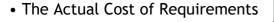
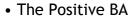
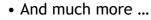
## BA DIGEST

• Business Architecture and Analysis











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## Welcome

Hello, and a very warm welcome to the Q2 edition of BA Digest. In this edition, as ever, you'll find articles on a range of topics from a diverse range of authors. I hope you find them useful and interesting, and if you do please pass a copy of the magazine on to your colleagues or connections. Also be sure to connect with any authors whose article resonated with you. Trust me, they will absolutely appreciate the feedback!

As you read through this edition of BA Digest, I have a challenge for you... why not think about whether there's a topic that you could write about? Part of the vision that drives BA Digest is to create an open-access platform that anyone can contribute to, and we welcome article submissions on any topic related to business analysis.

Now, this is where at least some people's 'impostor syndrome' will kick in. I know the feeling well! "Oh, but I'm not a professional writer" you might be thinking. Park that negative self-talk, and remember that you are a practitioner... and if you have a story to tell, experience to share, or an idea that hasn't been written about before, chances are you'll write a fantastic article. Every article goes through a three stage peer-review process (technical

review & fact check, copy editing & proofreading) which ensures your article really shines by the time it is published.

The first step is easy: Just submit a proposed title, and a short paragraph outlining your idea, and we'll get back to you. Here's the submission link: overto.link/write@digest

Just imagine how awesome it would feel to have your name in (virtual) print...

Finally, before signing off, I'd like to extend a massive thank you to the authors who have volunteered their time and energy to write for this edition. The magazine couldn't exist without you. Also, thank you to our advertisers... it is the advertisers who enable us to keep the magazine free. Please do what you can to support them... check out their services, click on their adverts. Remember, they are supporting the BA community!

Enjoy this edition of BA Digest. Until next time,

### Adrian

Adrian Reed

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest (& Principal Consultant @ Blackmetric)

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# Where Do I Start? Using BA Techniques to Navigate Career Transitions

Kathleen Schwaber

For many of us, jumping into a new project comes naturally. We have our well-baked recipe for how to plan our approach, elicit requirements, form and execute a strategy, and ensure value is realised by our customer. But what about changing companies or taking on a new role? I faced this type of change last year when I left my hometown, my job of 11 years, and moved across the country to chase a new adventure with my family. New industry, new company, new community—there was a lot of ambiguity and uncertainty. I wanted to get up to speed quickly so I could deliver value to my organisation right from the start.

Initially I didn't know the best approach to transition. My role was new for the company, and there was no "playbook" to refer to. It took some time to get organised, but once I figured out that I could look at my new career as a "project," I was much better able

to tackle the effort. Also having recently passed my International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®) Certified Business Analysis Professional (CBAP®) exam, I had a mind fresh with approaches and techniques. Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide provides a great foundation for business analysis work, and it's proven quite helpful in navigating my career transition. While there is much applicable value from all sections of the BABOK®, Planning, Elicitation, and Strategy Analysis have been the most impactful for me. Here are some of the ways that these sections were useful.

1. Planning: The role I came into was newly defined. There was no BA practice in my organisation. I needed to plan my approach, which started with determining what my manager's goals were for me and the new role. Finding answers to "why

am I here?" and "what are my deliverables?" helped set the stage. Without a rubric for my role, this involved having lots of conversations with my peers and leaders to create a vision for my position.

Once I had a vision and approach defined, it was time to identify stakeholders. Organisation charts were incredibly helpful visuals to see where I fit, and who the stakeholders were that would become involved in my mission to build a BA practice. I spent a lot of time learning about and assessing culture, determining how to engage different stakeholders and groups, and to anticipate the continued engagement. Relationships are key in any project, and especially so in the workplace. Mapping out and developing those connections early has resulted in so much more opportunity for me to learn and for me to co-create value with my customers.

- 2. Elicitation: I can really break this down into three types, like the BABOK® does.
  - Collaborative: Connecting with stakeholders was the first and biggest step. I took time to meet with people face-to-face, which had its challenges being in a post-pandemic workplace. I asked everyone I met with what they expected of me or needed from BA services. It was important for me to tie their expectations to my approach and

- vision. External networking was also key. I connected with other BAs, both in the US and internationally, to learn from their experience building BA practices. Many I connected with from IIBA® events and from publications like the BA Digest.
- Like • Research: networking externally, research was powerful in helping me understand my "project" context—a new industry and a new geographic community as well as recommendations for building BA practices in general. I did lots of research on my company and my industry, as well as the impact both had on the local community. I looked for any policies procedures I could find to develop an understanding for how different parts of my company operated. I researched technologies used by my company and my customers so I could better anticipate what BA work may come down the road, and to brainstorm early on how I may need to engage on those efforts.
- Experimental: This one can be nerve-wracking when you are in a mode of proving yourself to a new audience. Using connections I had made to date, I began to identify peers I could experiment with—previewing work products, gathering insight on areas for personal or professional development, and using them as sounding boards for new concepts or visions. Experimenting like this can feel risky but it has significant

value because it reinforces building relationships of trust and collaboration.

- 3. Strategy Analysis: three components from the BABOK® come to mind as particularly translatable to career transitions.
  - Current State Analysis: I asked myself (and stakeholders) several questions, like "what is working well?" and "what is not working?" If my task was to build a BA practice, I needed to take time to understand the history of the business and the current state. I also made my own observations over time, all of which helped me to form an understanding of the services a BA practice could provide.
  - Define the Future State: What do I want my role to look like? What does the organisation want from me? How can BA services improve the organisation? Answering these questions helped lay out what the future may look like. I paid attention to assumptions and constraints and tried to develop tactical responses to each as they came up so that they didn't become impediments. I set high-level goals for myself and the BA practice I was tasked to develop. I also communicated back to my stakeholders to confirm and finetune the future state vision. I knew full well that buy-in was critical, and I wanted it at each phase.
  - Define the Change Strategy: Developing a BA practice was an

entirely new strategic initiative for me. My prior BA experience was mostly tactical, so this was a big stretch goal. Having an opportunity to be creative and to build a business analysis practice was something new and exciting. This is honestly where I had some great fun, and finally found myself relaxing into the role once I had a good understanding of the context, current state, and the vision for what I was tasked with. It was in this phase I could start mapping out objectives and timelines so I could keep on track to achieving goals set earlier in the process.

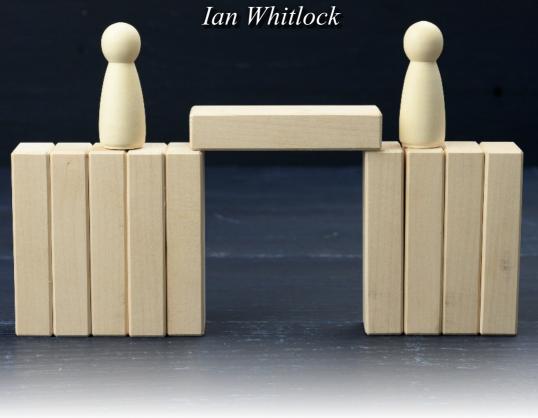
Starting at a new company or taking on a new role or promotion at a current company can feel daunting. Sometimes knowing where to start is not obvious, and the desire to transition smoothly and effectively adds extra pressure. Treating these transitions like projects or business analysis work is a great way to put a familiar process on the unfamiliar to ensure a successful transition.

Kathleen Schwaber is a Certified Business Analyst Professional with over a decade of experience in the public sector. She is currently a Senior Business Analyst in the Nashville, TN area. Connect with Kathleen on LinkedIn.

#### References:

IIBA (2015) A guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK® Guide) Version 3, IIBA, Toronto, Canada

## Business Architecture and Analysis: Areas of Collaboration



What are the differences and similarities between a business analyst and a business architect? How can a business analyst help a business architect, and vice-versa? The roles have definite similarities, but different ultimate goals. Both roles can help each other, and I will explain how in this article.

First, it is important to start with a definition. The Business Architecture

Guild's 'Business Architecture Body of Knowledge (BIZBOK ®) Guide' provides the following definition:

"Business architecture represents holistic, multi-dimensional business views of capabilities, end-to-end value delivery, information, and organisational structure as well as the relationships among these business views and

strategies, products, policies, initiatives, and stakeholders."

## A Shared Holistic Perspective

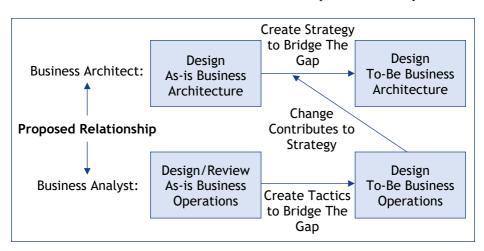
Drawing on this definition, it is these existing holistic views that can prove to be a valuable asset to the business analyst, as holism is crucial to both the business analyst and business architect roles.

A business architect works at a strategic level, where concepts are abstract, whereas a business analyst often works at a tactical level (although there can be a cross-over into strategy), and gets involved in the detail. Both roles can be involved in identifying and analysing the as-is state, and identify what is required to get to the desired future state. The business architect role is also involved in guiding the business towards meeting its strategy, while a business analyst would work on tactical changes that contribute towards the strategy (see conceptual model below).

An organisation may not always have a business architecture function, and if it does, it could be at any level of maturity, including their artefacts. The business architect(s) might also work in a silo, or be integrated with Information Technology (IT), or a change department. If business architecture does exist, regardless of maturity, a business analyst and business architect can help each-other.

#### Where Business Architecture Can Help Analysts

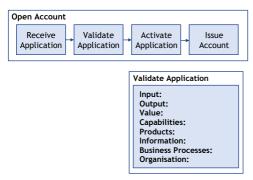
Business architecture, as per the definition above, can have and maintain different views of the business. This could include a capability map which displays what a business can do, or highlight what it has a desire to do. This is a useful artefact for business analysts. When 'new' business functionality is needed in a project the capability map can be consulted to see if a relevant capability already exists. Business analysts or solution architects might be able to map solution components to



capabilities enabling reusability between projects, resulting in even better value.

Business architecture artefacts such as value streams are also useful to business analysts. Value streams are an end-to-end collection of activities that create a result for a customer (whether that's the ultimate customer or an internal end-user). Value streams are broken into value stream stages, and these value stream stages can be cross-mapped to their enabling capabilities. They can also be linked to participating stakeholders, products, lower-level business processes and more.

An example is shown below:



Value streams differ from business processes in that value streams are highlevel and based on the perspective of enabling or co-creating value, whereas a business process demonstrates the operational flow, with the end-event enabling value. There is a clear link between the two, and value streams are likely to be of use to business analysts creating improving or business processes. Business processes can be associated or linked with the relevant value stream stage. If value streams are

linked to stakeholders, then this can help the business analyst identify relevant stakeholders, as well as the end-to-end activities that they undertake, therefore helping to identify upstream and downstream impact on any potential changes. The business architecture function may also be responsible for business process architecture, or this may be handled elsewhere. There is benefit to the business analysis to identify where business processes are stored, as this can save time and effort by providing the business analyst with as-is process maps, as well as a business defined set of standards for process maps/models.

An extra benefit to the business analyst is that business architecture artefacts will use an agreed and widely understood language. This will allow the business analyst to learn the business language used internally, which will then help with communicating with their own stakeholders.

A mutual benefit to both business architect and business analyst is understanding if a project that a business analyst is working on actively contributes to working towards the business strategy. If an initiative does not align with strategy, there is the chance to realign it, or propose that it is stopped.

## Benefits to the Business Architect

Business architects can face challenges in keeping their views of the business up to date. This is partially due to businesses changing continuously, coupled with a lack of awareness within the business of the artefacts that business architects create, maintain, and use. These challenges are where the business analyst can help the business architect. The first step for the business analyst is to simply have the awareness of the business architecture function if it exists within the business. Then, they can keep the architects in the loop with changes, helping them to keep their artefacts up to date.

Additionally, business analysts can communicate any fundamental business changes to the business architecture team. For example, if a new product is launched then the business architecture team may have a product map that requires updating. If there are capabilities that are being re-used or introduced to enable the new product, the capability map will require updating. A new product could also mean new additions to be added to the organisation map. Finally, it is a benefit to them if they are provided with the new or updated business processes implemented as part of the business change.

#### Conclusion

In summary, a business architect can help a business analyst by providing a ready-made holistic view of the business, including associated stakeholders, and provide guidance on any technology already acquired within the business that could help fulfil business requirements. A business analyst can help a business architect by assisting in keeping the business architecture artefacts up-to-date and accurate.

I'll end with a caveat that capability maps and detailed value streams are just two of the possible perspectives that a business architecture team may have, there are others that could be beneficial to the business analyst and many other potential collaboration opportunities in both directions. It depends on the business change, and the maturity of the business architecture team. Regardless, I'd suggest that a business analyst considers a business architect as a useful stakeholder early on when beginning work on a new business change.

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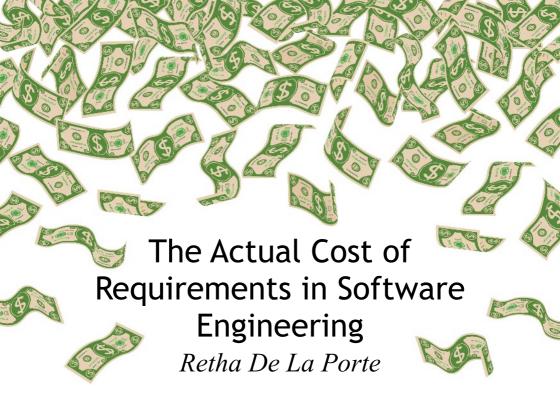
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"If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions" – Albert Einstein

One of the central activities and a *major cost driver* of business analysis revolves around the elicitation of business requirements since requirements reflect the needs of the users. A set of requirements should be treated as an intangible asset which has a value depending on the quality and overall business impact that the requirements will achieve when the solution is delivered. Requirements should be safeguarded, documented and maintained like any other intangible asset.

This article will delve into quantifying the hidden cost of requirements as well as propose certain measures which will enable organisations to maximise their return on investment on their requirements.

#### Quantifying Hidden Cost

Cost of reworking requirements

Studies done by the University of Massachusetts showed that the initial estimated project cost will ultimately only account for approximately 50% of total project cost. The remainder of the costs will be spent on rework (any additional effort spent redoing a process or activity that was incorrectly implemented the first time, or due to changes in requirements from the client), with the costs increasing exponentially the later the problem is identified in the

development life cycle. This has a direct impact on the performance, productivity and ultimately the profit margins of a company.

Common reasons that necessitate rework include ambiguous requirements, a lack of essential documentation, inadequate testing and poor communication, especially during requirement elicitation and analysis.

Codeclimate.com, a company focused on continuous improvement of software engineering, stated that a standard software development team reworks an average of 26% of its code prior to release — costing a medium-sized US business upwards of \$4.7m a year. Further studies done by Donald Firesmith from the Software Engineering Institute estimated that cost could total up to more than \$30 billion per year in the US alone. Time and resources that could have been allocated to innovation and other more value generating endeavours.

#### Cost of undocumented requirements

The Agile Manifesto states 'working software over *comprehensive* documentation' as one of its four core values, yet many organisations interpret this statement as simply no need for any structured project documentation resulting in all info on a project being dispersed and committed to the memory of those who had the privilege of being part of the project discussions.

This could roughly be compared to paying for the recipe for a

mouthwatering cake but then only receiving the final product. Although the cake is great, you cannot reproduce it when the cravings hit without having to spend more money on another cake that might not even be as good as the first one, since you don't know what ingredients were used nor do you have the instructions on how to make it.

At an average salary of \$78 000 per annum for an intermediate business analyst based in the US, this cost can quickly add up, with no recipe, or requirements, to show for it.

Returning to the matter at hand, the requirements are in essence the same as the cake recipe, both are assets with details that should be documented and safeguarded, during and after conception.

The need for documentation exists independently of the adopted project methodology; with waterfall we would want the recipe upfront. Whereas with agile, the chef would be encouraged to provide just enough information at the right time, ensuring focus remains on the cake.

Cost of not exposing and managing requirements

Similarly, to undocumented requirements, inaccessible and unmanaged requirements result in the same outcome with business analysts having to reinvent the wheel when a similar problem presents itself instead of maximising the return on existing requirements by reusing or improving on them.

## Strategies to Minimise Wasted Costs

As the costs for the aspects mentioned above are difficult to quantify, they are often overlooked when examining cost cutting or value adding initiatives, opting instead to scrutinise easily quantifiable costs like licensing fees or salaries.

Listed below are but a few strategies that a business analyst can implement to contribute to the reduction of the cost of requirements:

#### • Solve the right problem

Invest time to conduct research and analysis to ensure that you understand and define the real problem. Most of the time the stated problem addresses the symptoms and rarely ever the root causes. There are a variety of problemsolving tools and techniques available to assist in recognising the root cause of a problem including the Ishikawa diagram (fishbone) diagram and the 5 Whys. Lesser known but highly effective techniques include the Pareto chart, fault tree analysis and the Failure Mode and Effect Analysis (FMEA analysis).

## • State the correct requirements clearly and accurately

Any project documents produced will be of little value if the requirements stated are poorly defined, incomplete, or conflicting in nature. Ensure that your requirements are realistic and

accurately reflect the needs and expectations of your stakeholders by verifying your requirements against a quality checklist and making use of techniques like process modelling, prototyping and reviews.

#### • Perform frequent reviews

Although rework will always be inevitable, studies have shown that performing design, requirements, and code reviews earlier and more frequently in the project life cycle significantly reduces the amount of rework, in some cases to less than 10% of the total project costs.

A study done in 2008 by Mark W Huston at the University of Montana concluded that the optimum time spent on a review is between 16 and 24 hours to allow for the most efficient error detection rate. Any less time spent will result in an unacceptable number of defects in the product while a longer period will see the return on investment diminishing becomes as it increasingly difficult to identify defects and the downstream impacts on the system. With that in mind it's useful to take essence of the study's advice and ensure we allow an appropriate time for reviews. It might be appropriate to spend 16 to 24 hours reviewing the requirements on a mission critical project, however this won't always be the case. Reviews of this extent can become wasteful especially when looking at COTS, fixed budget, or time-boxed projects.

## • Follow a requirements management plan

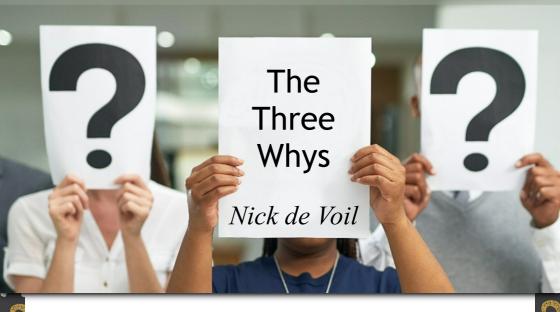
Proper management of requirements yields value beyond the project lifecycle by enabling the business analyst to define, trace, analyse and track changes to requirements in a secure, central and accessible location. Sorting requirements by category, priority and risk creates consistency that increases the reusability and traceability of requirements by having the relevant information organised in a logical manner that is easy to understand. requirements **Appropriate** management allows for improved collaboration between stakeholders subsequently leading to minimised rework required and an extended lifespan of existing requirements.

While not being exhaustive, the above list will address a substantial portion of the additional, usually unbudgeted cost of rework on requirements whilst ensuring that the company's assets will continue to provide value in the present and in the future.

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## Using Group Construct Analysis to Understand Stakeholder Worldviews in Ambiguous Situations, Part 8



No, it's not a typo – this is nothing (much) to do with the Five Whys technique.

In Article 4 we saw how Bill Clinton called into question the meaning of the word "is". Another simple-looking word that we use a lot in business analysis is "why". But has it occurred to you that "why" has three different meanings? The three meanings correspond to the timeframes of past, present and future. For example:

- 1. "Why did this process fail?" means "what are the events that happened in the past which resulted in this?"
- 2. "Why is this requirement crossreferenced to that document?" means "what is the underlying connection between these two things?"

3. "Why are we doing this project?" means "what desired future outcomes are we aiming for by doing this?"

In some languages, the English "why" can even be translated into three different words, depending on which of these meanings is intended.

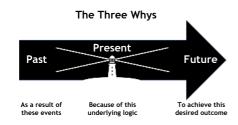
Either because of their personality or as a result of the particular circumstances, any given stakeholder may prefer to tell you about one timeframe rather than the other two. If you want to understand the person's viewpoint on the situation fully, you need to understand their perspective on all three. But it's also useful to be aware of their preference for focusing on one of the timeframes, as this will help you to communicate with them more effectively.

Incidentally, it's worth remembering that, when interviewing a stakeholder, it can be helpful to avoid saying the actual word "why?" and instead ask questions which make it clear which of the three meanings is intended, such as:

- 1. "What was the chain of events that led up to that?"
- 2. "What's the underlying thought process there?"
- 3. "What's the outcome that you're looking to achieve here?"

Now let's look at the reason the Three Whys are so relevant to Group Construct Analysis (GCA).

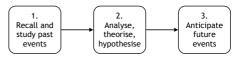
Anyone in an organisation – whether that's yourself or another stakeholder – who is trying to make sense of things, can be visualised as a lighthouse standing on an island (the present) in the middle of a time continuum leading from the past to the future. I'm thinking of those lighthouses where there are two beams of light which point in opposite directions from each other, leaving the rest of the surrounding landscape in darkness as the light rotates.



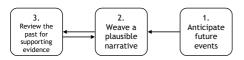
What we all want to know is: what will happen in the future? How can we achieve the objectives the organisation has set? What risks might materialise? Ultimately, will this (our current project) work or not? This is the reason the lighthouse is shining a light forward into the future – it is striving to understand what will happen, using the logic of the present and the lessons of the past as resources.

George Kelly (see Article 1) used the analogy of a scientist to describe the way that an individual develops and uses their construct system. Each of us acts as a theorist and experimenter, establishing our constructs on the basis of patterns that we've noticed in past events, testing them in our everyday life to see if they will help us to anticipate the future, and modifying our construct system if we become aware of deficiencies in it. As well as being a good description of what individuals do, this also fits the thought processes used by groups of people in organisations.

The lighthouse is also shining a light backwards into the past. In one sense, this is unremarkable. It seems that we're looking for facts about past experience to analyse and use as inputs to our process of predicting the future. This fits in with the sort of rational thinking that we aspire to as business analysts. But there's a twist. It turns out – and again, this is as true for groups as it is for individuals – that we don't always follow a logical sequence of studying the past, analysing in the present and predicting the future.



In fact, what often happens is this:



First, we anticipate a future world: either one that is desirable, or one that suits our purposes for some other reason. Then we start to create an argument for why our anticipated future is plausible. We look at past events and cherry-pick evidence which will support our narrative, then go back and fine-tune the narrative. We ignore facts that don't fit in. So the beam of light going backwards into the past is performing an active, selective function. It's notable as much for what it leaves in darkness as for what it illuminates.

You might recognise this general sequence as one which is often used when creating business cases, to support a pre-judged course of action. However, I don't mean to suggest that it is always used with the intention of deceiving anyone. Rather, this is completely normal human behaviour, and usually happens at an unconscious level.

This has a remarkable consequence for our view of the past. The past is not, as we might have thought, a reliable, inert, unchanging resource which we can access and analyse any time we need to. The past is a story that we are continually re-telling and re-making in the light of our current purposes. And we can't help doing this. Research shows that, when someone knows the outcome of a particular sequence of events, they recall the sequence of events in a much more straightforward way, as

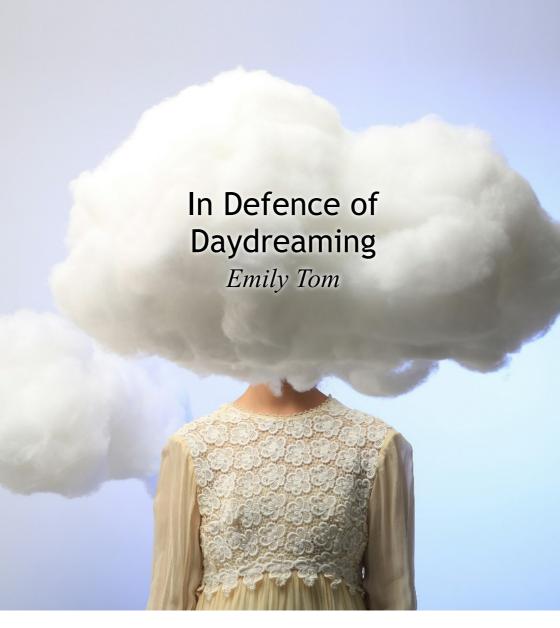
leading inevitably to that conclusion, and they discard those parts of their recollections that do not support that narrative.

As business analysts, we pride ourselves on our capacity for rational thought. But if we accept that our stakeholders, both as groups and as individuals, are always engaged in a continuous process of retelling history to suit their current theories, and adjusting those theories to fit the retold history, we may find it easier to understand some of their annoying habits – such as changing their minds or not accepting our logical arguments. And we may also accept that we're not immune from taking part in that process ourselves.

This means that using GCA effectively isn't just about drawing static maps representing snapshots of stakeholders' construct systems – although that can certainly be useful. It's also about seeing how construct systems can change over time, and understanding the influence that individuals and groups have on each other.

Nick is a director at De Voil Consulting. He specialises in helping organisations create people-oriented systems, products and services. He has trained thousands of professionals in business analysis, user experience, systems design, project management and agile development. Nick is author of the book "User Experience Foundations". Contact Nick via LinkedIn

You can read the previous articles in this series by accessing the BA Digest archive



When I was 6 years old, I was in Grade 1 at elementary school. That's when the *real* learning begins after Kindergarten. My marks were generally pretty good, but I remember being upset by two comments that appeared on both my mid-year and final report cards: "Emily

is very shy and needs to participate in class more often." and "Emily tends to daydream a lot." I wanted to scream in frustration, "But Mrs. L, I wasn't daydreaming. I was doing critical thinking!"

I had many questions about what we were learning in class. Questions such as "Why do we call them 'upper-case' and 'lower-case' letters?" and "Why do we have to learn both printing and cursive writing?" and "Why do nouns have gender in French? What makes a table feminine and a notebook masculine?" Why, why, why? But alas, I was too shy to raise my little 6-year-old hand to ask these questions in class.

Over the years, I've maintained my curiosity and have overcome my shyness. Now, as a business analyst, I ask many questions after doing some critical thinking. This article is about critical thinking, not daydreaming. Sorry for the click-bait!

## Why Critical Thinking Is Important

Critical thinking is a skill that is critical to our jobs as business analysts. By developing our critical thinking skills, we can:

- Discern fact from fiction
- Avoid solving just the symptom and not the root cause of a problem
- See the problem or opportunity from different points of view
- Open our minds to more options
- Consider the needs of a greater number of stakeholders
- Make better decisions
- Create shared understanding

I like the last one in particular. We are not just "translating" requirements; we are making sense of the information we have and seeing the situation in a more organised context. By asking questions and thinking out loud, we are able to create shared understanding with our stakeholders.

#### Why Critical Thinking Is Hard

Some people struggle with critical thinking because they don't have enough practice. We need to learn how to analyse problems, synthesise the information we have and seek more information until we have clarity. This can be a long process and we have to keep asking probing questions, confirming questions and even oddball questions until we understand things.

Some people are too shy or scared of asking a stupid question. We don't want to sound like we weren't paying attention or like we just don't get it. But isn't it important to seek shared understanding so that we continue our work? I have found that getting over the fear takes practice as well.

No matter how much business analysis experience we have, we need to continuously work on our critical thinking skills.

## How To Do Critical Thinking Without Criticising

It's important to apply critical thinking without criticising because stakeholders

hate confrontation. For this article, I'm focusing on how to verbalise your critical thinking so that you can have meaningful discussions with your stakeholders.

There's no set recipe for becoming the best critical thinker, but I have found several strategies that have helped me develop my critical thinking skills. I have also found that we need to use our strong communication skills to avoid being seen as criticising. The following table summarises some of these strategies:

(Apologies to left-handed people. This is just a fictitious example to demonstrate how these strategies work.)

Instead of	Do this	Example	Results
Taking the information at face value, assuming your understanding is correct	Validate your understanding	Stakeholder: Left-handed people are bad writers.  You: So if I understand correctly, you mean that left-handed peoples' handwriting is illegible. Or do you mean that left-handed people write material that is hard to understand.	You are preventing a misunderstanding.  Helping the stakeholder learn to be more precise
Not considering all options / not thinking outside of the box	Play the "devil's advocate"	Stakeholder: Left-handed peoples' handwriting is illegible.  You: Is it possible that right-handed peoples' handwriting is illegible too?  Also you: How common is it that left-handed peoples' handwriting is illegible?	Trying to understand the data / evidence that supports someone's perspective

Instead of	Do this	Example	Results
Immediately challenging the stakeholder's point of view  Example:  So, you want to reject all account application forms from left-handed people?	Getting agreement on something first in order to set the context, easing the path to further agreement	You: Would you agree that we want to process all application forms from prospective customers at our bank?  Stakeholder: Yes.  Also you: Then we need to be able to read all application forms, right?  Also Stakeholder: Yes  Then you: Then maybe we can provide electronic forms for either left-handed or right-handed people to fill out on a computer or mobile device.  Then stakeholder: Ah, that makes sense. It would also eliminate the need to re-key information.	It shows the stakeholder that you are on their side, that you both have the same objectives in mind  Sets the context before confusing them with your final point  By gradually getting them to agree to what you are saying, you are not shooting down their idea immediately
Limiting the scope of your subject matter expertise.	Knowing that you may be working with stakeholders from different backgrounds, learn things from many different domains and industries.  Learn how things work and how different ideas are connected.	Echo their terminology to demonstrate your understanding and keep the conversation going.  For example: When someone from the mining industry says "resources", they mean water, coal, natural gas etc.  When someone from a recruiting firm says "resources", they mean human resources.  If you are speaking with both of these stakeholders at the same time, adapt your language so everyone understands.	Allows you to actively engage with stakeholders  Teaches you different communication styles  Helps you become more articulate

#### Conclusion

Critical thinking is key to our profession. We need to work with many different stakeholders, and in order to be effective, we need to understand things from their points of view. We synthesise the information we are given, connect it with other information that we elicit through killer questions and then analyse the information to gain understanding. Thus, we can facilitate better decisionmaking bv creating shared a understanding of the problem/solution.

See? We can do a lot of work just by starting with daydreaming!

Emily Tom, CBAP is an independent consultant based in Ottawa, Canada. She is also the Regional Director IIBA Americas Northeastern Region, supporting 18 IIBA chapters. She is passionate about promoting the business analysis profession and supporting fellow business analysts in their careers.

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## BA Back Stories



## Paula Bell



## Interviewed by Christina Lovelock

You may know Paula Bell as the BA Martial Artist. Originally from Brooklyn and now based in Iowa, Paula runs her own business as well as being Director of Operations at Bridging the Gap. It's a busy time for Paula, she is launching a career preparation and development course. A lot of her time is spent on both strategic and daily planning. Promoting the course includes writing blog posts and creating videos for her YouTube channel and website.

## What are your passions or areas of focus at the moment?

My passion is mind, body and soul. When I started helping and coaching business analysts and other professionals, they had a lot of limiting beliefs. They had a lot of self-sabotage. They had a lack of confidence and a lot of that has stemmed from experiences and situations that have happened to them in their past. So my goal is to take a holistic approach

to coaching and that's where my passion is. I want to help you not only with your profession, but also with your mind and your body because it all works together and it all has to be in balance. If you don't feel good, you're not going to perform optimally. If you have limiting thoughts, you're probably hindering yourself from achieving what you could actually achieve because you're putting that barrier in place.

So that's been my purpose and my passion, to help people identify *their* purpose and passion and to look at people more holistically. There is so much more that you can do with the skills that you have.

#### How do you stay motivated?

accountability. I have mastermind group that I started in 2016, they hold me accountable, so I have no choice but to be motivated because I'm definitely not going to walk into one of those meetings and say I didn't do what I was supposed to do! Accountability is really huge for me. I also love what I do, so that's all the motivation I need. I do positive affirmations. I keep positive energy around me and it's great when I see people enjoying the things that I post or they say, "I needed to hear that today". I had somebody from the UK who I met when I spoke in 2017, this individual said to me "I was in a really dark space and it was your weekly motivations that kept me going". When you hear things like that, it motivates you because you realise, I may not have a million followers but I am making an impact. There are people that I'm impacting and that motivates me to keep going.

#### What led you to business analysis?

I fell into business analysis, I started off as a software engineer. When I left college (I won't tell you the year!) I moved into a position called an integration specialist, that was just a fancy word for having to do everything that nobody else wanted to do! At that point in time, I didn't even know what I was doing was business analysis. I don't even think business analysis was a title then.

I realised that I was really good at solving problems, critical thinking, analytical thinking. It came naturally to me. When I had gotten laid off from my first job and moved into a helpdesk support role, I had the opportunity to take formal BA training through B2T. That's when I got into business analysis and found it was second nature to me. I can do a use case. a wireframe, prototypes, I can do an Entity Relationship Diagram (ERD). It was easy to me and I liked it. I liked interacting with people and helping people solve their problems. If I can help people solve their issues that's what I love to do. So that's how I got into business analysis... I fell into the world not knowing that it would become what it is today and I just kept on that trajectory.

Is there a job that you've done that on the surface doesn't seem like it's related to business analysis but has actually given you skills that have helped you be a BA?

Running my own business! When you get into management, you're more strategic. However, you have to use the same skills that you leveraged as a

business analyst. I'm still solving problems, I'm still analysing, I'm still critically thinking. I'm trying to see what works well from a marketing perspective, what sort of communication resonates with people, what problem am I trying to help people solve by the service that I'm providing.

But also, how do I make sure I have the tools in place to be able to deliver those services not only from a marketing standpoint, but in the execution too. So I'm still doing business analysis all day long. All of those BA skills that I have used, that I have learned, I'm sharpening them every day even as an entrepreneur.

## What is the philosophy or mindset that you bring to business analysis?

Oof.

The fundamentals of business analysis have not changed. Methodologies, tools and techniques *have*, so go back to the basics. Don't forget the basics. What I was doing back in the 90s, I am still doing today! I might use different tools, I might use different techniques, I might use different methodologies, but I'm still approaching business analysis the same way. Let's stop overcomplicating it. We don't have to use big fancy words. We don't have to argue over terminology. At the end of the day, we're here to solve problems, so just solve them.

I found in my career, I've been doing this over two decades, I have not done any projects the same. Because the factors in the project in the way it's made-up are different, so I haven't done it the same, but what I *have* done the same is the way

I think, how I figure out my approach, how I drive it forward and how I pivot.

So that's what I would say, don't overcomplicate it. Keep it simple.

#### That's really insightful. Thank you. Could you tell me who or what have been some of the biggest influences in your career?

My first ever manager in Iowa, she was a massive influence for me. Because she taught me how to navigate corporate America, how to communicate better and how to present myself better. I came from New York, I'm from Brooklyn originally and my family's from Barbados. Now I'm in Iowa, so the communication style had to change and I had to learn how to change that up without losing myself.

Another person that I would say has definitely been an influencer for me, and I'm not saying this because this is his magazine, is Adrian Reed. The first time I met Adrian in person was at BBC, and I was telling him this concept I had about being the BA Martial Artist. I thought it was not the smartest concept, but I felt I could have a conversation with Adrian about it. He really encouraged me and I attended a virtual IIBA UK chapter meeting where he allowed me to pitch my idea. It was the first time I ever did it, and it was well received. That gave me the confidence to keep going and to get rid of my limiting beliefs and self sabotage.

There's been multiple people in the BA community who've influenced me and have encouraged me to keep doing what I'm doing.

## Is there any feedback or advice that you've received that has really stuck with you?

Know your audience. Understand the intent that you have when you're presenting, take more time to listen, to understand and apply active listening. It's not always about you, it's about the other person.

Be humble. I've been told that I come off as being humble and I'm grateful for that, and people have told me don't lose that. You might have a ton of experience, that doesn't mean you have to always demonstrate it and have to throw it out there. Let your actions speak for themselves.

And I think another key one is *always* believe in yourself and know your worth. Because if you don't, no one else will, so you really have to understand the value you bring and ensure that you don't ever lose sight of that.

## Have there been any light bulb moments that stand out for you in your career?

South Africa was a huge light bulb moment for me, in 2019. I was the supposed to be the opening keynote on the second day of the BA Summit and I was cool with that. And then, Joe Newbert came to me and asked if it would OK to be the opening keynote on the first day. I was a bit stressed because, you know, that's opening a conference! I'm setting the tone for the whole conference. And so I told a personal story. It was that vulnerability that allowed people to see me in a different light than they've ever seen. That was a

light bulb for me, that a lot of people just want you to be authentic with them. Just be real. Just be vulnerable with them, because that's going to motivate them and help them. The response I got was amazing.

It was an "a-ha!" moment for me that on projects, when we're meeting people, just have a conversation. I don't need to automatically jump right into work, let me get to know you a little bit, because then you get to the human side of an individual and they have a connection with you. And I believe that's really, really important.

### Are there any myths around business analysis that you would like to dispel?

You don't use agile for everything!

We have a lot of different tools and resources in the toolkit. It's your job to know when and how to use them. I don't necessarily need to use agile for a nonsoftware project. If I'm doing data mapping I really don't need agile for that. If I'm doing technology builds/projects, then agile is probably a great choice for those as we want to get workable code out there quicker. The beauty about business analysis is that it isn't black and white. There's a lot of grey because you're dealing with a lot of different factors. I have coached some individuals where it became evident that business analysis was not the right role for them because they want black and white with no grey. They want a formula... good luck with that, because it depends on what type of project you get! I can't give you a formula, I can give you fundamental tools and approaches, but I can't give you a formula because I don't

know what's going to be thrown at you. You have to figure out how to use the tools to solve the problem.

## What's something that you wish you'd learn earlier in your career?

I wish I would have learned how to be more bold. And what I mean by that is I think I put up with a lot of things in my career that I probably shouldn't have.

I did it because I needed a 9 to 5, I needed to take care of my family. I was a single mum at one point for a little while, with twins, and it was all about making sure that I was able to provide for them. However, I wish I would have been a little bit more bold and a little bit more confident in the value and the skills that I have. That is where I am now, I'm pretty bold and can say things now, but I wish I would have had that same boldness earlier.

I wish I had that confidence to just speak up, and be more in control of where I wanted to go in my career.

## So what advice would you offer to aspiring BAs?

#1 Learn the fundamentals of business analysis.

#2 Don't try and learn everything that's out there. There's no way you can. It's too overwhelming.

#3 Determine what industry or domain you want to practise business analysis in, because that can help you know where you should focus.

#4 Take control of your own career, know where you want to go, know what you want to do, and know when you want to get there. Then, devise the plan to make it happen and don't let your limiting beliefs or self sabotage stop you from getting where you want to go.

#5 Continue to learn. Because there's always new things that are coming out, so never stop learning.

#6 Stay humble. Just because you have a ton of knowledge and just because you might be somebody out there that's well known, that does not mean that you can't become irrelevant. So stay humble, learn from others, even if they're younger than you, learn from others and see what others are doing, and give your knowledge as well. Be open and willing to share your knowledge and help others along the way.

#7 Get a mentor. Please get a mentor! Get somebody, a mentor or sponsor, who can advocate for you because you cannot do it alone. You need those people that will hold you accountable and will always also encourage you. But tell you what you need to hear and not what you want to hear.

## That is absolutely brilliant advice Paula, thank you. So do you think that BAs are born or made? Do you think it's the natural traits people have or the skills they learned?

It can be both... I think for me it was natural. It came second nature to me. I just did not struggle like I saw some others struggle to learn business analysis, especially when we did our practicals on the certification programme, for me it was fun! But I'm not saying you can't learn it either. You can learn how to be a business analyst as long as you put in the time and effort.

There's benefit to doing other roles as well. If you are a software engineer it's amazing to then switch over to business analysis because you have more insight on how you talk about technology.

amazing to then switch over to business analysis because you have more insight on how you talk about technology, because you had to build it. If you are a help desk analyst, that's still great because now you have more insight on customer experience. If you are an auditor that's great as well, because now you're solving problems and people are coming up with all these wonderful requirements and needs and you have a risk lens to be able to say "I think this is going to pose a risk to the organisation". So you can be in any area and come into business analysis if you really want to do it.

But make sure, however you came to business analysis, that you keep up with how it's changing. It's evolving constantly, it's not really about the title anymore. It's about the role that you play and the value that you bring to the organisation.

This is now your chance to give a shout-out to anything: a person, a book or an event, something that's inspired you, and you think might inspire others.

Well, I have to do a shameless plug of my book! I wrote The Waza of Perspective, it took me 5 years and a lot of nudging. But I wrote that ebook because of areas that don't always seem to get the right amount of focus when running projects. We get told: "OK, here's the project, here's the scope, here's the deadline. Now make it happen." But we don't spend enough time understanding the organisation.

understanding the processes, the people, the data. And I think it's really important to understand those things because it gives you a lot of power, it gives you the questions to ask, to see where you could add more value and identify continuous improvement. So I love that.

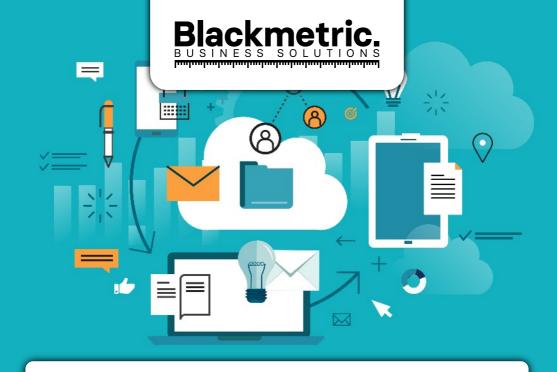
I also have to give a shout out to Bridging the Gap because they have a certification programme which is about *applying* business analysis, which again I love application, I'm not a huge multiple choice person. Laura Brandenburg (Founder of Bridging the Gap) also has a book out about How to Start a Business Analyst Career.

I would also highly recommend that you get some self-care books as well. I have book right now. It's 10,000 affirmations, so it allows me to get affirmations (like these) every day, do something else to feed your soul. Don't let everything just be straight business analysis. Do some other things to take care of your mind to feed your soul, to get you in your Zen, because that's going to make you a more effective business analyst.

Connect with Paula: www.linkedin.com/in/paulabell44/

#### 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



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## Learning about Your Estimations

- Register Your Learnings for a Consistent Estimation, and Stop Making It a Big Deal

Nuno Santos



Estimates were a root cause for frustrations in a team I worked with. Almost every time we completed a planning poker session, team members simply weren't confident with our estimation procedure. The act of "throwing a number" for a work item eventually came to endless discussions about that work item—all due to estimation-related frustrations. One way

I experimented successfully was with a t-shirt catalogue.

Regardless of the unit used for sizing, whether t-shirt sizing or numbers of story points (for instance, a Fibonacci sequence), estimations of this type use *relative* comparisons. Is an item bigger or smaller than other items? But, when a team is newly formed, the question that always arises is: "How can I give a

number if I don't know which scale we work with?"

The answer should be: "It's the scale we just created for ourselves!"

What you should worry about is to ensure consistency in scaling between estimates.

#### Initial Notes

This article is not about proposing accurate estimates. This article is not to show how to make accurate plans or team commitments to an iteration.

I agree with David Pereira when he argues that estimation it's not meant to be accurate, but rather to help us understand our uncertainty level. As Stuart Mann points out (in a webinar, around min 5:50 of the vídeo), it's in human nature to have the tendency to create predictability. The caveat is that – returning to David's article – stakeholders may see estimations as a precise and accurate plan.

This article is about dealing with frustrations when a team isn't comfortable with their estimations. Recording the estimates is not solely intended to improve accuracy, but rather so that the team has a source for learning and so that those estimate-related frustrations can be avoided.

#### The Frustrations Around Estimates

The team added an amount of work items that afterwards were not

delivered—many times not even started—during an iteration. The team wasn't feeling safe with their estimates. Because of the team's struggle to suggest a size for items, they were concerned that it could mean a plan too ambitious for that iteration was committed to. Because of the fear of seeing it as a commitment, they rather decided with a non-ambitious plan.

Using t-shirt sizing (a unit for classifying the size of an item, such as XS, S, M, L or XL) is a good entry practice for relative estimation. When compared to using numbers (for instance, in a Fibonacci sequence), the advantage of t-shirts is that the sequence of sizes is usually familiar to people.



For setting up a learning process, we created what we called a catalogue of t-shirts (since we adopted t-shirt sizing, having them all written down in one place to be consulted afterwards and calling it a t-shirt catalogue is just natural). The catalogue had different backlog items, classified under XS, S, M, L, XL, and so on. In practice, it is a register of the past items and their estimations. The difference is that this data in the catalogue will be used for learning.

Next, I present how the catalogue was built.

## Propose Initial Sizes for T-shirts

For context, imagine we are in a planning poker session. The business analyst or the product owner are presented with the first potential requirement, and the team is asked for an estimate. The catalogue can be created right from the beginning of this initial conversation. If there is already a record of past items, the catalogue can be created with those records (for instance, extracted from a tracking tool).

When starting to use them, a corresponding number should be allocated to each size. For example, a "medium" might be a 3 and a "large" might be a 5, and so on.

#### T-Shirt Size - Effort Estimation



Record those first points in a list. They serve as the shirt catalogue now. The catalogue shows the backlog items sized XS, S, M, L, and XL. The size XXL, at this point, is a sign that the item can be sliced a bit more, so it doesn't exist in the catalogue. If the team is still trying to know its own pace, by experience it may be risky to have such a big item for now.

## Classifications Within the Catalogue

Also, it may be useful to perform some

classifications within the catalogue. Using a shopping metaphor, let's say that when buying t-shirts, size is not the only criterion we use. Catalogues may separate t-shirts by their manufactured material, long or short sleeves, etc.

We can create richer catalogues if we classify our t-shirts in themes. And it also eases searching for similar work items (when we are looking for an appropriate example of a work item that we need a relative comparison during an estimation) if the t-shirts are grouped in the catalogue within those themes.

As examples of themes, the catalogue may group t-shirts based on:

- Technology, and how familiar it is to the team
- Legislation or regulation
- Third party integration
- Customer or user segment
- ... and so on.

#### After a While, Revisit the Catalogue

As it was mentioned earlier, there should not be any pressure for accurate estimates. But, after some sprints, teams should reflect on the values that were being recorded in the catalogue. For sure the team should have learned based on the items they implemented. Perhaps the team decided on size without much experience, but after some weeks/months they feel more confident and perhaps would have decided a different way. The catalogue should incorporate those learnings.

#### Keep the Catalogue Updated

In each estimation session, make sure the catalogue is visible. When estimating, team members see catalogue items and their minds will make a relative comparison with the backlog item being estimated.

After the sessions, it is advisable to add the newly estimated items to the catalogue. If the catalogue is kept updated, the more reliable the catalogue is

#### Conclusions

T-shirt sizes can be a great way of becoming accustomed to relative

estimating. Start with them if the team finds that easier.

You may start transitioning for numbers gradually (e.g. this makes it easier to use a tracking tool), but there needs to be a shared understanding of the corresponding number for each size.

And, when using t-shirt sizes no longer makes sense, just drop them—along with the catalogue.

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## Business Analysis and Cybersecurity - What Is the link?

### Bindu Channaveerappa

What comes to your mind when you see or hear the word "cybersecurity"?

When asked this question, a compliance team member might say, "it's about the compliance of cybersecurity laws, like, privacy". Somebody working in an IT team might say, "it is about securing the network or firewalls"; a system architect may say, "it is about securing the data and systems". And most business teams would say, "it's technical in nature, and hence the IT or cybersecurity team is responsible". If you were a business analyst, what would you say? Before you continue reading further, take a moment to ponder... what does cybersecurity mean to you?

This article will be in three parts over the coming editions of BA Digest. In these articles, I'll describe why cybersecurity should be an intrinsic part of business analysis and what BAs can do to address this mammoth problem. In this first part, I'll outline the root cause of the problem by taking a look at a few cyber incidents, and in later editions, we'll focus on the solution.

#### Cybersecurity Is about More than Just IT

A few years back, I would have said the same as the business teams: cybersecurity is the responsibility of the









IT or the security teams, and I do not have to bother about it. And as a BA, eliciting and documenting my project's non-functional requirements was all I had to do with it until a personal experience fundamentally changed my perspective on cybersecurity.

I was working on a customer subscription product some time back, and the data available for the subscription was the organisation's intellectual property. I was assigned to work on an enhancement which was at the bottom of the team's backlog. Note that the change was not seen as a business priority at all, which is why it was at the very bottom of the backlog.

It was brought to my attention that the business and technical teams had already devised a solution for that problem, but it was not yet implemented because there were other items on the backlog that had a higher priority. So as a good BA, I started to analyse the problem to get to the root cause of the issue and had conversations with the business. development and operations teams. The result of my analysis was shocking, as the root cause of the problem was a data breach. Even more startling was that the breach did not happen once but multiple times and, the operational reports showed discrepancies due to the heavy data downloads, yet nobody took notice and acted.

Just imagine what would have happened if all of the data had been downloaded and subsequently made freely available on the internet. What would be the impact on the organisation's customers, and most important of all, what would have happened to the organisation's reputation? Wouldn't the organisation cease to exist? The crucial question I had was, why wasn't this a business priority?

## Get It Wrong, and the Impact Is Significant

This is by no means an isolated incident. Let me share another couple of high-profile incidents.

One notable incident reportedly took place HMRC's child benefit in department in 2007. It was reported that all the child benefit data (including personal details of the children who were getting the benefit and their parents' personal and bank details) were copied onto password-protected but unencrypted CDs and posted to the National Audit Office through an unsecured and untracked channel. Some say that the CDs reached their destination, and some say they were lost in transit, but nobody knows for sure. This incident has been reported differently by different sources, but I want to bring your attention to some potential causes for this breach:

- Failure to separate the crucial/ sensitive data
- Failure to encrypt the data
- Failure for not conveying the data in a secure and trackable way

Reports from the time suggest that the person who copied the data and posted

the CDs was unaware of the risks and was only following the instructions given by their seniors. This incident took place in 2007, and clearly, we don't use CDs to transfer data anymore. We have made a lot of progress in terms of technology and ring-fenced data with legal regulations. But what about the "security mindset"? Have we made any progress? Let's consider a second incident that occurred nearly a decade later.

TalkTalk is an internet data provider. In 2009, TalkTalk acquired another company called Tiscali. As part of the acquisition, it is safe to assume that Tiscali's systems, processes, employees and customers were merged into TalkTalk. It appears that along with the systems, Tiscali's system vulnerabilities were onboarded too. Later in 2015, TalkTalk's database was compromised multiple times, and customer's personal and financial data were compromised.

TalkTalk suffered In essence. significant and sustained cyber attack involving a ransom demand. At the beginning TalkTalk suspected that the records of up to 4 million customers as many as up to 15,656, had been compromised, and reports from the time suggest that TalkTalk did not have sufficient monitoring in place to know that breaches were taking place. Later on, the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) confirmed that the attack saw the personal details of 156,959 customers accessed, including the bank account number and sort code of 15,656 customers. As a result, TalkTalk incurred damages up to 40

million pounds, lost 101,000 customers, and the ICO imposed a £400,000 fine. The shocking fact was that Metropolitan Police confirmed the arrest of five people ranging in age from 15 to 20 in connection with this breach. Once again, here I would like to bring your attention to the following potential causes for the failure:

- Failure to remove the vulnerable webpages
- Failure to update a patch which was available three-and-a-half years before the attack
- Failure to undertake proactive monitoring activities to discover vulnerabilities
- Failure to implement the defence for a common type of attack

Like HMRC and TalkTalk, many more reputable organisations have become the victims of cybersecurity breaches. They had ticked all the security obligations. They had security frameworks implemented or accredited to one or other security standards. They had their legal and regulatory teams who complied with the laws. They had a dedicated cybersecurity team in place, and despite all boxes ticked, they were not secured.

We can see from the above incidents that the underlying cause is usually the lack of awareness or not having a security mindset. Research has repeatedly shown that most cybersecurity incidents are due to a

## lack of awareness, and "people" are the weakest link.

Why is this the case? Why are the organisations (people) not aware of Cybersecurity? What are we missing here? We'll look at that in the next part of the article in the next edition.

Bindu is a BA consultant and director at IIBA UK chapter. She's a keen advocate for making cybersecurity inclusive within mainstream business analysis. Bindu was part of the team authoring IIBA's cybersecurity certification. She is creating a cybersecurity training course focussed around Business Analysis which will be available soon.

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## Passing on the Mantle



What is the difference between a good business analyst and a great business analyst?

This question was posed to a young aspiring business analyst back in 2017 during a weekly meeting with her senior business analyst mentor. But before I get into that, perhaps I should start this story the correct way—at the beginning.

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, lived a quality analyst who was looking to transition from the role of a quality assurance professional (QA) to that of a business analyst (BA). Though she was not the first to tread this path and she would not be last, we all know that each

journey is unique and no matter how prepared one may feel, a little help is always needed.

While most disciplines have a fairly clear career path, the journey of becoming a successful business analyst can be a little hazy at times. It may differ from country to country and there aren't many internationally recognised qualifications. One challenge faced by newer BAs is that some certification programmes have historically required experience. This in itself is kind of a catch twenty-two as you require experience to apply to sit for an exam but you need a qualification to get a job to gain experience.

Thus, our heroine, like many other aspiring BAs, carved her own path by choosing short online courses and other qualifications to help build her CV/resume. While certifications and qualifications undoubtedly help build you up, another great source of help which is often under-utilised is that of mentorship.

### The Value of Mentorship

A mentor can be defined as an experienced and trusted adviser, someone who helps provide guidance, advice, feedback and support.

If you have the great fortune of being a parent, think about those early days, when you leaned on your own parents or friends and family for help and advice on how to handle certain things. We can all agree that no two children are the same, but having that advice and support certainly proved valuable.

Transitioning from one role to another in the workplace is just the same, but more especially in the world of business analysis as the role so vastly differs between organisations and sometimes even between teams. Having a business analyst mentor helps to successfully navigate those scenarios whilst retaining that which makes one a great BA.

A nice segue back to the scenario I outlined at the beginning—I was that aspiring business analyst. I had been a QA for just over four and half years and was desperately searching for a change. The more I read up on the role of a BA, the more intrigued I grew. I began to

study short courses to help build my resume and I knew I was on the right path... but something was missing.

It was then that I stumbled upon a list of individuals within my workplace who had volunteered to mentor other employees. I was totally amazed by the fact that people willingly volunteered their wealth of knowledge and valuable time to help others in the organisation.

I scanned the list for potential business analyst mentors and greedily reached out to more than one. Who was going to stop me? Who was going to put a lid on my enthusiasm and desperate hunger to grow into a business analyst.

I went ahead and set up quick coffee 'meet and greet' type meetings with the potential mentors. These were senior business analysts with years of experience in the profession, a treasure indeed.

Their faces, styles and methods differed but one asked me a question which stuck with me till this very day and surely will stick with me for life: "what is the difference between a good BA and a great BA?" I didn't know the answer then, but I can answer with confidence today and say it is having a good mentor.

# Mentorship Helps Make "Good" BAs "Great"

Allow me to explain myself. Most people reach out to a mentor as a way to improve themselves, to help bridge a gap between where you are and where you want to go (how BA of us indeed!). A mentor offers an opportunity to sharpen your skills, challenge you to try new things or simply get out of your comfort zone but ultimately a mentor keeps you on the ball.

In an ever-changing world with constantly evolving technology, we are regarded as change agents, which means we are the ones expected to be at the forefront of the change, navigating and directing the teams while not losing sight of the end goal: typically user centric software, processes, products or services that also meet business needs.

No matter where you are in your journey of being a business analyst there is always something new to learn from another, or better yet to pass on to someone else. Perhaps you're looking to refine specific interpersonal skills, or maybe there are domain specific aspects of your company or industry that you need to sharpen up on. There is always something new to learn and always someone who has learnt something similar or perhaps even the same thing before us.

Irrespective of how qualified one may be for the role of a business analyst, the value a person can get from job shadowing and engaging in tasks such as requirements elicitation or user story creation helps better prepare the person in a more practical way.

#### Pay It Forward

We all have some "been there, done that" experience that is likely to help someone else. My experience as a mentee is what motivated me to become a mentor and while the journey can sometimes feel very demanding, it is more rewarding.

My challenge to all my fellow BA professionals is that we should constantly be reaching out to potential mentors and make ourselves available to potential mentees. Typical definitions of the role of a business analyst acknowledge that we help assess how organisations are performing and help improve business efficiency through our knowledge of both IT and the business, but I ask how can we help the business improve if we aren't constantly improving ourselves?

I am greedy for knowledge, I am also eager to pass on the mantle. I am eager to grow and help grow.

How about you?

One day I hope to hear kids talking about a career in business analysis the way they speak about becoming a doctor or lawyer. Let's start passing the mantle on and help create more "great business analysts".

Not one to shy away from a challenge, Christelle Govender is a South African business analyst, who is passionate about learning and growing not just herself but the global business analysis community.

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When Your Project Is in Trouble...



## Harry Madusha

The further a broken project goes before it is remedied, the higher the risk of major failure. A key prerequisite for any meaningful remedy is to convince those in charge that certain problems need to be addressed as early in the project as possible, but this takes courage. Truth is, everyone should tackle potential red flags the moment they spot them, but in practice people often don't want to be categorised as naysayers who don't have the "can-do" attitude. It can seem like the safe career move is to deal with your concern privately rather than contradict your employer and jump

into an argument about assumptions—especially when the decisions have already been solidified. However, what many managers won't tell you is that it is a crucial balance. Walking into your manager's office with every potential threat to a project the moment you detect it is not doing your job well either!

You're expected to know when to share problems versus when to tackle them yourself. Here are some crucial questions to ask yourself when a project starts to feel at serious risk that can help you either manage it or fix it.

### Key Questions:

# 1) Will the new business model require an implausible amount of effort?

Making big efforts to get a huge project over the finish line is part of the job. But if the only way something can work on an ongoing basis is with unrealistic effort from individual contributors. you've got a huge problem. What happens if they burn out and leave? Humans are humans, we are not robots and even if we were robots, even robots have their limits. A machine can't function non-stop, periodically it would have to be switched off, recharged, and serviced. If your project gets to the point in which excess work has to be put in continuously then something is definitely wrong somewhere. Could it be that time management is lacking? Because sometimes trying to meet the deadline can be the major cause of work overload. If you don't have a strategy to automate or streamline your work, there's a stress point in your business model that will collapse at some point.

#### 2) Is it difficult, or unattainable?

Optimism bias can lead to bad or even delusional decision-making. When optimism turns into blind optimism, you've got a huge problem. Attempting a daring goal is great if the plan to attain it is plausible. Yet if the goal is daring and the plan is soft, you're just hoping the impossible will occur. Regardless of every quote one might have read about achieving the impossible, there are some projects that are extremely difficult to

accomplish and in such instances we have to be realistic in the pursuit of our goals. Know when to abandon a project and when to continue. James Cameron wanted to begin filming Avatar in the 1990s, but he decided to postpone it when he realised that the technology just wasn't in existence. If there's no prospect for the maths to all add up, ask for clarification as to how exactly it is all supposed to work. You don't even have to state the issue— provide the facts and let them point it out for you.

# 3) Is the 80/20 rule being used incorrectly?

The 80/20 rule states that 80% of all outcomes are gotten from 20% of causes. It's used to determine the factors (typically, in a business situation) that are most responsible for success and then focus on them to improve results. This question needs to be asked in both ways. A company implementing a new payroll system will want to ensure that it works correctly as close to 100% of the time as possible, and it would be foolhardy to release a solution that isn't close to that level of performance. On the other hand, sometimes an ambitious timeline can be achieved when you can settle for less than 100% initially. If the 80/20 rule is being misused, you either have a dilemma or an opportunity that deserves raising.

#### 4) Can you really meet the deadline?

Huge projects often meet their deadlines by reducing scope along the way. Sometimes projects can be in trouble due to other tasks taking precedence, while simultaneously failing to manage stakeholder expectations that the deadline is no longer achievable. In some cases, stakeholders and project team members may be expected to retain their business-as-usual duties and 'multitask', which can be a recipe for disaster in some situations, as there just aren't enough hours in the day. If that's true in your case, what's happening to all of that other stuff? Is it accounted for anywhere?

#### **Does This Resonate With You?**

When you're burnt out and you've done everything you can do to try and make something work, the only thing left to do is learn as much as you can. If you're in this situation now, keep yourself open. If nothing else, you'll gain experience on how to respond under different

circumstances during crises that will help you throughout your journey. Also, use the questions above (amongst others) to try and navigate a way through, bringing your stakeholders with you on the journey. Good luck!

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Harry Madusha is a highly experienced Lead Business and Data Analyst with 12 years in diverse business domains. He is also the President of IIBA Nova Scotia, an accomplished public speaker, coach, and mentor. You can contact him on www.linkedin.com/in/harrymadusha or by sending an email to info@ninetech.ca or thebapriest@gmail.com

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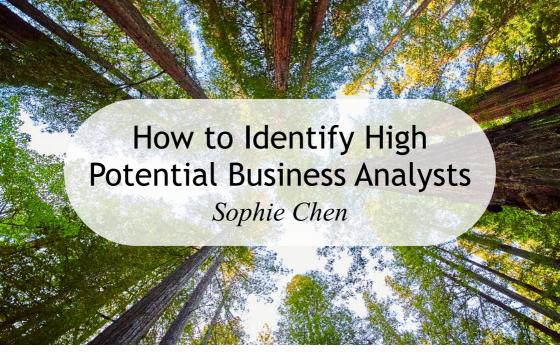


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There is a common misconception within the BA profession that the level of skills and capabilities a practitioner possesses is equal to the number of years they have been working as a business analyst. In many BA roles, hiring managers simply include "5+ years of experience" in the job description and have difficulty finding the right candidate within their budget. In this case, the ability to identify highpotential BAs is the first step to solving this issue.

How do we define "high potential" in the first place? My definition of it includes two factors:

- Someone who has a higher ceiling (capacity for growth) than their peers.
- 2. Someone who grows much faster than their peers.

According to my observations, highpotential BAs constantly adapt and improve to succeed because they recognise that change is the only constant in the world. They strive to maintain an up-to-date toolkit by embracing diverse perspectives and attempting new techniques. They can see the big picture while also paying attention to the details. They ask for feedback and implement it to improve.

However, there are many misunderstandings about "high potential".

# Understanding "High Potential"

First, high performance does not equate to high potential. We must first understand how someone achieved high performance. Are they simply repeating what they did to succeed previously?

Are they taking new perspectives and adapting their approach to changes? Are they using ethical ways to achieve good results?

High performance is like a snapshot of a current result. It does not necessarily mean that this person can continue to grow and achieve excellence continuously. On the contrary, if they refuse to unlearn what they know right now and refuse to open their minds to new things, it could lead to a barrier to future success

Second, being highly experienced is not the same as having high potential. If someone is repeating an identical set of approaches for ten years, do you think they are highly skilled or have high potential? They are clearly very experienced, in a very narrow set of practices!

In contrast, I have seen so many of my classmates from various backgrounds do extremely well and grow quickly, even though they have only been in the industry for just over one year. Their hunger for growth, success, and opportunities to step up is much stronger than some practitioners who have stayed in the industry for many years. They also bring fresh perspectives and skills from their previous roles and are determined to become good BAs when transitioned into this role.

Lastly, being highly specialised does not necessarily mean having high potential. Someone may be a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in a specific area. However, this does not automatically

mean that they are interested in looking at things from a strategic perspective and willing to level up to senior/management roles. A highly specialised BA is usually happy to stay at the doer/contributor's level. That is where their satisfaction comes from.

# Six Attributes of High-Potential BAs

To identify high-potential BAs, I would suggest that you pay attention to these six attributes

First and foremost, a strong ability to learn. What is their level of curiosity and willingness to learn new ideas and concepts? Do they rely solely on one method of doing things, or do they try new methods even if they may fail? If they are not inquisitive and do not ask good questions, chances are they do not have a strong curiosity to learn new things.

Second, the ability to think beyond the scope of the role. Are they able to see the big picture and understand the "why" behind the work they perform daily? Are they able to see through things and identify the underlying issues?

Third, a high level of emotional intelligence. Can they listen effectively and sense the emotions of the people with whom they work? Can they think from other people's perspectives and are they open to different opinions?

Four, resilience. How well are they able to work under pressure and bounce back

from failures/frustrations? Would they be able to remain calm in an urgent situation and assist others in staying calm? Are they able to accept constructive feedback and improve upon it?

Fifth, the ability to lead. Are they willing to take on challenges and step up when necessary? Do people approach them for suggestions? How easily can they earn the trust of others?

Finally, honesty and commitment. Can they deliver what they promise? Can they admit their mistakes without hiding them? Are they authentic in their work?

Identifying and attracting high-potential BAs is not an easy task. If you place the

right effort into identifying, hiring, and developing them, and fostering the right environment for their development, the return on investment will be remarkable. In the future, you might want to reevaluate the criteria in your job description and how you design the interview, holding the process open so that you can uncover truly high-potential candidates.

Sophie is a Technical Business Analyst and the Founder of the BA Career Meetup (www.meetup.com/ba-career-meetup-group/) in New Zealand. She is passionate about helping people transition into BA. You can contact her on LinkedIn at

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### No more accidental BAs. It stops with us.

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This article has the objective of presenting the current situation with business analysis in the Latin America region. To understand and expose the business analysis in the region, it can be described in the following words: potential, enablers and integration.

#### **Potential**

There is great potential for the business analysis profession in these countries. Many companies are transitioning from a traditional predictive project life cycle based to agile structures, such as tribes and squads. The role of the business analyst tends to be well-understood in predictive life cycles, but less so in adaptive/agile life cycles, however this in itself presents an opportunity.

Companies and teams that are achieving greater adaptability and maturity in their use of agile frameworks understand, with increasing frequency and certainty, that it is essential not only to have the role of business analyst, but also an analysis mindset. They appreciate the

need to establish this mindset in the agile roles such as: product owner, scrum master and the development team. This is crucial since all of these roles face problems and opportunities and must seek solutions. These solutions should be based on a framework of good practices and tools that help us to be effective and efficient. Therefore, in these more mature companies, it is being understood that implementing an agility framework in isolation is not enough. Efficiency and effectiveness is achieved by pragmatically applying a suitable framework where those with business support analysis skills the team in finding and developing efficient solutions. as promoted by International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) guide.

#### Enablers

The following enablers will be crucial to enable the foreseen potential. These enablers will ensure that a greater diffusion of BA can be achieved:

- Translation of the BABOK® v3 into Spanish.
- Articulate a clear business analysis model and business benefits (including case studies)
- Expand the dissemination of business analysis in business segments in Latin America.
- Instruction of business analysis in business schools and universities

Each of these points is explained below

# Translation of BABOK® v3 into Spanish

Translation is essential so that companies and their staff can correctly understand the application of business analysis and its benefits. This is particularly relevant since a large number of employees do not have a good command of English.

On this path, a group of professionals from different countries, led by the IIBA® Mexico chapter are participating in this translation process with the direction and good practices of the IIBA Global®. We will have good news very soon!!

In addition to this, it is essential that other business analysis guides and papers in Spanish are also leveraged, as well as BA certification., The more people that read, understand and become certified in business analysis, the more word about business analysis will spread.

## Articulate a clear business analysis model and business benefits

A further relevant enabler is the creation of a clear business analysis model and a clear articulation of the business benefits of business analysis. It is beneficial to showcase the benefits that companies and teams that have used business analysis within the region have achieved. At the moment, the IIBA® chapter of the region has its own way of reaching the institutions with different proposals. This should be standardised and have a single model, and perhaps a set of case studies or a guide for benefits.

# Expand the dissemination of business analysis in business segments in Latin America

With the translation of the BABOK® and certifications in Spanish, it is easier to spread the word about business analysis to more companies. It is even planned to have a face-to-face conference in Spanish. This follows the model of the IIBA® Brazil Chapter, who translated BABOK® into Portuguese and then achieved an important milestone of holding a face-to-face conference on business analysis in South America. It was a spectacular conference, with presentations on business analysis and other topics, where the IIBA® chapter of Peru also participated as speakers on various topics in Spanish. This included a presentation given by the recipient of the first student to receive an ECBATM certificate while studying the Continental University.

## Instruction of business analysis in business schools and universities

There are some universities in South realising America that are importance of business analysis in the business environment. One of the first institutions to realise this potential is the Continental University of Peru. This institution has an educational agreement with IIBA® and can grant certificates and Professional Development (PD) hours to undergraduate students who pass a business analysis course. This ensures that the employees of tomorrow have knowledge of the benefits that good business analysis can bring. It is a bet that will not only bring benefits to companies, but will also help spread the BA mindset.

### Integration

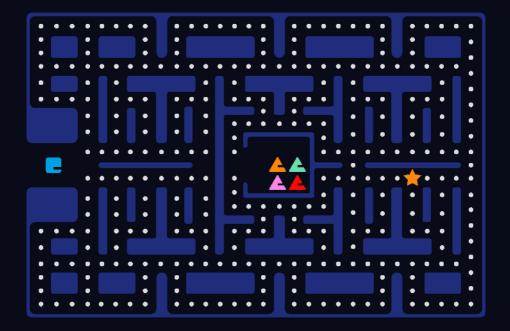
It is not possible to have a greater reach and effectiveness in dissemination of business analysis, without the support of each one of the IIBA® chapters in the region. In this area, for more than a year, the chapters have formed an alliance and we have monthly meetings to review various topics of interest, support each others' publications/events and develop and adapt a strategic plan in the region. The chapters that make up this alliance are: Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Peru, with the support of the IIBA® members of nearby and countries. In union we find our strength.

#### Conclusion

In this article we have explored the current state of business analysis in Latin America, where I predict a path with a high potential for business and educational diffusion, where it is essential to achieve the named enablers and maintain integration within the BA community. Following this path, the future of the BA and the IIBA® in this region is brilliant.

Miguel Llontop leads the business analysis community in Peru, he is vice president IIBA Peru UC Chapter, product owner in Pacifico insurance company and professor at the Continental university, He is founder of BAPeru and passionate about resolving problems. Connect with Miguel on LinkedIn

# Tips to Stay on Top of Your Analysis Game Whilst Navigating Life's Challenges



## Annalyn Rejji

The adage "tough times don't last, but tough people do" serves as a reminder that terrible situations are transient and that resilient and tenacious individuals can prevail despite them. It could even be seen as evidence of the resilience and adaptability of the human spirit. There are times when we need strength that we may not always have in order to navigate difficult situations.

Finding innovative strategies to stay motivated and productive might be difficult when facing obstacles in life, including those outside of work, but it's a crucial skill to have. This involves maintaining a strong focus on your business analysis work. As you navigate and strike a balance between all you need to do, inside and outside of work, I'm going to encourage you to concentrate on what you can control and

share 9 simple steps you can use to ensure your analysis game stays strong.

Here are some tips that can help:

- 1. Prioritise self-care: It is important to take care of yourself both physically and mentally. This includes getting enough sleep, eating well, and engaging in physical activity.
- 2. Establish a system to stay organised: Creating a well-organised approach to your job and life will help you remain focused and on course. To keep organised, use tools like calendars, to-do lists, and even phone apps. Even something as simple as putting a reminder to drink water or have lunch timeously. When everything is organised, you'll likely feel more in control and will worry less about forgetting things.
- 3. Set achievable goals: Set realistic and achievable goals for your analysis work, and break down larger projects into smaller, manageable tasks. This will help you stay motivated and see progress. If there are challenges inside or outside of work, be realistic. This might mean re-negotiating unrealistic deadlines or challenging priorities.
- **4. Take breaks:** Regular breaks can help you recharge and refocus, especially when you are feeling overwhelmed. This can include taking a couple of deep breaths, a walk, meditating, or doing something creative. Ironically, this is even more important when you are very busy. If you don't take a break, your body will likely *make you* take a break sooner or later.

**5. Reach out:** Don't be afraid to reach out for support from colleagues, friends, or family. Talking to someone about your challenges can help you find new perspectives and solutions. This could be someone inside of your organisation, or you could draw on an external network such as your local IIBA® chapter.

### 6. Remind yourself of your strengths:

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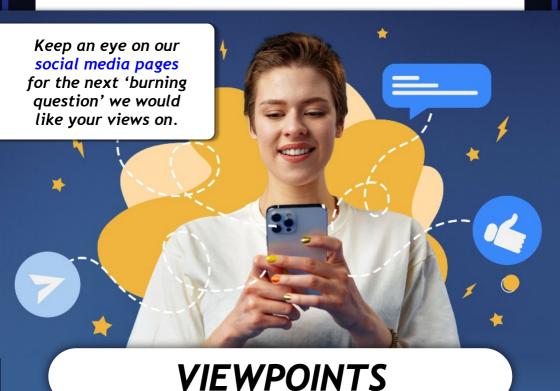
It might be very easy and alluring to concentrate on what you're not doing well when faced with problems. Instead, shift your attention to your strengths and what is achievable within whatever constraints that you are under. By keeping your strengths in mind, you'll be well-placed to use them to help you get through whatever difficulties you may be having.

- 7. Stay upbeat: Especially in difficult times, it can be challenging to keep a cheerful mindset. It can be beneficial to surround yourself with uplifting individuals and partake in pursuits that make you feel happy and fulfilled. This may encourage you to keep going and retain your focus on the task at hand.
- **8. Practice gratitude:** It can be challenging to find things to be thankful for. Why not spend a few moments reflecting on what you already have for which you can be thankful? This simple technique can activate the happy chemicals in your brain which, in turn, has multiple connected benefits.
- **9. Recognise the power of reframing:** Arguably, we are fortunate to have some freedom to create our own narratives and

designs in life. Practising reframing allows you to occasionally view things from a different angle irrespective of circumstances be it your life situations or analysis activities. Viewing a situation from a different angle often helps to add a new perspective which may in turn help generate new ideas of possible solutions.

By keeping a balance and using these suggestions, you may try to preserve your business analysis skills and remain concentrated on your work even when faced with challenges in life.

A dynamic blend of theoretical knowledge and real-world experience makes Annalyn Rejji a thought-leader in the global Innovation and Digital technology sector. She graduated from MIT and UCT and has two specialty MBAs that are gobally acknowledged. Annalyn is currently the Innovation Leader at Auditor General of South Africa.



On social media, we posed the question "Future forward: What changes do you think we'll see in the BA profession in the next ten years?"

No matter what technologies we will use in the following five-ten years, the one thing we still should care about is business knowledge. You will still need to understand how to approach any problems that appear in front of your clients, and you still need the skills of job shadowing and reading between the lines. You will still need to be creative and think beyond your experience beyond the market or recommend innovative. effective solutions. You will still need to communicate and get

deeper into stakeholders' minds. Of course, there will be a surge in using artificial intelligence, nobody knows how it will show itself and what products would be the most useful, and that's why I urge you to be fast learners, monitor the market, and continue deploying technologies that will improve your business analysis tasks and skills that make you valuable first.

#### Yevhen Kliukin

I see analysts being able to spend more time doing deep analysis and less time scraping words together for documentation as ChatGPT will enable us to generate solid foundational documentation that we can

expand on. The onus is on us to know what and how to prompt GPT to generate good content BUT also to add on to what it generates.

#### Carli Grobler

I would say a continuation of the evolution away from specialists to generalists who can wear multiple hats within the organization. These hats would include Business Analyst, Process Specialist, Product Owner, Project Manager, Data Analyst,

Trainer. In the current economic environment, why would an organization hire 6 roles when they can incorporate all of the above in a single role along the lines of Business Specialist.

### **Paul Whiteley**

In the next 10 years I think the BA role needs to move to a more central position within organisations in order to maximise the skills and capabilities the BA brings to an organisation. Currently one of the most constant sources of frustration I hear at BA events is how late in the lifecycle BA's get involved.

We need to stop being frustrated and pro actively change and redefine the role of the BA. In my opinion it is too entrenched in IT and this is a key constraint and obstacle to us being used as internal consultants during strategic planning and thinking.

Lee Williams

BAs will use chatGPT as their personal assistant...

**Nuno Santos** 

Al and machine learning will continue to play a major role in the business world, and BAs will need to be familiar with these technologies in order to help organisations harness their power. This will involve understanding how to use Al tools, as well as being able to identify opportunities for Al to drive business value.

Agile approaches to project management and product development will continue to be popular, and BAs will need to be familiar with these methodologies in order to support agile teams. This

will involve understanding how to work in short sprints, collaborate with cross-functional teams, and continuously deliver value to customers.

BAs will also need to be adept at stakeholder management, as they will often be the primary point of contact between the business and IT teams. This will involve understanding how to manage expectations, communicate effectively with different stakeholders, and ensure that everyone is aligned around the same goals.

**Daniel Grist** 

# How to Use Your Business Analysis Skills to Manage Your Career (Part 2)

Araceli Higueras



Welcome to the second part of "How to use your business analysis skills to manage your career".

In this series of articles about using your BA skills at the service of your career, I am bringing to you some of the similarities between coaching and business analysis, hoping to convey some ideas that will make you realise that your business analysis skills can be readily put at the service of your career, not just your daily work.

It is not necessary for you to **become a coach** (although I recommend that you learn the skills!) or that you **hire somebody with coaching skills** (even if I find working people with coaching skills great!).

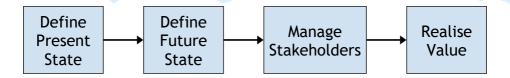
I am writing this article as an executive coach with experience since the beginning of 2009, albeit part-time, because I am also a business analyst in my 'day job'.

In my previous article, we looked at analysing present state and articulating desired future state. I am going to assume that you have an understanding of your goals and drivers, your values and the impact that you want to have.

In this article we're going to look at **stakeholder analysis**, what it means in the context of your career.

In the last article of the series, I will focus on business value realisation.

This journey is summarised in the following diagram.



# Begin at the Beginning: Identify

To begin with, let's **identify stakeholders**. The Cambridge Dictionary defines *stakeholders* as "a person such as an employee, customer, or citizen who is **involved** with an organisation, society, etc. and therefore has **responsibilities** towards it and an **interest** in its success".

Responsibilities and interest are key factors to identify who you want to to consider for this analysis: colleagues, managers, reports, peers and everybody else who works with you in a matrix organisation, subject matter experts in your areas of interest, decision makers in your projects of interest, influencers in your organisation or industry, mentors, mentees and sponsors.

Frame your thoughts around three stages of your career's timeline:

- 1. Your past
- 2. Your present and
- 3. Your future

Make sure you are not blindsided by your present. Nurture **relationships** from past working environments.

Make sure you are not blindsided by your current job and organisation. Keep

an **eye on the market**, engage with ex-colleagues who have moved on, industry influencers and SMEs.

### Analyse Stakeholders

Now let's have a look at your stakeholders, so that you can be clear on why they are on your radar.

There are many reasons to put and keep people on your stakeholder list, and you need to have a clear idea about why that is the case.

I like seeing the "whole" of my universe of stakeholders and being able to compare them, that's why I suggest using a table.

How do you want to "track" or analyse each person? It is fundamentally up to you, but here I'm going to share some suggestions:

- Domain of knowledge
- Level of Knowledge
- Interests
- Level of interest
- Level of influence
- Network
- Hobbies

### Engaging Stakeholders

We have now arrived at the time to start **engaging stakeholders**.

What to do with each person? Think about several strategies to develop an understanding of who needs to know what, who is a source of what knowledge, who supports what, who is influential where etc.

With each one of them you'll need to take different approaches: keep them informed, monitor them, collaborate and much more.

When it comes to your career and making your way forward, making the most of relationships with others can make a huge difference to the opportunities available to you, your success in projects you are involved in and your reputation.

If you choose to work with a coach, during coaching sessions, you will dedicate the time to analyse and reflect on both strategies and execution. This is not a theoretical exercise, this is an action plan that you need to keep up to date, track against and course correct when applicable.

# Some Key Aspects about Stakeholder Management

If I were to give you some tips, I would do it as a coach so I would be actually asking you questions, to support your journey:

• Making sure that you have identified all the relevant stakeholders

- Clarifying who needs to know what
- Ensuring that you have done some work to understand their knowledge and interests
- Getting your commitment to take actions
- Following up on actions
- Learning from the journey

Aware of the importance of being heard (not just listened to) and of hearing our own thoughts to clarify our ideas and connect with what really matters to us, I use my own career to inform my interactions with elements of analysis, design, language study and coaching to accompany you and propel you on your way.

### Coming Next

In the third article we'll look at how to communicate your objectives, your journey plans as well as your results.

We will look at personal brand and business value realisation, the two most important elements that you'll need to communicate.

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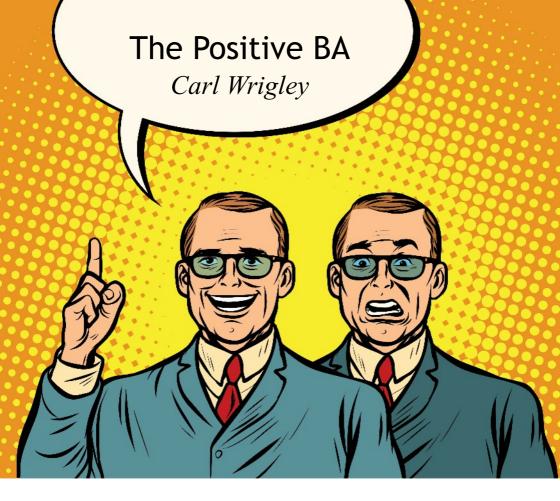
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I have been a BA ever since university and in the last 15 years I feel I've got the psyche of our community.

We are analytical, we ask "why is it performed like that?", "surely there's a better way?" and "let's get to the root cause of the problem" and so people may think we appear a little negative.

But we are not a negative bunch, and I very much enjoy catching up with a room full of BAs (according to the BA Life conference the collective noun for BAs is "an empathy"). When I catch up

with other BAs we typically discuss the niggles, the knots and the issues because we are eager to make things better.

What if I suggested that to elevate the profession we need to understand the audience a little more, in particular, within the change practices and change programmes in which we work?

# Thinking (and Talking) like a Project Manager (PM)

I'll give a personal example. A few years ago while working for a bank I was

asked to join a major project. The project was described as a "significant pillar of work" and would need someone with a broad experience and talent of business analysis. Suitable candidates were in short supply but luckily I was free.

The project was commercially sensitive, so involved signing a Non Disclosure Agreement (NDA). After signing the relevant paperwork I was told the project was to close the office I was working in within 18 months. My role would involve reporting fortnightly on the progress of the work to the sponsor and senior stakeholders, and to the supporting Programme Management Office (PMO). Crikey, in less than 30 minutes I'd gone from a BA to a programme manager!

This is where my biggest learning curve appeared. Previously if enough elements were overdue on a proposed project schedule, in my view it would warrant a project moving to a status of amber, or even red. As a BA, I act with pragmatism and realism, avoiding overambition and overselling. Because, after all, honesty is the best policy.

What I learned wasn't to be economical with the truth (little banking joke for you), it was more about projection and "performance". So where my Liverpudlian / Yorkshire dulcet tones would provide a sombre summary, I learned that even telling negative news, using an upbeat tone is beneficial. For example, I might say: "yes, issues have arisen, but we know how to resolve them, and have a plan to overcome them", with a smile on my face.

I know in other instances when attending programme boards or meetings with senior stakeholders, a BA's default reaction is often to highlight the issues and mistakes. After all, as BAs we're tasked with understanding the problems and issues within a business; however a sponsor, or stakeholder might not want to hear about them. What key stakeholders usually care about is the end product, the impact, and the options and outcomes available to them. So could it be to elevate our practice to trusted advisor, we have to bite our lip?

#### Know Where You Are

I enjoyed listening to a podcast featuring Alan Stein, a performance coach in the National Basketball Association (NBA). In the podcast he talks about the importance of measuring your ability and success against your own level and not of those you see as "Elite" professionals. He mentioned that in order to improve, you need to understand your starting point and be realistic with targets. He posed a fantastic analogy which fits with what I am suggesting in this article.

He talked about planning a route with Sat Nav: in order to understand the likely duration of a journey, the Sat Nav device first needs to triangulate your location, then it can work out the best route and suggest how long the journey will take.

Think about the BA in the Sat Nav context. We are responsible for deciphering where the business truly is and the activities required to get to a desired outcome. We are triangulators (a better collective noun?) and route plotters (I prefer triangulators). A challenge is that many involved in organisational change and the business just want to get to where we need to be.

Drawing an analogy with my personal life, this is a bit like my 3 year old toddler. If I told my daughter the route we are taking in the car, she'd probably stare blankly, be horrified by all the detail, and fear we'd never make it to the destination. Instead, I need to be positive with her, assure her that "Daddy knows where he is going" and convert the time into how many episodes of Bluey she'll be able to watch.

Imagine this for Stakeholders? They might find it a little condescending to talk about the latest kid show phenomenon (and I'm certainly not equating them with toddlers!). However it is beneficial to assure them that we know what is happening, explain the journey in a level of detail which is meaningful for them and to provide appropriate signposts. This can be combined with projecting our own purpose and value by considering the following three traits:

- 1. Credibility: this is where we can quickly assert our authority by explaining how we have seen this, be it a problem, an opportunity or event before, and how we dealt with it—remember not too much detail or we might lose their interest.
- **2. Presence:** we need to ensure that we compliment the change team, but also step forward and lead where appropriate.

Often I speak to BAs who feel they have been put into a position that resembles a "note taker" or an "author of requirements". I've seen it and faced it myself, but this can occur where others are not aware of my skillset and what I can do. This can be overcome by stepping up and leading and asserting how I can add value. By asserting my presence I can help to deliver much more.

**3. Intent:** this is similar to presence, but leaving stakeholders, colleagues involved in change (and anybody else) with a better understanding of what they can expect from me. I will talk more about outcomes rather than outputs. It's less about contracting as such, but more agreeing that I can be relied upon to do a particular set of tasks in line with what is expected.

### Conclusion

This article is based on my observations, and I am not suggesting this advice represents a definitive solution. My aim is for us all to be aware of how we can elevate our practice even further and how we as a whole community (triangulators, empathy) ensure our projects deliver positive, impactful and considered change that benefits customers, colleagues and the business.

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# Transferring BA Knowledge: The Importance of Good Onboarding

Volha Pasvistselik



Every time we start work on a new project the first meaningful step is onboarding.

Onboarding helps us to have a smooth start, to have knowledge about the goals and values of the project, its architecture and any design decisions that have already been made. It allows us to have an overview of integration points and transition requirements, to understand the context, and get to know stakeholders. Good onboarding helps to make a friendly environment from the first step of the project and allows the productive phase to start earlier.

I've had a great deal of experience in bringing new BAs up to speed on projects, and in this article I'll share some observations and best practices.

### Key Onboarding Advice

At the very first step, the most important thing is to identify who you are onboarding. This involves knowing their role, as a new business analyst colleague would have a different set of onboarding needs to a software developer. They will need different information, context, perhaps even access to different documentation and systems and so forth.

Once you know who onboarding, preparation the begin. Check that all documents are in an appropriate state and it's easy to identify their status (for example, whether they are draft or approved). If there are some assumptions or notes that are not described in the requirements yet, ensure they are added. Cataloguing this type of tacit knowledge is important so that your new colleague can find additional information or context that exists currently only in your head.

An important but easy to overlook part of onboarding is traceability between different requirements artefacts. It's important extremely to support traceability throughout the business change lifecycle. This ensures that it is possible to make an impact analysis, and it's very helpful during the knowledge transfer. Known connections between topics will allow a colleague who is being onboarded to use this thread and investigate features or close-related topics.A user story map or features list is a good idea to help a newcomer move in the right direction, and to quickly and easily understand the scope of work and features of the system.

### Don't Forget the Checklist!

Once you've checked that all your documents and artefacts are valid and relevant, it's a good time to create a checklist of topics you will share with a new colleague. For a new business analyst, I would include the following points -

- 1. **Introduction:** Give a short introduction giving an understanding of who you are, your experience, and your responsibilities on the project.
- 2. **Agenda:** Share what is the aim and agenda for the onboarding session and present your strategy to onboard the colleague.
- Project Definition: Give a highlevel definition of the project explain what you are planning to achieve with the project.
- 4. Goals and Outcomes: Describe project goals and business requirements.
- 5. Framework: Talk about the project framework and ceremonies on the project: Scrum, Lean, waterfall, etc. Give an explanation of your regular meetings and explain what to expect in each of them. Highlight if there are meetings that have to be facilitated by a business analyst. Invite a new colleague to all required meetings.
- 6. **Showcase:** Demonstrate functionality that has already been delivered. If you will be replacing (or integrating with) an existing

system, demonstrate that as well. Provide access to the colleague, so they can test the system and get to know the look and feel.

- 7. **Requirements:** Share functional and user requirements usually for this part I go through the requirements repository (in my case Confluence and Jira), explain the features, and also show how the work is organised.
- 8. Requirements Management:
  Explain requirements lifecycle
  management—give an
  understanding of what statuses you
  have for requirements, how they
  can be changed, the process
  of requirements validation and
  approval.
- 9. **Tools:** Show tools you are using and how they are organised for teamwork—in my case I usually show Miro and Figma in addition, because this is something we are using on a daily basis.
- 10. **Team members:** Give an introduction to the team members—share their expertise to give an understanding of which questions or issues each team member can be contacted about.
- 11. **Stakeholders:** Give an introduction to stakeholders and explain who is an expert in which topic.

This checklist is a sensible starting point, you will want to add your own points to it too. Once your checklist is done, think about the onboarding schedule you

would like to propose for a newcomer. From my experience, 1-2 sessions per day are enough, because otherwise you will overload the colleague and it will not bring a good result anyway. The brain needs some breaks to adapt the information! Schedule the sessions and put the agenda inside the invitation to give the colleague an understanding of what you are going to talk about.

In addition to the scheduled sessions it is also important to ensure your new colleague has access to the relevant systems, tools and chats, as well as the relevant documentation and other materials. It's also important to provide stakeholder contact details, including their available working hours, particularly if they work in a different timezone!

Remember, when you run a knowledge transfer session in addition to the main information you always have to add context. If possible explain why decisions were made. The context really makes a difference and helps to find the right direction in the further work, don't skip it.

And as a last important piece of advice - give your new colleague a feeling of trust and understanding that they can ask open questions whenever it is needed. This open dialog will help to cover gaps much faster and this way you can build good team work.

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