International Institute of Business Analysis™

Designing For Excellence in Business Analysis



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Last Year: Six Conversations About Business Analysis

- The senior professional differentiator is emotional intelligence, not Excel
- Pressure is the new normal
- Business analysis has become a strategic enabler
- AI is reshaping how analysts think, learn, and work
- Continuous learning is part of the job
- Outcomes over outputs

This Year: Business Analysis Practitioner Conversations

How to Amplify Your Value

A three-part webinar series by Laura Brandenburg · Platform: Natter · Hosted by: IIBA

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
An ROI Model for Business Analysis	Assess your Business Analysis Practice	Improve your Business Analysis Practice

How it worked

Each session posed questions to practitioners, who discussed them in one-on-one conversations with peers. IIBA used Natter, an AI-enabled platform, to create transcripts of each independent conversation, then anonymize and theme the data across hundreds of participant exchanges.

How Business Analysts Are Delivering In Their Own Words

Business analysis professionals are clear about the value they create in their organizations.

The challenge is that most of it goes unseen.

Financial & Operational Improvements

Unnecessary tasks eliminated through process improvement work.

Quantifiable savings through analysis efforts

Clarity and Risk Prevention

Understanding needs before jumping into solutions.

Identifying high-risk activities that can impact operations.

Connecting People and Problems

Identifying missing pieces of information before they become problems.

Bringing the right people into the room at the right time.

Bridging what the business says with what it really needs.

What BAs Say Is Working Against Them

Brought In Too Late

“. . . leadership wants to jump straight to solutions . . . The value I bring is making sure we understand stakeholder needs and address the root problem, not just a symptom.”

Unresolved Role Ambiguity

"Many people are unfamiliar with business analysis, so I often need to explain my role and the services I provide, as well as what I need from them . . ."

Organizational AI Governance That Hasn’t Caught Up

"I know we can't enter confidential information like Social Security numbers, but I'm wondering how far we can go.”

Business Analysis Infrastructure Built Ad Hoc

"Our standard operating procedures are so outdated that people have made their own versions . . I'm managing this on my own . . .”

Unsustainable Pace Creating a Psychological Toll

“I also tend to get overwhelmed so much that I can't think or form sentences, so I step away from my work to clear my head.”

The Gaps Between What Leaders Are Saying and Practitioners Are Experiencing

6 Leadership Conversations	5 Practitioner Themes
Pressure is the new normal	Unsustainable pace creating a psychological toll
AI is reshaping how BAs work	AI governance hasn't caught up
Continuous learning is part of the job	Unsustainable pace creating a psychological toll
Outcomes over outputs	Business analysis infrastructure built ad hoc
The senior professional edge	Unresolved role ambiguity
Business analysis as a strategic enabler	Unresolved role ambiguity + Brought in too late

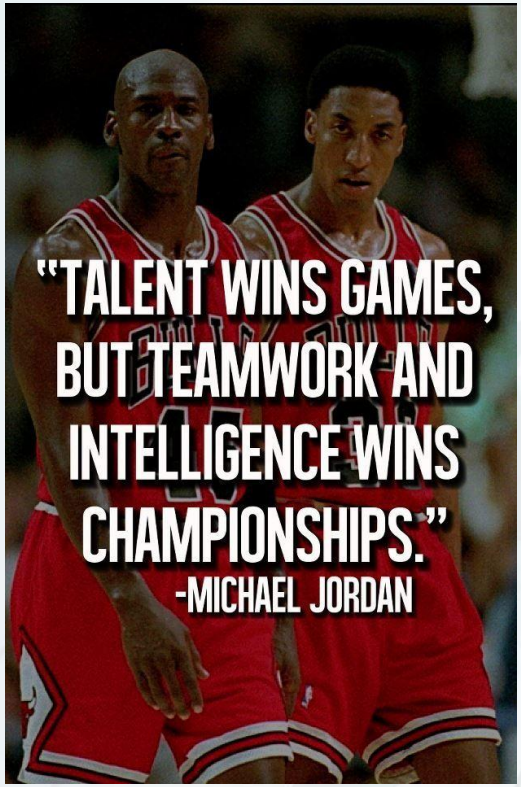
Most leaders are managing excellence.

But are you designing for it?

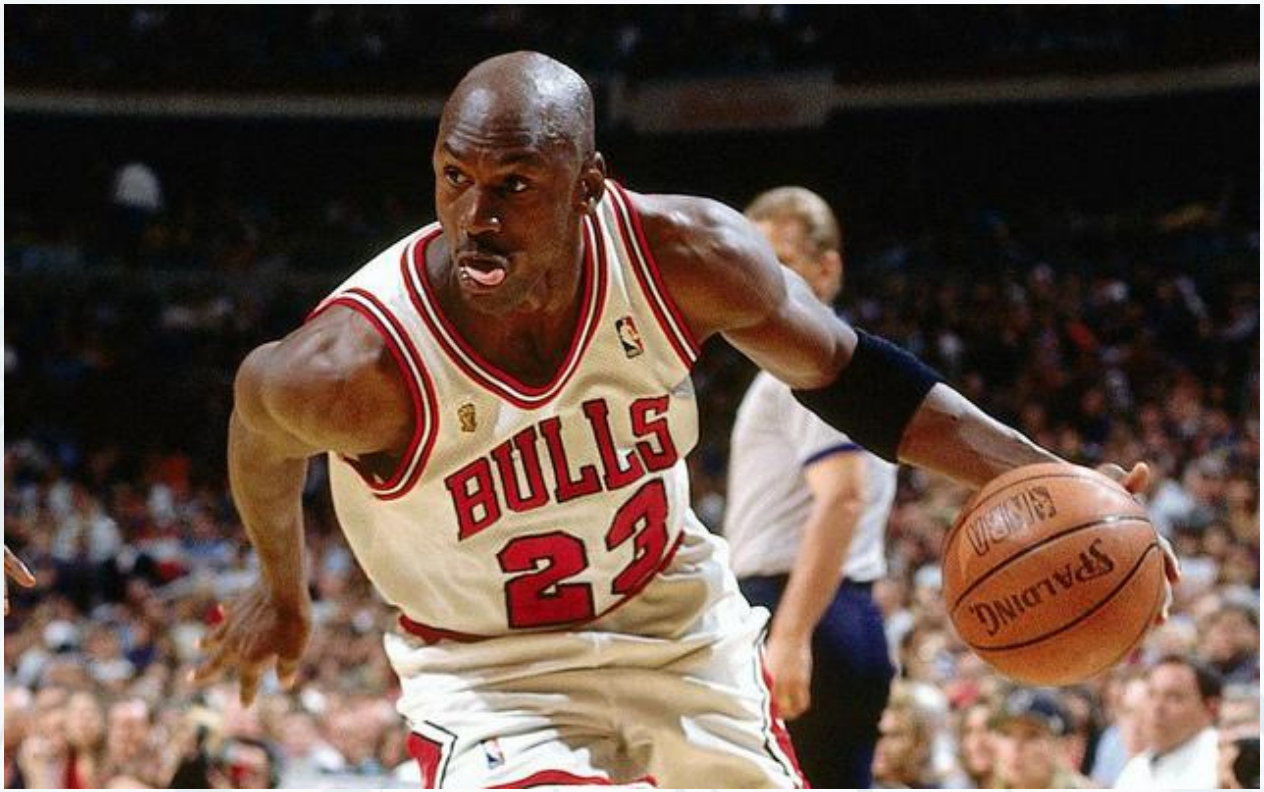


Fulton & Warner, Harvard Business Review, March 2026

An Example of Excellence Designed



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Three Lenses for Diagnosing What's Happening

***How to Turn Individual Talent into Organizational Excellence*, James Fulton and Todd Warner HBR.org, 12 Mar 2026**

1 Talent

How capability grows and adapts

Skills, mindsets, career development, recognition

2 Team

How work really happens

Peer accountability, team norms, how decisions are made, business analysis involvement, stakeholder expectations

3 Routine

How excellence becomes consistent and repeatable

Cadence, feedback loops, learning scaled across teams

Element 1: Talent

How capability grows and adapts

When designed

- Development embedded in the work, not occasional training.
- Career pathways are visible, not implied.
- The value analysts create is made visible — not left invisible by default.

When left to default

- Capability stagnates after hiring.
- Career paths are unclear or invisible.
- The connector identity degrades when the role goes unrecognised.

Ask yourself:

What is your system teaching your analysts every day by default?
What percentage of their time is protected for learning?

Element 2: Team

How work happens

When designed

- BAs involved at problem framing, not after scope is set.
- BAs have the responsibility for and the authority to do their work.
- Stakeholder expectations are set deliberately, not assumed.

When left to default

- Hero culture — a few individuals carry the load.
- Confusion about the role of business analysis.
- BAs brought in after the important decisions are already made.

Ask yourself:

- *Where in your project lifecycle do your business analysts typically get involved — and is that by design or by default?*

Element 3: Routine

How excellence becomes consistent and repeatable

When designed

- Consistent cadence and feedback loops.
- Learning scaled across teams — not limited to certain people.
- Standards and templates owned and updated as organizational assets.

When left to default

- Reactive, always-urgent work.
- Quality varies by who is assigned.
- Organizational infrastructure built ad hoc, alone, by each person creating redundancy and inconsistency.

Ask yourself:

Where in your practice does quality depend on a specific person being present?

A System Design Checklist

Five areas where the three elements tend to break down in practice:

1. Early Involvement **2. Role Clarity** **3. BA Infrastructure** **4. AI Usage** **5. Sustainability**

If you answer no to more than a few in any section,
analysts are filling that gap with effort and endurance

Early Involvement

Are analysts in the room before decisions are committed?

- [ ] Do we have explicit moments where problem framing happens before scope and timelines are fixed?
- [ ] Are analysts routinely involved before decisions are committed — not after?
- [ ] Do leaders reward prevention and reframing, or only recovery and speed?
- [ ] Is “good enough to learn from” considered progress early on?

If not: clarity is happening late, and analysts are firefighting by design.

Role Clarity

Do stakeholders understand why analysts are involved, not just what they produce?

- [ ] Can stakeholders clearly articulate why an analyst is involved, not just what they produce?
- [ ] Are analysts' contributions defined by decisions they influence rather than documents they write?1
- [ ] Is analyst inclusion based on explicit governance — or informal relationships?
- [ ] Do analysts have recognised authority to challenge assumptions?

If not: analysts are spending their time explaining the work, rather than doing the work.

Business Analysis Infrastructure

Are your standards and templates organisational assets — or personal initiatives?

- [ ] Do core analysis templates, standards, and SOPs exist and have named owners?
- [ ] Are they reviewed, updated, and retired intentionally?
- [ ] Is there alignment between “official” standards and what people actually use?
- [ ] Is infrastructure funded as an organizational asset — not personal initiative?

If not: analysts are building assets ad hoc for each initiative.

Artificial Intelligence Usage

Do your analysts have sanctioned AI tools and clear guidance on how they are to be used?

- [ ] Do we have approved AI use cases aligned to analysis work?
- [ ] Are expectations for human-in-the-loop review explicit?
- [ ] Are analysts given safe, sanctioned tools — or left to navigate policy ambiguity?
- [ ] Do you talk about AI in terms of clarity outcomes, not just efficiency?

If not: AI is making your existing system gaps bigger, faster.

Sustainability

Is your system designed for analyst endurance — or are you assuming it?

- [ ] Are analysts encouraged to escalate structural blockers safely?
- [ ] Is mentoring, sensemaking, and prevention recognised — not just delivery?
- [ ] Do analysts have visible paths to evolve into adjacent capabilities?
- [ ] Is wellbeing discussed as a design outcome, not a personal resilience issue?

> *If not: your system depends on analyst endurance and will eventually degrade.*

When These Elements Breakdown

Strong talent + weak team	→	**Burnout and turn over**
Strong team + weak routine	→	**Inconsistent outcomes**
Strong routine + weak talent	→	**Compliance without value**
None designed	→	**Individual effort becomes the system**

You don’t need to fix all five.

You need to know which one is **weakest.**

And start there.

When excellence matters,
it should be designed.



The Leadership Shift

Managing work	**Designing conditions**
Solving problems directly	**Shaping systems**
Relying on strong individuals	**Enabling consistent outcomes**

Four Things to Take Back With You

One thing to stop

Assuming that uneven outcomes across your business analysis practice is a people problem.

It's likely a design problem.

One thing to start

Having conversations with your BAs about what's making their work harder than it should be — not to fix it on the spot, but to understand what the system is doing to them.

One thing to find out

Which of the five checklist areas your organisation is weakest in — and whether that's something you designed, or something that just happened.

One thing to remember

You already have people in your organization who are trained to diagnose problems, identify root causes, and design better ways of working. **They're your business analysts.**

Are you applying that capability to your own practice?

Thank you!

Discussion

1. Which section of the checklist surfaces the biggest gap in your organisation right now — and what's one sign of it?

2. Where in your practice are analysts filling a design gap with personal effort — and how long has that been sustainable?

3. What's one thing you've designed — however small — that made excellence more repeatable? What would it take to do more of that?