis Skills for Good!

Victoria is a passionate Business Architect with 20 years' experience in Business Analysis. She is enthusiastic about professional development and loves learning. Victoria can be contacted on LinkedIn: [Victoria Banner | LinkedIn](#) or via [Contact Us – Business Analysis For Good \(ba4good.org\)](#)

Trust Is the Currency of Success

Daniel Grist



Looking back on the projects I have worked on as a business analyst across my career, one fundamental thing in common was that we established a significant level of trust across the whole project and stakeholder landscape. Trust is not just about facilitating open communication—it goes further than that—more must be considered to mitigate resistance to change and tackle underlying trust issues in organisations.

If you're reading this article, hopefully, you already believe that trust is essential, but how important is trust, and why

should we care so much about creating a trusting relationship in our project or product environment? According to the IIBA®'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide, a relationship with stakeholders that lacks trust can lead to “failure to provide quality information, strong negative reactions to setbacks and obstacles, resistance to change, lack of support for, and participation in business analysis work, and can lead to business analysis information being ignored”, sounds pretty serious!

The Foundation of Trust in Communication

Stephen Covey once said: “Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.” Trust is the thing that empowers our stakeholders to share their real concerns and ideas and ultimately leads to true collaboration on the issues at hand.

What's better than a story to show the importance of trust? A situation comes to mind: I was joining a project focusing on automation in the financial services area of the business, dealing with processes such as invoice reconciliation or payment remittances. The project could have generated a massive amount of savings for the company and led to operational efficiencies. However, not everything was going well. There was a lot of uncertainty around what this project may mean for some of the stakeholders involved, how this could impact their roles, and how it could ultimately lead to redundancies. When I joined the project I could sense the uncertainty in the team, I needed to understand what had happened to get to this point and why the team was feeling this way. It was understandable that team members felt this way, after all automation can bring anxiety and lead to a feeling of uncertain psychological safety.

I worked alongside the senior leadership team to create a shared understanding of the challenging situation. It became clear that people did not believe everything

they were told and trust was lacking in the team. I needed to call out the risk.

How could this threat be turned into an opportunity? Let's reframe this project. Instead of this project being for employee savings, what about if the team members who did get freed up could instead be trained to do higher-value work for the organisation? The project would eliminate some of their manual, time-consuming work and enable them to progress and do more exciting things.

By getting the senior leadership onboard and reframing the project goals together, collaboration increased, the real issues were tackled, and the team worked together well. Not everyone came onboard, as not everyone was interested in the new ways of working, but overall, we were in a lot better shape.

Some of the techniques used and actions taken to increase trust were:

Open Communication

It's essential to understand each team member. Often, I find it helpful to have one-on-one conversations, that's where you can listen openly and honestly. It is even better if they can be unscheduled, casual conversations over a cup of coffee. A quick Teams call about the weekend typically leads to rapport being built and enables an open conversation. It's super important to have that “small talk” before getting to the “big talk”, to understand how someone is feeling before they may open up about other issues. Alongside this, remember this

applies to everyone you interact with, whether a senior executive or an intern; often, the people who understand the real problems are the most junior team members, so respect at every level is crucial.

Setting Clear Expectations

What are the project goals, deadlines and ultimate objectives? Are there hidden motives? Employees are cleverer than some leaders give them credit for; if there is a hidden motive for a project, it will likely be revealed in time and more explosive than if it was stated at the project's initiation. It's better to be upfront about the project objectives and remember why this project is important for each team member. It's okay for the project objective to be for automation, but why should each team member be involved and want the project to succeed? Be honest about the objective, but relate that for each team member so that they understand what it means for them too.

Leading by Example

As [John Maxwell](#) put it: “A leader knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way”. Remember that people are almost always watching. Demonstrating trustworthiness as a leader by being reliable, transparent and accountable at every opportunity will enhance your reputation as a trustworthy project champion. Also, it is important to lead by example. One thing that I find essential (alongside open communication) is that often you need to be the person to show vulnerability

first. Being honest goes a long way. This might involve saying that you are uncertain about what this project means, not in a way to instil fear, but in a way that tells people that any concerns they have are valid and that you can come together as a team to tackle them and succeed.

Acknowledging and Celebrating Success

Building trust in a project team can take time, especially if it has been damaged in the past or if you are new to an organisation, but one great way to increase trust in a team is to genuinely celebrate successes. Celebrate when a hidden issue has been uncovered, celebrate when a unique solution has been found through team collaboration, and celebrate when people are open and honest. Acknowledge project failures or challenges, but focus on how the team's collaboration can be the instrument that will bring it back on track.

Trust can be built in a project team in many ways. Still, these four actions have been pivotal for me, emphasising honest communication, clear expectations, leadership integrity and celebrating success.

Daniel Grist, a Senior Business Analyst, blends internal and consultancy project expertise. Transitioning to Business Analysis unexpectedly, he now holds a Degree Apprenticeship and CBAP. He volunteers with Young Business Analysts (YBA), speaks at events, and aims to advance fellow analysts. Connect on LinkedIn: [Daniel Grist](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

Business Analysis & Sustainability: Shaping the Present and Future



Stefan Bossuwé Interviewed by Emily Tom

Thanks for participating in this interview, Stefan.

Let's start straight away with the first question:

What is Sustainability? What got you interested in this domain?

Sustainability is commonly used as a term meaning “long lasting” or “able to continue over a period of time”. In 1987, the [United Nations Brundtland Commission](#) expanded the definition with “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs.”

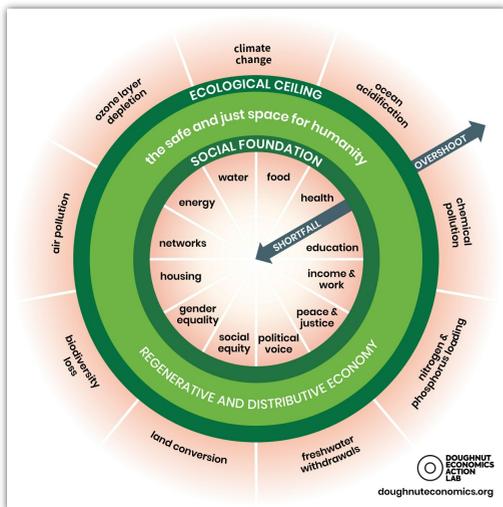
This implies a planetary dimension (climate, biodiversity, clean water, etc) and a social-ethical one (inclusive, equality, health, etc).

For almost all my life I have struggled with the injustice done to others, a feeling I have carried into my professional life as a business analysis professional. Being ethical and inclusive has been extremely important to me for many decades now.

Over time, I have come to see, like so many others, that the survival of our planet and its many inhabitants is seriously threatened by our excessive lifestyles.

When I came across an article about the [Doughnut Economy](#), created by economist and author [Kate Raworth](#) a few years ago, it struck a chord with me and accelerated my awareness of sustainability.

It's an economical model that respects the dimensions mentioned earlier by applying social and planetary boundaries visualised with the respective inside and outside parts of a doughnut:



The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries, Kate Raworth and Christian Guthier. Shared under a Creative Commons Licence: [CC-BY-SA 4.0 Terms](#)

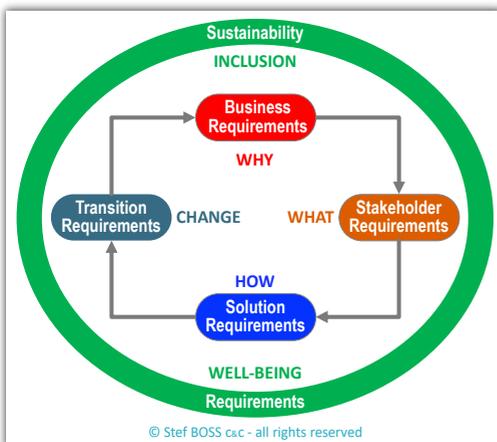
A series of animated videos ([here](#) and

[here](#)), Kate's [TEDx Talk](#) in Athens in November 2014 and her [TED Talk](#) in April 2018 in Vancouver blew me away. It's amazing to see how Kate exposes the catastrophic flaws of the neoliberal economic model in which we currently live (the creation of which probably lacked in business analysis). And at the same time, she offers a viable alternative, which is currently [increasingly being adopted](#) by organisations, cities and regions all over the world.

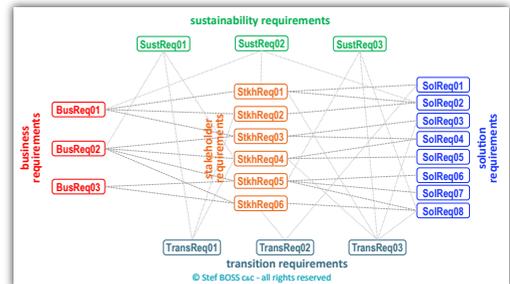
A final catalyst that reinforced my enthusiasm happened in November 2022. At this point, the International Institute of Business Analysis ([IIBA®](#)) introduced sustainability requirements as a new requirements category—the first new category in sixteen years. This inspired one of the [BA&Beyond conference](#) co-founders [Patrick Van Renterghem](#) to suggest that I give sustainability (and the new sustainability requirement category) the exposure it deserves. This acted as a nudge which inspired my action. With that in mind, he introduced me to [Ines Vanlangendonck](#), a fantastic lady who embodies sustainability in her personal and professional career for many years. This resulted in a wonderful collaboration in which we had an [interview](#) with my dear friend [Fabrício Laguna](#) (aka #TheBrazilianBA), and where we gave several talks on sustainability (including a [webinar](#) with an additional business architecture perspective)

How do sustainability requirements relate to the other requirement categories?

Business requirements represent an organisation’s strategy (goals/objectives), the “**why**” of a change. *Stakeholder requirements* translate those business requirements for the different stakeholders (which can sometimes conflict) and expresses **what** the stakeholders want. *Solution requirements* express **how** to ensure the stakeholders get what they need. *Transition requirements* represent the **change** to ensure a transition. And finally the *sustainability requirements* translate an organisation’s sustainability strategy (if it exists) into tangible statements. It represents how your organisation positions itself with regards to the **wellbeing** of the planet and its habitants and how this should be **inclusive** (leave nobody behind).



constraints on requirements of other categories.



Why does sustainability have its own requirement category instead of being just a special flavour of business requirements?

I can’t see inside the heads of the people that created it, but my guess is that they did it to create the very much needed awareness of sustainability, and that they believe it deserves its own category.

And, when an organisation has a sustainability strategy (e.g. **Environmental Social & Governance — ESG**), it makes more sense to have a separate category in which we want to write requirements

So how can we apply this in our daily business analysis work?

We all need to become aware of the existence (or absence) of a sustainability strategy in the organisation we work for. And if that exists, it should be rather straightforward to translate it into sustainability requirements.

Sustainability requirements may impose

if such a sustainability strategy doesn’t

exist, we can write sustainability requirements as if such a strategy exists without sharing them with outsiders. Then apply those “stealth” sustainability requirements on the requirements of the other categories, on which the “sustainability flavour” might be easier to sell than having explicit sustainability requirements when there’s no sustainability strategy. See it as doing business analysis with a sustainability mindset. For example: Social: Did we cover all of our stakeholders (inclusive)? Planetary: Which technology solution option consumes the least resources?

So far, you’ve been known as the Holistic BA. How does sustainability fit into this holistic view?

I’m so happy you asked this question, Emily. With holistic business analysis, you take a whole organisation as well as its components into consideration, but the boundaries of your horizon end with the external stakeholders your organisation interacts with. Sustainability expands this horizon and brings *the whole planet and all its habitants into consideration*. It’s holism on steroids.

Thank you so much for this great interview, Stefan. Are there any thoughts you would like to share with the business analysis community as a conclusion?

Thank you so much for inviting me, Emily. I hope it creates the critical and time-sensitive exposure to sustainability, and I hope it can inspire all of us to

take responsibility and leave our sustainability mark for the near and (very) long term future.

I would like to conclude with this important quote (apparently from the Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan) that my friend Ines often uses:

“There are no passengers on spaceship earth. We are all crew.”

I hope this metaphor can ignite all of us to contribute to a better planet for all its inhabitants.

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

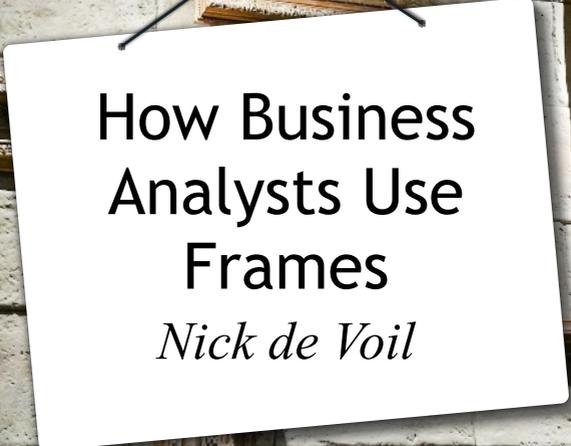
About the interviewer:

Emily Tom, CBAP is an independent consultant based in Ottawa, Canada. She is an aspiring writer and speaker and is passionate about promoting the business analysis profession. She supports fellow business analysts in their careers through knowledge sharing and mentorship.

Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).

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How Business Analysts Use Frames

Nick de Voil

Imagine you're travelling from Vilnius to Vienna (Wien) by train. You wake up from a fitful sleep and look out of the small window on the other side of the carriage. You see a flag flying, as shown in Figure 1.

"OK," you say to yourself. You know the Polish flag is white and red. "We've only got as far as Poland." You go back to sleep. The next thing you know is that the train has arrived in Venice. You've missed your stop, you're in the wrong



Figure 1

country, and it's a long way back. If you had stood up and walked over to the window to get a better view, you would have seen something more like Figure 2.

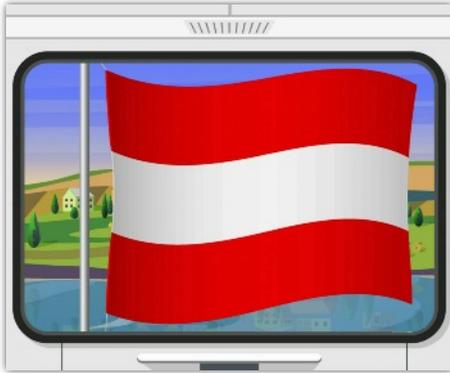


Figure 2

The Austrian flag is also white and red! The window frame would have constrained your view less, allowing you to see all the necessary details.

How many times have you been in a meeting where someone says, “we need to think about the big picture” or refers to being “unable to see the wood for the trees”? (Maybe it was you that said it.) These metaphors imply that the situation you’re discussing can be grasped fully and clearly if only you stand back far enough from it to see the entire thing. More often, our view of an object is constrained by looking at it through a frame, such as that of a window.

The metaphor of a **frame** is often used to refer to the set of assumptions which dictate our approach to a particular issue. If we talk about the “frame” of a painting or photograph, we might simply mean

the physical picture-frame—and the colour, size and style of this will indeed affect our perception of the picture itself. Alternatively, we might be referring to the rectangular area which the artist has chosen to include in the composition. This kind of **framing** affects our perception more strongly, in two ways:

- A large part of the world (most of it) is excluded from the picture;
- One particular feature is placed prominently in the picture and so will tend to attract our attention.

The first of these is analogous to the concept of **scope**, which is so important to us as business analysts. A project, a solution, a meeting or discussion all have an explicit or implicit scope, which determines not just what will be included, but equally importantly, what will be excluded. It’s always helpful to agree this explicitly with all participants from the beginning: where do we draw the boundary, and why?

The second point relates to **focus**. Again, it’s always a good idea to discuss and agree what are the most important and central features of the area under consideration.

So the idea that a thinking frame is like a picture frame or a window frame does capture some key aspects of project work. But often, when we talk about “using a [type of] frame” or “reframing the situation”, we’re referring to something more than scope and focus. We’re talking about a whole integrated collection of constructs that constitute a way of thinking and will dictate our

whole approach to the issue. There are many different terms for this, or something similar (*Weltanschauung*, *worldview*, *perspective*, *image*, *appreciative system*, *paradigm* to name a few), but in terms of Group Construct Analysis (GCA), this is a **construct system**.

In the world of physical objects, there's another type of frame which I think serves as a better analogy than a window frame or picture frame. This is a device called a **trial frame**, shown in Figure 3,



Figure 3

which is used by an optometrist (eye diagnostician) when testing a patient's vision. The optometrist has a large box of **lenses** which they successively try out in each side of the trial frame to see which type of lens suits the patient best.

The frame is a container for multiple alternative lenses. Some lenses will make distance vision easier; some will improve close vision. There are even lenses which improve the patient's perception of colour. So the frame

doesn't just provide scope and focus: it changes the way that the patient sees everything, which allows them to engage with the world in a different way.

According to George Kelly, whose theory of Personal Construct Psychology (see article 1) is the basis for GCA, human beings make sense of their environment by trying out constructs for size in much the same way that an optometrist tries out lenses. We tend to settle on the constructs that we find the most useful in making sense of the world. As we get older, our construct system becomes more fixed, but individuals vary in terms of their construct system's flexibility.

I believe that frames are fundamental to the way business analysts operate and contribute value in an organisation. As a specialist in flexible thinking, a good business analyst can:

- Switch frames readily
- Articulate what frame they are using
- Diagnose the frame that a stakeholder is using
- Detect when two or more stakeholders are using different frames
- Help stakeholders to think constructively and collaborate effectively by becoming aware of their own and each other's frames
- Coach stakeholders in switching and articulating frames

- Facilitate stakeholders in synthesising new frames
- Help stakeholders understand how to improve communication and persuasiveness using frames.

These skills apply both in set-piece contexts such as workshops, and in our general interaction with stakeholders on a project.

Nick helps organisations create people-oriented systems, products and services. He wrote the book "User Experience Foundations" and is writing one about Group Construct Analysis. The working title is "What People Mean: Modelling worldviews and narratives with Group

Construct Analysis", but Nick would love to hear from you with your suggestions!

You can read the previous articles in this series by [accessing the BA Digest archive](#)



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Debunking BA Myths: We're Strategic Navigators, Not Fortune Tellers

Charles Onyekaba



Introduction:

Business analysis serves as a compass in the ever-changing world of business, helping organisations through the intricacies of change. This critical discipline, however, is frequently buried in common misunderstandings, leaving it somewhat lost in translation. Picture a

scenario where business analysts are mistakenly perceived as wizards of data, armed with crystal balls to predict the future. Alternatively, think of a world where their work is reduced to a mundane paperwork exercise of churning out requirements. Such misconceptions not only undermine the true value of their role but also obscure

the transformative impact they can have on an organisation.

In this article, I will discuss some of these common misconceptions related to business analysis, and provide clarity on their importance to the profession.

“Business Analysts Are Data Analysts”

One prevalent misconception is the interchangeable use of the terms "business analyst" and "data analyst." While there is an overlap in skills, they

represent distinct roles within an organisation.

Data analysts primarily focus on interpreting and analysing data to uncover insights that can inform decision-making. Their expertise lies in statistical analysis, data visualisation, and the interpretation of trends. On the other hand, business analysts operate at a higher level of abstraction, bridging the gap between business needs and solutions. They engage in understanding organisational objectives, processes, and strategies to recommend improvements, which may or may not involve intensive data analysis.

	Scope	Responsibilities	Skills
Business Analyst	Has broader scope that extends beyond data analysis. They work to understand and address business problems, improve processes, and facilitate communication between stakeholders.	Responsible for gathering and analysing business requirements, defining project and product objectives, and ensuring that proposed solutions align with the organisation's goals.	Skills encompass various areas, such as requirements elicitation, process modelling, stakeholder management, and domain knowledge.
Data Analyst	Primarily focus on data-related tasks, such as collecting, cleaning, analysing, and visualising data to derive insights and support data-driven decision-making.	Responsible for working with databases, performing statistical analysis, creating data visualisations, and developing data-driven reports and dashboards.	Require strong skills in data manipulation, statistical analysis, data visualisation, and proficiency in tools like SQL, Python, R, and various data analysis software.

It is critical to dispel this myth so that businesses and stakeholders realise the value that business analysts bring. While data analysis is a tool in the BA's toolkit, their primary function is to connect organisational goals with successful solutions that take into account a larger variety of criteria than raw data.

“Business Analysis Is Just about Writing Requirements”

A typical oversimplification of the business analyst function is to reduce it to a simple documentation effort, with a particular emphasis on eliciting requirements. While identifying and documenting requirements is an important feature of business analysis, it is just one component of the overall responsibilities of business analysts.

Business analysts play a pivotal role in understanding and defining business needs, identifying opportunities for improvement, and facilitating communication between stakeholders. Their responsibilities extend to analysing business processes, and ensuring that proposed solutions align with organisational goals by engaging with the appropriate stakeholders and teams throughout the project lifecycle.

Limiting business analysis to just requirements engineering overlooks its strategic importance in driving organisational change and innovation. True business analysis entails stakeholder's collaboration, problem-solving, and a holistic understanding

of the business landscape, going beyond the confines of requirements documentation.

“Business Analysts Have Crystal Balls”

The assumption that business analysts have a crystal ball-like ability to anticipate the future is an odd but pervasive myth. This misunderstanding stems from the idea that business analysts should be able to precisely foresee business uncertainties, market trends, and customer behaviours.

In actuality, business analysts do not predict the future, but rather use a combination of analytical skills, historical data, and industry expertise to develop informed estimates. Based on existing information, they analyse patterns, identify possible risks, and proffer their mitigation strategies. However, due to the dynamic nature of business and external circumstances, projections are necessarily uncertain.

Organisations must recognise that while business analysts give valuable insights and recommendations, they do so within the confines of current information and data. Relying on them as fortune tellers may result in unrealistic expectations and impede the collaborative, adaptive character of effective business analysis.

“SWOT Analysis Is a Martial Art”

The sarcastic remark that SWOT analysis is a martial art illustrates a

prevalent misconception about this strategic planning tool. SWOT analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, is a systematic method of assessing an organisation's internal and external elements.

While the name "SWOT" may sound like it is related to martial arts, it has nothing to do with fighting or physical prowess. It is a thorough evaluation that assists organisations in making informed decisions by identifying internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats.

To dispel this myth, it is necessary to acknowledge SWOT analysis as a versatile technique used by business analysts to assess and strategise, primarily in conjunction with benchmarking analysis and other approaches. It is a framework that enables organisations to capitalise on their strengths, address weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate threats.

Conclusion:

Business analysis is a dynamic and

ever-changing field that is critical to the success of organisations. It is critical to dispel common misconceptions in order to create a deeper knowledge of the diverse nature of business analysis. Business analysts are more than just data analysts, and their responsibilities extend beyond the writing requirements. They don't have crystal balls and instead make decisions based on facts, analysis, and industry knowledge. SWOT analysis is not a martial art but one of the planning tools in a BA's tools kit.

By debunking these myths, organisations can better understand the genuine value that business analysts bring to the table. Embracing a more realistic understanding of the role of business analysis will result in more effective collaboration, informed decision-making and, ultimately, better organisational outcomes.

Charles Onyekaba is a business analyst with significant years of experience working on digital transformation, business change and regulatory projects. You can contact him on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/charles-onyekaba](https://www.linkedin.com/in/charles-onyekaba).

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Why Enterprise Architecture and Business Analysis Need to Be Close Friends

Rainer Wendt



Enterprise architecture and business analysis are both disciplines that need to be explained before we can discuss the relationship between them. These disciplines are unfortunately not as well known to the general public as project or product management and other related roles. Enterprise Architecture (EA) is [defined by Gartner](#) as:

“a discipline for proactively and holistically leading enterprise responses to disruptive forces by identifying and analysing the execution of change toward desired business vision and outcomes. EA delivers value by presenting business and IT leaders with signature-ready recommendations for adjusting policies and projects to

achieve targeted business outcomes that capitalise on relevant business disruptions.”

I very much like this definition, although I would have liked it even better if it had been more future-orientated and not just reactive. I searched for Gartner’s definition of business analysis at the same place, but unfortunately without success. What does that mean? Does it mean that Gartner, which is often perceived as a leading consultancy, does not know what business analysis is? That was kind of shocking to me!

Ok, let’s search for other neutral places for a definition of business analysis. I wanted to keep it *neutral*, i.e. not just

look up how [The Open Group](#) or the [International Institute of Business Analysis \(IIBA®\)](#) define their own practices. So, since Gartner disappointed me, I finally went back to Wikipedia for the [definition of Business Analysis](#):

“Business analysis is a professional discipline focused on identifying business needs and determining solutions to business problems. Solutions may include a software-systems development component, process improvements, or organisational changes, and may involve extensive analysis, strategic planning and policy development.”

If you read the two definitions carefully and think about what you understand and have experienced in your professional life, you are probably a little lost now. Were you aware of the significant similarities of EA and BA before you read the definitions above? You might object that I am talking about different levels, and that I should not lump enterprise architecture specialists together with business analysts, who mainly deal with "requirements" and the like. But is it really that simple?

No, it is not! I am not talking about different role levels, this is a matter of slightly different perspectives. Both experts are change agents at eye level who want to design and implement the best solutions for overcoming the future challenges of a company. This is their common denominator! From our practical experience, we know that EA and BA experts are not simply interchangeable, but often have years of

experience in their respective fields and have also acquired a great deal of domain knowledge. Let's talk about the three differences or why we need two disciplines, two experts or even two departments. Seems strange, doesn't it?

Difference #1: Where Can They Be Found in the Organisation?

In most cases, enterprise architects are not just hired for a project, but are often in an ongoing role in or closely related to the IT department and relevant business areas. Business analysts can find themselves in the same situation, but there are more project-specific engagements, i.e. business analysts are dismissed or re-allocated after the project is completed, similar to project managers. In organisational terms, this is a significant difference. Rarely are business analysts found working in a business domain, although there are some notable exceptions in continuous roles such as a product owner.

Difference #2: Company Strategy Driving Decisions

Strategy is the heartbeat of an enterprise architect. They have the greatest responsibility in developing new IT structures that best support the business strategy and the capabilities needed. While the typical business analyst ideally always has strategy in mind, they look more at the specific business needs and the corresponding solutions, especially in terms of their business cases, see below. Of course, there are

exceptional BAs who build a business strategy themselves. They are usually found in the role of management consultant rather than strategic business analyst, although both of these terms are broadly synonymous.

The bottom line is that strategy is the driving force in the daily work of enterprise architects and not so much of business analysts. In fact, we can say here that enterprise architects usually work at a higher strategic level than business analysts. Moreover, business analysts need to get their architects on-board if they conceptualise solutions. Only solutions that have the (strategic) blessing of architects can be proposed to decision-makers; anything else makes no sense (this also applies to the security experts who have to give their security-blessing).



Difference #3: Business Cases

With business cases, it is the other way round. An enterprise architect starts thinking without having the costs in mind. Their first goal is to create a future-proof solution and IT landscape that is flexible enough to be equipped for coming changes. For business

analysts, (business) benefits and costs are key aspects when comparing solutions. The cost-benefit ratio is initially the most important driver for them.

I am not saying that enterprise architects do not pay attention to costs and business analysts are not interested in long-term sustainability. Of course, both experts (should) have a holistic approach, but to different degrees.

I have identified three differences between enterprise architects and business analysts that should be considered, regardless of which role you actually work in. Understanding the viewpoints and drivers of other stakeholders is essential to achieving great things as a team. If you take this into account when communicating and organising workshops and meetings, things will become easier and more efficient.

Rainer Wendt is a well-known, Germany-based expert and trainer in the fields of business analysis and project management, he is chairing the European Business Analysis Day (www.ba-day.com) and managing masVenta Business GmbH (www.masventa.de)

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What We Can Learn from High Performing Sales Reps to Give Our Stakeholders "Aha" Moments

Helen Symonds



“Aha” moments hold significant value for business analysts. These are the moments when a BA cultivates a shift in perspective among stakeholders. All of a sudden that solution they were adamant about becomes a distant memory.

Some of the stakeholders I most enjoy working with are the challenging ones. The ones that don't initially welcome you with open arms, which makes getting to that “aha” moment difficult. Colleagues scoff: “Ha! Good luck with them, you'll need it!”

What we're presented with as BAs in these instances is actually an opportunity to sell the value of business analysis to someone who's not yet bought into it. What better to look to than the sales profession itself for some pointers on

how we can achieve this?

Over a decade ago, I was lucky enough to attend [Challenger Sale](#) training. Although relevant to the role I held at the time, it might surprise you that I have applied the methodology just as frequently in my role as a BA. The methodology was introduced in a book entitled "[The Challenger Sale](#)" by Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson.

During the training we were introduced to research carried out by CEB (now Gartner), that found B2B customers were [57% through the purchase process](#) before they even engaged in meaningful contact with suppliers. Customers were increasingly doing their own research and already forming preconceived thoughts about what they needed.

Sounds familiar, right? Our stakeholders are often doing the same, and by the time a BA is involved, they can already be heavily invested in a particular solution. More a case of ‘implement this’ rather than ‘analyse that’!

Five Profiles of Sales Professionals

Dixon and Adamson identified **five distinct profiles** of sales professionals, and no prizes for guessing the name of the one most likely to succeed in this new environment. Of course, it's the Challenger. I'm not going to delve into all five profiles, but before we talk about what makes a Challenger, it's worth touching on one of the other profiles, Relationship Builders.

In sales, a Relationship Builder was found to be the least likely to be a star performer, with a Challenger being most likely to be a star performer in complex contexts. Why is this important in the context of business analysis? Because building relationships is seen as a fundamental skill for a BA to have. But if being a Relationship Builder doesn't work for sales reps in high complexity sales, how is it going to work for us in our highly complex projects with our difficult stakeholders?

We're here to help the business get the best possible outcomes, and sometimes that means telling our stakeholders things they don't want to hear. It means, challenging them. We don't get the best possible outcomes by being overly-generous with our time, accommodating

everyone, and being people pleasers. Here's where we can learn a thing or two from Challenger reps.

Bring on the Challenger...

Challengers combine three key skills, the ability to; teach, tailor and take control, whilst building a healthy dose of what Dixon and Adamson refer to, as “constructive tension”. This might feel counterintuitive to us, after all, we're here to help resolve conflict, not create it. But the key word here is “constructive”.

By teaching, tailoring and taking control, there will be conflict to overcome. Stakeholders who have their own strong opinions aren't going to roll over instantly, just like a prospective customer isn't going to whip out a purchase order during a first encounter with a sales rep. But what exactly does it mean to teach, tailor and take control?

The defining attribute of a Challenger sales rep is their ability to **teach for differentiation**. It's about providing real insight that makes customers think differently about their business. Bringing new ideas to help them save money, make money or avoid risk. A mantra that has stayed with me from the training.

We can do the same for our stakeholders, and when we're dealing with stakeholders who have already formed those preconceived ideas of what solution they want, there's an element of ‘unteaching’ that needs to happen as well!

The reference to differentiation is that by teaching, the sales rep in fact can become a differentiator. When there is little differentiation between the products or services of competing suppliers, successfully converting the opportunity can come down to ‘how’ you sell, rather than ‘what’ you sell.

B2B buying decisions are very rarely made by just one person... in fact the same applies to any decision for that matter. I am sure we've all worked for organisations that have their fair share of committees and review boards. Unless what you are trying to teach resonates, then it's unlikely to stick, and that's where **tailoring for resonance** comes in.

Think of your own experiences where someone has tried to teach you something. If the ‘teaching’ doesn't resonate with you then it will quickly be forgotten and you'll carry on with the status quo. It's the same for our stakeholders.

Just like Challengers, we need to understand what's important to the individual stakeholders we are dealing with and tailor the teaching to each stakeholder. For example, understanding what their objectives are and how their performance is being measured. It's also useful to know what has tripped them up on past projects, if they are ‘anti-BA’ it could be for a good reason!

The third skill is to **take control** of the customer conversation, being assertive with the customer, and not being afraid to push back. This involves challenging

the status quo, with the aim of steering a customer to a better outcome.

For BAs, this isn't about dictating to the project team or stakeholders, it's about being more assertive in what we, as professionals, think we need to be doing to get the best outcome for the business. The sad reality is, that sometimes, even our project team colleagues don't always truly value what we do. And again, we're presented with another opportunity to sell the value of business analysis.

A Challenger takes control with diplomacy and empathy. BAs are already great diplomats and empaths, just think what we could achieve if we take control more often.

Trust Matters

The afterword of *The Challenger Sale* is aptly titled “Challenging Beyond Sales”. It explores how the Challenger approach can be applied to business functions beyond sales, and I wholeheartedly agree after putting it into practice myself. Saying that though, it wouldn't be successful without a foundation of building trust, and quite simply doing the things I say I am going to do.

Although we can't lose sight of being ‘Relationship Builders’ as BAs, we can at least sprinkle that with some Challenger, and if you're feeling really brave, a great big dollop of it!

Helen is a Senior Business Analyst at Close Brothers who discovered the joys of being a BA 7 years ago and hasn't looked back since. You can contact her via [LinkedIn](#).

Should This Item Still Be in My Backlog?

Nuno Santos



Teams working in an agile way commonly use a backlog. Yet, frequently situations emerge where such use leads to more complex work than initially predicted when we started filling the backlog.

We can agree on the importance of managing the backlog. When used properly, the backlog should be the core repository for requirements (with product backlog items referencing other artefacts as needed). Yet, it may contain needs and requests from various stakeholders, each of whom have a very different perspective. If it transforms –

paraphrasing Allan Kelly, in "[Moving Away from Backlog Driven Development: A New Chapter in Agility?](#)" - into a *bottomless pit*, we will lose sight of what is important.

To help with that, there are many tips available. So, let's get a quick overview of the main obstacles to a clean and lean backlog.

Is It a Bottomless Pit for Everything?

If a backlog is the only source when it comes to the requirements and for what

teams work upon to deliver features, it is also true that there are many possible ways for an item to enter and be added to the backlog.

Because any stakeholder can be a possible source of a new backlog entry, it's easy to get a big list of requests that conflict with each other and lack coherence. When that happens, well, your backlog becomes a *bottomless pit*.

So, the backlog should only include items that will help realise business value. That links to the organisation's strategy, the item should contribute to a higher business goal or outcome ([for example, the highest OKR](#)).

The Large Quantity of Backlog Items

It is common to treat a product backlog as a repository where we register the requests of all stakeholders of our project/product. Thus, we fall into many of the [anti-patterns identified in backlog management](#), such as the #2 "backlog too big" and #3 "expired items". Having a huge list of items in our backlog will lead to a [loss of focus and agility](#).

Are Items Aligned with the Vision or Are They Just a Fancy Request?

The backlog should be structured to include the various types of requirements defined by IIBA's Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide:- business, stakeholder and solution (plus transition)

requirements. One way of approaching this is to structure the backlog into epics, features and stories, respectively, as suggested by [Line Karkov](#), throughout the horizons of BABOK®'s Agile Extension (Strategy, Initiative and Delivery). This allows the traceability of the value that a rock brings within the strategy of the organisation not to be lost.

A Well-structured Backlog

Make sure the backlog only has main goals, and stories that contribute to those goals. Anything else is noise. On the [Brazilian BA webinar series](#), Dr. Michael White suggests having only stories with a clear user problem in mind. Technical work should only appear in a backlog by exception, when strictly necessary.

Another common issue comes when adding Non-Functional Requirements (NFRs) into the backlog. Dr. White suggests having them as acceptance criteria of the story. If an NFR crosses multiple stories, it should instead be one of the points of the *Definition of Done* checklist.

The Item's Age

The "age" of an item inside the backlog is a possible indicator of the value of the item (or, more likely, the lack thereof). In a list of backlog management [anti-patterns](#) by Stefan Wolpers, the antipattern #3—"outdated issues"—suggests that the item is not aged beyond the next 3 iterations (or Sprints).

A similar indicator by David Pereira, who suggests that the ideal is [between 2 and 4 months and beyond that it's already a waste](#) – *they age like milk, not wine*.

Measure the Backlog Growth

Another thing that has to be a priority in backlog management is paying attention not only for what comes into the backlog but also what comes out. Paraphrasing another interesting metaphor by Allan Kelly, in ["Moving Away from Backlog Driven Development: A New Chapter in Agility?"](#): if we imagine a backlog to be like a mortgage, then more stories mean more interest is paid. You are supposed to eventually pay all of the loan, including the interest. You do not want a debt that keeps increasing.

Fighting the Mortgage, Because Items Can't Stay There Forever

There is an interesting method that can help avoid falling into some of these traps.

[The Rock Crusher: A Model for Flow-Based Backlog Management](#) is a method for managing backlog items along a "funnel" in the most fluid way. And, for that, it crushes rocks. A "rock" is any item within the backlog. Throughout the funnel, prioritisation is constant. The perceived value maintains the rock inside the funnel and to the next stage. If not, one throws it out to the "waste gate". The method has a specific ceremony where the group decides what

to throw away, the ["crush meeting"](#). It is very similar to backlog refinement meetings in Scrum.

Being a funnel-shaped flow, it begins by being able to have larger "rocks", but arrives at a point where only smaller "rocks" pass.

An interesting thing about this method is that it *obligates* throwing away items from time to time. It is in this crush meeting that the team decides to send rocks to the waste gate. And something is always sent to the waste gate in this meeting. Interestingly, if nothing goes away, it's seen as an anti-pattern of the method: *"Nothing is Ejected Through the Waste Gate"*.

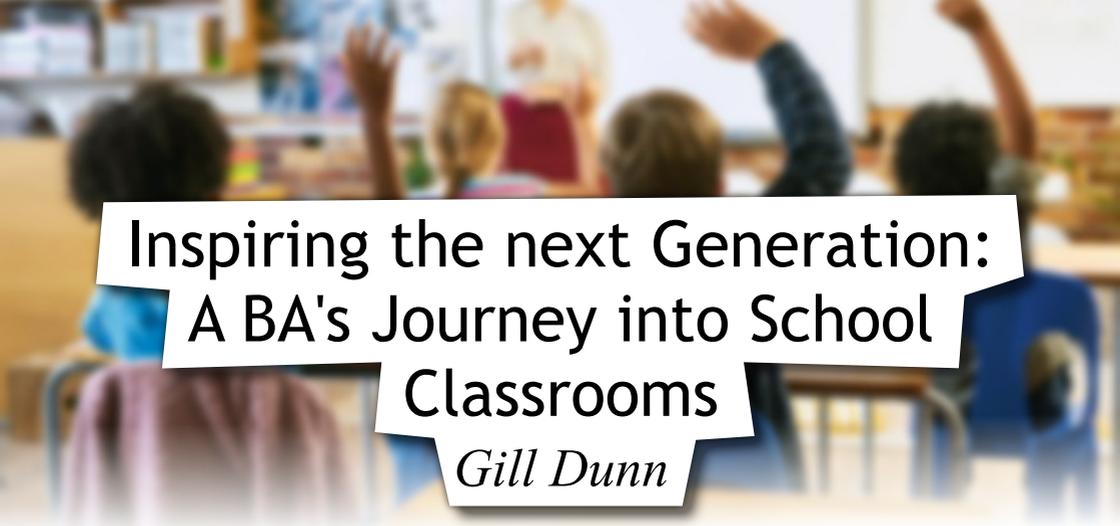
We must always take this into consideration. As David Pereira says, ["Once the old goes away, the door opens for the new"](#).

Conclusion

The use of a backlog is one of the most adopted techniques in terms of agility, but the way many business analysts and product owners manage them can be all but agile.

This article covers many traps, from adding it with no-value-added items, unstructured items, or simply not getting them out.

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Inspiring the next Generation: A BA's Journey into School Classrooms

Gill Dunn

I was reading through the BA community activities on LinkedIn last year, and one that really stuck out to me was the [BA School Day initiative](#). This is an initiative that encourages BAs to go into schools and talk about business analysis, to help spread awareness of the role. Having accidentally found myself with a career in business analysis, and supported and recruited many others who have similarly found themselves a BA following a zig zag career, I really liked the idea of sharing more information about the role with young people so they can make the move into business analysis more intentionally.

Also, in my Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) volunteering time provided by my employer I've been supporting [Cardiff Commitment](#)—a local authority based initiative to support career development in schools.

Joining up these initiatives for BA School Day seemed like a brilliant opportunity. Cardiff Commitment runs an “open your eyes” week, and they approached me with the opportunity to

talk about the business analyst role. I jumped at the chance! It was a week of interactive live sessions from different organisations, and different roles, talking about the world of work, and helping pupils aged 9 – 11 hear about jobs they don't normally hear about. It's a brilliant initiative to help pupils see their futures in a different way, and know about the wide range of jobs on their doorstep.

I created my 45 minute session to talk about delivering change in a building society and how the BA role is fundamental to knowing we're solving the right problems and in the right way. I was thrilled to hear 70 classes had signed up—that's around 2,100 pupils!

Firstly I talked about what a building society is, how we operate, and the importance of data. I included a little video tour of our data centre which really helps bring to life the scale and security of the data we hold about our customers, our transactions and our products. Then I took them all through the lifecycle of an idea. We started with

how the BA makes sure that it's actually a good idea. The feedback from my sessions showed the term "professional question askers" was the most memorable part of the BA role and I was really pleased that was one of the key takeaways. Some of my change colleagues contributed with video segments talking about the role of the solution architect and the software developer before we started the interactive portion.

For the activity I set out a problem: under 16s are only able to manage their accounts in a branch with a passbook. The idea we were all going to work on was to create an app for young people to manage their savings. The first activity had half of each table being business analysts and the other half being customers. They were given a little planning time and some ideas around what would make a good question, and then I started the time. They came up with some great ideas and the concept of data security had clearly stuck with them as they all talked about securely logging in and ensuring their customer records were accurate. Some fun features made their way in such as a spending tracker, a map of where they spend the most money, and finding ways to receive money by earning an income doing household chores.

They then switched roles and the new business analysts had to ask lots of questions to help organise the features into priority order. What do they need for a minimum viable product and what could they add later? There were some great conversations here and using the [MoSCoW prioritisation framework](#)

helped them structure their questions. Once they'd agreed their priorities they then had some time to design their app. I gave them some templates, icons, calendar and keyboard images on a sheet which their teachers had printed ready for them. We used the full session and had time for a few questions at the end of the segment.

The feedback was really positive, but my absolute favourite part of it was picking my daughter up from school an hour later and she and her friends walked out of the classroom together talking about becoming business analysts. I hadn't told her I was going to be on her classroom screen so once she got over the embarrassment she put it on her "maybe list" of future jobs (still competing with fashion designer and choreographer but I'm ok with that).

The recording has been made available to all of the schools who participate with a potential reach of 7000 pupils in Cardiff. The Cardiff Commitment is a great initiative and is a great way to reach young people on a large scale. For anyone thinking of looking for a way to support local schools or spread the word about careers in business analysis take a look at your own local authority career support services and see what opportunities they have.

Gill Dunn has been a BA for 12 years and is now the Community of Practice Manager of Business Analysis at Principality Building Society. You can connect with [Gill on LinkedIn](#) and her particular areas of interest are BA capability building, enterprise agility, creative role crafting and social impact.

It's Functionally Fantastic, but We Still Hate It: The Importance of NFRs

Adrian Reed



When considering buying or designing a new product, it is often the *functionality* that dominates the conversation. Cast your mind back to the day that you got your first smartphone. If you're anything like me, you were excited about the new features that you'd be able to use: suddenly there was the ability to send emails, play games, look up train times and much more besides. Yet for any of those features to be useful, certain other non-functional aspects have to be met too. As a consumer, I take for granted that my smartphone will be quick (imagine if it took 20 seconds to swipe the screen) and have a reasonable battery life (if the battery didn't last a full working day that would be a major issue).

These implicit non-functional aspects play a huge part in whether the product will actually be used once it's purchased, and whether anyone will actually *like* using it. **The harsh truth is that a**

product can be functionally fantastic, but if the non-functional aspects aren't right, whoever has to use it might still end up hating it!

In the example of a smartphone, many of these aspects are implicit and taken for granted. Having a phone that is speedy to load apps is *normal* so (unless they've had bad experiences in the past) it's unlikely that a customer is going to specifically ask for it. We could almost consider some of these aspects to be 'hygiene factors'. Customers are unlikely to get excited if these requirements are met, but they are likely to be *extremely* disappointed if they aren't met!

The Non-Functional Challenge

The implicit nature of these expectations hints at the challenge of eliciting and

analysing Non-Functional Requirements (NFR). Before we discuss this further, it is valuable to provide a definition. [The International Institute for Business Analysis \(IIBA®\)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge \(BABOK®\) guide v3](#) define an NFR as:

“A type of requirement that describes the performance or quality attributes a solution must meet. Non-functional requirements are usually measurable and act as constraints on the design of a solution as a whole.”

As well as implicit expectations of stakeholders, this definition highlights another challenge: breadth. Aspects such as ‘performance or quality attributes’ can be very broad indeed, covering seemingly disparate topics such as security, performance, sustainability & ethics, and much, much more besides.

While it’s clear that getting the NFRs wrong (or missing them entirely) can have severely negative consequences, a related question is *how on earth can we elicit them in the first place?* Ask an end-user about performance, and they’re likely to say “I want it to be fast”. But how fast is “fast”, and what trade-offs need to be made?

Stakeholders Matter: It’s a Balancing Act

Stakeholder analysis and engagement is a core part of business analysis, and NFR analysis is no exception. In fact, it is likely that there will be additional or different stakeholders involved in defining and analysing NFRs.

For example, end-users and business domain subject matter experts are often excellent sources of potential functional requirements. Yet ask them about security or data, and unless this happens to be their particular area of expertise, they will likely struggle. The same is true if you were to ask them about backup, disaster recovery, and other topics. They might well have a view that *something* needs to be done, but they’re unlikely to be able to specify a detailed set of requirements.

This is where other specialist expert stakeholders often help fill the gap. Compliance, security, business continuity experts and so forth can often provide a view on the company-wide policy towards certain non-functional aspects. Technical subject matter experts may be able to benchmark the performance of an existing solution. That way, if the business stakeholders say “it needs to be at least as fast as what we have today”, you have a metric to benchmark against!

Yet, as with all requirements, there is a balancing act. With many types of NFR it’s possible to ‘dial up’ and ‘dial down’ the requirement. Think of availability: a solution that needs to achieve 99.99% availability between 08:00 - 18:00, and 80% outside those hours is subject to a whole different set of constraints to one that must meet 99.99999% 24/7, 365 days of the year. The maintenance and “run” cost is likely to be different, so there is a trade-off. Right-sizing the NFRs is an area where business analysis plays a crucial role.

NFRs Don't Have To Be Scary

NFRs can seem scary at times. We've probably all been in situations where nobody wants to talk about them, they are deferred to later, and are very easy to ignore. They become "important but not urgent"... until suddenly they *are* urgent because an IT system falls over, there's a security breach, or some other unfortunate event.

Yet, counter-intuitively, the analysis mechanisms for eliciting NFRs are *pretty much the same* as for functional requirements, albeit techniques might be used with a different 'spin'. The key is that NFR elicitation and analysis requires planning, and relies on the stakeholder net being spread widely. It

relies on product or project stakeholders proactively shining the spotlight on these topics, rather than letting them lurk in the shadows.

By doing this, we increase the chances of the product being used, liked or even loved. And reduce the risk of delivering something functionally fantastic that they absolutely hate.

And surely that's worthwhile?

Adrian Reed is an enthusiastic BA from the UK. He's Principal Consultant at Blackmetric, where he works with a range of clients across a variety of industries.

[Connect with Adrian on LinkedIn](#)

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currently. We're looking at all the processes we have across the different departments and finding ways we can automate. I am working with an automation expert to identify the things that we could automate because there's so much going on as the team grows! And then in the coming weeks, I have a couple of speaking engagements that I have lined up, events for Black History Month and also International Women's Day.

Your job is quite varied, how do you explain to people what you do?

That's one of the hardest things because I wear so many hats! I describe myself as a business consultant. I think it's just easier to say that, since I am an entrepreneur and I have my own consulting company, but I still do business analysis, and I am also a business analysis coach. I love to provide coaching to younger BAs, mentor them, help them in their careers. I'm the founder of the Business Analysis School, where I lead all the training and certification programmes. I have a coaching team that I lead now, so I'm basically providing the oversight function for the school. And, within my consulting company, I am the lead consultant. We have consultants in the company that are working with our clients, and I oversee them, but I also have a lot of the conversations with clients, especially before the project starts, analysing what we will be doing for them.

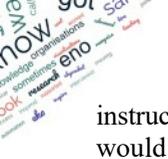
I am also a speaker, I do a lot of speaking engagements and I have to travel for that

sometimes. The final area is strategy. I do a lot of business strategy for new business owners, small businesses trying to get started, helping them with the overall strategy. I help them see where they are, where they want to be, what systems they need, the processes and the kind of people they need to hire to help them reach their income and revenue goals.

So overall, I just call myself a business consultant because that's an easier umbrella for all the different things!

What led you to discover business analysis?

I got into business analysis accidentally! I studied accounting but I was already getting tired of being an accountant because it was just repetitive, doing the same thing over and over again. I was more interested in project management and I was really interested in tech so I was trying to see how I could move into that space. But, I knew I didn't want to write code! So, I was looking for new opportunities and at that time I was working as a project accountant. I had amazing project managers that I was working with, and the senior project manager at that time, I shared with him that I was interested in project management. I took a course in project management, but one day he said "you know, the work that you do with us on this team is more like a business analyst than a project manager". I'm like, what's a business analyst? I had to Google it to find out more about it! I spoke to my training school, and found they had a course in business analysis. My



instructor said, “actually we feel like you would be a better business analyst than a project manager, just based on the kinds of questions you've been asking me”. So I'm like, OK, let's do it. I took a course in business analysis, and did my research on the IIBA®. I found I wanted to become certified. I was in love with business analysis. I was thinking—where have you been all my life? This is the career path I've always wanted, but I just didn't have the title. I was involved in all kinds of projects, and system implementation tied into accounting. I was doing business analysis and didn't know it.

So that's how I found out about business analysis. Then I became an [IIBA® member](#), took my [CBAP®](#) exam and never looked back.

Finding business analysis was obviously a key turning point for you. Were there any other turning points in your career?

Absolutely. Finding business analysis was definitely a highlight for me because it was the career path I always wanted and just didn't know what it was called. Another turning point was when I moved as an immigrant to Canada. Although I was practising business analysis in Nigeria, when I got here, I realised there was such a huge demand, and business analysis here was more advanced and more companies were becoming agile. The skill sets required were so varied and it pushed me to upskill and learn new things. The turning point was getting here, being able to find new opportunities. Finding new jobs as a new

immigrant is really tough, but business analysis gave me the opportunity to have multiple options. I got a job in the US and in Canada. In about six months of being here, I got my first six figure job, which was such a big deal for a new immigrant because we know how much immigrants can struggle.

That turning point in my career led to the turning point for other people who knew me and were able to learn business analysis through me. It turned around their careers because, just as someone told me, “you can do business analysis”, I told them the same and I also coached them through it.

Is there anything that you wish you knew earlier in your career?

Well, I wish I knew about business analysis earlier! I wish I knew about the business analysis career path. I wish that there were more opportunities for business analysts in Nigeria at the time when I was there and I wish that the IIBA® had a stronger presence in Nigeria back then. They have a really strong [IIBA® chapter in Nigeria](#) now, and that's really great.

Something else is that I wish I had focused on learning some technical skills when I was younger. I think that would have helped skyrocket my career. A lot of us were scared of tech because we're told that we would have to code. But there are so many areas like data, cyber security and cloud that I've worked in now and I realised I didn't have to code to work on those projects!

motivate me to keep going, because I know that I'm helping people.

Whenever people reach out to me from places like Malaysia, Singapore, Jordan, Cyprus, I've never been to those places. But by sharing my knowledge and using online spaces like LinkedIn it's helping people change their lives. I'm always motivated to keep going and keep sharing my knowledge.

What's something that you're really proud of from your career so far?

What I'm most proud of is the lives that have been impacted. Helping immigrants who had 10-15 years, even 20 years of experience but moving to the UK, US and Canada they didn't know how to navigate their careers. And today, those people are senior managers, they are team leads in great companies and they're using business analysis skills to support those organisations.

I can list projects I'm proud of. I've had opportunities to work on great projects that have been nominated for awards here in Canada, but I would definitely say that my biggest pride is having an impact on people. People I may never meet in my lifetime, but I definitely changed the trajectory of their lives with my teaching and my story.

This is your chance to give a shout out, anything that's inspired you that you think would inspire others.

I definitely want to give a shout out for the [Business Analysis School](#), for anyone who is interested in learning how to leverage their skills and experience.

We work with people who already have experience to help them to work as business analysts. So if you have domain experience in any industry, we'll work with you to help you move into business analysis within that industry or even in another industry.

And, I'd like to highlight my new book coming out called the [Six Figure Business Analyst](#), where I share my story and the stories of other people who have been able to leverage their experiences to land six figure jobs as business analysts because it's not a myth, it's something that's possible for those of us who have the skills and experiences.

Connect with [Eno via LinkedIn](#).



About the interviewer:

Christina Lovelock is a BA leader, author and coach. She is active in the Business Analysis professional community and champions entry level roles. She is co-author of the BCS book [Delivering Business Analysis: The BA Service Handbook](#). She would be delighted if you would like to connect! [Linkedin.com/in/christina-lovelock](#)

Keep an eye on our [social media pages](#) for the next 'burning question' we would like your views on.



VIEWPOINTS

On social media, we posed the question ***“What is your favourite thing about being a business analyst, and what is one thing you'd change about the profession?”***

The best thing about being a business analyst is we're always learning. There are many careers where you hit the ceiling but in the BA world there's always new projects and new people to meet. Every stage of a project has its own challenges and provides a great insight whether you've been a BA for 20 weeks or 20 years.

The BA role varies a lot which can be a blessing and a curse. The roles and responsibilities of a BA can be unclear and sometimes overlaps with a product owner's role. One thing I would change is having a clear understanding of 'who does what'.

Vishal Gupta

My favorite thing about being a BA: working with people, making a positive change, and the amazing BA community.

What I'd change is the misconception that BAs are product owners or SMEs of the business domain - or worse - we're

not needed on agile projects. We are here to elicit requirements and facilitate a shared understanding on those needs to help implement a successful solution to create value.

Kathy G. Berkidge

The thing I love about being a business analyst is that I can apply it anywhere in my life. There were numerous cases when I broke my context, activities, issues, and opportunities into pieces with business analysis as a framework. At that moment, I began seeing all the needs, stakeholders, solutions, etc., which are a part of everything surrounding me. It is genuinely impressive to see how things unravel as soon as you put them into terms of business analysis.

What I'd change would be removing the label "translator from business to development" from the conversation entirely in IT business analysis. While it provides a brief understanding of a profession, it diminishes the value and impact of our work. Instead, I'd stick with a better, more complete, correct, and concise definition of "bridging function." It is much closer to the perfect "consultant" definition.

Iurii Gomon

I'm passionate about the dynamic nature of being a business analyst, especially when confronted with complex problems. It's the thrill of navigating through uncertainty and crafting actionable strategies that propels me forward in this role. I aim to shift the perception of the business analyst role by highlighting its multifaceted

nature and the significant value it brings beyond mere requirement documentation. I believe in showcasing the strategic insight, problem-solving prowess, and transformative impact that business analysts can offer to projects and organizations.

Reena Cheeneebash

Working as a BA is the most gratifying profession I can imagine. Being the "glue" between many diverse stakeholders across various departments, whether it is business and technology, ensures that work will never become boring. Being a BA offers the great opportunity to practice life-long-learning every day.

The only thing I would change would be the title "BA". That's why I don't try to explain the role so much as the activities I undertake. This not only creates acceptance on all sides, but also unlocks new opportunities by avoiding restrictive categorizations.

Gottfried Szing

As a business analyst, my greatest joy stems from the exhilarating process of unraveling intricate challenges, crafting both viable and creative solutions, and spearheading transformative changes essential for shaping the future success of the organizations we serve.

Nevertheless, if I could wave a magic wand, I would ardently wish for deeper education and appreciation of our multifaceted skills, talents, and strategic

significance. We play a crucial role as value engineers and drivers of innovation, growth, and long term sustainability within organizations. Additionally, we act as advocates, prioritizing the evolving needs and delightful experiences of their cherished customers. We are the linchpin in implementing vital change and the cohesive force binding organizations to their triumphs.

Doris Kimball

I just love being able to co-create together with the business, to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new opportunities and new mindsets, to boldly go where no person has gone before!

I would like to make the profession more present and appreciated at a strategic level,

be it within an organisation, but as well at a political or even diplomatic level (where we could maybe have prevented Brexit or could have co-created a more sustainable economy than the catastrophically neoliberal capitalism we are in today or ...).

Stefan Bossuwé

For me, it's the collaboration of working with different people to solve business problems.

It's getting to that light bulb moment when you've collaborated with different stakeholders to elicit and define the pain points of a business problem that no one else can seem to easily illustrate. You've brainstormed and evaluated different solution options to resolve each pain point, you've presented your analysis findings to senior leaders in business language to ensure a shared understanding of the

underlying problem and you've secured their buy-in to refine the requirements for the optimal solution.

One thing that I'd look to change about the profession is increase the awareness of how our role as business analysis professionals can fit into "technical" initiatives that business leaders are planning so that we can guide leaders to deliver the best business outcomes.

James Dean

Favorite things

1. Discovering, then conveying, the magnitude of improvement between the status quo and the future state for impacted stakeholders
2. The innovation professions (and professional associations) talk about each other more, so integration is happening.

What to change

1. The amount of innovation in the world that has **obvious** benefit is so high that we have less of an

excuse for **experimenting** than some say. When we work a little harder, our confidence in our value propositions will be higher.

2. Current references to storytelling are casual and "expose an inch." BAs should pull hard, run, "take a mile," never let go, and, collaboratively, never stop rewriting - improving - stories. Literally. Writing. Stories.

If not us, then who? If not now, when?

Robert Snyder

As a business analyst (BA), navigating the intricate landscape of IT projects often feels like speaking two different languages. That is my favorite aspect of being a BA. One moment, you're decoding the nuanced needs of business stakeholders, translating their requirements into a language that resonates with the technical team. The next, you're delving into the intricacies of software development, ensuring that the solutions proposed align seamlessly with the business vision.

Amidst translation challenges, many BAs grapple with blurred lines between post-go-live support and core analysis roles. They're often diverted to troubleshooting live issues, sidelining strategic analysis. Redefining boundaries demands collaboration among stakeholders to clarify expectations. Empowering BAs to prioritize strategic analysis over reactive support tasks is crucial for aligning solutions with business goals.

Younis Malik



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