



Career Enhancing Habits for Business Analysts

Kent J McDonald

insideproduct.co/iiba-palmetto-dc



Shauna McGee Kinney ✓ • 2nd
Business Analysis & Business Development
16h • 🌐

Connect ...

Is your company undergoing an agile/digital/product transformation leading people to believe that “we don’t need business analysts anymore?”

Kent McDonald from **Mind the Product** pointed me to this article.

Written in 2022. Perth, Western Australia is now where the US Midwest was 4 years ago

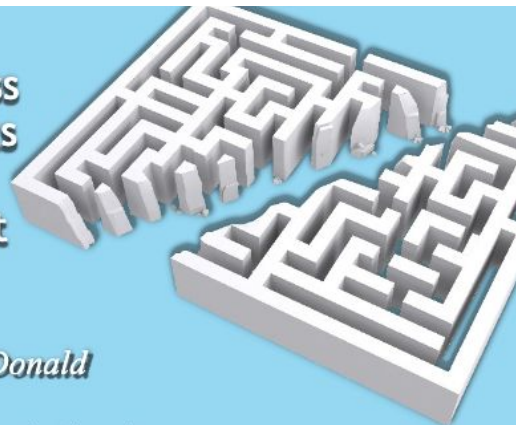


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4 comments

BA Digest Q4 2022

Business Analysts Can Be Product People



Kent McDonald

Are you a business analyst who wonders what your career will look like in three to five years?

Is your company undergoing an agile/digital/product transformation leading people to believe that “we don’t need business analysts anymore?”

Do you really enjoy business analysis but feel like the only way to get the compensation you deserve is by taking a new job with a different title?

As I first noted back in 2017, [product management roles offer a viable career path for business analysts](#). This path is especially relevant for business analysts who currently work on custom software development projects in their current role.

Here are the stories of four people who shifted from business analysis to product management.

Lessons Learned from BAs who are now product people

Don’t worry about the title, focus on your skills

Stephanie Cooper started out as a data analyst at an IT Consulting firm where she taught herself SQL. After a few months, the company had a business analyst spot open on their tech side so she moved over to that role.

After a few years as a business analyst, she wanted to have a bigger impact on her business and have a bigger vision of her product. She felt that shifting from business analyst to product manager would allow her to do that.

To make that switch, Stephanie started looking for product management roles outside of her company. To overcome the challenge of not having an official product management title before, she

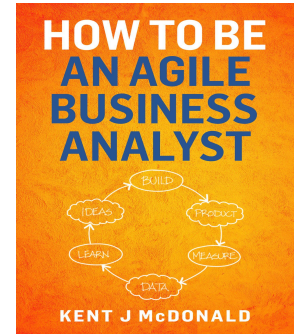
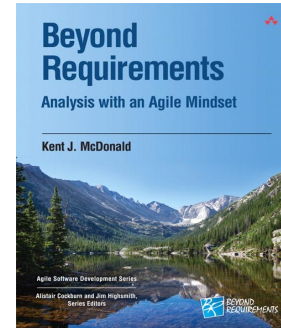
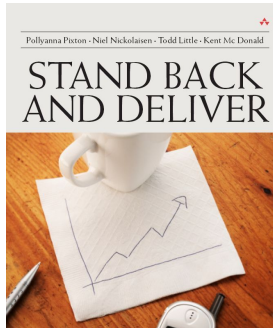
Drop a number in chat:
What's the last
dollar figure you used
to describe your work's impact?

A little bit about me

Director of Delivery



Writer/Advisor



Career Enhancing Habits

01

IMPACT

Connect your work to how
money flows through
the organization

02

CONTEXT

Match your approach
to the moment

03

JUDGMENT

Make decisions that balance
impact and context

CAREER VISIBILITY COMPOUNDS WHEN YOU PRACTICE ALL THREE

01 Impact

01 IMPACT

Connect your work to how
money flows through
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CAREER VISIBILITY COMPOUNDS WHEN YOU PRACTICE ALL THREE

*“If you were the CEO,
would you fund your team?”*

— Matt LeMay

We built something genuinely useful.
We just couldn't explain why it mattered.

My contract wasn't
renewed.

Habit 1

01

IMPACT

Connect your work to how
money flows through
the organization

***FIND THE NUMBER YOUR
LEADERSHIP IS TRYING TO MOVE.
EXPLAIN HOW YOUR WORK
MOVES IT.***

How to find your number

Financial Services

AUM, loan volume, new accounts

Look at the last investor deck or earnings call transcript.

Insurance

Claims ratio, underwriting cost, compliance exposure

Check the regulatory filings or the CFO's last all-hands slide.

Retail

Margin, inventory turn, revenue per transaction

Whatever metric the CEO spent the most time on is your number.

The connection looks like this

Delivery language	Money language
We completed the data migration on schedule.	We removed a processing bottleneck costing ~\$40K/month in manual reconciliation.
We built a product data platform for consistent views across internal tools.	We gave sales and ops a single source of truth reducing rework and speeding quote cycles.
We launched the new underwriting workflow.	We cut underwriting time by 30%, freeing capacity for 15% more applications per quarter.

Your turn

**WHAT NUMBER IS
YOUR LEADERSHIP
TRYING TO MOVE
RIGHT NOW?**

**DOES YOUR WORK
MOVE IT? IF SO,
HOW?**

DROP YOUR NUMBER IN CHAT

Impact is what makes you visible
when the budget conversation happens.

*How you apply that knowledge depends entirely
on where you are — and that changes constantly.*

02 Context

01 IMPACT

Connect your work to how
money flows through
the organization

02 CONTEXT

Match your approach
to the moment

03 JUDGMENT

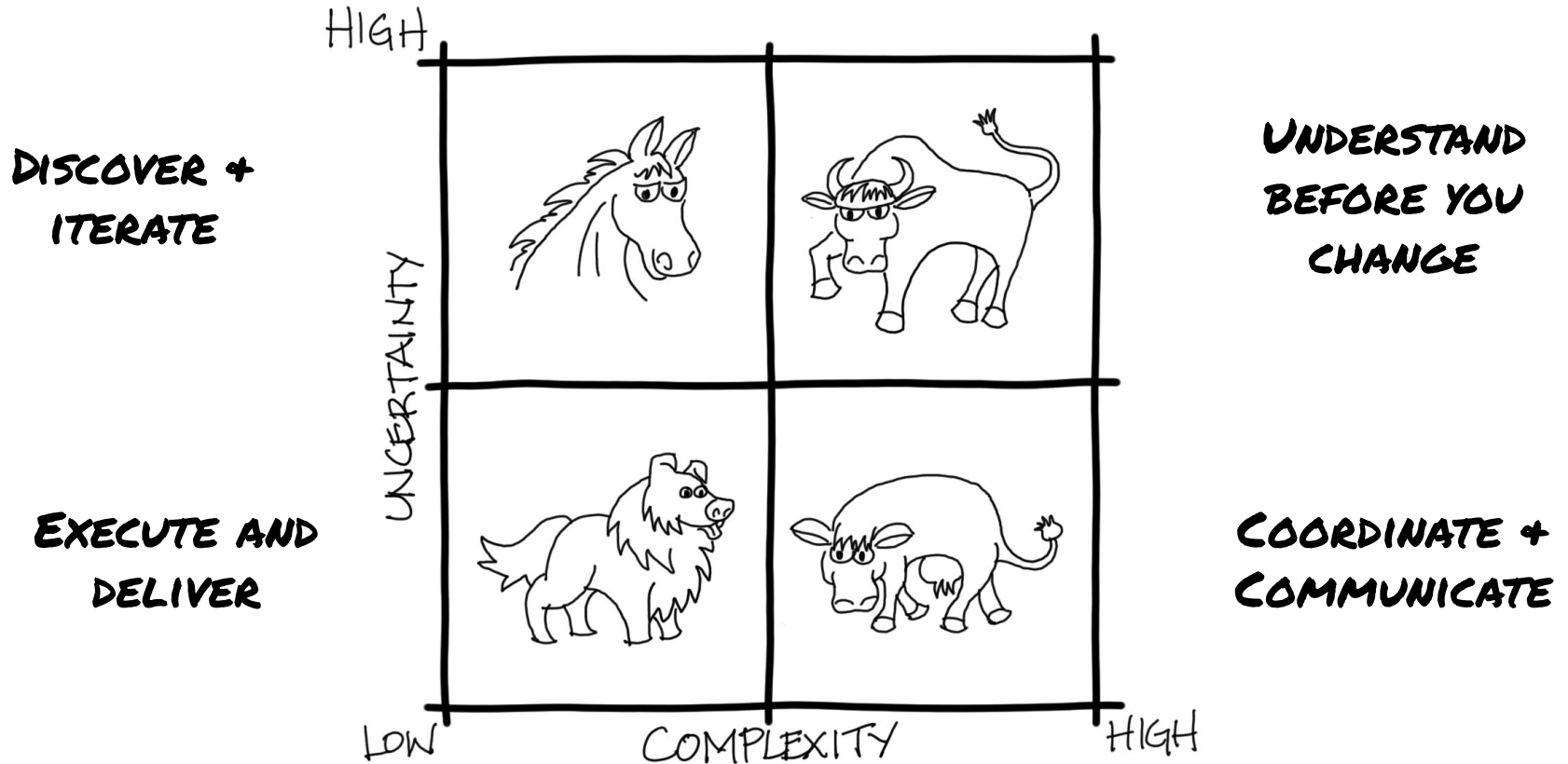
Make decisions that balance
impact and context

CAREER VISIBILITY COMPOUNDS WHEN YOU PRACTICE ALL THREE

There is no
such thing as
“best practice”

The right next step depends
on where your product is.

Context Leadership Model



We thought we were herding a cow.

We were actually wrestling a bull.

Habit 2

02

CONTEXT

Match your approach
to the moment

FIGURE OUT WHERE YOUR

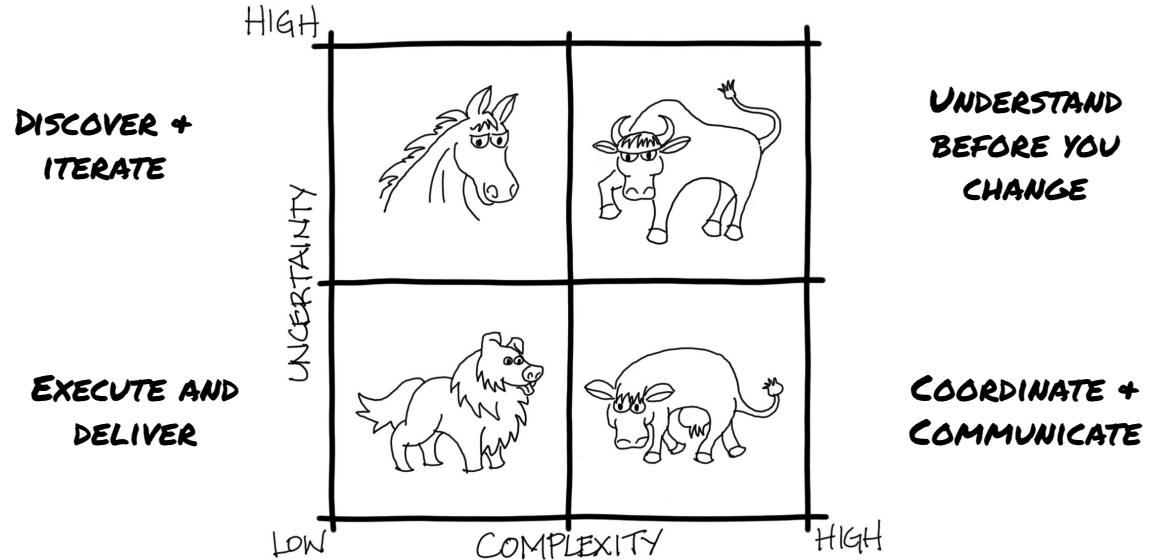
PRODUCT IS.

ACT ACCORDINGLY.

**WHICH QUADRANT
DOES YOUR
CURRENT PROJECT
LAND IN?**

**WHAT SHOULD YOU
BE DOING
DIFFERENTLY BASED
ON THAT?**

Your turn



DROP YOUR QUADRANT IN CHAT

Knowing where you are
changes what you do.

But you need the judgment to balance impact and context.

03 Judgment

01 IMPACT

Connect your work to how
money flows through
the organization

02 CONTEXT

Match your approach
to the moment

03 JUDGMENT

Make decisions that balance
impact and context

CAREER VISIBILITY COMPOUNDS WHEN YOU PRACTICE ALL THREE

“Every day, people throughout the organization, especially those closest to the edges of the organization - the market and customer needs, need to make decisions.”

— Niel Nickoliasen

We had a proposal that looked ready.

It wasn't.

We almost sent it.

Habit 3

03

JUDGMENT

Make decisions that balance
impact and context

BALANCE IMPACT AND CONTEXT.

TAKE THE NEXT BEST STEP.

How to apply judgment

- 1 What impact does this decision drive?**
What outcome are we trying to move?
- 2 What's true about the context we're in?**
Constraints, uncertainty, politics, and risk.
- 3 What realistic options are feasible right now?**
Not the ideal options — the actual ones.
- 4 What is the smallest next step that preserves impact?**
The step that reduces risk without losing ground.
- 5 Who needs to know we're using judgment here?**
Make the decision logic visible — don't just move.

But I'm not the
decision-maker

Judgment isn't taking on all the risk yourself.

It's making the decision clearer
to decrease risk.

Your turn

**PICK AN
UNRESOLVED
DECISION ON YOUR
PROJECT**

**RUN THROUGH
THESE QUESTIONS**

What impact does this drive?
What's true about the context?
What are the realistic options?
What's the smallest next step?
Who needs to know?

DROP YOUR UNRESOLVED DECISION IN CHAT

Impact. Context. Judgment.

Three habits. That's the whole roadmap.

You already do this work.

Now do it in a way people can see.

Pick one habit.
Build it this week.



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