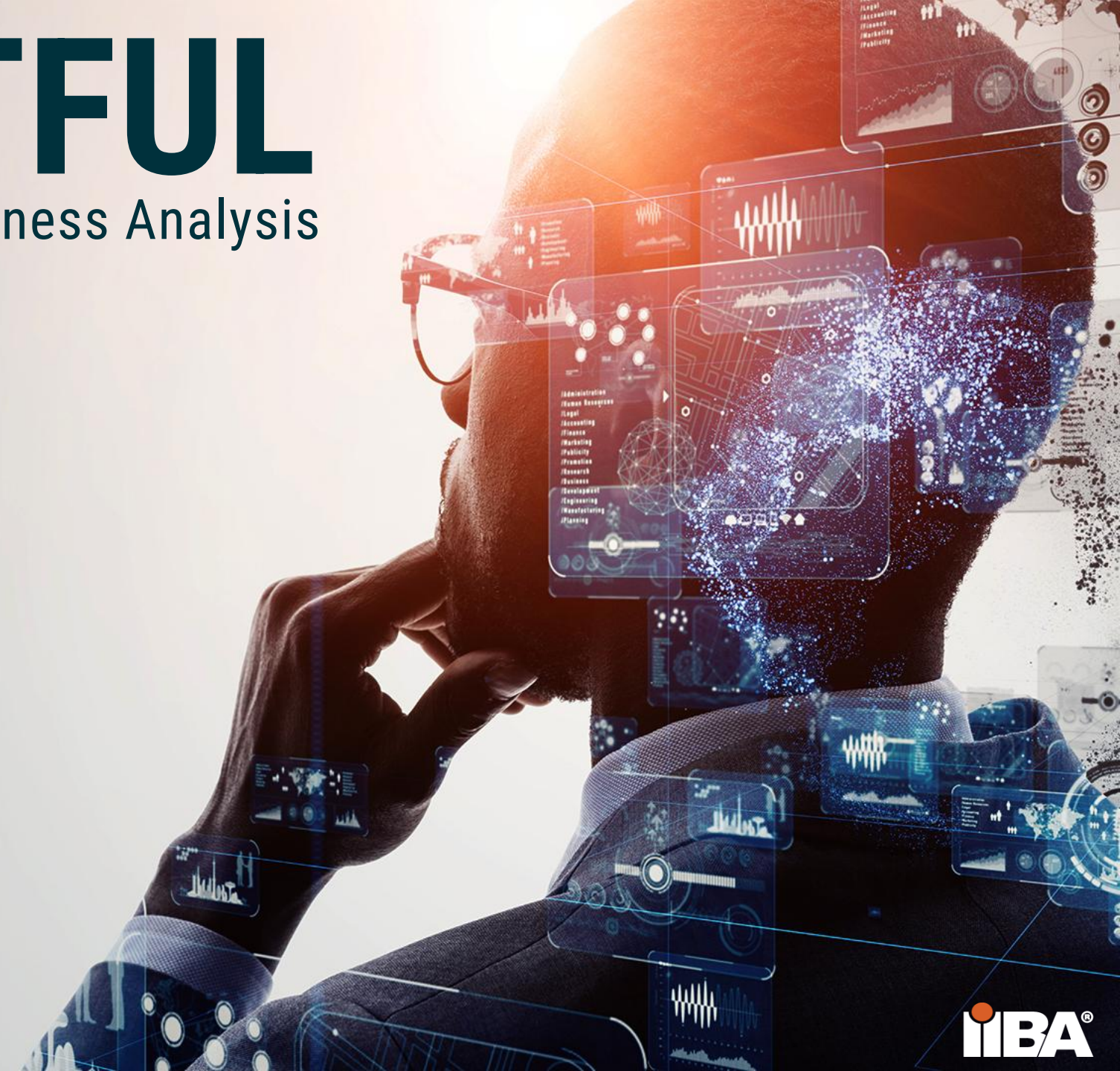
THOUGHTFUL

Ten Skills for the Future of Business Analysis



Learning at the intersection with AI

Delvin Fletcher • IIBA

01

Why This Matters Now



The Noise Problem

$1 Trillion

Global AI Spend

- (maybe) $40-50 Billion of durable annual revenue.
- We are being sold AI, not informed about it.
- Having an AI strategy has become more important than having a business strategy.
- We need discernment.

The History Problem



Sustainable Benefit?

of organizations treated agile like a bureaucracy install (MIT)

The Pattern Repeats

- **1990s** ERP rollouts
- **2001–2005** Web 1.0 boom & bust
- **2008–2010** Mobile app rush
- **2015–2019** Big Data / Blockchain
- **2022 →** AI – same pattern?

Learning Box

"If you apply AI to a high-entropy, bureaucratic system, you will simply generate waste at 100x the speed."

~ Jeff Sutherland, co-creator of Scrum, Linkedin, 2026

The Amplification Problem

AI Slop

Ambiguous, biased, or misaligned outputs from requirements work done without proper analysis.

AI agents don't hallucinate because the model is bad — they fail because the model will always generate a response, whether or not the structured context it needs actually exists.

AI Drift

The gradual misalignment of AI-integrated solutions from original intent over time — as systems evolve without continuous analytical oversight.

AI doesn’t forgive sub-par business analysis – it amplifies it. And it amplifies it at inopportune times when patience for rework is at its lowest.

Learning Box

~ Angela Wick, Journal of AI, Robotics & Workplace Automation, 2026
~ Darlene Newman, Ivy Captech, LinkedIn 2026
~ Angela Wick, IIBA The Corner , January 2026

The Learning Problem

The Diamond-shaped Firm



Senior — narrowing

Mid-level hybrid roles — growing

Widest point — co-ordination + judgment

Junior — at risk

Entry — disproportionately affected

Learning Box

"The best leaders and most impressive experts acquire the skills they need to lead and solve important problems by learning the trade from the ground up."

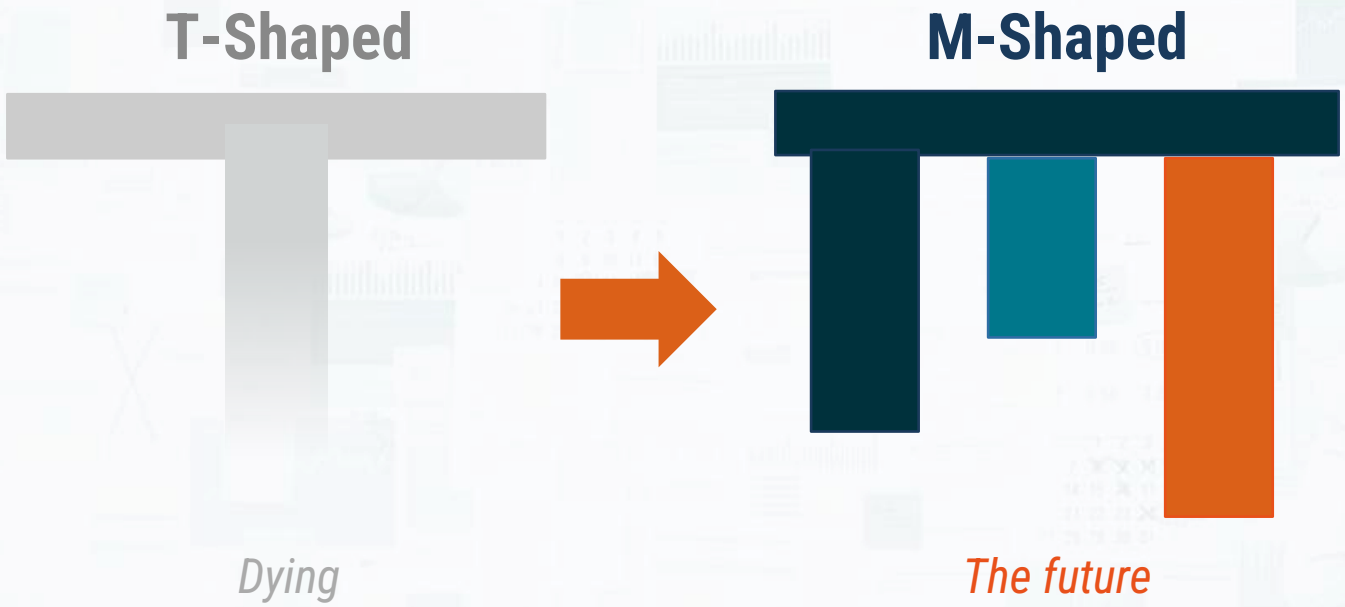
~ Edmondson & Chamorro-Premuzic, Harvard Business Review, March-April 2026

02

What is Actually Changing



The M-Shift





Business operations specialists (process + co-ordination + analysis) in employment & pay since 2022

Learning Box

In an age where AI has deep expertise in everything, human value comes from connecting the dots."

~ Jurgen Appelo, LinkedIn, 2026

The Arrival of the Agentic Enterprise

Intelligent Tools (GPT-3 era) | 2020-2022

Passive Assistants (Copilot) | 2023-2024

Proactive Agents (OpenClaw) | 2025-2026

Agentic Ecosystems | 2026-2028

Autonomous Orgs | 2028-2032

The questions that matter…

If systems are built by AI agents in days, **who interprets business needs and system requirements for the agents?**

If developers are gone in 6-12 months, **who orchestrates the AI agents that develop our systems?**

If the Agentic Enterprise is upon us, **who curates the domain knowledge?**

If enterprise AI agents become ubiquitous, **who governs what AI agents are authorised to do?**

The Center of Gravity in the Information Economy

FROM

What is published

TO

What is being asked

Learning Box

"The defining asset is no longer attention – it is context."
"Whoever holds the user relationship holds the context"

— Shuwei Fang, Harvard Kennedy School, The Economist By Invitation, April 18, 2026

03

Ten Skills for the Future

> *”The question is not whether AI will transform your organization. The question is whether our practice will lead it."*
>
> **— Dr. Terry Roach, Chair, IIBA Board of Directors**

The Ten Skills at a Glance

S1	Sensemaking in Complexity	
S2	Narrative Framing & Strategic Influence	
S3	AI-Augmented Analysis	NEW
S4	Adaptive Collaboration & Facilitation	
S5	Knowledge Architecture	NEW
S6	Agent Entitlement Governance	NEW
S7	Ethical Judgment	
S8	Provenance, Lineage & Calibrated Pace	
S9	Business Acumen & Outcome Ownership	
S10	Presence	

S1

Sensemaking in Complexity

Creating clarity in fast-moving, ambiguous environments. Framing the real problem. Identifying patterns. Turning messy input into insight.

BABOK 9.1.5 Systems Thinking · BA Standard 2025 Foundational Competency

S1

Sensemaking in Complexity

Creating clarity in fast-moving, ambiguous environments. Framing the real problem. Identifying patterns. Turning messy input into insight.

BABOK 9.1.5 Systems Thinking · BA Standard 2025 Foundational Competency

---

S2

Narrative Framing and Strategic Influence

Leaders don't need more data — they need meaning. Turning analysis into narrative. Visualising trade-offs. Asking catalytic questions.

BABOK 9.1.7 Visual Thinking
If you can't tell the story, your insight dies on the table. — Jas Phul

S3

AI-Augmented Analysis

Three distinct modes

AI as Tooling

Do existing work better

AI accelerates drafting, auto summarise, reduce extraction, production and repetitive analysis times.

Practice:
prompt fluency, output editing, tool selection

AI as Thinking Partner

Interrogate the output

Use AI to challenge framing and generate alternatives. Stress test assumptions. Treat outputs as drafts to argue with. BA evaluates, challenges and decides.

Practice:
critical thinking, calibrated trust, counter argument

AI as Agentic Execution

Within bounded entitlements

Define what agents may do.
Set conditions and escalation routes & rules.
Govern the live system.
Audit, Oversight and Intervene

Practice:
entitlement design, drift detection, audit and oversight

AI4BA → BA4AI → AI4Agents

S3

AI-Augmented Analysis

How techniques are evolving

AI Suitability	Strong augmentation across the technique's whole workflow, with human judgement retained throughout — resting on one foundational judgement made first: whether a source is trustworthy enough to analyse at all. Poor sources are screened out before the AI drafts anything, so this judgement underpins every finding downstream. The inputs to this Technique are documents, the material a language model is built to read and process; the work is high-volume and methodical; and the output is cheaply verifiable against its sources. The augmentation opportunity is real, but it is conditional on the verification discipline set out under Failure modes & how they're caught.
Human/AI Division of Labour	What AI can draft: • reading large document sets and extracting candidate notes per topic • drafting the document analysis chart (topic, type, source, verbatim detail, paraphrased critique, follow-up actions) • grouping related items into logical clusters, and • surfacing where notes appear to conflict, duplicate one another, or leave a knowledge gap. In each case the output is a *draft for review*, not a finding of record . What the analyst owns: • whether a source is relevant, current, genuine, and credible enough to trust at all • what is material enough to enter the work product, and • how findings are framed for their audience. The pattern is: AI proposes; the business analyst adjudicates provenance and signs off.
AI Operating Pattern	AI works best here when given a defined set of documents and a clear research scope, moving through the material in passes: first finding relevant content, then drafting from it, then checking statements back against their sources. This multi-pass approach matters because the Technique depends on tracing each finding to a specific source. Feeding all documents in at once for a single summary breaks that traceability and risks producing a confident-sounding result that quietly omits a contradicting source.
AI Failure Modes and How They Are Caught	Four failure modes apply here: 1. Fabricated or mis-attributed quotation: a confident-but-invented quote reads exactly like a real one; 2. Silent reliance on outdated sources: the model has no inherent sense of a document's currency; 3. False completeness: a fluent summary that presents the surviving documents as the whole picture, omitting a contradicting source that was dropped or under-weighted; 4. Inference stated as fact: a conclusion the analyst drew from a document gets written up as something the document itself stated. All four are plausible-but-wrong outputs that can reach a stakeholder artifact unnoticed without a verification gate. Four mechanisms catch them: • Source locators built in by design: every extracted statement carries a citation , keeping the spot-check cheap and fabricated quotes catchable; • A groundedness check: an automated test confirming each drafted statement actually appears in the source it cites; • Conflict surfacing check: after drafting, explicitly ask the AI whether any documents in the set contradict or qualify the findings ; • Separate columns for document statements and analyst inferences: keeping what the source says and what the analyst concludes in distinct, labelled columns catches inference stated as fact and flags currency issues for the spot-check.

S4

Adaptive Collaboration and Facilitation

Orchestrating people as well as processes. High-impact workshops. Conflict navigation. Decision-making design.

Facilitation + Leadership & Influencing = 2 of 5 BA Standard Foundational Competencies (2025)

Business analysis leadership: from owner of requirements to architect of the analysis collaboration.

S5 Knowledge Architecture — Making the Enterprise AI-legible

AI systems don't run on prompts. They run on *some* (structured) understanding of your operating model.

Why AI fails without BA:

- Entities are not defined
- Relationships are not mapped
- Terminology means different things in different teams
- Completion criteria lives in someone's spreadsheet on their desktop

S6 Agent Entitlement Governance

What?	Under what?	When?
What is this agent authorised to do? Scope and conditions.	Under what conditions may it act? Business rules and constraints.	When must a human be involved? Escalation paths and thresholds.

Learning Box

"The BA skills we've developed in facilitating self-organization – clarifying objectives, defining boundaries, process decomposition – are directly transferable to designing AI agent systems.."

~ Filip Hendrickx, Re-inventing the BA Value Chain, IIBA The Corner, March 2026

S7

Ethical Judgment — With a Practical Toolkit

AI raises the stakes: AI slop propagates at scale.
Decision Errors, Bias, Privacy, Over-Reliance, Explainability.
AI personalisation erodes the common ground that holds communities together.

Learning Box

~ *AISI.gov.uk – AI Security Insititute (UK)*

~ Fabricio Laguna – FABR Model, Linkedin, 202

S7

Ethical Judgment — With a Practical Toolkit

AI raises the stakes: AI slop propagates at scale.
Decision Errors, Bias, Privacy, Over-Reliance, Explainability.
AI personalisation erodes the common ground that holds communities together.

S8

Provenance, Lineage, and Calibrated Pace

Provenance: understand where this came from — context, authenticity, history.
Lineage: understand the path — transformation, bias, input.
Pace: move at the best speed. Not the fastest speed. Accurate. Tested. Ready

AISI.gov.uk – AI Security Institute (UK)

Laguna — FABR Model, (LinkedIn, 2025)

S9

Business Acumen and Outcome Ownership

Connecting every skill to the reason the organisation exists.

The value stream: team tasks → deliverables → assets → hypotheses → user behaviour changes → business results.

S9

Business Acumen and Outcome Ownership

Connecting every skill to the reason the organisation exists.

The value stream: team tasks → deliverables → assets → hypotheses → user behaviour changes → business results.

S10

Presence — The Human Skill That Holds Everything Together

Navigate the best human focus: non-anxious, complete, integrated.

Trustworthiness (BABOK 9.2.3): offset the natural fear of change experienced by many stakeholders.

04

Putting it Together



PUTTING IT TOGETHER

What you can do next

FROM

AI as ‘Strategy’

TO

AI *in* the Enterprise Operating Model

- Skills over roles
- Enduring artefacts over project documents
- Linking architecture and analysis
- AI tooling fit for purpose *inside* capability work
- Start governance
- Test the 70/30 rubric in your context
- Plausible over perfect

Compete with AI on execution — bad idea.
Elevate to direction, context, judgment — much better.

— Fabricio Laguna




Thank you!