



# BUSINESS ANALYSIS IN A DISRUPTIVE WORLD

A NEW FRONTIER FOR BUSINESS ANALYSIS PROFESSIONALS

DISCUSSION PAPER



## Business Analysis in a disrupted world?

*In early 2016, we announced a strategic alliance between IIBA and BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT with the aim of this collaborating to elevate the profile of the Business Analysis profession globally. We believe that together, both organizations will speak with a louder voice and make a greater impact.*

*We have discussed ways to bring the Business Analysis community together and to facilitate knowledge sharing. This is why we are pleased to share this discussion paper with you, the Business Analysis community - as the first in a series that inaugurates our joint efforts. We would like to hear your views and thoughts as this is the start of a program that we hope will evolve and grow with your input.*

Stephen Ashworth, President and CEO, IIBA

*We at BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, are delighted to be working together with IIBA for the benefit of Business Analysis globally. This discussion paper is the culmination of a series of exhibitions and events at which we have brought together the BA community to discuss themes and trends we see influencing business analysis practice. One of the themes we hear discussed frequently is "disruptive business analysis" and so we are pleased to share with you a summary, analysis and viewpoint on the topic and what it means for the community. In this paper we assess how Business Analysis professionals are experiencing and driving disruption – with input from senior professionals, Michelle Shakesheff and Brian Simpson.*

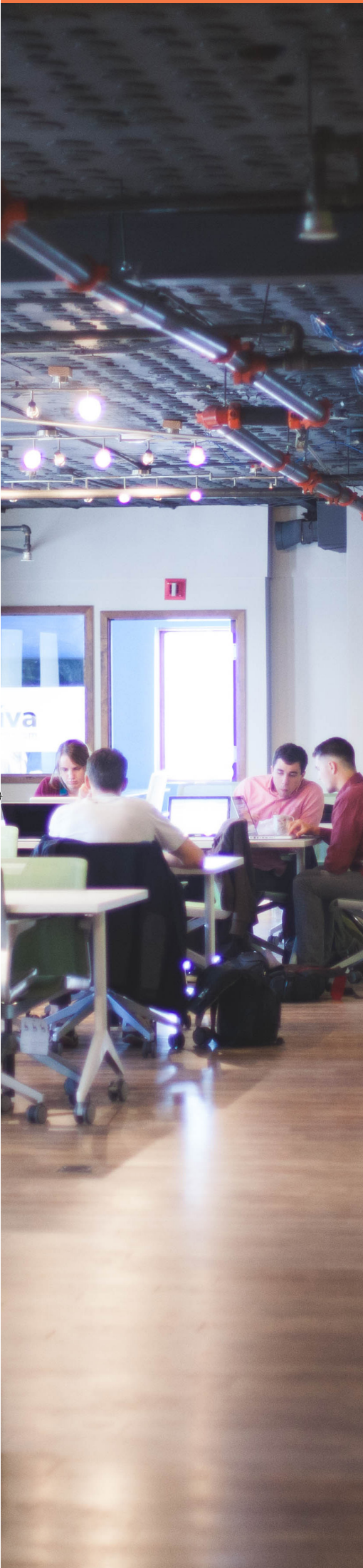
Jon Buttriss, CEO, BCS Learning & Development Ltd

## How can Business Analysis professionals support business in a disruptive world?

One of the most significant, if not the most significant, functions of business analysis is to deliver valuable change to organizations. Business Analysis professionals assess the organization and its operating landscape, they evaluate available and emerging technologies and processes, and they orchestrate projects that deliver solutions to best meet the needs of the business. They are used to change. They deal with change every day.

In the words of Michelle Shakesheff, Business Analyst Manager at Zurich Insurance, "Business Analysis is one of those roles that will never be static. It will always be changing as organizations change and technology changes."

But 'disruption' goes beyond change. The world has changed and has become much more complex. Competition is more intense than ever before, and the changes facing business are happening faster than ever before. To remain sustainable and competitive, organizations are recognizing the value of the role of business analysis in helping them to achieve their business goals.





## The Agile influence

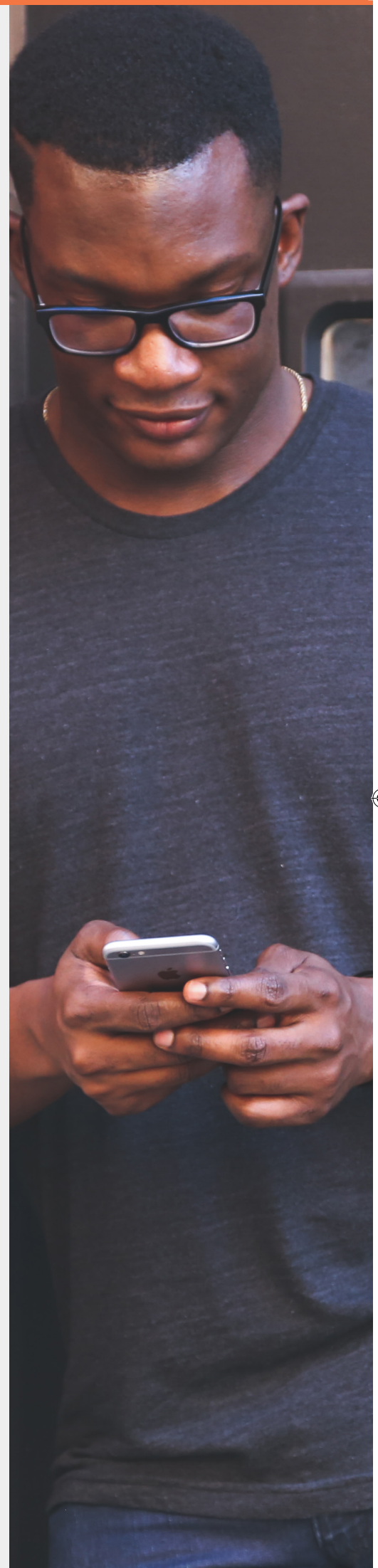
The shift towards Agile approaches has had a profound impact on people, projects and organizations, and subsequently, the Business Analysis profession.

Traditionally, organizations used waterfall approaches along with selected use of iterative approaches popularized by methodologies such as RUP. The evidence of benefits from adaptive approaches became too compelling to ignore, however, organizations struggled with adopting these approaches. Confusion reigned as new lightweight approaches clashed with the traditional plan driven approach to project execution. Most organizations were ill prepared for the cultural transformation that needs to occur for all stakeholders in order to harness the power and benefits of adaptive approaches.

Just as with the fallacy of adopting waterfall in the 1970s, organizations interpreted the Agile Value statements in the Agile Manifesto - "Manifesto for Agile Software Development" developed in 2001 - and the supporting Agile Principles, too literally. As an example the Agile Principle: "Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project" was interpreted as only developers and business stakeholders. Additionally, popular adaptive approaches don't identify all key roles that are needed to successfully execute work in this way. As an example SCRUM identifies two critical roles and everyone else is part of the development team. Misconceptions and misunderstanding led to organizations ignoring the need for business analysis expertise and assuming that developers and business stakeholders would jointly understand how to elicit requirements.

## An increasing understanding of the value Business Analysis professionals bring to Agile Projects

Fifteen years of learning and experience applying the Agile Manifesto has led to a greater understanding of how business analysis fits into agile/ adaptive approaches and the value Business Analysis professionals bring to agile projects. Organizations are now realizing that by consistently applying Business Analysis discipline and leveraging the expertise of their seasoned Business Analysis professionals, they are able to dramatically increase the organization's ability to deliver expected value incrementally through each iteration.





## Leveraging Business Analysis Professionals in Agile/ Adaptive Approaches

### The Business Analysis Professional as a Team Member

Projects utilizing agile /adaptive approaches focus on rapid delivery of business value using methods that evolve requirements and solutions in increments and through collaborative execution. Developing documentation is minimized with agile approaches - only where it adds value - and the team focuses their energy on developing value incrementally and for each iteration. Successfully doing this means organizations must enable the creation of cross-functional, independent, self-organizing teams that house all the required skills and expertise to effectively deliver the desired outcomes.

To support this, organizations should leverage their existing business analysis talent and “equip” them with the ability to take on a variety of roles that will support the flexibility required applying agile/adaptive approaches. Business Analysis professionals should be trained to learn new or more appropriate techniques and develop multi-faceted skills.

### The Business Analysis professional as the Product Owner

In this scenario, the Business Analysis professional is transitioned to the Product Owner role, or as a proxy and liaison between the Product Owner and the team. This often works well as traditional Business Analysis professionals have a strong understanding of business needs and have strong relationships developed with key stakeholders throughout an organization.

To successfully accomplish this, organizations should empower Business Analysis professionals with the ability and authority to make decisions for a product. If that is not possible, a more likely role may be that of a “consulting role” to the Product Owner. In this case, the Business Analysis professional uses their deep and broad knowledge of the business to act as a liaison between the Product Owner and the Development Team, helping with Backlog Management and providing the required business knowledge.

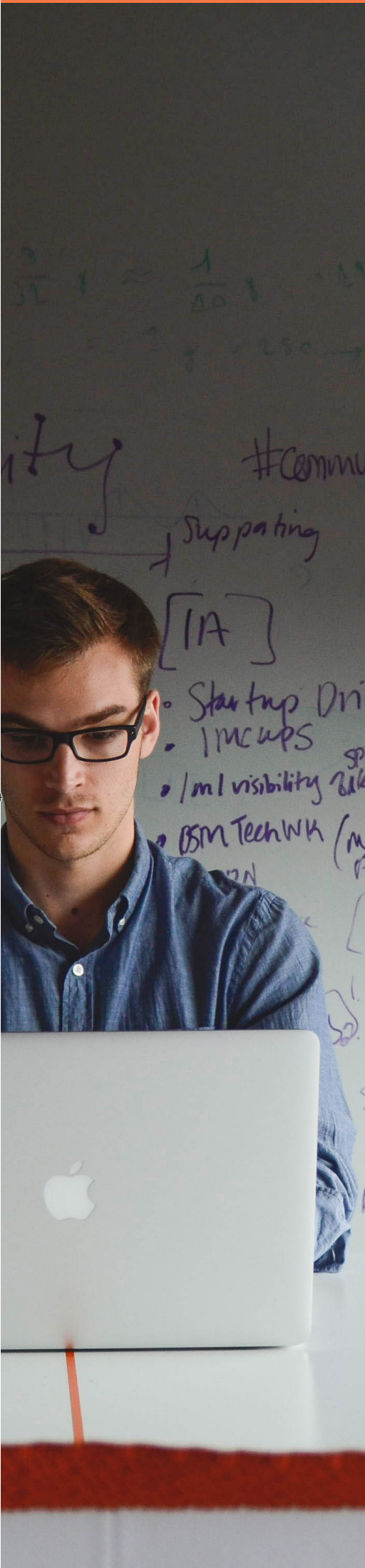
### The Business Analysis professional as Team Coach

Business Analysis professionals are traditionally very strong from a process perspective and generally have well-defined competencies such as facilitation skills, negotiation skills, presentation skills, problem solving skills, etc. Organizations should leverage Business Analysis professionals who have demonstrated these capabilities by transitioning them to a role where they will have the responsibility to ensure the team is executing and performing all required activities.

This role is applied as “Scrum Master” by teams that have adopted SCRUM as their preferred agile approach.

Organizations must be able to identify the appropriate talent, as many Business Analysis professionals do not have the ability to move from a more traditional “doer” role to a “team coach” role. Attention should be provided to individuals that have demonstrated a high degree of competency in facilitation, negotiation, coaching, etc.

BA professionals can play a significant role helping organization be more successful with agile projects.



## Operational disruption

Business analysis has certainly been affected by the influences of disruptive technologies. Developments such as Cloud computing and BYOD (bring your own device) are creating change in the way businesses manage their IT operations and both present Business Analysis professionals with new challenges.

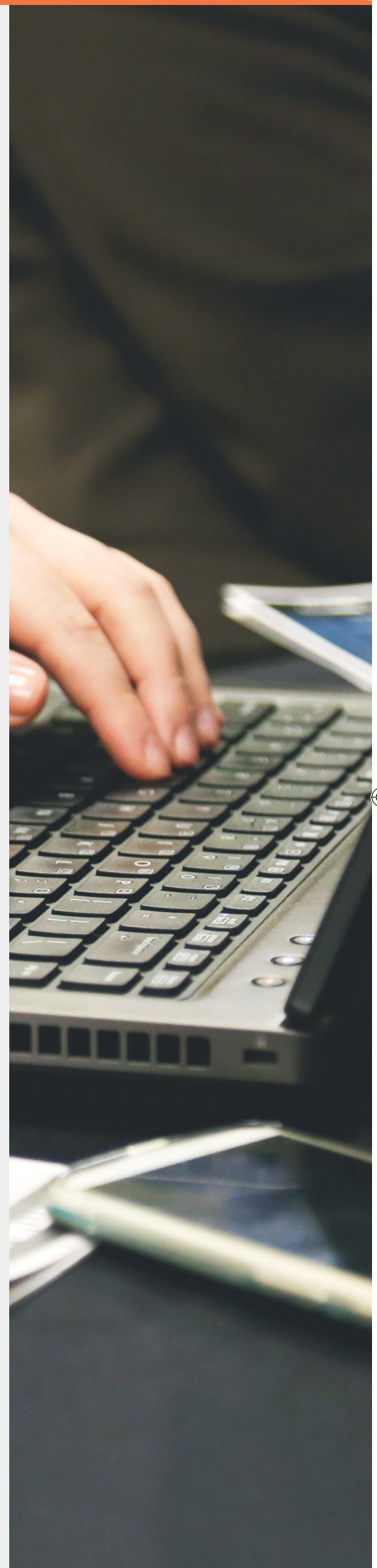
Cloud computing allows for on-demand access to a public pool of computing resources such as networks, servers, storage, apps and services –or the opportunity to develop this on a private basis. This conforms to our earlier definition of disruption, since it's a new technology offering an alternative system – principally, it involves a move away from fully owned, in-house software and infrastructure.

Traditional software, infrastructure and platform decisions (in the world before SaaS, IaaS and PaaS) involved making investment recommendations that would be accepted or rejected by 'the business'. However purchasing these as a service brings with it a new cost model. Cloud resources are priced by usage level which needs to be carefully evaluated, and they also require a certain level of in-house readiness which demands a sound commercial judgement on the part of the BA professional. There are risks and responsibilities inherent in outsourcing decisions, and new considerations around data integrity and protection that border on the cyber security space. Outsourcing decisions may have organizational and people impacts that require empathy & strong stakeholder management skills. It's clear that this places new demands on the Business Analysis professional.

To take the example of Bring Your Own Device as an ever-growing trend, this also presents the Business Analysis professional with new challenges. Ever more tech-savvy employees are using personal equipment to carry out company tasks. This has profound implications for the organization and its IT function, which must factor in BYOD when making decisions around providing resources, connectivity, security, and data management. But beyond all that, it has created a workforce that is personally invested in IT decision making and one that understands more about technology than ever before. Employees may well be using more sophisticated technology at home than they are in the office.

Michelle Shakesheff, agrees that expectations are certainly changing. "Almost everyone within an organization these days is going to be technologically savvy. As consumers we're using technology within our working lives, and it's easy for stakeholders to form the perception that tech should be easy."

On the one hand, it is more straightforward to communicate technical information, objectives and imperatives to digital natives and migrate them to new tools and ways of working. The process of requirements elicitation should also be simpler, in the sense that technology is now a common language. However, the flip side is that Business Analysis professionals may have to work harder to impress upon these digital natives a project's complexity. The stakeholder group for IT projects has broadened significantly. Gone are the days when senior management was content for IT to 'just get on with whatever you do'. IT is now in the spotlight.





## Business advantage through digital transformation

However, the increasing prominence of IT goes far beyond the operational. IT is no longer 'just' a facilitator for doing business; today it is just as likely to be core to the business offering and a collaborator rather than purely a provider. The impact of technology on competitive advantage is arguably more fundamental than it has ever been. This means the importance of delivering value through projects is make-or-break and has increased the scrutiny and engagement from the wider business and placed IT at the heart of the organization. Disruptive technology has always been present, but with today's pace of change and in our digital world, we are seeing transformation in businesses and industries happen faster than ever before. More dramatic commentators would say it's a case of "disrupt or die".

The risks of implementing disruptive technology are likely to be more profound than the risks of implementing continuous improvement. For new practices and technologies to become embedded, it is critical that people at all levels of the organization take ownership of change, otherwise significant investment can be lost. "Support from the top is essential for the introduction of change in a large organization" says Brian Simpson, BCS member and Senior Lead Business Analysis professional. "Without a senior mandate, the adoption of new tools, processes and standards is placed at risk and may well be ignored." And thus the project fails. So whilst the Business Analysis professional can be a catalyst for change, success will depend just as much on soft skills as excellent business analysis.

But although the risks are higher, so too is the opportunity. Disruptive technology is transforming entire industries. To take the financial sector as an example, established high street banks are facing increasingly fierce competition from new fin-tech (financial technology) companies, which have harnessed mobile app technology to achieve significant competitive advantage.

Atom Bank, for example, allows consumers to bank exclusively on a smartphone. Customers no longer need branches, but they do respond to great looking applications. And that means continually releasing updates (using Agile, of course) to keep the apps fresh and up to date. Established, slower-moving organizations are now adopting Agile, just to keep up. Traditional high street banks are having to redistribute a level of investment from physical premises into app development to meet the changing expectations of customers.

This is certainly Brian Simpson's experience, working at a large financial services company. "My organisation has undergone significant change in the past ten years and has adopted software development approaches to suit the demands. Mergers created large scale data and infrastructure projects whereas now we move towards smaller application development projects". Although the former utilised a Waterfall model, and the latter Agile, business analysis has continued to play a pivotal role throughout.

The roles of Business Analysis professionals are shifting to match these changes happening at the macro, industry level. Just as with Agile, disruptive technology has thrown down the gauntlet for business analysis. For adaptable Business Analysis professionals, there is the opportunity to broaden the business analysis skill-set and contribute even more tangibly to the business' success. The responsibility –and opportunity– placed at the door of the BA professional is therefore so much greater.

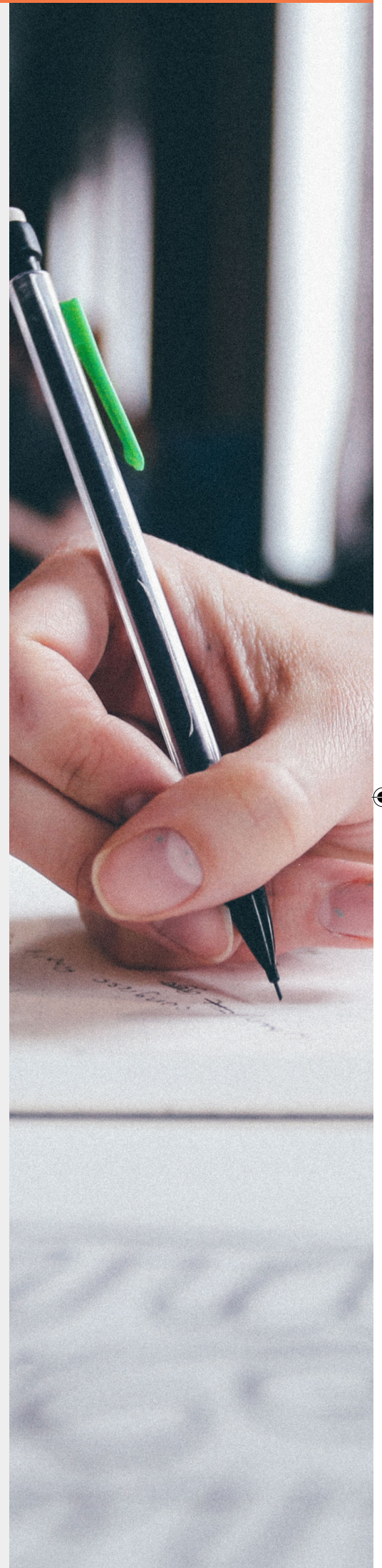




## These are exciting times

We do not see a future where there is not value in business analysis, or indeed in Business Analysis professionals. We all recognize that there are influences that are fundamentally shifting the remit of the Business Analysis professional, just as new technology and methodologies are changing the working practices throughout organisations. It is certain that influences like the examples shown here- Agile, Cloud computing and disruptive technology itself- will reshape the role of a Business Analysis professional and provide both opportunities and challenges. Business analysis is no doubt now operating in a disruptive, and disrupted, world. But Business Analysis professionals are well-placed to respond to these upheavals – they will change and evolve with businesses and industries as they've always done.

But Business Analysis professionals will drive disruption too. With a uniquely flexible skill set, they are fully equipped to harness these new technologies and new ways of working – to become agents of disruptive change within teams, businesses and industries. These are exciting times for business analysis.





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