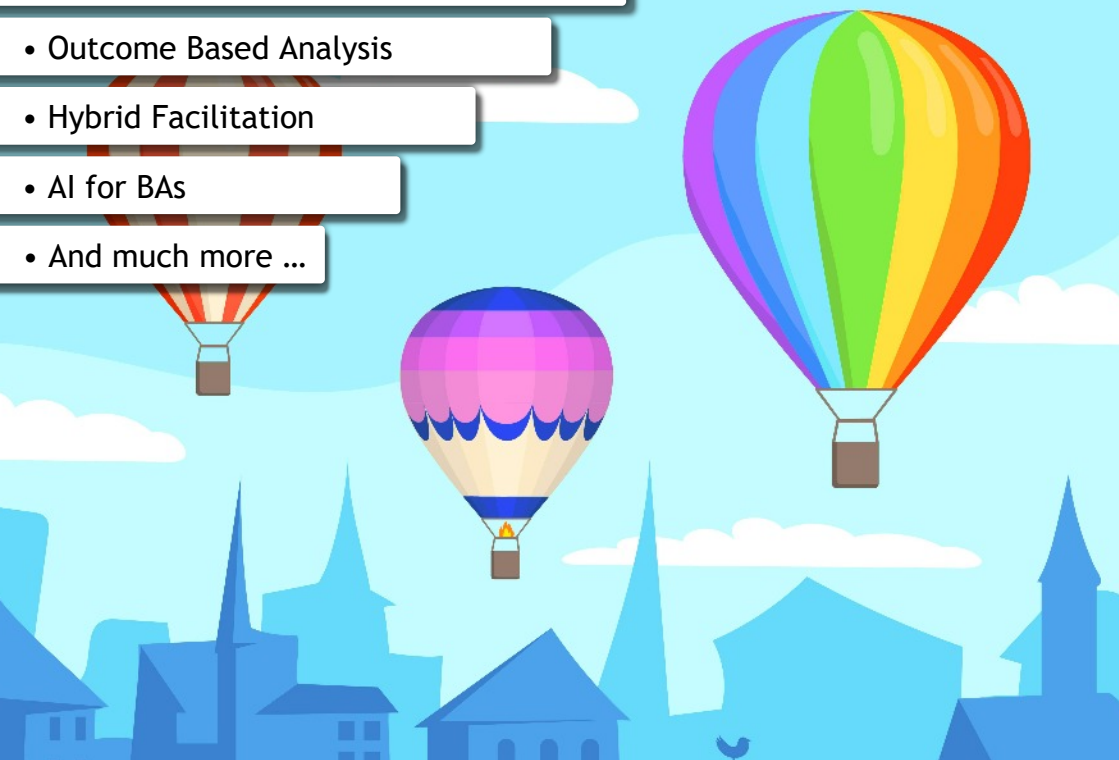# BA DIGEST

- Navigating Impostor Syndrome

- Outcome Based Analysis

- Hybrid Facilitation

- AI for BAs

- And much more ...

Your regular round-up of useful BA content

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of BA Digest. I can't believe we're over halfway through 2024!

I've been thinking recently about how *journeys* and *processes* relate to each other. A customer (or other stakeholder) tends to experience a service journey that spans multiple processes, and this is easily overlooked.

Let me give you an example. I recently stayed in a hotel where the air conditioning wasn't working, and it appeared to be affecting multiple rooms.

It was late, and in my experience folks on the front desk can rarely help with maintenance issues 'out of hours' anyway**.** I sent a DM to the hotel's account on Twitter/X. They swiftly replied essentially saying "ah, we can't help, contact the customer relations team". I duly filled in a form and waited.

When the customer relation team finally got back to me, I'd long since checked out. To their credit, they did what they could to resolve the issue, and also reinstated a pre check-in checklist to ensure that it wouldn't happen again.

Why do I mention this? Think of the 'processes' from the hotel's perspective: "Check in", "Check out", "Handle social media query", "Handle complaint", they would likely all be defined and managed separately. Indeed, when the social media team DM'd me to explain they couldn't

help, I'm sure that meant that the issue was 'closed' from their perspective. Of course, the issue wasn't 'closed' from my perspective at all!

A key point here is that service journeys span multiple processes and it's the *touchpoints* that matter. Thinking like a customer or stakeholder, and *experiencing* journeys that way leads to better empathy.

There are articles in this edition of BA Digest, on topics too numerous for me to list. But I see more and more implicit and explicit mention of value, ethics, exceptions and thinking beyond the 'happy path'. On how to use our tools to ensure that people get the outcome that they need and want. On how technologies like AI can be both a good and a bad thing. Encouraging these debates can only be positive.

As always, a massive thank you to the authors who have allowed us to publish their work. Kudos to you. Also, thank you to our advertisers. It is the advertisers who enable us to keep BA Digest free, so please do support them and check out their services.

Adrian

Adrian Reed

Editor-In-Chief, BA Digest

Principal Consultant, Blackmetric

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Start with the End in Mind: The Importance of Outcome Based Analysis

Frances Eccles

Why do most projects seem to start in the middle? "We need an app…" "We need a report with these fields…" Does this sound familiar? How easily can anyone in your project team clearly state why they are building that app or that report? How often are your stakeholders disappointed when the change doesn't deliver what they expected? All of this can be fixed by taking the time upfront to really understand what outcome the stakeholders are trying to achieve.

Clearly articulated outcomes provide a foundation for defining requirements. If you can't articulate the end state, the change you want to see post-project,

how do you tackle the difficult decisions as you proceed? In an organisation with a business architect, you might already have a clear enterprise architectural strategy and well defined business goals. If you don't, you can still take the outcome definition part from the discipline of Enterprise Architecture (EA) and use it to help focus your requirements.

Outcomes over Solutions

The Open Group Architecture Framework (TOGAF®) refers to outcomes as:

"The changes, benefits, learning, or other effects that happen as a result of what the project or organisation offers or provides".

Outcomes are not the *solution* you implement but the *impact* the solution will have.

The sponsor might come to you saying we are behind in the market, all our competitors have an app and our customers want one. The next question has to be *why:* before you can define an outcome you have to be able to understand the current problem and desired outcomes. What impact will having an app have for our customers? The desired outcome that is initially stated might be to "reduce customer queries by telephone", however this alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Applying SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Timebound) and armed with your understanding of the problem, the stated outcome might be modified to: "reduce telephone queries received for key customer life events by 20% by December 2025 by providing direct notifications in advance of the change". Of course this is just a starting point, with further iterations even more precision can be gained.

Elaborate with Benefits Dependency Maps

Now you have aligned your stakeholders on what they want the change to achieve, you can start to elaborate what that means. Benefit dependency maps are a great way of bringing concrete project outcomes and overall business strategy together. The benefit dependency map structure starts with the outcome, leads to the benefit this will give (e.g. reduced headcount for query handling) which can then be linked to overall objectives. In the example below, the outcomes are referenced so they can then become the start point for requirements traceability.
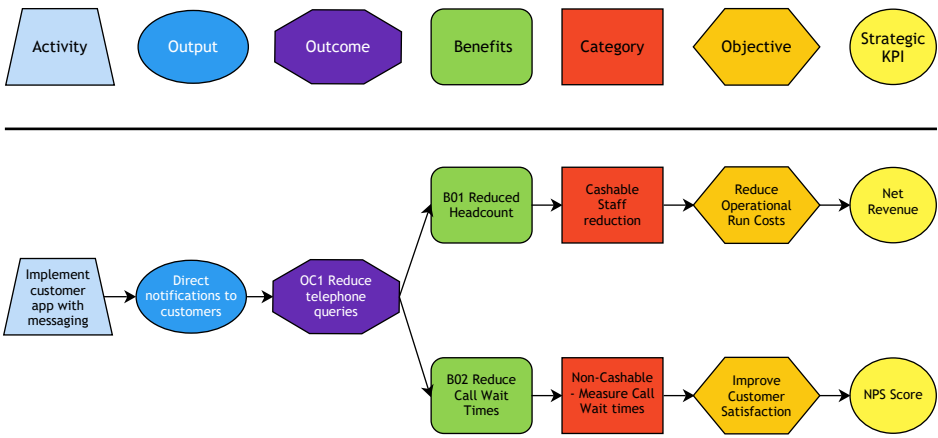
Building a benefits dependency map can really help focus stakeholders on what they want to achieve and help flush out any gaps in understanding early, prior to the change being fully defined. This work is done before definition of your epics or high level requirements to help justify investment in a project.

It should be noted that there are various forms of benefits dependency map. The diagram above is based on my previous work and experience, and is inspired by an article on Businessanalystmentor.com. Another format is that described by Ward & Daniel in their book Benefits Management: How to increase the business value of your IT projects. As with so many techniques, there is no 'single right' approach, and what matters is finding the right tool for a particular context.

Managing Scope and Aligning to Strategy

Once you have aligned how your project links into the overall business strategy and have defined the value it will deliver, you have a powerful tool for scope management. Linking requirements into outcomes enables each scope discussion you have to show a tangible impact on the original scope and a quantifiable impact on benefits.

For everyone on the project, the outcomes the project wants to achieve provide an anchor. Whether you work with an agile framework or in waterfall, the key principles that underpin the definition of outcomes, clear articulation of benefits and the ability to show how these trace into your requirements provide the guide rails to keep your delivery on track. The power of being able to show your stakeholder how you are delivering on the outcomes as you move through a project or change delivery is huge—it builds trust that the team gets it. It can help with the difficult decisions as the anchor of the outcomes enables you to show impacts and it makes showing the value you can realise post implementation a breeze.

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Analysing Experience: Bridging Rational Insights with Emotional Impact

Mark Smalley

Business analysts often recommend the use of IT systems and services to solve business problems and assess their effectiveness. IT services are intended to enable people to use and benefit from the functionality that IT systems offer, but people often complain about the experience from dealing with IT systems and with IT people.

XLA (Experience Level Agreement), also known as IT service experience management, represents a movement within the IT service management community for those who care deeply about the impact of IT on people and their business, and who even feel guilty for their past "crimes against digital humanity". It offers fresh perspectives

that can be valuable to business analysts.

This article is intended for business analysts who want their recommended solutions, which they partially design and facilitate, to result in the desired human experience and business impact. It serves as a complement to the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide's existing guidance, and can be compared with BABOK®'s existing perspectives that highlight important aspects (Agile, Business Intelligence, Information Technology, Business Architecture, and Business Process Management).

BABOK® and IT Service Experience

BABOK® v3 already acknowledges the existence of IT service experience as a phenomenon. While there is no dedicated knowledge area or perspective solely focused on IT service experience, several knowledge areas incorporate aspects of User Experience (UX) and Human-Centred Design (HCD) principles.

● **Strategy Analysis**: This knowledge area advocates for considering human experience implications when evaluating potential solutions and incorporating human experience metrics into solution evaluation criteria.

● **Elicitation and Collaboration**: This knowledge area emphasises understanding stakeholder needs, including IT service users, and fostering collaboration to gather insights into their expectations and pain points.

● **Requirements Analysis and Design Definition**: In this knowledge area, business analysts are encouraged to consider human experience factors during requirements decomposition and solution design, ensuring usability, accessibility, and overall user-friendliness.

● **Solution Evaluation**: This knowledge area stresses evaluating the proposed solution against the business objectives and requirements, including assessing its impact on the user experience through user testing and feedback mechanisms.

However, there is still room for further emphasis of IT service experience. Particularly in strategy analysis, by incorporating a focus on IT service experience into this area, business analysts can ensure that IT solutions are not only aligned with business needs but also provide a positive user experience. This could be achieved by

● Adopting a user-centric mindset, understanding the needs, expectations, and pain points of IT service users. This can be achieved through user research, empathy workshops, and user persona development.

- Incorporating IT service experience principles and practices into the strategy analysis process. This may involve evaluating the usability, accessibility, and overall design of IT services to ensure they meet user needs and expectations.

- Defining and tracking metrics to measure the effectiveness of IT services from a user experience perspective. These metrics could include user satisfaction, task completion rates, and error rates.

- Promoting collaboration between business analysts and IT service experience professionals to ensure that IT service experience is considered throughout the entire development lifecycle.

- Incorporating IT service experience principles and practices into governance frameworks to ensure that IT service experience is considered when making decisions about IT investments and initiatives.

BABOK® Knowledge Areas

In order to contribute to these knowledge areas, here is a compilation of some relevant points from the book Reflections on XLA.

Service Experience

People's emotional state and sometimes also their wellbeing are affected by their experience with services. This should therefore be an important consideration during service design and execution. Service interactions take place within the context of a relationship with expectations, with experiences before, during and after the interactions. Value from service is experienced subjectively and is therefore difficult to know with certainty. Empathy, compassion and expectation management are key competences that affect service experience.

IT Service Suffering

IT practitioners should start their improvement journey by recognising and acknowledging that people suffer from bad IT service. The IT industry has failed miserably in their relationships with user organisations and needs to make amends. Many people in IT feel a moral obligation to act, and are adopting XLA.

Experience Level Agreement

XLA is an abbreviation of eXperience Level Agreement and is closely related to SLA (Service Level Agreement). XLA is not only a concrete agreement between service provider and service recipient. It also refers to the abstract and generic concept of agreeing the desired experience from IT services, and, by implication, to facilitating the desired experience. The key beliefs behind XLA are:

- People desire emotional wellbeing

- IT service affects people and their business

- IT service often falls short, XLA can improve the impact of IT service

- Many people feel morally obliged to better serve IT users

Figure: the essence of XLA

IT Service Experience Management

XLA is an integral part of IT service management. IT service management aims to ensure that the right IT services are agreed, that all involved parties are aligned with the agreed services, and that the parties collaborate effectively. At a high level, IT service experience management entails:

- Making agreements about the desired IT service experience (extending the scope of the service level agreement) and setting expectations.

- Selecting the appropriate set of people and resources, and organising specific tasks related to IT service experience, such as measurement.

- Executing the actual IT service interactions where the service is actually experienced and where value is co-created by provider and consumer, applying empathy, compassion and expectation management in particular.

- Analysing the outcomes, creating hypotheses for improvement, and conducting these improvements as experiments.

BABOK® Underlying Competencies

BABOK® recognises analytical thinking and problem solving, behavioural characteristics, business knowledge, communication skills, interaction skills, and tools and technology as essential skills and characteristics that a business analyst should possess to effectively perform their role. XLA can be regarded as a lens through which to apply analytical thinking and problem solving, and as business knowledge in the sense of a better understanding of how IT services affect people and their business. XLA's various models and frameworks are part of tools and technology.

Mark Smalley helps IT people understand service and you can contact him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/marksmalley

'Reflections on XLA', a book by Mark Smalley is available on Amazon.

'Free XLA', an article by Mark Smalley with a list of free resources, is available on LinkedIn.

Mastering AI Decision-making: Minimising Risks and Maximising the Rewards

Doris Kimball
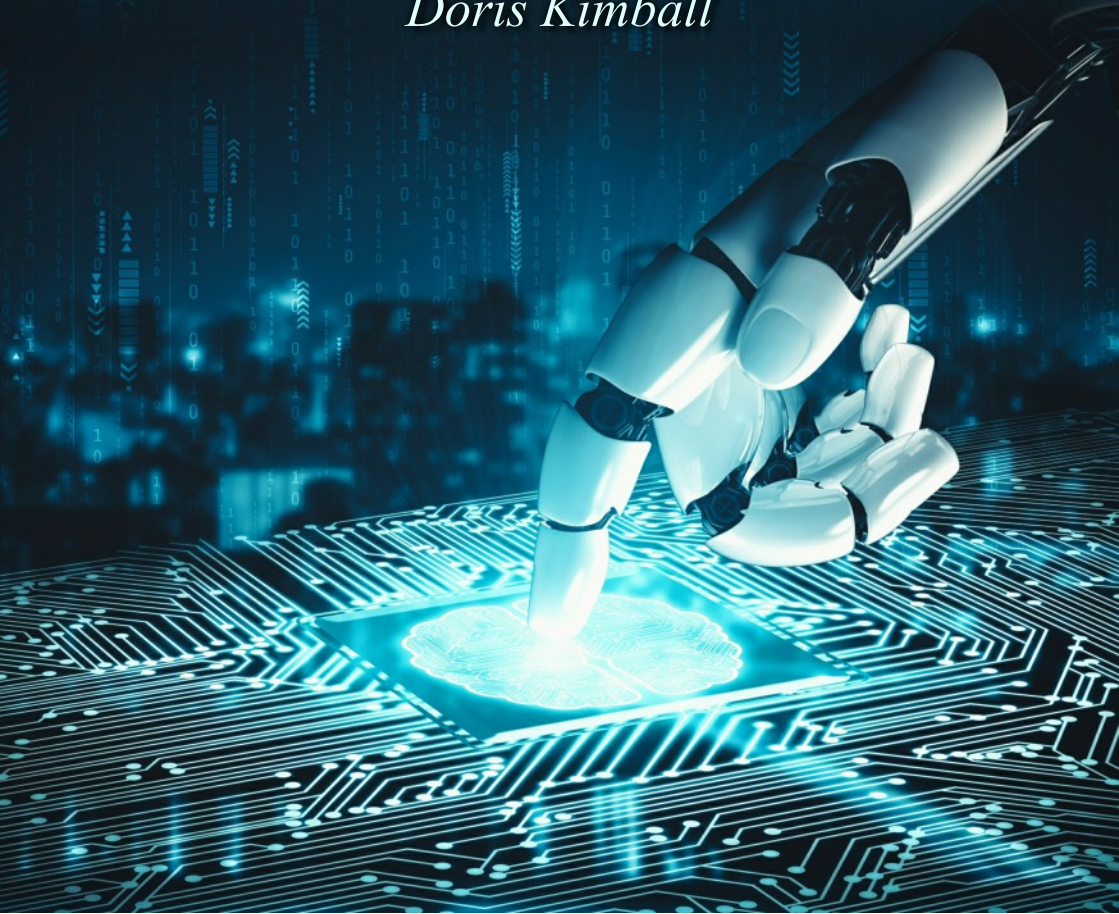
In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, mastering the art of AI decision-making is paramount for organisations aiming to thrive amidst the ongoing transformation. Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds immense potential to revolutionise business operations, offering unprecedented levels of efficiency and productivity. However, with this potential

comes considerable changes. Many organisations find themselves navigating the complexities of AI implementation without a clear roadmap, leaving them vulnerable to risks and missed opportunities.

One of the most critical yet often overlooked aspects of AI initiative is defining the problem at hand—the core business decision that needs to be addressed. Too often, teams are presented with vague or ambiguous problem statements, leading to a scattergun approach where insights are extracted from data without a clear understanding of their relevance to the organisation's objectives.

What organisations truly need is a strategic approach to harnessing the power of AI while mitigating its inherent risks. Enter decision management: a systematic and disciplined framework designed to enhance decision-making processes across all levels of an organisation. Decision management incorporates a range of techniques, including decision modelling, data analysis, business rules management, and predictive analytics, to optimise decision outcomes. This approach goes beyond merely automating routine operational decisions; it involves continuous monitoring, evaluation, and refinement of processes to drive efficiency, consistency, and adaptability.

By integrating AI technologies with decision management practices, organisations can achieve a synergy that transcends the capabilities of either concept in isolation. This convergence,

known as AI decision-making, empowers organisations to unlock new insights, streamlines operations, and enhance agility in decision-making processes. While AI contributes advanced analytics, predictive modelling, and real-time data processing capabilities; decision management provides the necessary governance and structure to ensure that AI-driven decisions align with organisational goals and values.

In essence, decision management serves as the compass that guides organisations through the complexities of AI implementation, providing a strategic framework for orchestrating successful initiatives. Embracing AI decision-making not only minimises risks but also maximises rewards, enabling organisations to thrive in the era of digital transformation.

Minimising Risks with AI Decision-Making

The risks associated with AI-driven decisions are significant but can be effectively mitigated through decision management. Here's how:

- **Bias and Fairness**: Decision management ensures that AI systems adhere to regulatory and policy-based rules, preventing biases in data that could lead to unfair outcomes. For example, the hypothetical case of an AI recruiting tool favouring male candidates would showcase the importance of decision management in promoting fairness and equality.

- **Complexity and Comprehension**: Without decision management, AI systems may become overly complex, hindering business understanding and debuggability. Decision management fosters transparency and maintainability in AI solutions. This is vital for sectors like healthcare, where the clarity of AI algorithms for medical diagnosis directly impacts reliability and safety.

- **Lack of Agility**: Decision management facilitates real-time data-driven decision refinements, ensuring that AI systems remain adaptable to evolving business needs. This agility is crucial: for example, a bank's AI-based credit scoring system will likely need to adjust to economic shifts promptly to maintain accuracy and mitigate risks.

Maximising the Rewards with AI Decision-Making

Integrating decision management with AI capabilities unlocks numerous rewards, driving organisational performance and innovation:

- **Consistency and Compliance**: By combining AI with decision management, organisations ensure consistency in decision-making, thereby enhancing regulatory compliance and reducing risks. For instance, a financial institution utilising AI-driven fraud detection systems aligns decision management practices with AI capabilities to proactively mitigate fraud risks.

- **Scalability and Adaptability**: The integration of AI and decision management enables organisations to scale operations and respond effectively to changing business requirements. For example, a retail company using AI algorithms to analyse customer purchasing patterns can dynamically adjust inventory management strategies with decision management, ensuring agility and responsiveness.

- **Operational Efficiency**: When AI and decision management are combined, operational processes become more streamlined, resulting in cost reductions and improved efficiency. Imagine a hospital implementing such an AI-decision management system for patient care, the hospital can now personalise and automate treatment decisions based on patient data, optimising resource allocation, and improving patient outcomes. This approach ensures consistent alignment to evidence-based practices, leading to enhanced operational efficiency and increased patient satisfaction.

Starting Your Own AI Decision-Making Journey

Embarking on the integration of decision management into AI-driven initiatives benefits from a structured approach. The following steps outline a clear roadmap for organisations:

Step	Action	Description
1	Identify valuable operational decisions.	Pinpoint crucial decisions impacting business outcomes, such as claim validity for an insurance company.
2	Build a concise understanding of the decision.	Engage subject matter experts to create a logical model of the decision's hierarchical structure, highlighting crucial regulations and business policies.
3	Explore AI opportunities.	Seek areas within the decision where AI can boost efficiency, like using AI algorithms to detect fraud in claims processing.
4	Develop effective AI algorithms.	Create tailored, robust AI algorithms to glean precise data-driven insights to improve the targeted decision.
5	Implement AI solutions.	Integrate the AI algorithms into decision-making processes to leverage AI capabilities in real-world scenarios.
6	Continuous improvement.	Establish methods to monitor the AI performance and refine the models regularly to meet evolving business needs.

By following these steps, organisations (even those new to AI) can make informed decisions and maintain a competitive edge in dynamic markets.

Conclusion

Mastering AI decision-making is essential for organisations navigating the digital transformation era. Integrating decision management with AI capabilities mitigates risks like bias and complexity, while leveraging benefits such as consistency and operational efficiency. This convergence drives enhanced performance and innovation, aligned with business objectives and regulatory requirements. A structured approach to integrating decision management into AI initiatives enables smarter decision-making processes, ensuring competitiveness in dynamic markets. As John Lasseter aptly said, "The art challenges the technology, and the technology inspires the art," highlighting the symbiotic relationship between innovation and creativity in AI decision-making.

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Finding Your Confidence: Navigating Imposter Syndrome as a Business Analyst

Kyle Roycroft

Business Analysts (BAs) are often positioned at the forefront of change (or transformation). They're the orchestrators of innovation, tasked with deciphering complex information and translating it into actionable strategies to drive organisational progress. Yet, under the surface of many successful BAs there is a common struggle: imposter syndrome. Every professional has moments of self-doubt and insecurity, particularly in environments where they are continually challenged to learn and grow. This is especially true for BAs, where the landscape is ever-changing. The desire to continually prove oneself and deliver on expectations can be exhausting, which can be a significant barrier to success and fulfilment in an individual's career.

So, then, how do we lead change initiatives when experiencing these feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy? Let's unpack this.

Definition: What Is Impostor Syndrome?

Building on a definition provided in the article What is imposter syndrome? Definition, symptoms, and overcoming it by Amal Saymeh, we might say that:

Imposter syndrome is the condition of feeling anxious and doubting your abilities despite being high-performing in an external, objective way.

This often results in feeling like a fraud or phoney and not experiencing the joy of success. It is often seen as a cognitive distortion whereby we trust the thoughts in our brain without objectively assessing the evidence—this biassed perspective of ourselves that we take on is often made up of irrational thoughts and beliefs that we unknowingly reinforce over time. These thought patterns can be subtle and difficult to recognise.

As outlined in Saymeh's article, with imposter syndrome, a person struggles to feel confident or competent, regardless of their achievements. They tend not to experience the joy of success, because they are always waiting for their inadequacy to come to light. Symptoms may include anxiety, negative self-talk, constant comparison, fear of failure and distrust in your own intuition and capabilities. Feelings of self-doubt may lead you to impose the expectation on yourself of knowing everything, or you may find yourself taking on additional work to prove yourself. You may downplay your achievements or hold back from trying new things. Perhaps you even get stuck aiming for perfection, too afraid of making a mistake. You don't ask for help because it feels like admitting defeat, so instead, you end up struggling on your own. Procrastination may even set in as you try to avoid facing these feelings. Most, if not all, of these symptoms are rooted in a sense of insecurity—or, put another way, a lack of self-confidence.

Impostor Syndrome Amongst BAs

I think that BAs can be particularly susceptible to imposter syndrome for various reasons. Firstly, most BAs I have met did not plan to be BAs; they somewhat fell into the role. As such, many don't have any formal experience or qualifications in the field. This can leave one feeling ill-equipped to fulfil the role when facing new challenges.

Another reason is the nuanced nature of the BA role, depending on the industry or organisation, or if you are working as a consultant or not, some roles require stronger soft skills or business knowledge, while others require more technical or professional skills.

Finally, there are often high expectations when it comes to expertise and value-add. BAs are often relied on to provide valuable insight and direction. They are generally expected to be knowledgeable in various business areas or domains, and they are expected to deliver value quickly, especially as consultants.

For a BA, this can all result in a sort of striving to prove your worth, fuelled by imposter syndrome. However, this isn't

sustainable. Instead, by combining awareness of these challenges with a few healthy practices, one can avoid the feeling of dread and can operate in confidence. Here are a few practices that helped me to develop my confidence.

Be curious: Accept that you don't know everything, and approach each situation with a willingness to learn and understand. Stay curious about new best practices, technologies and industry trends, and invest in ongoing learning to expand your knowledge and skills. Additionally, be a detective: follow your intuition to follow leads and ask questions to bring clarity. You won't always be a subject matter expert (SME) in every project, so have the humility to admit what you don't know every now and then.

Collaborate: Actively seek feedback from colleagues, team leads and clients to gain insight into your performance and areas where you can grow. Embrace feedback as an opportunity for learning and development, as opposed to viewing it through a negative lens (view it as not what you lack, but rather, where you can grow). You can also join a community— doing so will combat feelings of imposter syndrome, which is fuelled by isolation. As a BA, you miss out on a vast amount of experience if you are not networking, sharing and building ideas with others.

Build your team: Collect people and gather a team of experts around you who will take the time to explain things and guide you. Find a mentor, as well as colleagues who can peer review your work, assist you when you're stuck, and

encourage and motivate you. Doing so can remind you of what you know, your abilities, and the work you still have to do.

Prepare: Prioritise thorough preparation before meetings, presentations or project discussions. This involves delving deeper into the subject matter, focusing on your specific goals, or seeking support from SMEs. In doing so, try to anticipate potential questions or challenges, use draft versions of artefacts to avoid the perfection mindset, and lean on existing templates and the experience of others. Lastly, clarify what is expected of you, so that you can tailor your efforts.

In closing, imposter syndrome will likely be an ongoing feature in our BA journey as we continue to challenge ourselves and step into new roles. However, by applying these practices, we can navigate the ever-changing landscape with confidence and find fulfilment in our work. As you continue to learn, experiment, innovate and collaborate, you will begin to sharpen your knowledge and skills, and deepen your experience, thereby enabling you to explore the unknown and drive change confidently.

Kyle Roycroft is a business analyst at Haefele Software who is passionate about solving problems and bringing order to chaos. With a love for all things technical and a knack for unpacking complexity, he enjoys working in highly collaborative environments. You can contact him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/kyle-roycroft-658244199/

Is the Happy Path Getting Too Overgrown to Follow?

Helen Bateman

I remember life before everything was digital and have also witnessed the digital age progress since the days of the first car/mobile phones and dial up internet connections. I've seen the transition from manual to automated insurance premium calculations, adapted from using an overhead projector for presentations to PowerPoint and moved from cheques and cashpoint cards to having a 24/7 banking app that lets me do most transactions anywhere at any time.

It was whilst I was making some changes to my mortgage that I started thinking about how digital progress has changed the customer experience in so many aspects of our lives. Are we now approaching a stage where digitalisation is beginning to be more of an annoyance than a convenience? Are there now so many variables in a process that it is more challenging for the customer to find, yet alone follow the designed happy path?

For example, providing copies of your payslips to a mortgage provider used to be quite straightforward (albeit of questionable value when the amounts on those payslips have been paid into an account at the bank you are sending them to). You would either take or send the original (or photocopied) paper payslips that your employer had sent to you to the lender. Nowadays you are likely to need to access your employer's HR portal to download the payslips, save them in a format and location so they can be uploaded through whichever mechanism and format the lender has requested.

I tend to read and respond to emails via my phone's email client. In this process, when you click a link in an email you are met with challenges such as what location/format to save files in, the size/compression needed, along with usability of some of the applications on a phone sized screen. This often ends up in having to dust off my personal laptop,

doing the inevitable software updates needed to get it going, before continuing the process from there.

When reviewing and designing business processes, we tend to set the start point at the initial customer contact channel (phone, letter, face to face, email, or web) and end the process at the point where the enquiry was satisfied (despatch of goods or response communication sent to customer). Is it time as BAs that we help businesses to consider extending process boundaries beyond these points as well as considering the likelihood that device switching will happen mid process?

Do we need to up our game when looking at Non-Functional Requirements (NFRs), particularly interoperability, usability, portability— considering the vast array of combinations of devices and software that exist? Can we undertake more analysis, perhaps using personas, to better identify different user needs and to understand what devices customers use and where and why they hit problems? Can we still assume that a process is complete at the point we have sent the response email—or is it time to follow through on what happens once the customer receives the email and how easily they can complete their actions to either view, respond or proceed to the next stage?

When clicking on an embedded link the behaviour/navigation is variable depending upon where you are accessing the link from. If you are using an email provider's email app or are clicking a link within an app rather than a website, any links often open within the app itself. Should you then need to access other information from your inbox or elsewhere in the app, you must navigate back from where you are, often losing information you have started updating.

Irritants like this seem to occur daily once you start noticing them.

- My gas/electric smart meter dashboard no longer shows the correct charges as I have a V1 smart meter that does not work with my current supplier and there is no way to get it updated as apparently there is no upgrade plan

- A grocery store app sends a One Time Passcode (OTP) via email to complete a transaction, but you have to exit the app to get the code from your email and then can't return to the app in the place the code is needed

- My new printer does not work with AirPrint (I realise now I should have checked for this functionality but didn't realise that was needed—I'm not a technology expert!) so I now have to print from my phone via a somewhat unreliable printer app

- Adding my shopping bag to scales of a self-serve till before scanning as instructed, always needs a staff override if it already contains shopping from a previous store

- CAPTCHA tick boxes don't render correctly in some browsers so you can't click to confirm you are a human unless you know you need to try a different browser

Why is this so often the case? Is it simply that in designing processes, businesses feel that anything outside of their own systems or process boundaries is too hard to control or it is simply not their problem?

Is it time to challenge this view? Have we reached the point where the number of variables means a happy path of a new user, with the latest device and software and no previous account history is highly unlikely, therefore our process design should spend more time examining more complex variations as well as factoring in ongoing reviews and adaptations as technology and customer behaviours change?

I am interested to see how things continue to develop but my feeling is that most companies will, for economic reasons, consider their focus to be on their main systems/process rather than concerning themselves with the extended end to end customer experience. As BAs should we be calling this out as a concern and looking for ways to create better customer journeys before many digital solutions get too complicated for customers to endure?

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Quantum Leap in Business Analysis
Gottfried Szing

Imagine the following: you are working as a Business Analyst (BA) on problems that are hard to solve on a normal computer. Problems you have very likely faced at least once during your career as BA. Problems exceeding the current capabilities of computers.

And now imagine: you have a super-fast computer that could solve problems and crunch data faster than any supercomputer available. A new breed of computer that can optimise your investment portfolio almost in real time, can reroute trucks due to congestion, or can discover new materials.

Sounds great, right? This sounds very futuristic and still it is. Yet it's not a distant future.

A super-fast computer like this won't be built on current classical components and won't work like our current computers. Such computers will harness the effects of quantum mechanics and are referred to as Quantum Computers (QC).

What Are Quantum Computers?

Nowadays computers, whether a high-performance computer or one in a "smart" toothbrush, are all using *bits*. A bit can only be in two states: either *yes* or *no*. Bits can also be manipulated with operations, which will again result in either *yes* or *no*.

An example is a typical light switch that can turn the light either on or off.

In contrast, QCs operate on *qubits* that are not restricted to a simple *yes* or *no*. They can be *yes*, *no*, and anything between (*maybe*). They can exist simultaneously in a state of *yes* and *no*. This phenomenon is known as *superposition*. Furthermore, two qubits can be connected and influence each other. So, the alteration of one qubit has a corresponding impact on the other. This property is known as *entanglement*.

Example: a dimmer can turn the light off or on, but allows also to set the brightness anywhere between.

Being a technical business analyst by profession, I am always interested in whether a new technology can enhance problem-solving capabilities. But can QCs really help? Let's find out.

Opportunities and Threats

In such scenarios, a SWOT analysis is my technique of choice. QCs typically come from an external origin (except if you are working for QC vendors) and therefore QCs can either be an opportunity or pose a threat. Let's discuss some examples for both categories.

Financial Modelling

Financial modelling is the process of financial analysis and aims to find an optimal balance between return and risks. It could be the analysis of how capital or assets could be allocated to achieve certain business objectives. It could also help in answering the question of how financial portfolios are put together.

In any case, accurate and timely analysis is crucial. With the growing number of assets and parameters and the ever-increasing volume of data, a precise calculation in real-time becomes challenging.

QCs with their unique properties and employing algorithms such as Variational Quantum Eigensolver (VQE) or Quantum Approximate Optimization Algorithms (QAOA) hold the promise of significant improvements. Current research suggests that optimization problems can be solved more efficiently and with higher accuracy using QC technology.

Optimization Problems

In addition to the aforementioned optimisation challenges, there are also well-known logistical problems that are also known as the "travelling salesperson problem" and the "vehicle routing problem". These issues describe the attempt to find an efficient route for a given number of destinations. However, as the number of destinations and vehicles increases, the complexity grows exponentially and pushes classical computers to their limits.

Specialised QCs such as quantum annealers are well-suited for solving such problems. Here, the data is encoded in qubits and the solution is approximated with sufficient accuracy through several simulation iterations. Even if several simulations are necessary, the overall time required for finding a solution can still be significantly shorter compared to classical algorithms.

Many everyday tasks, like network control, traffic control, cargo movement at harbours, or delivery services, fall within this category. Quantum and quantum-inspired computing can be the answer to handling logistical problems with greater efficiency.

Data at Risk

It is important to emphasise that the basis for many applications lies in the data available and data is usually secured and protected by cryptography, which is

threatened by Shor's or Grover's algorithm. Both can break or at least weaken the protection by current methods. But solutions for this could be Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) or the adoption of quantum-safe methods known as PostQuantum Cryptography (PQC).

QKD offers the secure exchange of keys for encrypting and decrypting messages. While QKD enables companies to secure the transport of data by exchanging encryption keys via a tap-proof channel, it requires the acquisition of new equipment.

On the other hand, the transition to PQC will be an in-place upgrade of existing infrastructure and software. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is currently standardising replacement encryption methods that are not vulnerable to QC.

Creating a Quantum Workforce

The shift from classical to quantum is a major transformational change. It is not an evolutionary step, it's a whole new paradigm requiring entirely new skills and roles. Some of these roles will be technical, like physicists for exploring new areas of theories, quantum hardware engineers, mathematicians for developing quantum algorithms, software programmers who understand QC principles. As QC is still a very new technology, specialists with the necessary expertise are currently limited.

Non-technical professionals such as BAs will play a crucial role in bridging the gap between business and this innovative technology. BAs will help to identify new use cases and enhance existing ones through their efforts to integrate quantum computing seamlessly into a company's landscape.
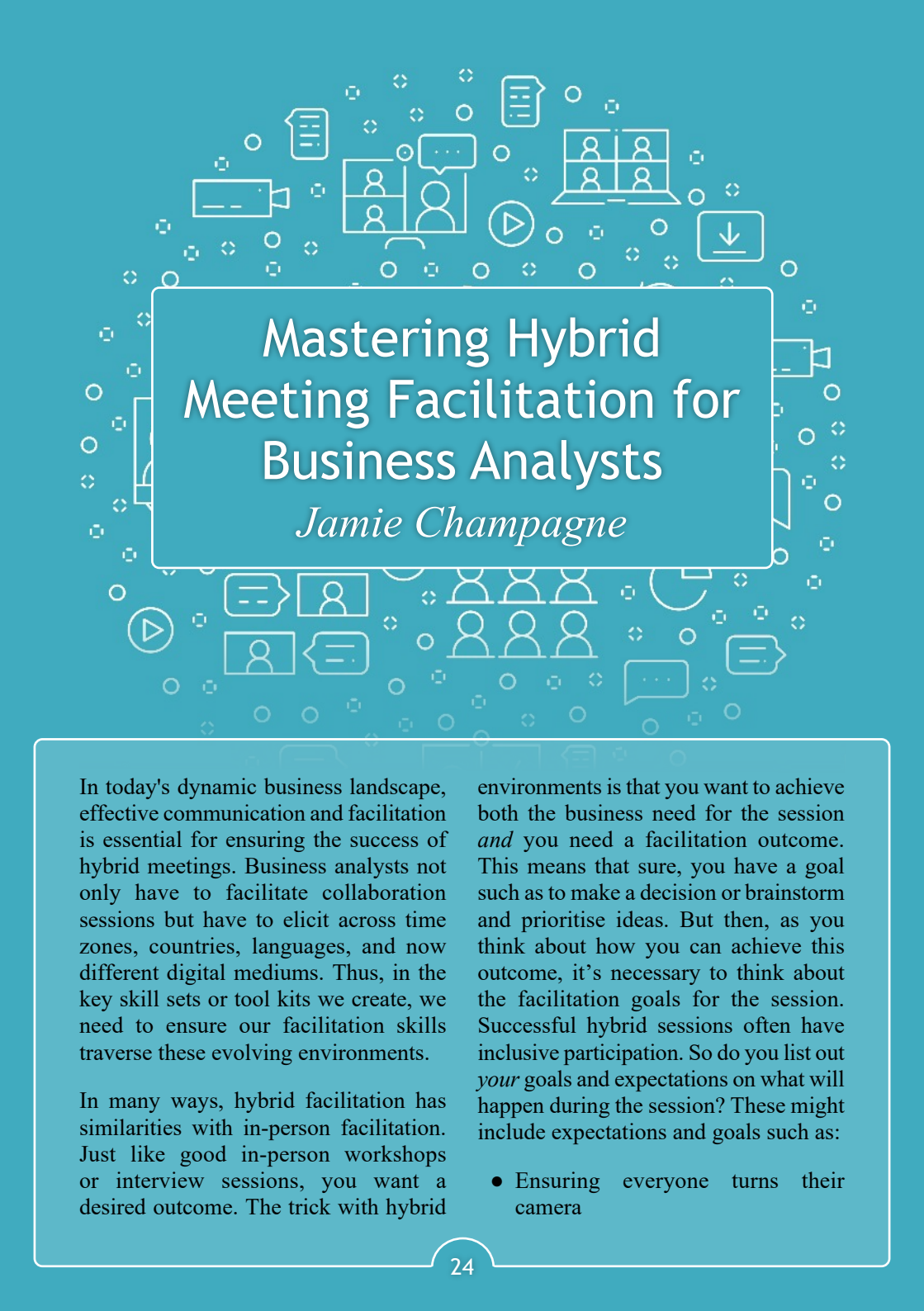
Curious about QC?

If you are now curious about QC and its possibilities, you might ask how to move forward from this point? Here are some ideas how to proceed:

- Enhance your understanding by enrolling in basic introduction courses.

- Explore the websites of the major QC providers. Many of them offer free access to their systems and loads of learning material.

- Begin with finding people talking about quantum computing. They will help you to navigate around in this new territory. Find other quantum-curious people within your company, explain the concept of QC to your colleagues, and engage in discussions about this with IT professionals.

Collaboration is the key to unlocking success with this innovative and promising technology.

Gottfried Szing is an independent consultant in Vienna, Austria. He has over two decades experience working as technical business analyst & architect in various industries and is passionate about seamlessly integrating business and technology. Connect at LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/gottfriedszing/

Mastering Hybrid Meeting Facilitation for Business Analysts

Jamie Champagne

In today's dynamic business landscape, effective communication and facilitation is essential for ensuring the success of hybrid meetings. Business analysts not only have to facilitate collaboration sessions but have to elicit across time zones, countries, languages, and now different digital mediums. Thus, in the key skill sets or tool kits we create, we need to ensure our facilitation skills traverse these evolving environments.

In many ways, hybrid facilitation has similarities with in-person facilitation. Just like good in-person workshops or interview sessions, you want a desired outcome. The trick with hybrid environments is that you want to achieve both the business need for the session *and* you need a facilitation outcome. This means that sure, you have a goal such as to make a decision or brainstorm and prioritise ideas. But then, as you think about how you can achieve this outcome, it's necessary to think about the facilitation goals for the session. Successful hybrid sessions often have inclusive participation. So do you list out *your* goals and expectations on what will happen during the session? These might include expectations and goals such as:

- Ensuring everyone turns their camera

- Everyone should contribute at least once

- The session ends with clear and documented agreement on the next steps

When you can pull in both these perspectives in your planning, you not only have great outcomes, but you get buy-in from your stakeholders for many more great facilitated sessions.

Technology Isn't Everything

When you have hybrid sessions, instead of thinking of the technology first, consider a mixed-media approach. Remember, hybrid environments allow stakeholders to participate in ways that make *them* comfortable. By planning engagement as part of the agenda, you create room for collaboration. I like the idea of a "20/20 agenda" – that means you write out the agenda or ideas you want for the session. You then remove 20% of the agenda: this means you have just created 20% more room for collaboration. This prevents us from filling the whole time with business actions and deliverables, which limit the space for connection to happen.

When you host a hybrid session, start incorporating inclusiveness during your planning work and show it in all your execution during your event *and* even afterward. Show that *everyone is equal,* regardless of where or how they participate. Did you send pre-work to both the online and in-person participants? Consider how many instructions you sent for the Zoom room and whiteboard or Mural space. Did you send information to the in-person participants on how to get to the conference room or how to check in with security? Keep things equal. Session expectations are the same. If I ask participants to avoid multitasking/checking their email, I expect this to apply to both in-person and remote participants. The consideration to have/not have food or drink during the session is universal. I'm addressing the session expectations, not the individual environments. And yes, even those individuals who think they are "loud enough for everyone to hear" – in my sessions, everyone has to speak into the microphone.

But…Technology Does Matter

But yes, now it's time to consider the technology. Start first with the business product that you are working on. What is the desired outcome of the session and how does it relate to the product? You're going to need the output and any artefacts in a digital format if you want everyone to be able to contribute. So even if in-person use whitepaper or sticky notes, they're going to have to add their work to the virtual whiteboard or SharePoint site. And the in-person participants have to be on their laptops to participate on the whiteboard with the online participants. Think about how you're going to capture the output. And going digital, honestly, makes it easier to share after. No more decyphering handwriting from sticky notes after the session.

Now let's ask what the team needs to see. Do they need to see the whole conference room? Or simply the working space? Need to see facial expressions? Or physical actions? Those questions determine camera placement and even quantity or types of cameras. The same questions are for the audio—what needs to be heard? Most of the time, audio and video is easy for individuals. It's the groups of online or in-person that need to be considered. Ideally, you want a microphone in front of each person. Otherwise, can you move the microphone in front of each person? Imagine someone speaking softly or mumbling at a meeting. Is anyone really listening to them? That's what happens when you have bad audio.

Sometimes You Need Help

So with all this going on, you might consider how valuable an assistant is. There are at least two things to consider in this process. An in-person assistant focuses on those in-person. Does everyone have materials? Do they help move the microphones around or adjust video cameras so you can engage *with* the participants? An online person is watching the chat, troubleshooting technical issues, and ensuring people are participating. What's different is that these assistants are also a representative of the participants. They can speak up or encourage participation and inclusion so you do get the necessary participation and collaboration. And these don't have to be an added resource or a consultant to be hired. Look around and see if you have any less-experienced staff that need training. You can give them clear instructions, like helping ensure the online people have no technical issues and ensuring the chat items are addressed. In doing this they are exposed to both your content *and* your facilitation techniques. They get on-the-job training while helping! Or do you work with project managers or people who often work across domains? Assisting you with a session is a great way to learn about other areas of the business. They get an introduction to vocabulary and concerns all while helping you accomplish goals. And this is the ultimate style of a successful business analyst – get the most value out of any session!

The final work is what comes *after* your session. Ensure what was produced is sent to everyone. It's crucial that everyone knows the next steps. Capture any conversations that happened as people left your physical spaces or extra chats that came in your app and include this in the wrap-up communication. Continue to treat all participants equally with a focus on outcomes.

Thank everyone for their hard work and hopefully, you'll have excited and engaged participants who look forward to your next successfully facilitated hybrid session!

Jamie is beyond her "passionate BA" title and truly embodies business analysis and adding value to those around her every day. An accomplished speaker, author, and trainer, she enjoys sharing with others ways to improve their analysis skillsets with productive and measurable results…when not on a surfboard.

Four Habits for Effective Business Analysis: What the Last 19 Years Have Taught Me

David Vrbanek

As I reflect on my journey as a seasoned business analyst, I can't help but marvel at the myriad of lessons learned along the way. The role of a business analyst is a dynamic one, requiring a blend of analytical skills, interpersonal finesse, and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Here, I share four pivotal lessons that have shaped my career and continue to guide me through the ever-evolving business landscape.

Question and Verify: Unravelling the Web of Assumptions

One of the cardinal rules in the world of business analysis is to always question and verify. It's easy to get caught up in assumptions, often leading to misguided decisions. Early in my career, I learned the importance of untangling the web of assumptions that can plague a project. The BA is the last project team member that should assume anything.

Being a business analyst isn't just about eliciting requirements; it's about understanding the underlying rationale, motivations and challenging preconceived notions. I recall a project where stakeholders were convinced that a particular feature (spell-checking) was essential for success. However, through a series of probing questions and a meticulous verification process, it became evident that the perceived necessity was based on outdated information.

The key takeaway here is to approach every project with a healthy dose of scepticism. Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions and challenge the status quo. By doing so, you not only uncover hidden insights but also ensure that your recommendations are grounded in solid, verified information.

Be from Missouri:
Show Me the Proof

The old saying, "I'm from Missouri; you'll have to show me", embodies a crucial mindset for any business analyst. In a world inundated with data and information, it's easy to be swayed by impressive presentations and persuasive arguments. In addition to this, stakeholders are not always clear about their needs, nor describing their pain points. However, seasoned analysts understand the value of demanding tangible proof.

In my experience, this lesson hit home during a project where my fellow project team members and I anticipated our shortlisted vendors would not show us exactly what we needed to see from their software solutions. As such, we adopted the "show me the proof" mentality. Instead of relying solely on the vendors' assurances, we insisted that each vendor follow the same 'demo script' to validate their claims.

The demo script not only revealed potential pitfalls that were conveniently omitted in earlier sales pitches, but also allowed for necessary adjustments before a full-scale implementation. This experience reinforced the importance of being discerning, even when faced with seemingly convincing propositions. As a business analyst, it's crucial to be an advocate for evidence-based decision-making.

Document, Document,
Document:
The Analyst's Blueprint

The three most important things in real estate are location, location, and location. If there's one lesson that has become ingrained in my daily routine, it's the importance of documenting, documenting, and documenting some more. In the fast-paced world of business, details can easily slip through the cracks if not captured and catalogued appropriately. Writing things down frees your mind to do what you do best (analysis), instead of trying to remember everything. This isn't about documentation for documentation's sake, it's about having *proportionate and appropriate* documentation. It's an investment that saves time in the long run.

Whether it's meeting minutes, requirements, or project timelines, meticulous documentation serves as the BA's blueprint. I recall a project where a seemingly insignificant detail from early discussions ended up being a game-changer in the final implementation phase. Without thorough documentation, that critical piece of information might have been lost in the shuffle.

Documenting not only aids in the clarity of communication but also serves as a historical record. It enables teams to track the evolution of a project, learn from past experiences, and avoid repeating mistakes. As a seasoned business analyst, I've learned that a well-documented project is a resilient project.

Never Stop Learning: Embracing the Ever-Evolving Landscape

In the realm of business analysis, stagnation is a recipe for obsolescence. The technological landscape, business practices, and market dynamics are in a perpetual state of flux. Embracing the practice of "never stop learning" has been a cornerstone of my professional journey.

Early in my career, I made a conscious effort to stay abreast of emerging technologies, industry trends, and evolving methodologies. This commitment to continuous learning has kept me relevant, generated new ideas, and allowed me to converse better—all

of which opened doors to new opportunities and challenges.

The digital transformation era has ushered in tools and techniques that were unimaginable a decade ago. As a business analyst, staying ahead of the curve is not just a luxury but a necessity. Attending workshops, pursuing certifications, and engaging with industry communities are avenues that I have consistently explored to fuel my appetite for learning.

My 19 years as a Business Analyst has shown me that no two projects are identical, and that each project is a canvas; the lessons learned are the brushstrokes that shape the final masterpiece. Questioning assumptions, advocating for proof, meticulous documentation, and a relentless pursuit of knowledge form the bedrock of success in this dynamic field. By weaving these lessons into our everyday activities, we not only navigate the complexities of business analysis but also contribute to the growth and resilience of the organisations we serve. So, fellow analysts, let's continue the journey with curiosity, scepticism, diligence, and an unwavering commitment to lifelong learning!

David Vrbanek is a Lead Business Analyst, Instructor, Mentor & Coach. You can contact him at www.linkedin.com/in/dvrbanek, he teaches BA courses at the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies, and he provides mentoring/coaching services to aspiring through seasoned BAs at www.everyday-ba.ca.

Business Analyst Insights at Presales: Strategies for Success

Iryna Hurska

The role of a business analyst remains one of the most captivating professions for me. Our role affords us the opportunity to engage across all stages of the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC). While we're well-versed in the typical activities undertaken during project execution, have you ever considered what a BA can contribute prior to a project's inception? What precisely do we contribute during the critical presales stage?

BA Activities During the Presales Stage

This article focuses on BAs who are working for a solution provider, where a solution is sold to a client. In this context, the typical responsibilities of a business analyst during the presales stage include:

1. Collaborate with the presales team, typically comprising a sales manager and technical experts such as developers, Quality Assurance (QA) professionals, and User Interface (UI)/User Experience (UX) presale specialists.

2. Understand the potential client's core needs and assess the proposed solution's viability and feasibility.

3. Determine the optimal approach for estimating product development, keeping in mind time constraints.

4. Undertake product development estimations (BA activities for future product development).

5. Collaborate with other presales experts to present the estimates and provide explanations to the client.

The most challenging aspect is number 4: providing estimates for future product development. Often, the initial question arises: "How should estimates be provided?" In reality, there are several approaches, including

1. Rely on the information provided by the client regarding the future product and provide quick estimates based on a "wild guess."

2. Decompose the future product into modules and features, offering approximate estimates for each, and then total these numbers to provide the overall estimate.

Which approach do you prefer?

Feature List for Preliminary Estimates

Naturally, various circumstances, time constraints, and company-specific approaches may influence procedures during the presales stage. However, in my experience, the approach of decomposing the product idea to create a feature list proves to be the most effective and beneficial business analysis artefact for preliminary estimates. Let's examine its role using an example. The example below shows a partial feature list with estimates, in hours, shown against each feature.

Feature	Estimate, h
Authorisation	
Register	4
Log In / Log Out	8
Forgot Password	2
User Profile	
CRUD Profile	8
Notification Settings	8
Manage Bookings	
View Schedule	16
Book an Appointment	4
View Appointment History	4
…etc…	

So here, you can see the decomposed product features with estimates of hours needed for business analyst involvement. If you sum up the numbers, you will receive the estimate for business analysis activities for the entire product. It would be advisable to state exactly what the estimate covers (and doesn't cover), and also to quote a range or tolerance (e.g. "X - Y days" or "x days +/- y%") to show certainty or risk.

Now that your feature list with estimates is prepared, the next step is to present it to other presales experts and, ultimately, to the client. How can you ensure effective communication with presales experts, maximise the value of your involvement, and win over the client? The following tips can help:

Maximise the Value of Your Involvement

Establish Collaborative Environment:

- Set up clear and transparent communication with presales experts and clients
- Schedule regular meetings on specific days and times convenient for all the decision-makers
- Actively participate in discussions and be open to adjustments
- Implement clear documentation and responsive feedback channels

Understand Stakeholder Needs:

- Take time to understand the needs and expectations of all stakeholders involved thoroughly
- Customise your communication and deliverables to meet their particular needs and address any concerns they may have

Focus on Solutions:

- Don't stop at problem definition, focus on proposing viable solutions
- Present your proposal clearly and confidently, highlighting the benefits and value it can bring to achieve the client's business objectives

Analyse Data and Insights:

- Use data-driven insights and analytics to justify your recommendations and estimates
- Strengthen your credibility and make your proposals more convincing by providing accurate data

Provide Value-Added Perspectives:

- Go beyond the scope of your role by offering value-added ideas and suggestions
- Demonstrate a deep understanding of the client's business challenges and industry trends
- Propose your ideas based on competitor analysis, additional market research, and domain investigation

Implementing these tips can build trust and rapport within your presales team. Working under such conditions, your potential project is destined for success.

Conclusion

As you can see, when you perform in the presales stage as a business analyst, you encounter both challenges and opportunities. If you wish to feel your true impact and make this journey more pleasant for yourself and all stakeholders involved, simply follow the tips listed above, create an open-minded environment and establish clear processes. After that, observe the results. These results will, in turn, demonstrate that you are a trusted advisor and an invaluable asset to the presales team.

Iryna Hurska is a BA Team Leader with over 7 years of experience. She runs an Instagram Blog – EasyBA – filled with interesting articles, tips, and inspiration for Business Analysts in IT. Check out more of Iryna's educational materials on her website. Feel free to connect with her on LinkedIn.

How to Become a "value" Business Analyst? Metrics for Choosing the Solutions That Deliver the Most Value to Stakeholders

Cédric Berger

In order to discuss value in the context of business analysis, it is useful to consider what business analysis means. The International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®)'s Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide defines business analysis as:

"*The practice of enabling change in an enterprise by defining needs and recommending solutions that deliver value to stakeholders.*"

As a practitioner, it is worth considering:

- Are you able to measure the value of a solution?

- How do you know if a solution creates value?

I remember during the 2023 Building Business Capability (BBC) conference first hearing about the Business Analysis Core Competency Model (BACCM™). Value is a core concept of this model.

More than ten years on, business analysts are still somewhat at a loss when it comes to this important concept. In the BABOK® and associated documentation, there are numerous techniques for analysing other concepts mentioned on the BACCM™ (including analysis of stakeholders, context, needs and solutions) but very few for analysing value.

Brief history

To help us consider value, let's take a glance at some techniques that emerged after World War II. As time has

progressed, a host of productivity, creativity and innovation techniques have emerged, including new approaches to design, brainstorming, and marketing. In the world of engineering, there is a post-industrial realisation that the value of a product lies not in the product itself, but in what it enables us to achieve—the services it provides. This is what we refer to as the product's function. This concept was clearly articulated by Laurence D. Miles in his 1961 work, *"Techniques of Value Analysis and Engineering.*"

Building on this work, it is possible to conclude that few of the components are essential for delivering the service, which leads to questioning why many of the components do not serve the purpose for which they were designed.

By analysing the components that do not contribute to delivering the expected service and by reducing the number of components, we can enhance the value. The principle of value analysis was born!

Therefore, we can define value as the ratio between the services provided and the resources consumed.

Value = Benefits / Costs

Benefits: Satisfaction and impact on all stakeholders

Costs: Consumption of resources (people, time, materials, energy, space, etc.)

Since 1950, value analysis has evolved significantly in the United States and Europe, shaping late 20th century innovations. This approach, based on specific techniques like functional analysis and value engineering, has been institutionalised through organisations (such as SAVE International) and standards (such as the British Standards Institute (BSI)'s standard: BS EN 12973:2020 Value management).

Let's apply these techniques and concepts to develop **value indices** that illustrate the creation of value.

The Strategic Value Index (SVI)

Utilising the principles of functional analysis (BS EN 17952:2024, Functional Analysis), the Objective and Key Results (OKR) approach reintroduced by John Doerr in his 2017 book 'Measure What Matters: OKRs The Simple Idea That Delivers 10x Growth', and the opportunity diagrams from Teresa Torres's 2021 book 'Continuous Discovery Habits', the goal is to compile all relevant objectives (opportunities) related to the initiative to create the strategic index. To do this, follow these steps:

1. Frame the initiative:

- What will the future solution **be used for**?

- Ask those who the solution will serve if the problem is correctly stated and meets their expectations.

2. Collect objectives.

Gather the objectives and define the

acceptance criteria, for example by defining the key results.

3. Organise objectives.

Break down the objectives into a hierarchical diagram, either into more detailed levels or by service, business unit, or department.
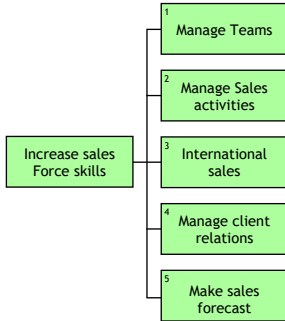
Figure 1 : Objectives Breakdown Structure (Opportunity Tree)

4. Prioritise the objectives.

Determine the relative value of each objective. By default, all objectives are considered equal. However, if you wish to assign greater value to one objective over the others, the "pairwise comparison" technique can be used to assign specific values to each objective and thereby determine their strategic value. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
A:Appreciation		A,3	A,3	A,1	A,3	A,2	A,2	A,3	A,2
B:Achievement			C,3	B,2	B,3	B,2	G,2	B,3	B,3
C:Work conditions				C,3	C,3	C,3	G,3	C,3	C,3
D:Power/Influence					D,3	D,2	G,3	D,2	I,1
E:Creativity						F,2	G,3	E,2	I,2
F:Interest							G,3	F,1	I,3
G:Financial benefits								G,3	G,3
H:Relationships									I,3
I:Self development									

Figure 2 : Pairwise comparison table

The Business Value Index (BVI)

Let's now measure the interest of needs for stakeholders using the following three indicators:

1. The importance of needs according to the MoSCoW Method, as suggested by Clegg & Barker.

Is the need essential, important, desirable, not necessary now?

Use this framework to measure the interest of **internal** stakeholders.

2. The attraction of needs according to the Kano Method

Is the need attractive, mandatory, proportional, basic, or adverse?

Use to measure the interest of external stakeholders.

3. Current satisfaction level:

Is the need already satisfied, partially satisfied, dissatisfied? Is it a new need?
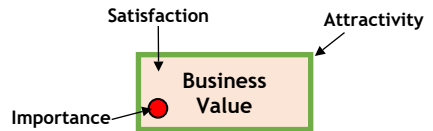
Figure 3 : Visual representation of BVI

The Impact Value Index (IVI)

Each of the ideas, solutions proposed for the desired solution will have an impact on stakeholders. This indicator measures

the three main impacts: social impact (acceptable), technological impact (feasible), and environmental impact (sustainable).
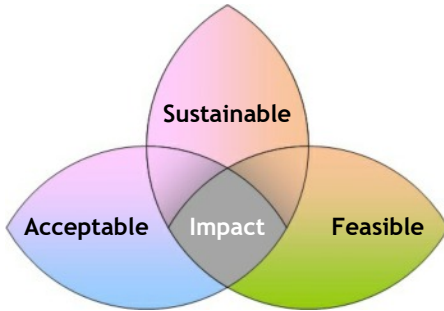
Figure 4 : the three impacts of value (IVI)

The Impact Value Index (IVI) of new ideas is often represented using the Eisenhower matrix, with feasibility on the x-axis, acceptability on the y-axis, and the size or colour of the bubbles representing sustainability.
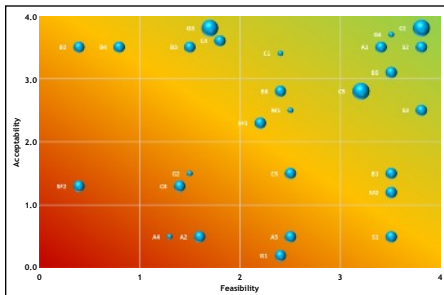
Figure 5 : Visual representation of IVI

The cumulative of these 3 values (BVI, SVI, and IVI) is named the **Total Benefits Index** (TBI), which allows measuring the benefits, the numerator of the value ratio.

Let's calculate the denominator by measuring the costs (resource consumption).

The Life Cycle Cost (LCC)

As previously mentioned, this indicator depends on the nature of the potential initiative. The value can be:

- Monetary (Dollars, Euros, Yen, Pounds, Rupees, Francs...)

- Temporal (Hours, minutes...)

- Volumetric (m², m³)

- Of different resources (CO_2, energy, water...)

- Etc…

This indicator must consider the consumption of these resources throughout the life cycle of the future solution. In the case of economic measurement, the life cycle costing or total cost of ownership technique will be used to define the measure. Other economic ratios can also be used, such as Return on Investment (ROI), Net Present Value (NPV), etc.

The Eco-Value Index (EVI)

By combining these indicators, it is possible to measure the estimated value of solutions.

The simplest, the classic Value Index: **VI = BVI / LCC**

The most comprehensive, the Eco-Value Index: **EVI = TBI / LCC**

The value of each solution can be represented as a line, where the horizontal axis represents resource consumption (LCC) and the vertical axis represents satisfaction of needs (BVI or TBI). The steepest line corresponds to the solution with the highest value.
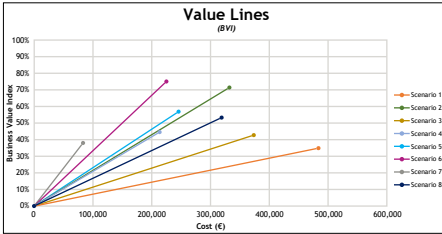
Figure 6 : Visual representation of Solution Value

Conclusion

As a business analyst and specialist in needs, measuring value isn't very complex, because the real complexity lies not in assigning value to solutions but in gathering the "right needs", and you are the champions at that.

Let's build these indicators, and you'll become champions of value!

Cédric Berger, CBAP®, VMA®, Dean of Value University, see more information about Value Methods on linkedin : www.linkedin.com/in/cedricberger/ and youtube : Université Valeur - YouTube

From Requirements to Reality: How Business Analysts Will Adapt and Lead in the Industry 5.0 Era

Shreya Panchal

Imagine a bustling emergency room in a hospital. A team of nurses scurries around, their movements a well-rehearsed dance. But at the centre, calmly dissecting the situation, is the doctor. They analyse symptoms, consult specialists, and formulate a plan—all while the patient's condition can change in an instant. This is the world of a Business Analyst (BA) in the era of Industry 5.0.

The industrial landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation in the current decade. Industry 4.0 ushered in a wave of interconnectedness, with cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, and artificial intelligence (AI) weaving themselves into the fabric of production. Machines began a real-time dialogue, exchanging data and optimising processes. Factories equipped with intelligent sensors that monitor equipment health, allowed for predictive maintenance. Production lines, guided by AI algorithms, became marvels of efficiency. Supply chains,

once rigid, gained a newfound agility. And now comes Industry 5.0 – also called automation with a soul; which recognises the irreplaceable value of human ingenuity and collaboration. The focus shifts from automation alone to a powerful synergy between humans and digital solutions.

Industry 5.0 doesn't seek to dismantle Industry 4.0 advancements. Instead, it builds upon them. It embraces the transformative power of IoT, sensors, automation, and robotics but adds a crucial element—*the human touch*. This new phase places humans centre stage. It's about forging a collaborative environment where technology empowers and complements human intelligence. While Industry 4.0 championed automation and advanced tech, Industry 5.0 champions a harmonious co-existence.

This shift recognises a fundamental truth: technology, while powerful, cannot solve every challenge alone.

Humans, with their unique problem-solving skills and creativity, are central to progress. Industry 5.0 strives for outcomes that transcend what either humans or machines could achieve in isolation. Industry 5.0 is a collaborative wave, not a disruptive revolution.

From Requirement Gatherer to Ecosystem Orchestrator: The Evolving Role of a BA

"Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." - Michelangelo

Traditionally, BAs acted as the bridge between business needs and technical solutions. Their primary focus resembled the sculptor meticulously studying the rough stone, outlining requirements, documenting processes, and ensuring project deliverables aligned with business goals. This approach served well for well-defined projects with clear objectives, much like a sculptor working with a predefined design.

Industry 5.0 prioritises human-centred technology and sustainability as its main tenets. This necessitates a shift from simply meeting business needs to creating solutions that benefit both people and the planet. This is where the limitations of the traditional BA role come into play. Their focus on internal requirements might not fully consider the user experience or the environmental impact of the proposed solution.

Industry 5.0 operates in a dynamic ecosystem unlike the controlled environment of a factory line. Emerging technologies like AI and Big Data blur the lines between the physical and digital, creating a constant state of flux. Traditional business analysis, focused solely on gathering static requirements, falls short in this dynamic environment.

The BA of Industry 5.0 needs to evolve from a requirement gatherer to an ecosystem orchestrator. Just like a doctor expertly navigating a medical emergency, the BA must ensure human well-being and environmental responsibility are central to every decision. To thrive in this environment, BAs must become masters of:

1. Championing the Human-Centric Approach

BAs play a critical role in shaping this future by championing a human-centric approach that prioritises the needs and well-being of the workforce. They must become advocates for the "human-in-the-loop" concept, ensuring that technology empowers workers through digital devices like wearables and intelligent assistants.

The core principle is to leverage technology to adapt production processes to worker needs, not the other way around. This isn't just about asking "what can we do with new technology?" but rather, "how can technology make work better for our people?" BAs must play a crucial role in gathering insights into worker tasks and working environments. They must focus on automating repetitive tasks, thereby freeing up workers to focus on higher-level cognitive tasks that require human

judgement and creativity.

Achieving this human-centric future requires close collaboration between workers and BAs throughout the design and deployment of new technologies. This includes robotics, AI, and other Industry 5.0 advancements. BAs must champion the concept of the "extended operator", where workers' capabilities are augmented with innovative tools like AR/VR, wearables, and intelligent assistants. Collaborative robots and big data analytics further empower workers, ensuring humans remain central to production while maximising benefits for both the company and the workforce.

2. Building Resilience and being the Architect of Adaptability

Industry 5.0 demands a shift from fragile, just-in-time production models to a more robust and resilient approach. This means building robustness against disruptions, fostering adaptability to changing circumstances, and ultimately, ensuring long-term sustainability. Business Analysts (BAs) are uniquely positioned to champion this shift by becoming architects of adaptability. The key to resilience lies in developing strategic value chains, production capacity, and business processes that are not just efficient, but also flexible.

By analysing data across the factory floor, supply network, and industrial system levels, BAs can identify potential weak points susceptible to disruption. This vulnerability mapping is crucial for prioritising areas where resilience needs to be strengthened. Gone are the days of rigid, long-term plans.

BAs must embrace constant iteration, incorporating real-time data and user feedback to continuously improve processes and adapt to changing market demands.

3. Being the Greenprint Analyst

Industry 5.0 demands not just efficiency, but also a commitment to environmental responsibility. Business Analysts (BAs) can become "greenprint analysts," championing sustainability by fostering a shift towards circular processes. This means reusing, repurposing, and recycling resources, minimising waste and environmental impact. BAs can work with engineers to leverage technologies like AI and additive manufacturing to optimise energy consumption, resource efficiency, and minimise waste.

By fostering innovation in sustainable practices, BAs can empower businesses to realise their potential as pillars of a transformative future. By embracing this challenge, BAs can play a critical role in shaping a future where industry thrives in harmony with the environment.

BAs can ensure Industry 5.0 ushers in an era that values not just efficiency, but also a more empowered, inclusive and sustainable work environment.

Shreya Panchal is a seasoned business analyst with a talent for implementing data-driven solutions and streamlining complex processes in the supply chain sector, specifically within the agro-chemical and oil-gas industries. Connect with her on LinkedIn to exchange ideas and opportunities.

Why Is a Raven like a Writing Desk?

Nick de Voil

Differences and similarities

I recently watched a news segment where a pair of identical twin sisters were interviewed. Strangely, when seeing them both together, it wasn't the similarities that stood out, but rather the differences in their appearance. It was easy to tell them apart. And yet, when you only saw one of them at a time, it was hard to know which one you were looking at.

This tells us something about the way that people perceive the world around them, and explains why Group Construct Analysis (GCA) can shed light on that process. This understanding can help business analysts take a systematic approach to understanding their stakeholders.

Classification

As apprehended by any human, the world is full of things, people and events. We start learning to distinguish things of different classes at an early age. How do we do this? What is it about a thing that makes it an example of one class rather than another? The answer is simple: we compare it to something else and decide whether they're similar or not. But our conclusion will depend on what we compare it with.

Imagine a child living in a housing development in, let's say, Coventry city centre. Every day they see pigeons outside. They've never seen any other kind of bird. To them, the words *pigeon* and *bird* are synonymous. If someone asked, "what is a bird?" they might point

at a pigeon and say, "there's one!" — which would be a good answer. Alternatively, they might say, "It's a flying animal about 40cm long with grey markings and two wings, which makes cooing noises". If asked, "what sorts of birds are there?" they might talk about variations in markings.

As an informed but unbiased observer, an analyst might reply, "Well, that's partly right, because all birds are flying animals with two wings. But you're making some unwarranted generalisations there. Not all birds are about 40cm long, have grey markings or make cooing noises."

The Universe of Discourse

Of course, we'd be wrong: not all birds are flying animals. We'd have fallen into the same trap as the child — except that they did so through lack of knowledge, whereas we did through carelessness. Specifically, we made an assumption about the **Universe of Discourse** (UOD). This term refers to the assumed geographical and temporal **frame** (see article 12) which underlies every conversation, but is hardly ever made explicit. Very likely we were only considering birds that are indigenous to the UK, unlike penguins, ostriches or kiwis.

Because people don't normally specify their UOD when conversing, a business analyst needs to be on the alert for the restrictions that are normally applied in a particular workplace or by a particular individual. Bear in mind:

- When making a statement or asking a question, be explicit about the UOD. If you're only talking about one geographical area or timeframe, or restricting the UOD in some other way, such as to one project or department, then say so.

- Be sure that the person answering your questions is in the same UOD. The participants to a conversation are often inhabiting different universes. And even if not, people have a tendency to get carried away by a train of thought and switch UODs without realising it – so keep checking.

- Remember that the person answering your questions may lack knowledge of the possible alternatives. An individual's experience constrains their construct system. The same is true of a group. It's your job to help them consider other possibilities. The better you understand their experience, the better able you are to predict gaps in their construct system.

- Never forget that your own construct system is also limited in ways that, by definition, you aren't aware of. Always be looking for indications of this, and trying to expand your construct system. The saying "To a person with a hammer, everything looks like a nail" is a statement about construct systems.

Usually, when drawing a construct map, we don't show the UOD, because it's ephemeral. However, sometimes I draw a labelled box around the entire diagram or a section of it, to represent the individual's or group's UOD, either

because it's habitual or because it's relevant to the current context. The examples below show how widening the UOD results in a richer system which will generally both contain more problems and afford more possibilities.
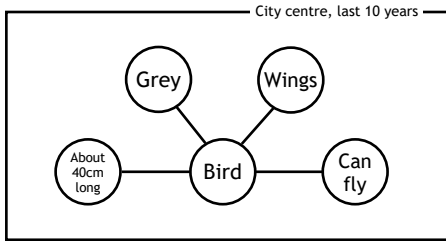
Figure 1: the child's system
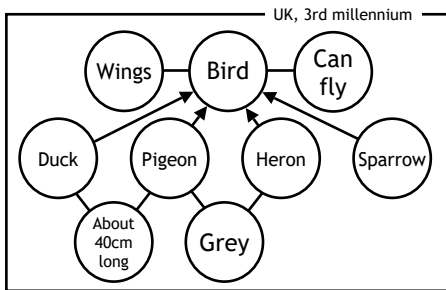
Figure 2: the analyst's system
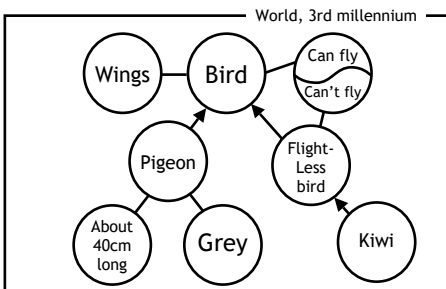
Figure 3: UOD further expanded

Categorisation

So we assign things to classes on the basis of their similarities and dissimilarities to other things. Not only is this how an individual forms their constructs, but it also gives us a way of exploring that person's construct system. We can analyse their thinking about similarities and differences using the **repertory grid** technique (see article 5). The key principle here is that you can only see the similarity between two things (think of those twins) by comparing them, not just to each other, but also to a third, dissimilar thing.

Whether explicitly or informally, for most of the 2,300 years since Aristotle, the received wisdom has been that things can only be classified in one correct way, as exemplified by Linnaeus' hierarchical taxonomy of biological species. Determining this one correct way was the task of first philosophers, then theologians, then scientists. The assignment of any given thing to a class is often considered a matter of identifying and evaluating the **attributes** relevant to the class, such as

- CanFly
- HasWings
- Length
- Colour

Over the last 150 years this belief in the "one true way", often associated with the word **classification,** has been dismantled in many academic disciplines, but it lingers on in people's construct systems, and in some approaches to analysis.

We can contrast this with **categorisation**, which recognises that there are always multiple differing and

overlapping ways of thinking about anything, because each person's construct system is formed by their unique experience. Not only is GCA a categorisation-based approach, but also it's one where attributes don't play an important role. If a concept is important, then it's usually treated as a construct in its own right rather than as a subsidiary element of another construct.

Understanding stakeholders' construct systems is about understanding the different ways that they categorise things. As we saw in article 12, an important part of the business analyst's job is to facilitate communication amongst stakeholders. Techniques based on categorisation, such as a GCA workshop, are an excellent way of doing this. This can include asking questions like Lewis Carroll's famous riddle from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* which forms the title of this article.

Nick 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 "User Experience Foundations" and is working on a book about Group Construct Analysis.

Contact Nick via LinkedIn

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

Why Stakeholder Motivation Drives Engagement

Nicola Livingstone

Stakeholder engagement. It's a term commonly used in the project world, but how often do we really delve deep enough to understand individual stakeholder motivations and their reasons for being part of a project?

A stakeholder analysis can sometimes feel a bit like a shopping list – 'I'll need a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in each area, a product owner, a sponsor, a core project team of a solution architect, a developer, a tester…' the list goes on. We don't always get to choose who fills each of these roles, often the people are assigned to the project based on their skill set and position. We understand the 'why' of their participation—specialist knowledge, decision maker, etc, but that isn't enough. We need to understand their personal 'why'.

Take, for example, an operations manager assigned to a project because their team will be directly impacted by what the project is looking to deliver. They could be a promoter: someone who embraces change, is completely in support of the project and wants to be involved as much as possible. Or they might be a detractor who views the proposed change as something that will create additional work and inconvenience for them or their team. Their purpose and role on the project doesn't change based on their

perspective, but the *way* you need to engage them absolutely does.

Recognise Promoters and Detractors

It is important to recognise that there will be promoters and detractors in any given context, as well as people who are somewhere in between. People can also shift from being a promoter to a detractor, and vice versa.

A promoter can be an ally in workshops and meetings, someone who will be happy to support the initiative publicly. However it's important to remember they may have a rose-tinted view of what they think the project will deliver. They may be hesitant to raise risks or concerns because they are invested in seeing the project succeed. This can result in potential issues not being identified and resolved as early as they should be, putting the whole project at risk.

In contrast, a detractor may look for any and every opportunity to make the project fail, creating chaos and obstacles to try and hinder progress. Their perspective could be a result of issues experienced on this or previous projects which has tainted their view of projects in general. Sometimes it could simply be a personality clash between the detractor and others in the project team and not actually related to the project or its deliverables at all.

How you engage a stakeholder is also important in influencing their perspective. An operations manager will most likely be time-poor, especially if they are involved in several different projects/initiatives in addition to being responsible for the day-to-day management of their teams. Inviting them to every single meeting and discussion regardless of its purpose could disengage them as a stakeholder if they feel it's overload and disrespectful of their time. Alternatively, if they are not invited to every meeting they may see this as them being excluded from the project and having their participation and contribution undervalued. Engagement of a stakeholder can directly impact and shift their perception and motivation if it is not personalised to their specific needs and wants.

Understanding the point of view and personal motivation of a stakeholder is one of the most important ways of getting them on board with the project because it allows us to utilise their energy, understand and address their concerns and try to find a common ground and outcome that is positive for everyone. You may discover that the detractor is correct, the project hasn't been properly scoped and potential benefits have been exaggerated. Or it could be that they have been negatively impacted by previous projects promising unrealistic benefits and they need to have that trust rebuilt. There will be instances where the motivation of the stakeholder is in direct conflict with the project deliverables and there is no way to bring them on board. In these scenarios we must still work at finding an outcome that balances the needs of the stakeholders as much as possible,

whilst recognising and acknowledging that we cannot resolve every concern.

Analyse Motivations with the ALL Technique

That brings us to the big question – how can we understand the perspectives and motivations of individual stakeholders? There is no magic answer to this question, we need to rely on our skills as BAs to understand what's driving them, starting with what I call the 'ALL' technique:

Ask: Ask what their motivation is. Either ask the person who nominated them to be part of the project team, or just ask the stakeholder themselves. What are their thoughts on the project? What are they hoping to get out of it and what are the positives and negatives that they see? Be curious, understand why they are there and tailor your engagement with them to align with the outcomes they are looking for.

Look: Observe everything! Look at their body language, their non-verbal cues. Are there topics or discussions where they suddenly sit up and pay attention? Have they slumped back in their chair disengaged with a negative or defensive posture? These are all clues that can be used to have follow up discussions with the stakeholder to understand their feelings and either try to address them (if negative) or use their positive point of view to help promote the value of the project to a wider audience.

Listen: Listen to their language and tone of voice. Are there times when they seem excited and animated? Do they appear argumentative or dismissive when others speak? Do they repeat certain past experiences on projects that have been positive or negative? Active listening is a key skill for business analysts - learn to hear what *isn't* being said.

Understanding Increases Success

Truly understanding the personal motivation of a stakeholder is key to successful engagement. We all know how to use a template, write a requirement, plan an approach. But a project succeeds or fails because of the people and the dynamics delivering it. One of our core skills as BAs is our ability to use a variety of tools and techniques to understand people and their motivations, making sure we tailor our approach to get the best outcome. It's sometimes too easy to get lost in the structure and methodology and we can forget the most important factor in the success of a project—the people. It takes time and effort to get to really know and understand our stakeholders and their differing needs and wants, but it is always time well spent and can build trusting relationships that add value long after the project ends.

Nicola is a Senior BA Consultant with NRI-ANZ and has over 15 years experience as a business analyst across multiple industries. Outside of work she's navigating the wild and exhausting world of puberty with her teenage son. If you can relate or send help then connect with Nicola on Linkedin

Unlocking Productivity: How Business Analysts Can Leverage AI

Rod Simpson

It is said that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will not lead to mass redundancies, but rather people who use AI will replace people who don't. In this context, let's explore how Business Analysts (BAs) can significantly enhance their productivity and effectiveness by incorporating AI tools like ChatGPT into their workflows. This approach not only streamlines a BA's tasks but also positions them favourably in an increasingly digital-oriented job market.

ChatGPT to Streamline Meeting Minutes

As BAs, we regularly need to take minutes from meetings, workshops or interviews. Although tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams can help us, we don't always have access to those. Tools such as ChatGPT can assist us in at least two ways: it can take dictation and convert this into meeting minutes, and it can take a scanned copy of hand-written notes and convert that into meeting minutes. Both of these functions save us the time of rekeying the information. These options are further explained below.

1. Dictation Using Browser Extensions

One way of enabling AI dictation is to install a browser extension such as 'VoiceWave: ChatGPT voice control' . This tool integrates directly into the browser and provides an easy-to-use interface for dictating notes. Dictate directly into ChatGPT and ask it to create minutes based on the text. It is advisable to say the attendees names but also spell them out loud the first time the name is mentioned.

I would recommend using a prompt of 'create minutes of the following meeting'.

This can be done directly after the meeting or from your written notes. If

you are using VoiceWave I would recommend altering the settings and changing the value of 'don't send messages automatically' to on. If this setting isn't changed, the system may interpret a pause in speaking as an enter key and thereby truncate the minutes prematurely.

2. Digital Transformation of Handwritten Notes (Paid Versions Only)

We can either scan or take a digital photo of our notes taken during the meeting. This can be done using either png, jpg or pdf format and attach the file to a chat in ChatGPT. Then using the same prompt as before the system will produce minutes.

Please note you can just write bullet points which should include who was saying them and that will suffice for ChatGPT to generate what is needed.

Once ChatGPT has generated the minutes then simply cut and paste into the format you desire, whether it is word, doc or email.

ChatGPT for Spreadsheet Formula

Who hasn't spent a frustrating afternoon trying to figure out some Excel or Google Sheets formula? Well, ChatGPT might be able to help you. To get the most effective result it is important to phrase the question well and ask it to create a formula, while also specifying whether you require a formula for Excel or Google Sheets. Once it has produced a formula, you can just copy and paste it into the relevant cells in your spreadsheet. You do need to be very careful about defining which columns you're interested in and how it is all going to work, but it takes a lot of the strain out of what we are doing.

Modelling with ChatGPT

Modelling is an important part of our job as BAs. Something people don't often realise is that there are mark-up languages similar to HTML such as PlantUML as well as another called Mermaid. These mark-up languages can be used to generate models. I will add a proviso about these models: they are not easily manipulated, you can't drag items within the model around. However, these models can be imported into Visio, Draw.io, Lucid, or even whiteboards such as Miro. What you will do is send a piece of text, either as an attachment or as actual copied text, into ChatGPT and then ask the chat to create a specific type of model generated in either PlantUML or Mermaid.

Here is an example of a Use case diagram created in PlantUML all I did was attach text stating the users and the functional requirements they could use.
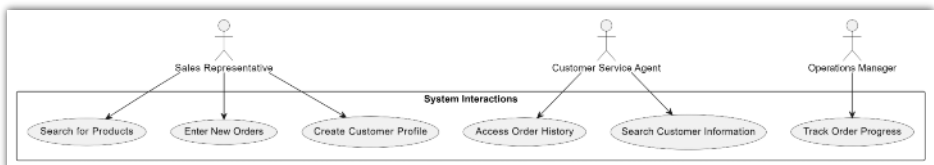
Privacy and ChatGPT

A lot of people have been concerned about privacy in ChatGPT. Well, if you're not paying for it, I think this is something you have to accept is going to happen. However, if you have either ChatGPT+, ChatGPT Teams, or ChatGPT Enterprise, there are solutions. ChatGPT Enterprise will not hold on to details of your conversations or use them for training purposes; that is explicitly stated within its offering. The same applies to ChatGPT Teams. When it comes to ChatGPT+, there is now a new feature where you can state something is a temporary chat. If it is a temporary chat, they will hold on to it for 30 days, but only for misuse and abuse purposes, not for training or for sharing in any other way.

In summary, AI is not going to replace the role of the business analyst, but smart BAs will use it to augment their practice and seek efficiencies. If you aren't already experimenting with AI, I'd highly recommend you give it a go!

Rod Simpson is an independent trainer working with Metadata Training Ltd. If you are interested in learning more about how BAs can leverage ChatGPT, Metadata Training offers free lunch-and-learn sessions on a regular basis covering this subject. Please visit the Metadata Training website for details.
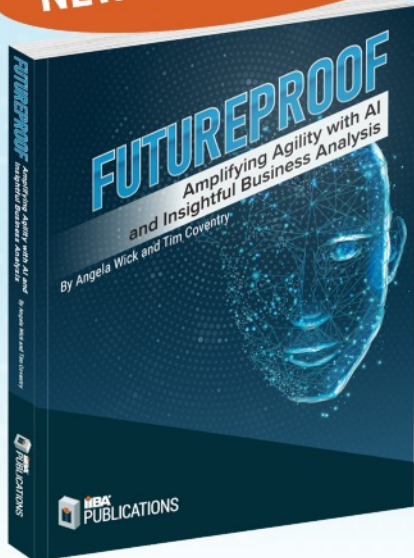
Overcoming Documentation Hurdles: BAs in Iterative Software Development

Younis Malik

If you've made a transition as a BA from traditional linear software development to a more iterative model, you've likely encountered the challenges associated with documentation.

Before delving deeper into these challenges, it's essential to understand how the two models differ in their approaches to documentation. In traditional software development methodologies, such as the waterfall model, documentation reigns supreme. Extensive documentation, including Business Requirements Documents (BRDs) and Functional Specifications Documents (FSDs), is meticulously prepared before development begins. These documents aim to capture all project requirements upfront, providing a comprehensive blueprint for the entire development process.

On the other hand, in iterative models like agile, documentation takes on a more dynamic and flexible role. Documentation in agile is lighter and more iterative, focusing on capturing immediate needs and allowing for adjustments throughout the development

lifecycle. Examples of documentation in this model include user stories, acceptance criteria, and visual prototypes.

As Mike Cohn puts it in his book *User Stories Applied*, it is comprehensive vs dynamic documentation.

Now that we've established the fundamental differences in documentation approaches between traditional and iterative models, let's delve deeper into the challenges faced by business analysts in navigating this transition and what type of adjustments are involved to overcome these challenges.

Challenges: Mindset Shift

This, in my opinion, is the primary challenge like in any other transition we make whether in our personal or professional lives. In traditional software development the mindset often revolves around the rigid structure and detailed upfront planning. Some BAs are used to spending significant time and effort in creating the big bulky requirement documents.

As stated by Ryland Leyton in his book, *The Agile Business Analyst: Moving from Waterfall to Agile*, BAs accustomed to waterfall methodologies need a significant mindset shift. They must embrace the principles of agility, focusing on collaboration, flexibility, and responsiveness to change. They must embrace the idea that requirements will evolve over time, and

documentation should reflect this dynamic nature.

Another important factor that would require a mindset shift is the challenge of overcoming *resistance to change,* both within oneself and among stakeholders. BAs may encounter scepticism from team members accustomed to traditional methodologies and may struggle to advocate for the benefits of iterative approaches. Overcoming this resistance requires patience, perseverance, and effective communication to demonstrate the value of embracing agility and flexibility in software development.

Communication over Documentation

This specific challenge associated with transitioning documentation practices might result in diminished confidence and apprehensions regarding potential failure. Nevertheless, BAs must enhance their interpersonal abilities, such as communication, collaboration, and active listening. Despite the hurdles it presents, this challenge can be managed.

In the book *Agile Business Analysis: Practical Guidance for IT Professionals* Debra Paul and Lynda Girvan argue that BAs can adapt their communication practices to fit within iterative documentation frameworks. Since Iterative methodologies favour lighter documentation formats, BAs need to learn how to effectively capture and communicate requirements in these concise and flexible formats.

Comfort with Ambiguity and Uncertainty

Traditional software development often follows a linear and predictable path, with requirements being finalised upfront. BAs may find comfort in this certainty but struggle with the ambiguity inherent in iterative models. In agile, requirements are fluid and subject to change based on ongoing feedback and iteration. BAs must become comfortable with uncertainty, embracing change as a natural part of the development process and adapting documentation practices accordingly.

Collaborative Approach

If you come from a traditional software development background you tend to follow a more structured and formalised approach to documentation. There is very limited interaction between different project roles and phases. However, in the case of the Iterative methodologies emphasis is on collaboration and cross-functional teamwork. BAs need to work closely with developers, testers, product owners, and other stakeholders to co-create solutions and ensure a shared understanding of project goals and requirements. This collaborative approach requires BAs to adopt a more holistic view of the project and actively engage with the entire project team.

Continuous Learning and Improvement

While the approach to ongoing development and growth may vary between traditional software development models and agile, business analysts remain committed to refining their documentation skills and methodologies to ensure project success.

The shift to iterative methodologies represents a process of continual learning and advancement for BAs. They must stay abreast of emerging agile practices, tools, and methodologies, actively pursuing opportunities for professional growth and sharing knowledge within both their organisational context and the broader business analyst community.

Impact of the Transition

Transitioning from traditional documentation-heavy approaches to iterative methodologies can have a significant impact on the workflow and effectiveness of business analysts (BAs). Particularly in terms of managing fragmented requirements and maintaining focus on product functionality.

Managing Fragmented Requirements

Since in iterative methodologies requirements are captured incrementally and iteratively, unlike in traditional software development this transition can pose challenges for BAs in managing fragmented requirements effectively. Instead of having a single, comprehensive document outlining all project requirements, BAs must now track and manage a dynamic set of user

stories and acceptance criteria that evolve throughout the development process.

This is one of the most common challenges faced by BAs that I have interacted with. To overcome this challenge, BAs may need to adopt new tools and techniques for requirements management, such as agile project management software or collaborative online platforms, to effectively capture, prioritise, and track fragmented requirements in an iterative environment.

Maintaining Focus on Product Functionality

Another impact BAs may see whilst transitioning is on maintaining focus on product functionality amidst changing requirements and priorities. Since focus here is on delivering incremental value to users through iterative releases and feedback cycles, BAs must ensure that each iteration of the product delivers tangible functionality that aligns with user needs and business goals.

This requires BAs to prioritise requirements based on their business value and impact, collaborating closely with stakeholders to identify and validate the most critical features and functionality for each iteration.

Workflow and Effectiveness

The transition fundamentally changes the workflow and effectiveness of BAs. Instead of spending extensive time upfront on documentation, BAs must now allocate more time to ongoing collaboration, communication, and adaptation throughout the development process.

While this shift may initially disrupt established workflows, it ultimately enhances the effectiveness of BAs by fostering greater agility, responsiveness, and alignment with evolving project needs and stakeholder priorities.

BAs may need to develop new skills and competencies, such as facilitation, negotiation, and prioritisation, to effectively navigate the challenges posed by managing fragmented requirements and maintaining focus on product functionality in iterative environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, business analysis is just as crucial in iterative and adaptive lifecycles as it is in predictive, linear lifecycles. The factors outlined in this article provide a guide for those making the transition from a linear to an adaptive, iterative lifecycle. Crucially, it's important for us to always be adapting and learning—and a change of delivery approach is a perfect opportunity to upskill and learn!

Younis Malik is a seasoned Senior Business Analyst currently providing consultancy for a prominent logistics company based in Europe. With over 17 years of diverse IT experience, he brings a wealth of knowledge and insight to the table. You can reach out to him at www.linkedin.com/in/unismalik/.
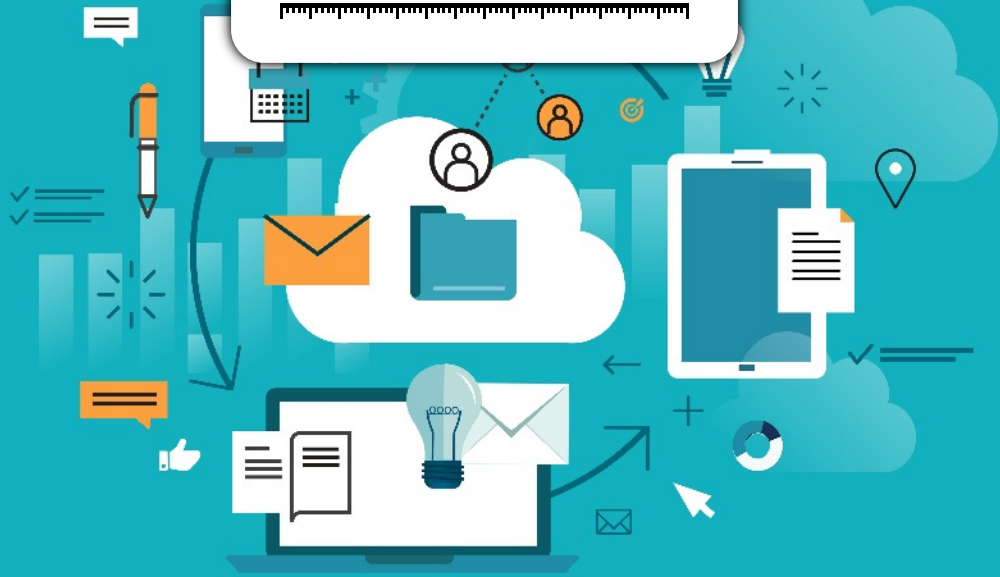
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Mohamed Zahran

Interviewed by Christina Lovelock

Mohamed Zahran is a business architect and business analysis consultant, and was the founding president of the IIBA® Egypt chapter. This interview took place while Mohamed was in the UK, keeping up with his professional learning and certification, by undertaking an in-depth architecture course and exams.

What is getting your time and attention at the moment?

I'm working on two different things. One is about using AI to really support

business analysis, using tools like ChatGPT and other tools that are available, to give us time back, so we can really focus our efforts on our stakeholders. That's the main idea, we need to collaborate more with stakeholders, not spend a lot of time documenting requirements!

The second one is about security. In the last two years, I have shifted my focus onto security, not only at the system level but at the enterprise level. Now I'm working with e-finance and the financial sector in Egypt to develop a local tailored framework, looking at business risks from a security perspective, thinking about how we can design our applications and services to be more secure from the start. It's not only about the IT, but all different perspectives, like financial, HR, performance and process.

How does your business analysis background help you do that?

If you look at any architecture framework, TOGAF, Zachman, all of them, at the core of all of them is business analysis! You cannot do any architecture without knowing the business and no one is able to know the business better than a business analyst!

Your work is quite varied, how do you describe what you do?

In Egypt every time someone asks me what I do, I say I'm the tailor. You came to me with a problem, and I will tailor a solution that fits you exactly right, and is only for you. And that solution is based on your requirements. I use this description all the time, even with the

government! So, I am the solution tailor.

What led you to business analysis?

It was part of my study at university, I was studying management information systems. I have worked in varied roles, from network to development to project management. In every role I had, I kept saying "I need to understand more of the business so I can do this in a better way". So, in 2008, I started hearing about the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®), I learned a lot about business analysis, and memorised version two of the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK®) Guide and that's what got me started in business analysis.

What aspects of business analysis do you enjoy most?

I enjoy it when you come into a room and a lot of people are sitting there with a problem, but they are just asking the wrong questions. And then, I am able to help them, and provide a road map, and we figure it out. We define how we can move forward step-by-step and finally you find something whether it's a tool or a process or whatever, that will be the output of this project or initiative, and will address real business problems.

But what I really like, and I remind myself of this every day, "I'm not going to work to develop software. I'm using what I learned as a business analyst, all my experience, all the tools and techniques I have learned, to tailor a solution, and make life better for someone on this planet". Whatever I am working on, it's always making

something better, making life better for someone. This is what I tell myself every day in the morning.

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

Back when I started, and in Egypt especially, it was not easy to find a training programme or resources about business analysis. This was the main trigger for me to start the IIBA® chapter in Egypt. At that time, I was hiring business analysts to work on my team, and I couldn't find anyone! I kept asking people, "where did you get your training?" The main answer was that they had just read from the Internet, no specific training.

So, I thought if I could have 100 professionally trained business analysts working in government agencies, what would the impact be? What could we achieve? I wish we had learned about business analysis and had more resources earlier, but it's all part of the journey!

What or who have been some of the strongest influences on your career?

It wasn't a business analyst, it was a professor at my university. He's an investment professor, he's not in technology, but he dedicated the first semester to learning about how to define requirements. It was how to define requirements for investment like if you are building an investment portfolio, how you balance it. And he was the one who pushed me to go in that direction, to really think about requirements and solutions.

How do you make sure that you keep learning now?

Whatever I'm doing, I have to keep learning. If you stop learning, you're out of the game. I always want to make sure that I am capable of providing more value for my society and my company. Part of my master's degree was about artificial intelligence, but I still have to keep learning after the master's, about prompt engineering and other areas. Things are changing so quickly and I have to keep learning something new.

What are you most proud of from your career so far?

I was working on a project about five years ago. It was linked to the United Nation programme for the poverty line. One day I was at the grievance office, where people went if they were having problems or issues, and we needed to help them figure out what had happened. I was there visiting the team, getting a sense of what's happening in real life after the system had been live for some time. I was just visiting because I like to know how people actually use my systems and services. An elderly lady came in, she didn't know me, she didn't know anyone. She came in, and was having problems with a payment. We were able to do the calculation right there, and put the money onto a smart card for her. She was just so happy and so grateful, it meant so much to her and her family. I wish I could have taken a picture of her, but this was one moment I will never forget. This is what has motivated me to keep working, to keep finding a new challenge and new ways

of helping people.

Is there anything that you haven't done yet that you hope to explore or achieve in the future?

There is still a lot of challenge in letting people know what a business analyst can do to provide a positive impact. I still work with a lot of agencies, and a lot of corporate organisations that are wasting a lot of resources, just by jumping directly to the solution before even thinking about what is actually needed.

We still need to put a lot of effort into spreading the idea of business analysis, allowing the training to be more affordable for people. Good, accredited training has such a positive impact, not just on the person doing it, but for their whole society. I wish we could find a way to make it much more affordable, but still be economically viable.

I am also interested in figuring out how to make best use of AI. It's changing everything on the planet, it's going to change how we develop systems, and it's exciting.

This is your chance to give a shout out for something or someone that's inspired you that you want other people to know about.

There are so many great events these days, and people should look at IIBA® events and support those. But I want to mention a book, not a technology or analysis book, but a novel, by Paulo Coelho called The Alchemist. When you read it as an analyst, you start reading between the lines. I like that a lot.

And a person who has inspired me is a cardiologist, named Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub. He was born in Egypt and trained in London. He was very well known and respected in the UK, then suddenly he moved back to Cairo to open a charity, to provide heart surgery in Egypt for free. Not only that, but he also managed to transfer all his experience to a young doctor. I read his biography and he highlighted that it's not about what I achieve when I'm alive, it's about what will happen to all that knowledge and experience, I have to transfer it to someone so humanity can keep using it. That's really inspiring to me.

Connect with Mohamed via LinkedIn.

About the interviewer:

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

VIEWPOINTS

On social media, we posed the question

"What is your favourite BA tool or technique, and why?"

Wireframing, as it starts discussions. People naturally want to improve or correct what they see, helping us arrive at the best solution.

Raymond Led Carasco

To avoid getting into a fixed routine, I regularly try out a different technique, because there is indeed so much choice, that makes work as a #BA extra fun and educational!

Wouter Nieuwenburg

Use Cases and Scenarios are indispensable techniques in business analysis for defining functional requirements of a system or software. A use case outlines how a user interacts with a system to achieve specific goals, while a scenario details the sequence of events that occur in response to those interactions. These techniques help business analysts communicate complex ideas by breaking them into manageable units, ensuring all stakeholders understand the requirements. Use cases and scenarios also help identify potential issues early, allowing for timely adjustments during development. By providing concrete examples and detailed step-by-step descriptions, they clarify functional requirements and uncover gaps or inconsistencies before implementation.

These techniques are my favourites because they offer a structured approach to capturing and validating requirements, leading to more effective and efficient system development. They also facilitate clear communication among stakeholders, ensuring everyone is on the same page, which is crucial for successful project outcomes.

Lalita Lalwani

My favourite BA tool is the Logical Data Model (LDM): the diagram showing "things" in the real world and the relationships between them.

In my experience the LDM can be overlooked because we're focused on (say) the Business Process Model (BPM). And anyway developers do data don't they? Of course they do, but we do it differently. We have a whole-of-system view and bring a user's lens. We are not burdened by physical implementation.

Discussing an LDM with a customer is one of the few times I have had a "wow". A picture showing the entities they knew well and how they linked together was a revelation to them. The diagram had them fully engaged, provided good conversation and clarified requirements that would otherwise have been missed or been identified later. Finally, not to be underestimated, it gave them confidence that I understood their business. Long live the LDM!

Jeff Rayment

Domain Story Telling (domainstorytelling.org) - it is not limited solely to BA, but it is my tool of choice if it comes to capturing stories from users & customers. Domain Story Telling enables me to capture how people collaborate, discuss aspects of a specific domain, establish a shared language and to uncover fresh perspectives from a unexplored realms.

In a very simple and versatile way which does not need any extensive training or complex framework. By only following a few simple rules (see domainstorytelling.org/quick-start-guide) you can achieve remarkable outcomes in brief sessions.

Gottfried Szing

Functional Decomp. Most projects have been wide and deep. Using functional decomp helps to see the whole. Break it down. Not become discouraged at the size and complexity. It's a way to manage the approach to climbing and learning a massive project. Helps narrow the scope.

Jenny Stein

The '5 Why's' technique. So often people present you with a solution to the problem rather than the problem itself. The '5 Why's' technique allows you to uncover the actual problem that needs to be solved.

David Smith

My favourite BA tool/technique is the curious mind. Curiosity, and interest in the people and the things they do in their day-to-day business. Out of that come the opportunities, wishes, requirements, etc. to improve. And all other tools and techniques should follow that same path: start with the people, the organisation and how it really works. At the BA conference in 2023, various polls and discussions on BA superpowers showed the same pattern: visual & modelling techniques can be learned, but its starts with curiosity, empathy, listening, relationship building, etc. etc. If we need to name a physical tool, the humble pen and paper (or equivalents, analogue or digital) are on top.

Danny Kalkhoven

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We don't know what to say.
We have no words. There's so
much going on in the world...
Support the things you believe in,
however you can. One way is via
www.unicef.org but most of all,
be kind. And please, if you can,
help, support or donate