

# *A Navigator To* **BUSINESS ANALYSIS**

*Proven Tips and Tricks to Become a Successful BA*

Sergey Korban

# Is this Book for You?

Do you believe that business analysis is a key to success of projects? Then your understanding of business analysis, knowledge areas, their tasks, techniques and underlying competencies is vital for your success.

Whether you are a student, a software developer, a project manager, or just someone getting started on a journey into the business analysis world and looking to get a better understanding of best practices in this profession, this book is for you!

Already a business analyst but there is a need to take your skills to the next level? Do you want to become a successful business analyst? Here we present business analysis principles tested in real projects with real people. I outline what works, what information needs consideration, and what not to forget while you are on a mission.

This book is for everyone who wants to either start a business analysis career or would like to learn practical tips and tricks to get the job done in an effective way.

Business analysis is not just a discipline in itself. It resides amongst many other disciplines that complement it. And if you explore them a bit and find ways to improve your business analysis skills and tools, then you become a better business analyst yourself, empowered by practical knowledge and ready to use tools.

YOU can become the Business Analyst and YOU can do the business analysis job much better. This book will help you achieve these goals.

# About the Author

Sergey Korban is a business analysis practitioner and mentor with over 33 years of field experience. His experience covers public and private companies in industries such as computer hardware distribution, software retail, automotive (a car dealership chain), ERP systems (business consulting and software development), mobile solutions and utilities.

He has worked on various types of projects (compliance, process improvement, business transformation, technology replacement and upgrades, software implementation to name a few).

Sergey lives in Wellington, the beautiful and windy capital of New Zealand. Sergey works in the energy sector, delivering compliance, business and technology projects following modern BA, PM, ITIL and Agile methodologies.

Sergey is certified in PRINCE2, ITIL and Agile. He contributes to the BA community through his blogs and many articles illustrating different aspects of business analysis and project management.

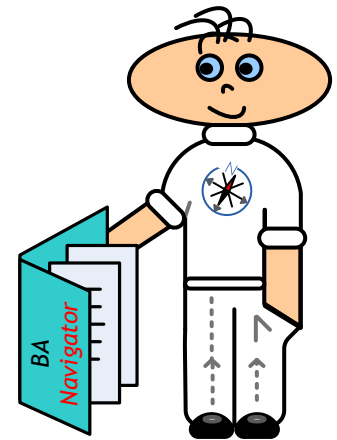
He shares his insights at [aoteastudios.com](http://aoteastudios.com).

# About the BA Navigator

I see that business analysis has become a recognized discipline. Yet, business analysis does not exist on its own. It interacts with many well established disciplines like project management, risk and change management, just to name a few. These interactions enable business analysis to be a valuable link within the value chain of any organization.

If you are new to the business analysis field, you should plan to have:

- ☐ *knowledge* in many business areas
- ☐ soft *skills*
- ☐ practical *experience*
- ☐ *passion* for helping business people to succeed
- ☐ *resilience* in dealing with many types of stakeholders
- ☐ *persistence* in delivering value to the business.



Anyone wishing to become a business analyst should have

- ❑ a strong desire to learn and apply lessons learned into a daily practice
- ❑ resilience to deal with stress and pressure of deadlines
- ❑ ability to effectively re-use and innovate
- ❑ ability to see a holistic picture of things.

You may have experience in engineering, software development or project management. You may be an IT specialist, business consultant, data or quality analyst or someone who wants to get into the BA world. I aim to give any of you a solid foundation in business analysis, make you confident in your knowledge and skills, and transform your experience into solid business analysis skills.

This book gives you a valuable overview of business analysis and practical tools to help you to get the job done.

I also believe that a successful business analyst needs to have

- ❑ a broader view of their work,
- ❑ understanding of business context
- ❑ ability to use best practices from other disciplines supporting business analysis.

This book gives you a good introduction to supporting disciplines to complete the context in which business analysis resides.

# What's in the Book

## Part I Business Analysis

- 1 BA Overview
- 2 BA Core Skills
- 3 BA Lifecycle
- 4 BA Techniques
- 5 BA Techniques-  
Insights
- 6 BA Artifacts

## Part II Beyond Business Analysis

- 7 Enterprise  
Analysis
- 8 Project  
Management
- 9 Service  
Management
- 10 Security  
Management
- 11 Regulation
- 12 SDLC

## Part III Climbing Up

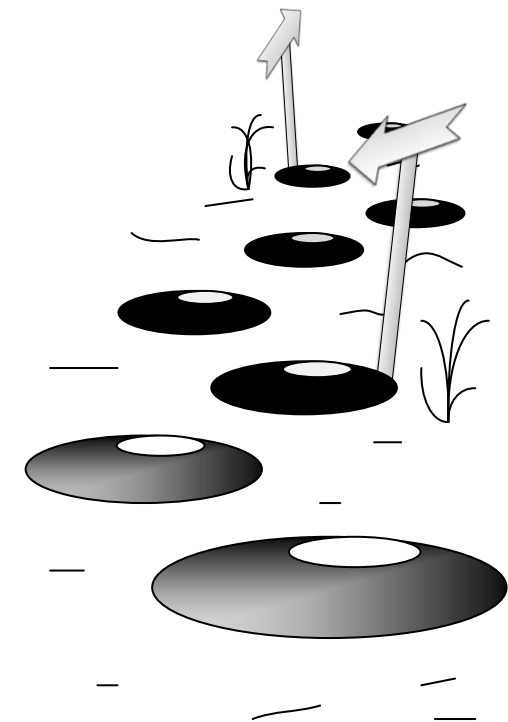
- 13 Build Up Your  
Value

“

A guided tour into a terra  
incognita is better than a  
journey there on your own...

~ Aotea Studios

”

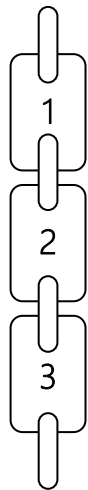


# What is Business Analysis?

Business analysis is becoming an important function in an organisational value chain along with traditional functions such as sales, procurement, marketing, finance, just to name a few.



The core objectives of business analysis are akin to a chain with three links.



1 Explore the current business model of an organisation and its functioning to identify causes of either poor performance or insufficient capability or loss of competitive advantage.

2 Specify tangible and intangible impacts of the identified causes on the organisation to justify the required changes.

3 Find solutions to rectify the identified problems and their causes.

People who work on exploring the organisation's current state, identifying the business problems and their causes and then finding feasible solutions to the identified problems (the future state) are called business analysts or shortly - BAs.

“ Everything is simpler than you think and at the same time more complex than you imagine. ”

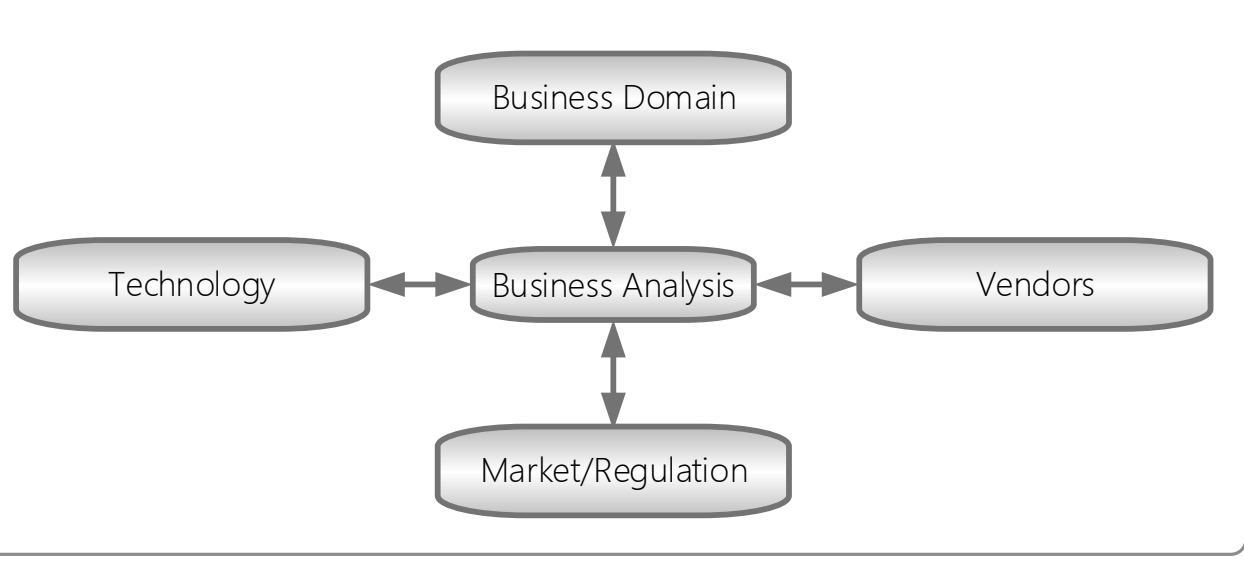
~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

# Business Analysis in a Nutshell

In practical terms, the function of business analysis works as a hub between an organisation (business domain), technology (IT infrastructure within and outside the organisation), vendors (suppliers of technology and other services) and regulatory bodies (where applicable).

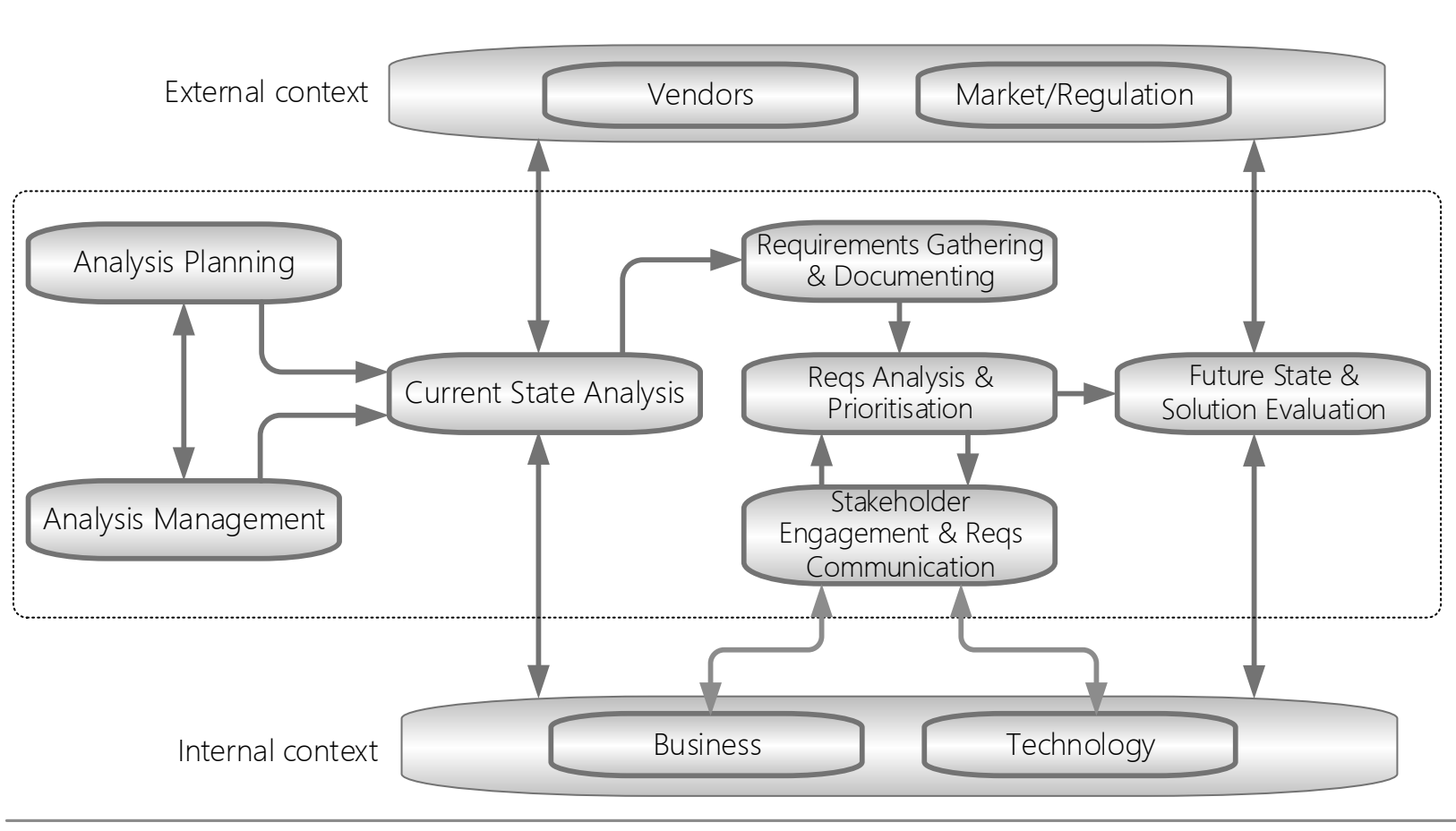
A business analyst simultaneously 'translates' between these different languages aiming to satisfy the business need and resolve the business problem through alignment and compliance with multiple requirements and conditions.

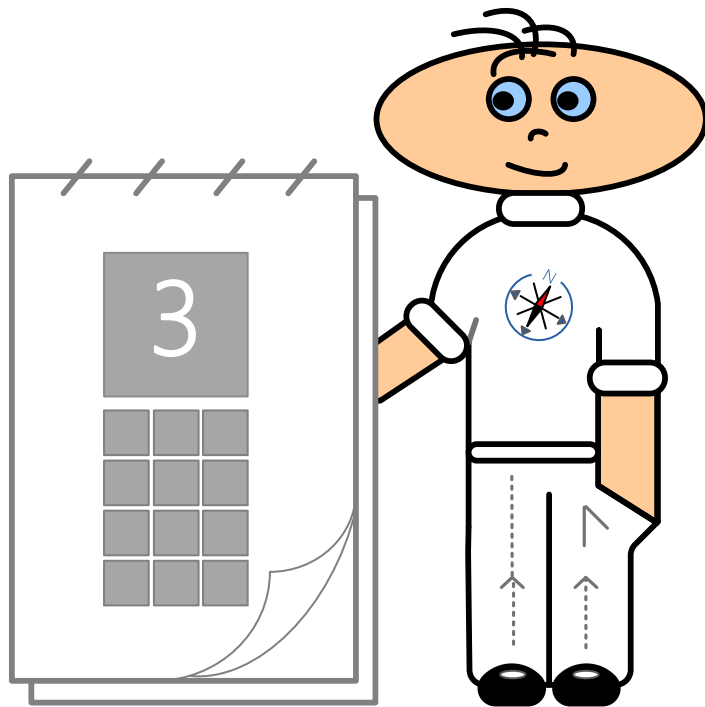
An understanding of these large knowledge domains and their terminology allows you to be a successful BA who delivers value to an organisation.



Business analysis framework defines business analysis context, scope of business analysis, phases of business analysis, tasks to complete within each phase, and interaction of the phases.

Business analysis deals with two contexts simultaneously: external and internal. This happens because there is no business that operates in vacuum. Each business interacts with its environment in some way and this environment affects the business in some way, too.





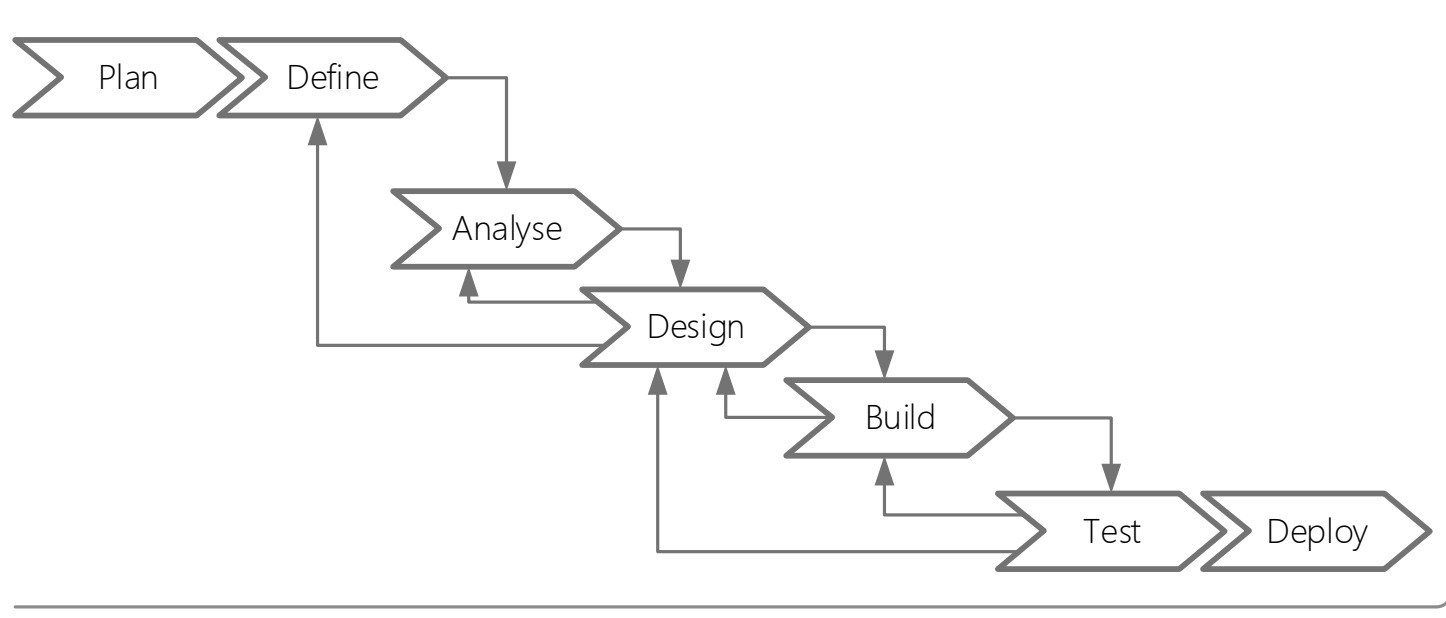
# BUSINESS ANALYSIS LIFECYCLE

# Business Analysis Lifecycle

Modern projects are more and more focused on delivering solutions comprised of business processes and software applications to support them. As a business analyst on such projects you will go through the stages (lifecycle) illustrated below. During each stage you will produce certain deliverables (documents) supporting a project manager and project team in delivering a solution.

The stages have iteration loops with a varying intensity. Different approaches can be applied within these projects: waterfall, spiral lifecycle, incremental, hybrid, and finally, agile. The application of the approaches is based on the project nature and constraints in place (time, cost and quality).

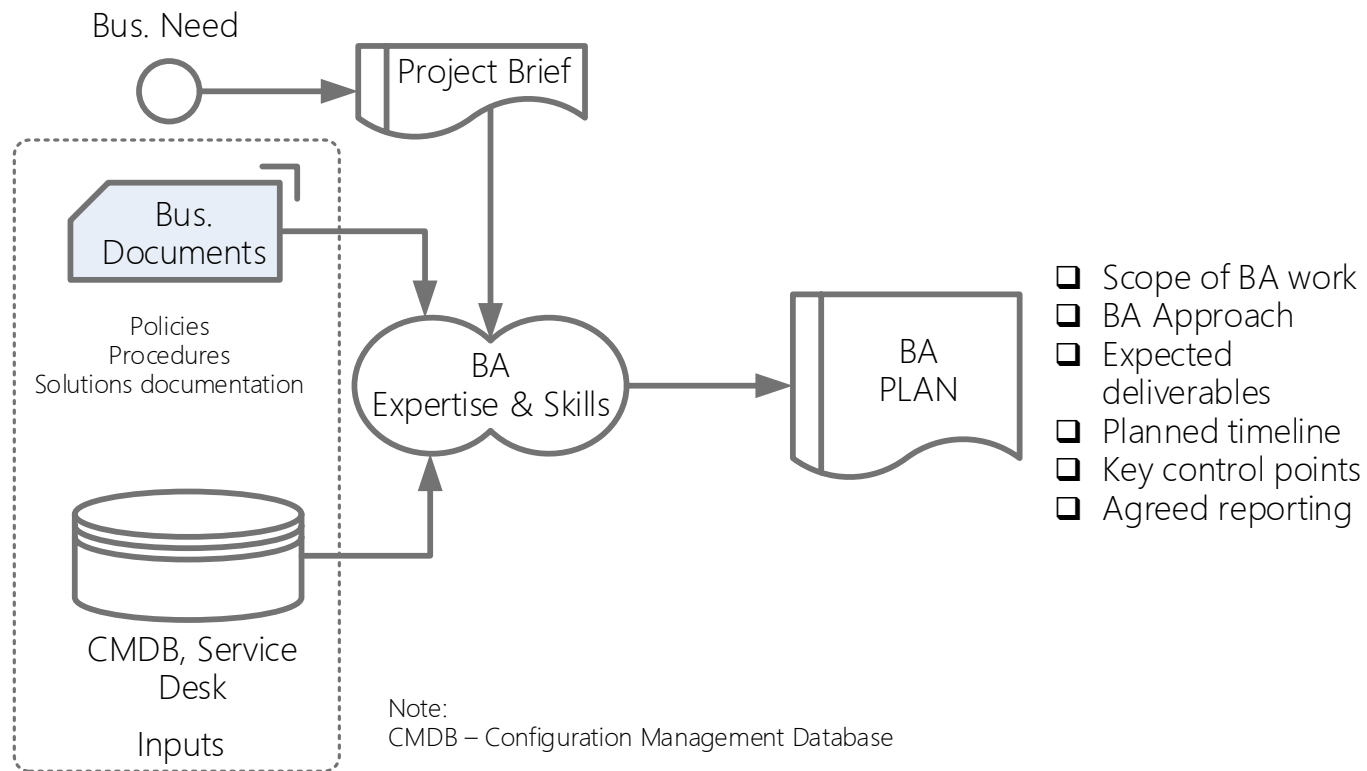
I would like to walk you through the lifecycle shown below to show what is happening within each phase.



“All you need is the plan, the road map and the courage to press on to your destination..”  
~ Earl Nightingale

# Plan

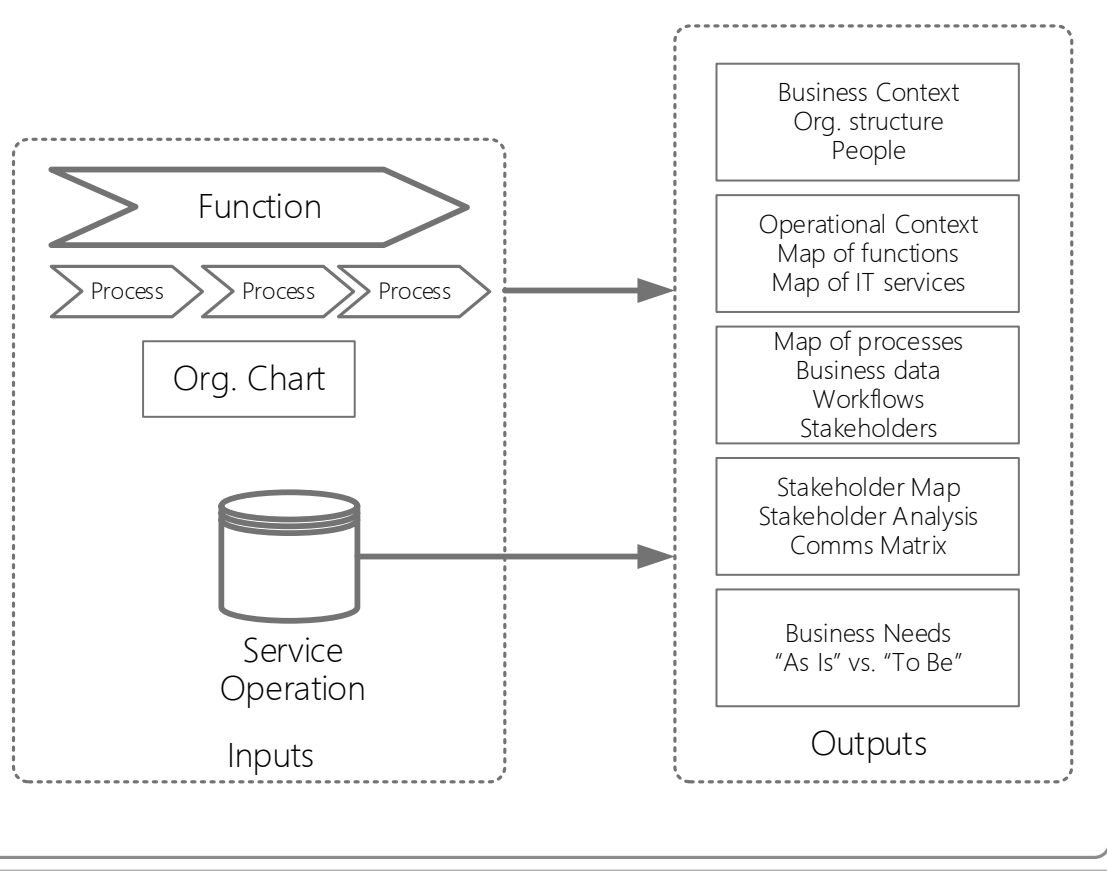
A Project Brief presented to you by a project manager serves as an enabler for business analysis planning. The Plan determines the scope of business analysis work. You also define a business analysis approach, planned timeline for business analysis activities (elicitation, analysis, modelling, and documenting), key control points to monitor progress of the business analysis activities, and business analysis artifacts to be delivered within the specified timeframe.



*Use all available business documents to learn about business functions and processes, and applications supporting these processes.*

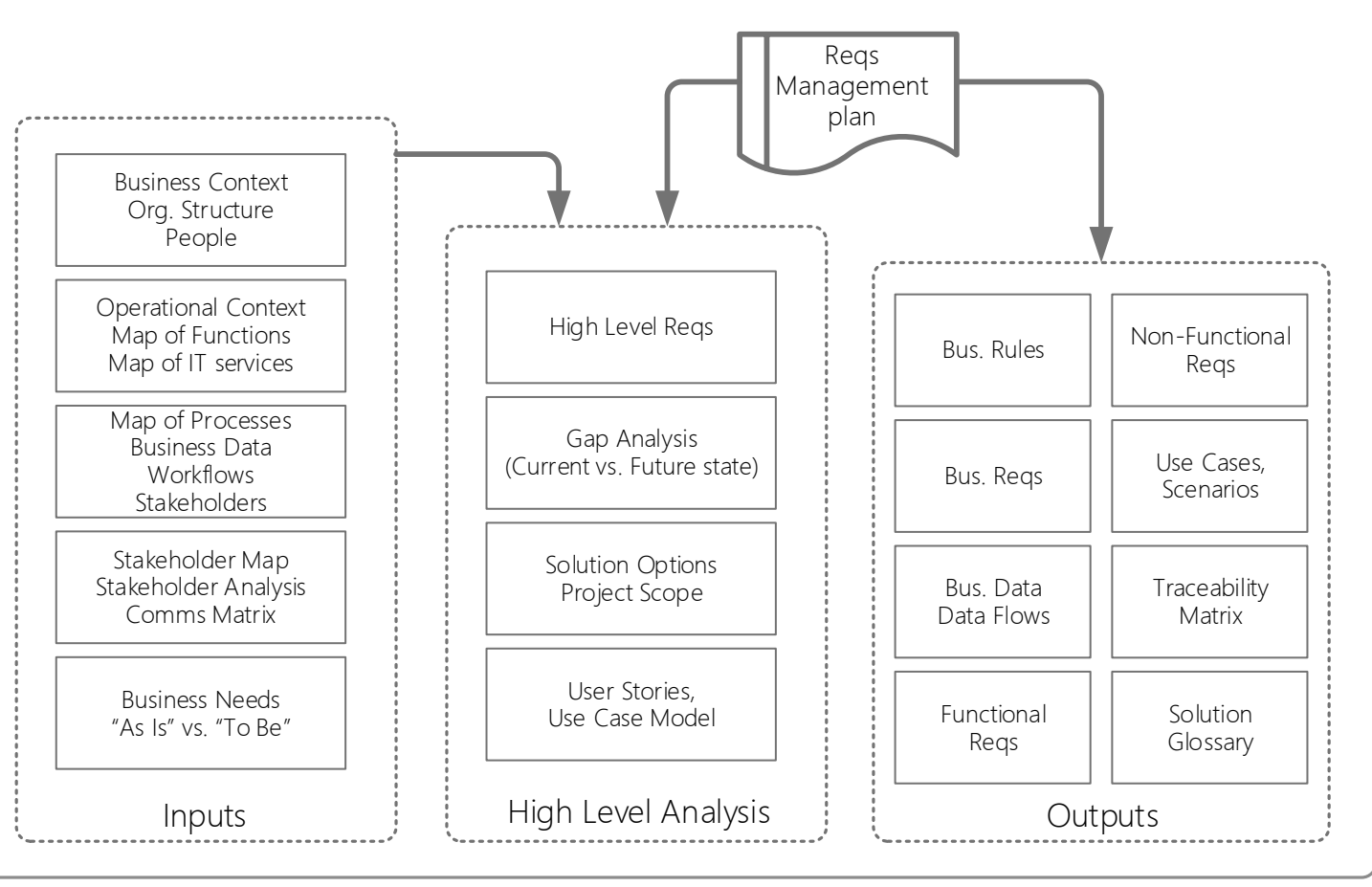
# Define

During this phase, you elicit requirements and collect information about the enterprise, its business functions, underlying business processes and organisational structure. You map the functions to the processes and, at a more granular level, to stakeholders. It is important to do because this mapping will be required to manage change. The information collected throughout this phase serves as an input for the next phase.



# Analyse

During this phase, you gather and analyse information about regulatory requirements, policies and business rules. Regulatory requirements govern compliance, while policies and business rules determine how these rules are applied to business processes. You capture the terminology used by stakeholders in the Glossary of Terms. The requirements identified and approved at the end of the phase will serve as an input for the next phase, Design.



# Project Collaboration

I am sure that you've come across many heated discussions about relationships between a project manager (PM) and a business analyst (BA). These discussions are often focused on their non-aligning sides rather than on their mutual efforts to ensure project success.

I personally tend to think about PMs and BAs working together on projects as two hands carrying a baby. Here is my view on the PM-BA tandem and how it comes together to make a project successful.

## How It Works

I've been involved in multiple projects for the last two decades. The projects were of different scales and nature. However, there is one common element in all of them: a project manager and a business analyst are the two sides of the same coin. Their skills and joined efforts make a project successful and deliver good value to the business. I would like to demonstrate how a PM and a BA could work on a project, and explore each project phase in more detail.

## Project Start Up

A PM and a BA work with project stakeholders throughout the entire project lifecycle. Before the project starts, a PM deals with a project sponsor and business stakeholders to identify the business need at a high level. The outcome of this interaction is a Project Initiation document. This document outlines the business need, the impact of the current state on the business, the desired target state, project complexity, estimated project duration and expected benefits.



*Please note that project phases and the documentation involved follow PRINCE2®.*

## Project Initiation

A PM engages a BA to help with project scoping and definition of the business need, expected project outcome (deliverables) and acceptance criteria.

While the PM works on drafting a project plan, the BA develops a business analysis plan outlining business analysis deliverables, communication patterns with stakeholders, requirements management approach and estimation of effort. The BA agrees the business analysis plan and Requirements Management plan with the PM.

Once the plans are agreed, the BA works closely with the project stakeholders on clarifying the business need, specifying high level business requirements, conducting stakeholder analysis, documenting user stories and use cases (where applicable), identifying risks, assumptions and constraints, as well as tolerances to a solution.

The BA determines solution scope, high level requirements, solution approach, reusable and new components to be used in the final solution. The BA works closely with the PM to align solution scope with project scope and facilitates project planning.

The BA informs the PM about all identified and potential risks. The PM maintains the risk register and develops mitigation strategies for the identified risks.

The joined efforts result in two key documents: Project Vision and Solution Vision. The former contains the problem statement, desired outcome statement, acceptance criteria for deliverables, stakeholder analysis, business context, assumptions, constraints and scoping definitions (in scope/out of scope).

The latter describes the problem statement, solution statement, provides a solution overview, stakeholder summary (RASCI), determines “to be” capabilities and business context, defines what is in and what is out of solution scope.

These two documents support the Business Case document in medium and large projects, supporting project sponsor’s decision-making on whether to go ahead with the project.

The PM and BA work jointly on developing a WBS to ensure that the solution can be assembled in a way that enables cost efficiency and adherence to project time and resource constraints.

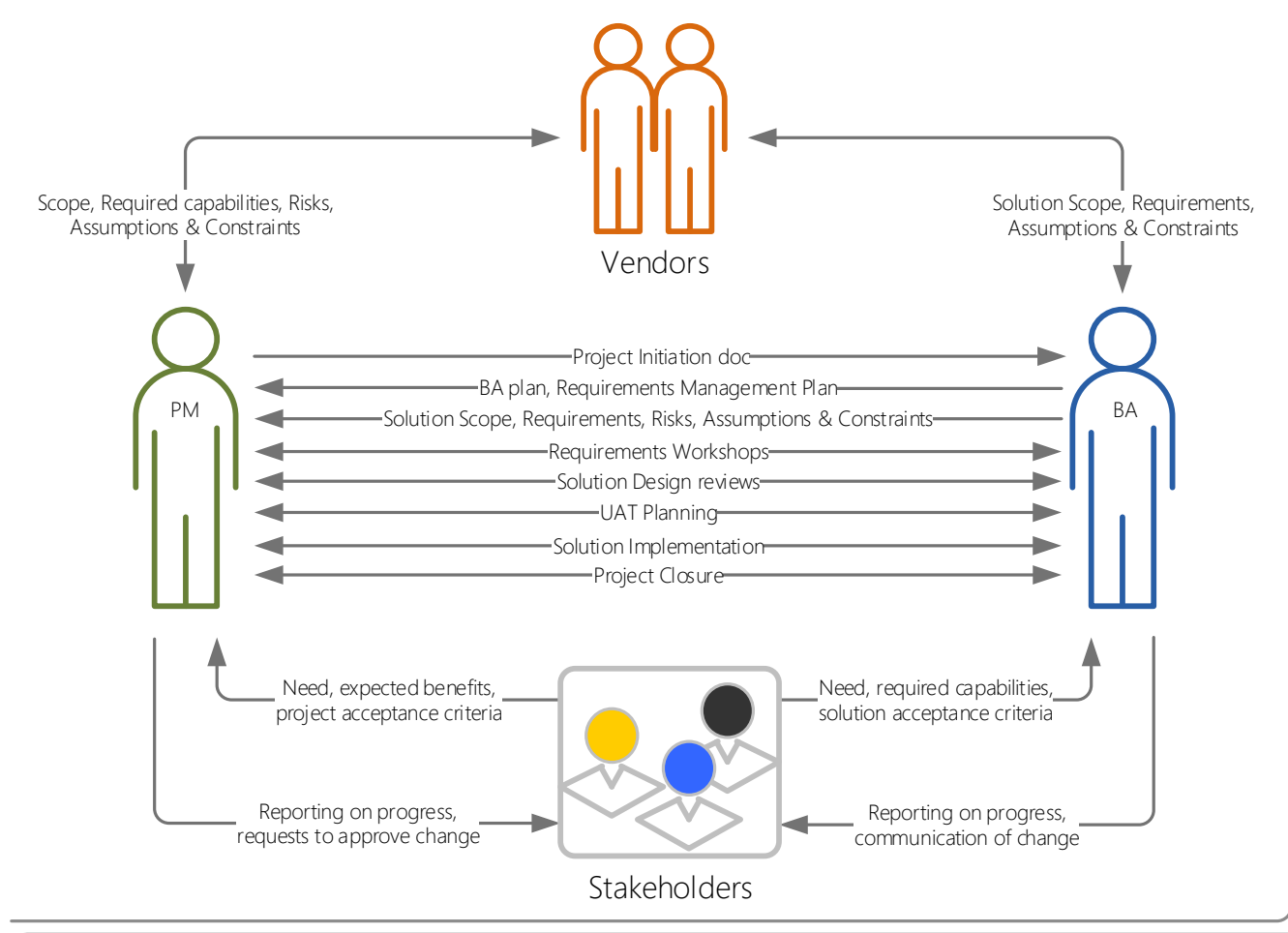
## Project Execution

This phase flags even more close collaboration between PM and BA. They work together in requirements workshops to prioritise and validate requirements. They conduct workshops with vendors of components to the solution (where applicable).

Changes to solution scope lead to changes in project scope so the PM applies change management process to ensure that only justified changes will be accepted. The PM maintains the change request register throughout the project.

BA’s reporting on progress in turn supports the PM’s reporting on project progress to the project sponsor and other interested stakeholders.

The PM supports the BA in communication with solution architects, software developers and other engaged third parties with regards to solution validation activities. The same is true when it comes to user acceptance testing. The PM's support is invaluable here. The duo works hard to ensure that solution acceptance criteria will be met within the predefined tolerances. The BA facilitates solution implementation to ensure a smooth transition to the "business as usual" mode.



## Project Closure

After having the project deliverables accepted by the business, the PM works on closing the project. The BA facilitates project closure by providing feedback for the post-implementation review. The BA reports on how well the solution met the business requirements. They jointly work on the Lessons Learned log to ensure that all valuable information has been captured for further use in future projects.

The BA hands over artifacts such as business requirements, functional requirements, use cases, non-functional requirements and solution technical specification to the business. These artifacts form a basis for business documentation on how to use the solution.

When the project has been formally closed, the BA files all approved BA artifacts in a central repository.

## Short Summary

My observation of modern projects indicates that the complexity of projects has increased to a great degree. Changes to business processes are coupled with changes to legacy business applications, IT infrastructure, and interfaces with the company's environment.

The PMs and BAs are required to be more productive in projects of different nature. My experience gained from over 60 projects proves that to deal with the changing demands and make projects successful, the BA and PM should work in tandem pushing hard towards the finish line.

# Learning About Business Domain

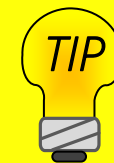
We live in the fast-paced business world so our ability to quickly adapt to changes drives our success. Starting a BA career or moving into a new industry to pursue new opportunities poses one common challenge – you need to have the knowledge of or practical experience in the business domain you wish to work in.

Unfortunately, knowledge about business domains is not that readily available. Business domain experience is often gained through actual work in a specialised industry such as automotive, retail, banking, insurance, telecommunications etc.

If you have the required domain knowledge then your application will be a bright spot for any HR person. But what can you do if you don't have the required business domain knowledge?

How does one gain domain expertise? Usually, domain expertise is acquired over a period of time by being in the "business" of doing things.

For example, a banking associate gains knowledge of various types of accounts that a customer (individual or business) can operate. Similarly an Insurance Sales Representative gets to know the various stages involved in preparation of an Insurance policy over time.



*Act like a business user. Think about the job at hand, what tools they use, what data they process, whom they communicate with etc.*

Some business analysts acquire domain knowledge by testing business applications and working with business users. They create a conducive learning environment through their interpersonal and analytical skills.

I see a lot of questions “How do I start...?” on many BA forums. I am also sure you have seen a lot of recruitment ads saying that the business domain knowledge or practical experience “would be advantageous”. Why is it so important to have?

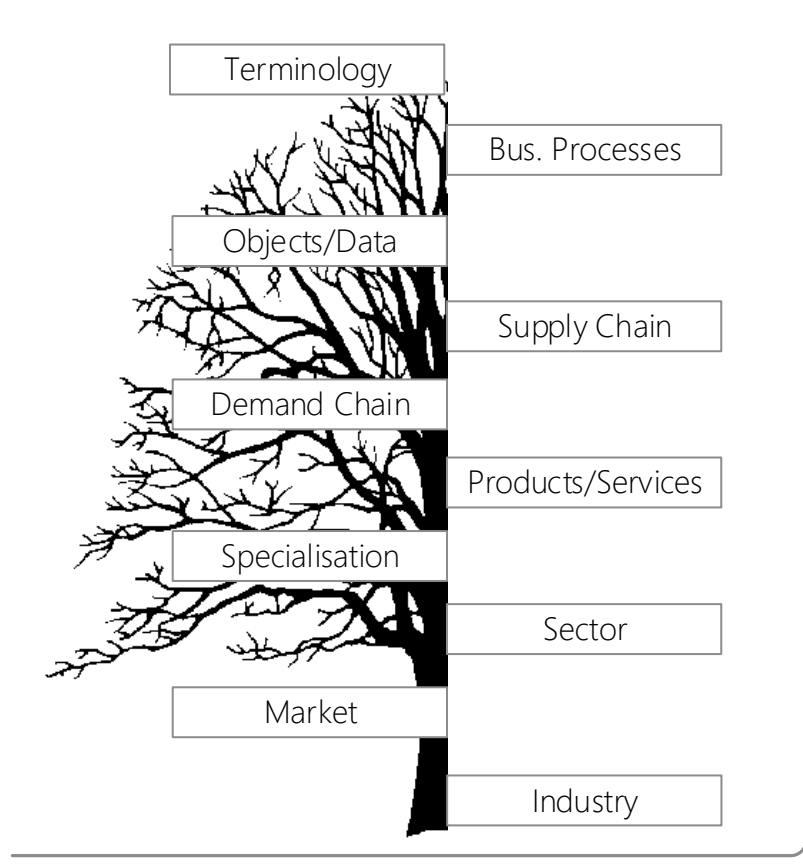
It is important because it is not enough to have just good BA skills (communication skills, requirements elicitation, capturing User Stories or writing Use Cases etc.) to deliver fast-paced projects. Many more skills are required. Knowledge of different industries, their specifics and terminology are just a few examples of the required skills.

So, how can one go about obtaining new domain knowledge in a fast-track fashion? Some would say that all industries and their business domains are very different, thus there is no way to get this knowledge in a simple way. In reality, these domains are *not* that different. There are common principles behind each business domain that help you get up to speed quite quickly.

These principles are applicable to any business domain, so it doesn't matter what you are going to learn about: retail, wholesale, financial services, manufacturing, utilities, etc.

How do you start working on a new domain? Analysing my approach to learning about new domains to date, I see that I've been applying the same approach over and over again, especially in starting in a new domain.

I call it a "10 storey tree". This approach allows me to break the complexity of a new business domain into layers that I can learn about and digest pretty fast. So, in my view, you can learn about any new domain using the following building blocks:



Let's consider the automotive industry as an example.