



Technical Skills Every Business Analyst Should Master or At Least Understand

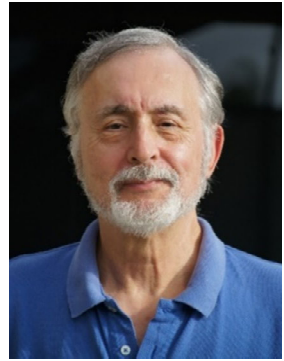
Presenter:

Steve Blais, PMP, PMI-PBA

Author, Consultant, Teacher and Coach

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Steve Blais, PMP, PMI-PBA, is an author, consultant, teacher and coach who has over 55 years' experience in Information Technologies working as a programmer, project manager, business analyst, system analyst, general manager, and tester.



He is the author of Business Analysis: Best Practices for Success (John Wiley, 2011) and co-author of Business Analysis for Practitioners: a Practice Guide (PMI, 2014) and a contributor to the Business Analyst Body of Knowledge, V3 (IIBA, 2015). His new book, The Digital Transformation of Business Analysis, published by IIBA Press, will be out at the end of the year.

Business analyst skills in general

■ Communication skills

- The Skill of negotiation
- Mediation
- Facilitation
- Listening
- Information gathering (asking questions)
- Written communication
- Expressing empathy

■ Problem solving skills

- Problem analysis
- Information gathering
- Ideation
- Imagination
- Illustration

■ Thinking skills

- System thinking
- Strategic thinking
- Critical thinking

■ Political skills

- Influence
- Tact
- Mediation
- Information gathering

■ Analysis skills

- Curiosity
- Categorization
- Critical thinking
- Filtering and prioritization
- Decomposition
- Analysis tools (Ishikawa, SWOT, etc.)

■ Modeling skills

- Data modeling
- Process modeling
- Behavior modeling

■ Moderation and facilitation skills

- Conflict resolution skills
- Expressing empathy

■ Decision Support

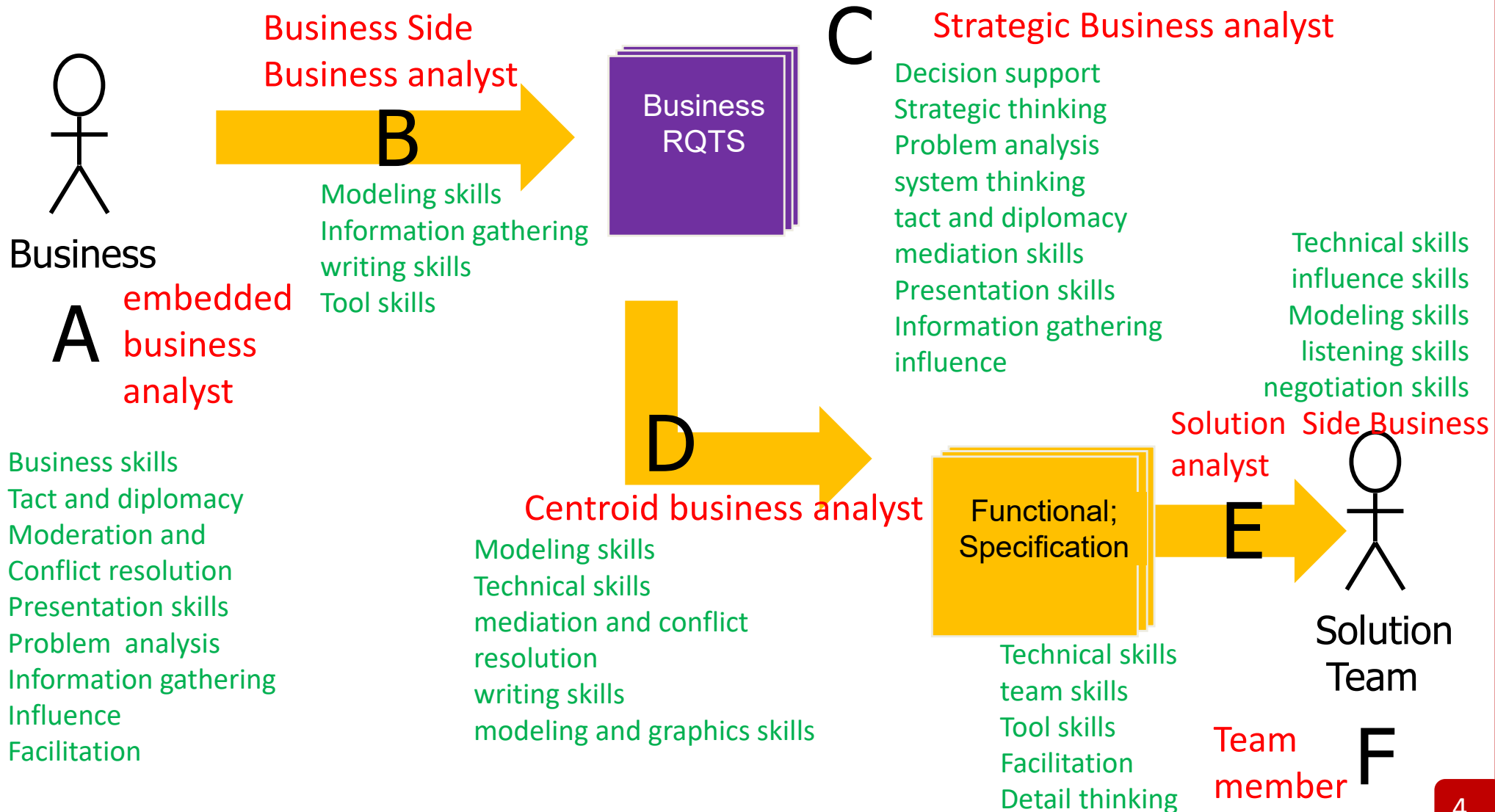
- Information gathering (research)
- Data assembly
- Presentation

■ Technical Skills

- Enough to be dangerous

Different skills needed for different roles

Communication skills, analytic skills, Problem Solving



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Questions, questions

I asked the DBA where I might find this field I need for this new feature and he gave me a Data Model. Do I know how to read it?

I have to make a presentation of the requirements for the new job...in PowerPoint...



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author

Jack and Jill are in disagreement about the new feature and I need to resolve it soon so I can define the right requirements

Customers are complaining that it takes too long to reorder items. I'll have to check out the process and see if I can streamline it in some way

The vice president has a tough call to make is asked me to review the information and present alternatives

In Context

- **Observe and understand the needs of people**
- **Convert insights into meaningful strategies**
- **Take insights about people and convert them into solutions related to:**
 - Products
 - Processes
 - Business models
 - Strategies
- **Create prototypes and evaluate those prototypes**
- **Tell stories and spread your ideas**

Adapted from: Tim Brown, *Change by Design*

Agile BA Roles / Skills

T-shaped

Communication

Basic technical knowledge (skills)

Agile tool usage

Estimating and testing skills

Team player

Collaboration skills



Work under short deadline pressure

Data oriented skills

- **Communication**
- **Graphing skills (data visualization)**
- **Statistical tools including Excel**
- **Math skills in general**
- **LLM (e.g. ChatGPG) prompts**
- **Out of the organizational box thinking (system thinking)**

Business / management skills

- **Communication**
- **Decisiveness**
 - Making well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences while understanding the impact and implications of the decisions being made
- **Problem Solving**
 - Identifying and analyzing problems, waiting relevance and accuracy of information, generating and evaluating alternate solutions and making and presenting appropriate recommendations

Underlying communication skills

- **Asking questions**
 - Elicitation
 - Engagement
- **Listening**
- **Telling stories**
- **Illustrating**

Essential skill: communication

- Communication requires listening
- and that requires asking questions
- Most of us do not have the skill of asking questions

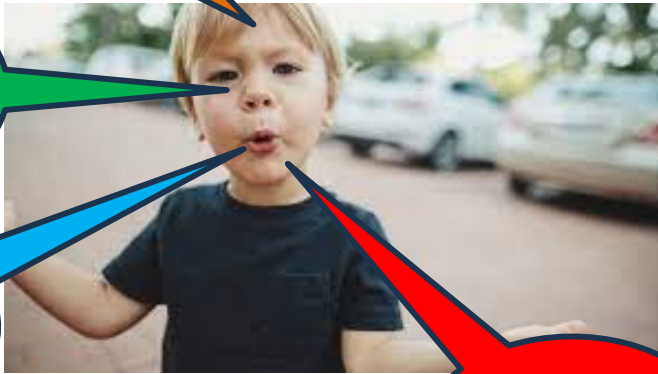


Why not?

Why?

Why?

Why?



Why?

Because

Because

Because

Go ask
your ...

I need to
know all
the
answers



Those questions
I didn't ask the
professor are on
the exam

And even more whys...

Do you
have any
questions
for us?



I'm being hired
for my
knowledge. I
better not ask
any questions

Oh, yeah. I got this.
I'll be ready for the
review Wednesday. I
know what he
wants... I think...



Let's review this
Tuesday. Any
questions?

No one else has
questions. They
all understand it.
I'm not sure

I'll figure it out
later. I need
some coffee.

Questions without answers

- “How’s it going?”
- “Good morning, how do you feel?”
- Rhetorical questions

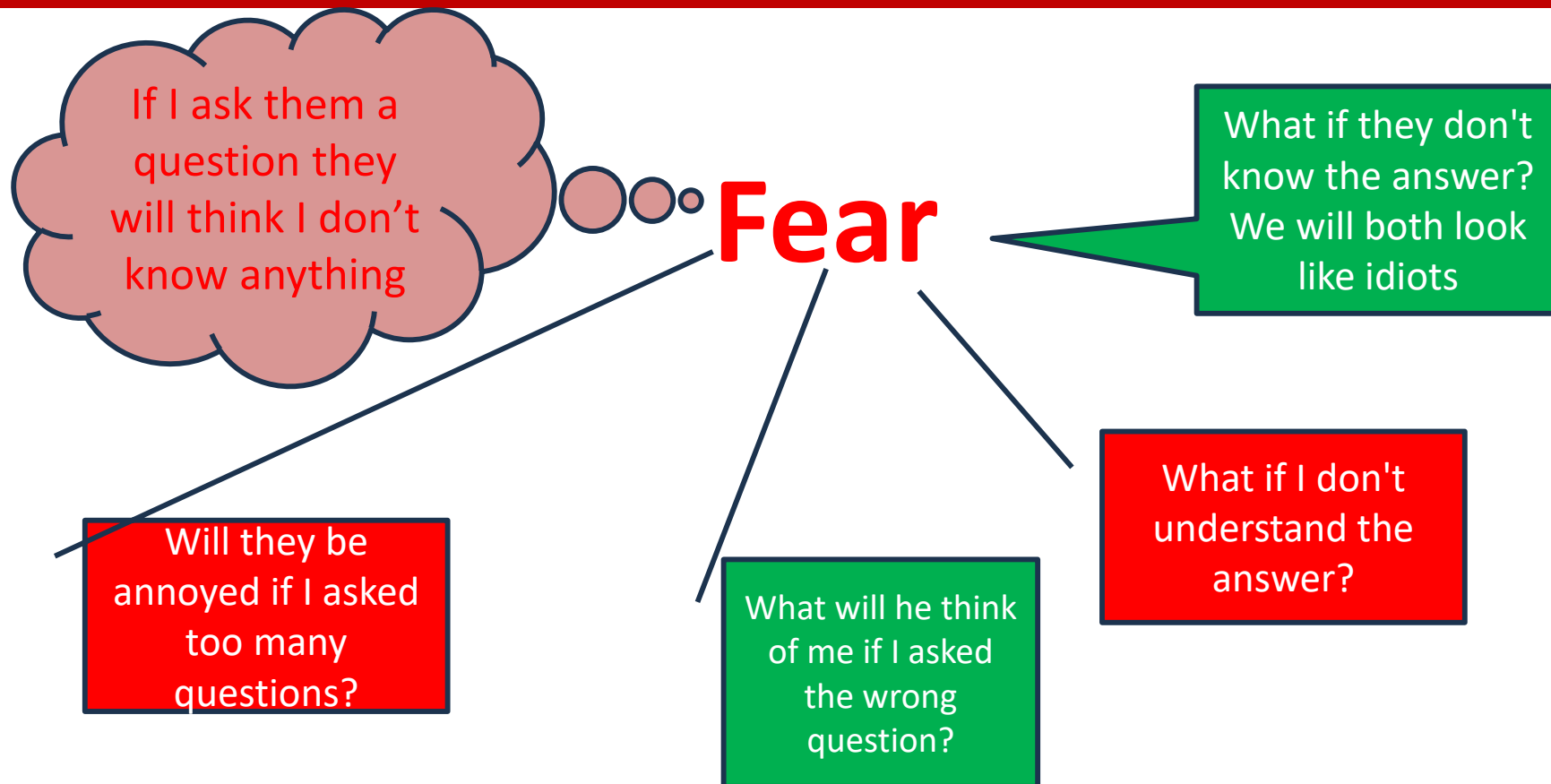
Is that a rhetorical question?

So, are you ready for dinner?



- Focusing on the next question

5th Why...



- In other words we are trained to not ask questions
- It is no longer innate and automatic

Reclaim your Curiosity

- Select a document (email, report, news article, etc.)
- Ask a question for each paragraph
- Assess assumptions, battle biases, challenge conclusions



Mary had a Little lamb
fleece was white as snow
everywhere that Mary went
the lamb was sure to go

Pet Lamb?

Lamb for dinner?

Mary is a con artist?

Adapted from Jerry Weinberg, "are your lights on?"

- **Bonus: this also improves your critical thinking skills**

Honor the pause...

- **Count to 5 before answering a question**
 - Questioner will assume you are taking the question seriously and thinking about it
 - Allows time to think about it
- **Count to 5 before asking the next question**
 - Responder assumes you value their answer
 - Responder fills in the vacuum
 - Forces you to think about the answer
 - Produces a better next question

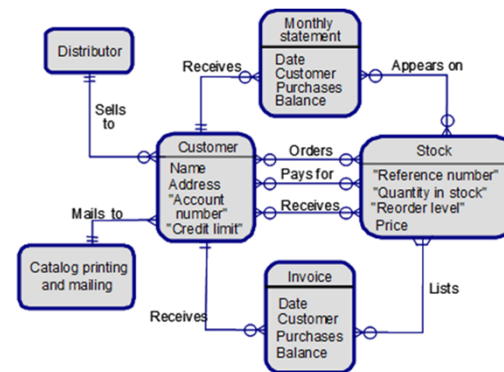
Story telling...

- **Explanations that make sense to the listener**
 - Provide context
 - Beginning to end
 - Recognition and achievement of goal
- **Includes an emotional factor**
 - Positive feelings about achieving goal
 - Positive feelings about solving a problem

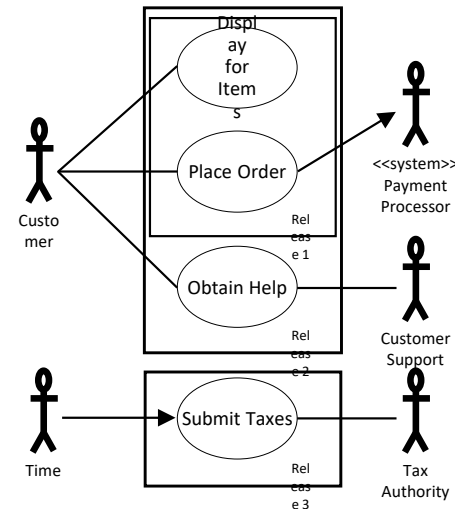
Data story telling: using data visualizations to illustrate the story

Story telling?...

- Modeling is a form of story telling
- Gathering information works better when it centers on story telling
- Requirements is a story about the solution
- All presentations are stories
- Agile: “user stories”



A day in
the life



Tell to me
like I'm six
years old



Do you use story telling? In business?

- **Your resume is a story**
 - How do you tell it
 - Does it really tell the story of your skills?
- **Other stories:**
 - The business case
 - The new system or feature you are introducing
 - The business's mission and strategies
 - Problems and solutions
 - Descriptions of issues and challenges

But...but...but...

- We don't tell stories...

*"The facts, Ma'am.
Just the facts."*



How to learn to be story tellers

- Practice paraphrasing
- Play the “what’s going on” game
- Read to children
- Tell them the story



Illustrating: Data stories

- **What is behind the statistical analysis**
- **the data used to prove the story you are telling**
- **Adds human factors to charts and graphs and numbers, O, my...**
- **use charts and graphs to illustrate or support the story you are telling (make it more interesting)**

Slide into the Skills

Select a number of skills that you want to work on

Add the skill to your repertoire

Refine or improve the skill that you have

State a reason or purpose for acquiring or improving the skill

Review the list and select one (and only one) skill to work on

Devise a game that focuses on the skill

A game that has scorekeeping

Play the game

Win the game - repeat

Questions and Contact Slide

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