# Cheat sheet

The Value-Driven Business Analyst

By Laura Brandenburg

The Value-Driven Business Analyst is written primarily for current or aspiring business analysts, but it's highly relevant for project managers who work alongside BAs or who find themselves performing BA responsibilities, especially in smaller teams or hybrid roles.

Key Framework: The 8-Step Business Analysis Process

The core of the book is the **8-Step BA Process**. For project managers, this acts as a hybrid BA/PM roadmap for structuring project conversations and deliverables around value.
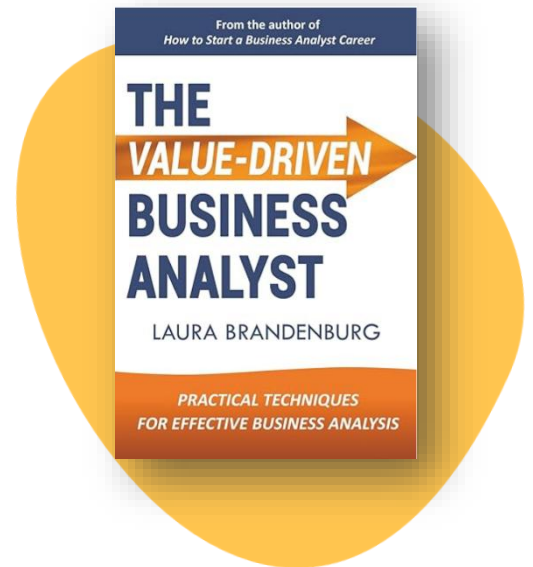
1. Get Oriented

- Learn the landscape: systems, stakeholders, terminology
- Ask beginner questions: "What is the business problem we're trying to solve?"
- Don't assume alignment, verify purpose early and often

2. Discover the Primary Business Objectives

- Uncover stakeholder goals and what success looks like
- Use open-ended questions like: "What's the trigger for this project?"
- Focus scope discussions around business objectives, not just task lists

3. Define Scope

- Identify what's in and out of scope by anchoring back to objectives
- Use visual models or context diagrams
- Rein in scope creep by aligning scope to value, not assumptions

4. Formulate Your Business Analysis Plan

- Define how requirements will be gathered, documented, validated

- Clarify stakeholders' availability and expectations

- Make the BA plan visible in the overall project plan, it sets the rhythm for discovery work

5. Define Detailed Requirements

- Engage stakeholders to refine features, rules, data, workflows

- Use models like use cases, process flows, and user stories

- Consider progressive elaboration here, don't front-load every detail

6. Support Implementation

- Clarify requirements with developers and testers

- Handle scope clarifications quickly and confidently

- Use the BA as a buffer to reduce noise in delivery stages

7. Help the Business Get Ready for the Solution

- Contribute to change management, training, and user support

- Anticipate business readiness issues early

- This is often a gap: ensure someone owns operational transition, even if it's you

8. Assess the Value Created by the Solution

- Post-implementation reflection: did it solve the problem?

- Use metrics where possible, stakeholder interviews where not

- Build this into your lessons learned and benefits realisation reviews

This framework can plug directly into any project lifecycle and gives you a repeatable structure for making sure the *right* product gets delivered.

Tools and Techniques for PMs

Stakeholder Analysis

- Identify, prioritise, and plan engagement for key players

- Use questions like: "What does this person need to say yes to for the project to move forward?"

Context and Scope Diagrams

- Visual representations of systems, boundaries, and actors

- These help avoid ambiguity around handoffs, integrations, and interfaces

Requirements Models

- Use cases

- User stories and acceptance criteria

- Process maps

- Decision tables

Even if you don't write formal business requirements documents, these tools help you validate shared understanding quickly.

Meeting Facilitation Scripts

If running meetings where you're not the content expert, use lines like:

- "Let me summarise to check I understood…"

- "It sounds like that's an action for the risk log, shall we add it?"

- "Who else needs to know about this?"

Glossaries, Confidence, and Language Clarity

Build a **business glossary**, especially when entering unfamiliar domains. You may find yourself in meetings where different stakeholders use the same terms differently, or where acronyms and jargon cause confusion.

Creating a glossary helps:

- Clarify terminology across departments

- Reduce misunderstandings in requirements or status updates

- Build your confidence when discussing domain-specific topics

This strengthens cross-functional communication. It can also serve as a foundation for consistent documentation or even future onboarding materials.

If you feel out of your depth in a new project, start capturing and defining key terms, this positions you as organised and proactive, not inexperienced.

Bridging the Gap Between Vision and Delivery

The book highlights that one of the most valuable contributions a BA (or PM acting in that role) can make is bridging the gap between the "big idea" and how it actually gets implemented. This involves:

- Asking clarifying questions

- Connecting requirements back to business objectives

- Visualising workflows and systems

Project managers can adopt these practices to:

- Create stronger business cases

- Justify scope changes more effectively

- Identify when features creep beyond value-add territory

Convert 'fuzzy' business goals into measurable outcomes, using tools like logic models or impact mapping.

Leadership Through Listening and Facilitation

The book talks a lot about leading without knowing everything, and suggests we lead the process:

- Facilitating discussions instead of dominating them

- Summarising others' points to check understanding

- Prompting action or next steps when the group stalls

These behaviours build trust, especially early in projects when you haven't yet proven your technical or domain expertise.

When stepping into a project late or mid-flight, lead with process clarity, not assumptions. Use questions like:

- "What decision are we trying to make today?"

- "Who needs to be in the loop before we move this forward?"

Becoming a Value-Driven Professional

The final sections of the book focus on **confidence, leadership, and mindset**.

- Focus on *your process* and *your value*, not your title

- Use templates and structures to manage uncertainty

- Regularly assess how your work contributes to business goals

- Reflect on what you delivered but also why it mattered.

Don't wait for permission to lead on value. Use your planning, communication, and facilitation skills to create clarity, especially when others can't.

The book reframes business analysis not as *gathering requirements*, but as *making change easier and more valuable*. This mindset helps PMs build credibility with sponsors, product owners, and delivery teams alike.