Chapters to Go

Agile Extension to the BABOK Guide, Version 2

by The International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA)
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Skillsoft

Chapter 2: The Agile Mindset

Overview

Agile is best described as a mindset that guides the way work is approached. Agile is not a methodology that prescribes how to do that work.

Agile business analysis is comprised of applying an agile mindset to the fundamental knowledge, competencies, and techniques of business analysis. Appendix B: Mapping BABOK Guide Tasks to Horizons demonstrates how an agile mindset can be applied to each *BABOK*® *Guide* task.

An agile mindset drives agile business analysis practitioners' thinking and behaviour. This, combined with a set of practices and techniques which enable effective delivery of just enough of the right product to the right people early and often, and the focus on maximizing value, are the goals of agile business analysis.

The goal of applying an agile mindset is to maximize the outcome (value delivered) with minimum output: "do less and do the right things, right".

2.1 What is an Agile Mindset?

The agile mindset is based on a common core of human values that include respect, courage, collaboration, continuous learning, customer focus, and value maximization. These values find their clearest expression in the Manifesto for Agile Software Development (Agile Manifesto).

The main aspects of an agile mindset include

- deliver value rapidly and consistently,

- collaborate courageously,

- iterate to learn,

- simplify to avoid waste,

- consider context and adapt to realities,

- reflect on feedback and adapt both product and process, and

- produce the highest quality products.

2.2 The Agile Mindset, Methodologies, and Frameworks

Agile is best described as a mindset because the values and subsequent principles explain ideas and attitudes with which people approach a situation, but do not prescribe exactly what they do in those situations.

Every situation is unique – there is no single "agile" approach. There are a variety of techniques, processes, and tools which can be applied in different combinations to different extents depending on the context. Agile teams are best served when they select a particular combination of techniques, processes, and tools that fit their context and help them work in agreement with their chosen mindset. This combination can be considered the team's methodology.

There are a number of branded frameworks that fall under the broad banner of agile. These frameworks are collections of specific practices and ideas that have been proven useful in a specific context. These frameworks have some common characteristics:

- respect for people and the importance of creativity in delivering value,

- the importance of rapid delivery, feedback, and learning to ensure the product or service being produced meets real customer needs,

- collaboration and communication among the team members and the stakeholder community in order to build shared understanding, and

- break work into small slices of business value and deliver them incrementally and iteratively.

These frameworks include Scrum, Kanban, Extreme Programming, Adaptive Software Development, Lean Software Development, SAFe, LeSS, DAD, and many others.

It is important to understand that the context in which a framework worked at one time may not be the same as the context for a different initiative. There is no "one size fits all" in the agile mindset. The key to agility is to find what works in a particular context. Many teams find it helpful to combine techniques and practices from multiple frameworks to address the challenges of their context.

2.3 Applying the Agile Mindset

The ideas that inform the agile mindset were not new when they were synthesized into agile software development. As people practiced, spread, and refined these ideas, they found that the ideas can be applied to any domain that derives value from creative human work. These ideas have been used in marketing, running law and architecture firms, in consultancy organizations, in many different product development environments, in pharmaceutical product discovery, and a myriad of other domains.

All of these domains depend on human collaboration, skill, and knowledge to deliver value to the consumers of products. Business analysis shares these characteristics. Business analysis is a human-centric, exploratory, and creative endeavour, and analysis work results in changes to the way organizations run.

2.4 Agile Extension and the Agile Manifesto

The agile software development movement was founded on a document which encapsulates a philosophy of work, the Manifesto for Agile Software Development. This manifesto presents a set of values and principles which are the underpinning of the way of working embodied in agile software development.

The Manifesto for Agile Software Development (Agile Manifesto) was penned by a group of practitioners and methodologists who sought alternatives to the way software was developed at the time. A high percentage of software development initiatives were late, exceeded their planned budget, and didn't achieve their quality goals. The teams building software were stressed, unhappy, and dissatisfied with the working environment.

The Agile Manifesto states:

> *"We are uncovering better ways of developing*
> *software by doing it and helping others do it.*
> *Through this work we have come to value:*
>
> ***Individuals and interactions*** *over processes and tools*
> ***Working software*** *over comprehensive documentation*
> ***Customer collaboration*** *over contract negotiation*
> ***Responding to change*** *over following a plan*
>
> *That is, while there is value in the items on*
> *the right, we value the items on the left more."*

If we apply agile thinking to business analysis we can view these statements as guidelines for a philosophy of analysis.

These statements may be rooted in software development, but they can be related to agile business analysis in any context. Replacing "working software" with "working solution" expands our thinking and gives us guidance for an approach to analysis with an agile mindset.

1. **We are uncovering better ways of delivering solutions by doing it and helping others do it.**

   This is the most important statement in the Agile Manifesto. It reinforces the practice based and empirical nature of the agile mindset. You learn what works by trying things out, not theorizing about what might work.

2. **Individuals and interactions over processes and tools.**

   Business analysis is a human-centric activity. Business analysis practitioners start by understanding stakeholders' needs which requires them to work closely with stakeholders at every step of the value chain. Solutions frequently change the way people work, and agile business analysis practitioners make people the center of the work.

3. **Working solutions over comprehensive documentation.**

   Agile business analysis practitioners focus on producing something, showing it to stakeholders, and eliciting immediate feedback to determine if they are on track to satisfying the need. Agile business analysis practitioners engage stakeholders in conversations in order to build and maintain shared understanding.

   Documentation does provide value, but only when it's written to match its intended purpose. Agile business analysis practitioners produce documentation as they implement a change and use it to facilitate and support discussions with stakeholders.

4. **Customer collaboration over contract negotiation.**

   Agile business analysis primarily focuses on satisfying needs. Business analysis practitioners learn to understand needs by showing increments of solutions to stakeholders and analyzing the feedback received. This ongoing collaboration with stakeholders facilitates new information about the need and constantly refines the understanding of the need until the need has been satisfied.

   This ongoing collaboration with stakeholders also uncovers new needs based on customer demand, new competitors entering a market, government legislation that impacts the solution, or any other factor that may impact the solution.

5. **Responding to change over following a plan.**

   Agile approaches do plan. In some contexts the plan is called the product roadmap. In an agile context, success is measured based on how well solutions satisfy the customer's needs and the value they derive from the solution. The ongoing learning and feedback that is central to the agile mindset allows for business analysis practitioners to continually refine their understanding of the need and make changes to the solution to ensure the solution satisfies the need.

   It is the ability of agile business analysis practitioners to accurately respond to change that allows them to deliver value to their customers faster, with higher quality, and with the ability to rapidly change direction in response to changing conditions.

2.5 The Business Analysis Core Concept Model ™

The *Business Analysis Core Concept Model™ (BACCM™)* provides a conceptual framework for business analysis that is comprised of six terms that have a common meaning to all business analysis practitioners. Refer to *A Guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge*® (*BABOK*® *Guide*) version 3 for more information regarding the *Business Analysis Core Concept Model™.*
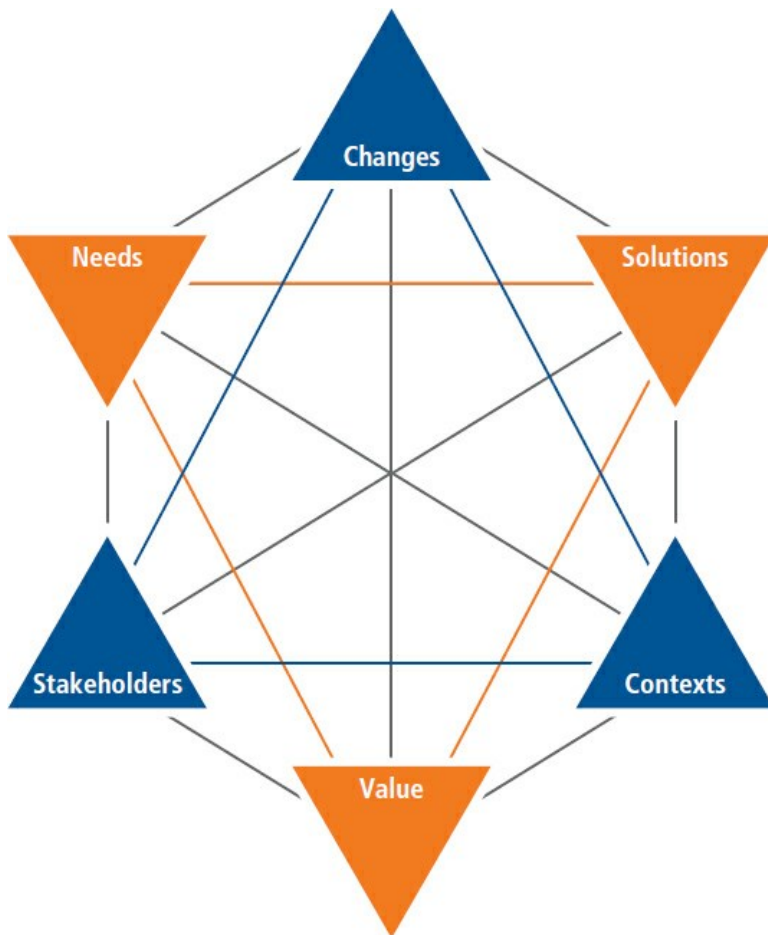
Figure 2.5.1: The BACCM

The six concepts of the model are:

- **Change**: The act of transformation in response to a need.

- **Need**: A problem or opportunity to be addressed.

- **Solution**: A specific way of satisfying one or more needs in a context.

- **Stakeholder**: A group or individual with a relationship to the change, the need, or the solution.

- **Value**: The worth, importance, or usefulness of something to a stakeholder within a context.

- **Context**: The circumstances that influence, are influenced by, and provide understanding of the change.

These concepts are common to all business analysis practitioners, and they can apply to any domain and any level in the organization. They provide a universal language to describe how to approach business analysis with an agile mindset.

2.6 Principles of Agile Business Analysis

The Agile Manifesto provides a set of values that form the foundation of the agile mindset. The *BABOK® Guide* presents the *Business Analysis Core Concept Model™* which provides a set of core concepts and common language to describe business analysis. The *Agile Extension to the BABOK® Guide* describes seven principles for agile business analysis.

The principles that guide agile business analysis are:

- See the Whole

- Think as a Customer

- Analyze to Determine What is Valuable

- Get Real Using Examples

- Understand What is Doable

- Stimulate Collaboration and Continuous Improvement

- Avoid Waste

2.6.1 See the Whole

The principle of See the Whole guides business analysis practitioners to analyze the need in the context of the big picture, focusing on the business context and why a change is necessary. Business analysis practitioners examine the context in which the need exists and how the context influences the solution.

Agile business analysis assesses how the solution delivers value when satisfying stakeholders' needs. The value for the solution is created through gaining an understanding of the context, the solution, and the stakeholders. The ideas behind See the Whole are influenced by systems thinking.

2.6.2 Think as a Customer

The principle of Think as a Customer guides business analysis practitioners in ensuring solutions incorporate the voice of the customer through a clear understanding of the expected user experience.

A customer can be any stakeholder that interacts with the solution. Business analysis practitioners generally start with a high-level view of customer needs and progressively decompose these viewpoints into an increasingly detailed understanding of the needs the solution must satisfy. Agile approaches incorporate feedback loops to continuously validate this learning. As solution delivery progresses, both the customer's and the organization's understanding of the needs evolve. Feedback and learning is central to ensuring these changes are incorporated into future iterations of the solution.

2.6.3 Analyze to Determine What is Valuable

The principle of Analyze to Determine What is Valuable guides business analysis practitioners to continuously assess and prioritize work to be done in order to maximize the value being delivered at any point in time.

Determining what is valuable involves understanding the purpose of requirements and ensuring solution options and solution components continue to support the desired outcome. This includes avoiding waste by maximizing the amount of work not done and delivering valuable solutions early and continuously.

2.6.4 Get Real Using Examples

The principle of Get Real Using Examples guides business analysis practitioners in building a shared understanding of the need and how the solution will satisfy that need.

These examples can be used to iteratively develop and elaborate analysis models to explore multiple dimensions (for example, user role, user actions, data, and business rules) of a need. This practice continuously engages stakeholders and supports a shared understanding of needs.

The level of abstraction of examples and models varies depending on the audience and the outcome being sought. For example, when planning the product, examples or models can be used to set context and identify scope. These models are more abstract and provide a broad perspective of the need. When delivering the product, the examples or models can be progressively elaborated to identify specific details of the need and the solution.

Examples can also be used to derive acceptance criteria, help design the solution, and provide a foundation for testing the solution.

2.6.5 Understand What is Doable

The principle of Understand What is Doable guides business analysis practitioners to understand how to deliver a solution within given constraints. Constraints can include the capabilities of the technology used to deliver the solution, the skills of the team, and the time in which you have to deliver a valuable solution.

Understanding what is doable involves continually analyzing the need and the solutions that can satisfy that need within the

known constraints. It also involves considering measures such as team capacity and velocity trends to maintain reasonable expectations on an ongoing basis.

2.6.6 Stimulate Collaboration and Continuous Improvement

The principle of Stimulate Collaboration and Continuous Improvement guides business analysis practitioners in creating and contributing to an environment where all stakeholders contribute value on an ongoing basis.

Agile approaches emphasize the usefulness of continual collaboration between those with a need and those who are delivering a solution to meet that need.

A key aspect of the agile mindset is continuous improvement. Business analysis practitioners seek to continually improve the solution as well as the processes used to deliver the solution. Continuous structured and unstructured feedback allows business analysis practitioners to adapt the solution and its processes in order to increase the value being delivered.

Retrospectives are also used to examine processes and solutions, and identify opportunities for improvement. Healthy, collaborative teams have the trust and safety necessary to transparently identify opportunities for improvement and implement them.

2.6.7 Avoid Waste

The principle of Avoid Waste guides business analysis practitioners in identifying which activities add value and which activities do not add value. Agile business analysis seeks to understand the need and to deliver a solution that satisfies that need. Any activity that does not contribute directly to this goal is waste.

Waste can be divided into two sets of activities:

- those that have value but do not directly contribute to satisfying the need, and

- those activities that do not add value at all.

The aim is to completely remove those activities that do not add value, and minimize those activities that do not directly contribute to satisfying the need.

When avoiding waste, agile business analysis practitioners

- avoid producing documentation before it is needed, and when documentation is needed do just enough,

- ensure commitments are met and there are no incomplete work items that adversely impact downstream activities,

- avoid rework by making commitments at the last responsible moment,

- try to elicit, analyze, specify, and validate requirements with the same models,

- make analysis models as simple as possible to meet their intended purpose,

- ensure clear and effective communication, and

- pay continuous attention to technical excellence and accuracy. Quality defects (such as unclear requirements) result in rework and are waste.

2.7 The Business Analysis Core Concept Model™ and the Principles of Agile Business Analysis

The *Business Analysis Core Concept Model™* (*BACCM™*) provides set of core concepts and common language for business analysis. The seven principles of agile business analysis provide guidance on applying the agile mind set to business analysis activities.

The principles of agile business analysis can be mapped to the core concepts as listed below.

Table 2.7.1: The BACCM and Principles of Agile Business Analysis

Core Concept	BACCM™ Definition	Principle of Agile Business Analysis

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Core Concept	BACCM™ Definition	Principle of Agile Business Analysis
Change	The act of transformation in response to a need	Change is central to all principles of agile business analysis.
Need	A problem or opportunity to be addressed.	Get Real Using Examples.
Solution	A specific way of satisfying one or more needs in a context.	Simulate Collaboration and Continuous Improvements.
Stakeholder	A group or individual with a relationship to the change, the need, or the solution.	Think as a Customer.
Value	The worth, importance, or usefulness of something to a stakeholder within a context.	Get Real Using Examples and Avoid Waste.
Context	The circumstances that influence, are influenced by, and provide understanding of the change.	See the Whole.