How applying systems thinking to the BA approach and process can produce high quality requirements

Shawna Anderson, CBAP®
ABOUT ME
Who I am and a brief attempt to convince you on why I should speak on this topic.

Career Data
- Trained in Systems Thinking, Quality Improvement, Design Thinking, Business Analysis
- 14 years Mayo Clinic experience
- Work with multiple people and disciplines across several states
- CCBA® Certified 2012
- CBAP® Certified 2015

Other Helpful Info
- I’m human
- I’ve fulfilled both the stakeholder and business analyst roles
- This is a lessons learned presentation to share what can work when eliciting requirements from stakeholders
“The secret killer of innovation is shame.

You can’t measure it, but it is there.

Every time someone holds back on a new idea, fails to give their manager much needed feedback, and is afraid to speak up in front of a client you can be sure shame played a part.

That deep fear we all have of being wrong, of being belittled and of feeling less than, is what stops us taking the very risks required to move our companies forward.

If you want a culture of creativity and innovation, where sensible risks are embraced on both a market and individual level, start by developing the ability of managers to cultivate an openness to vulnerability in their teams.

And this, paradoxically perhaps, requires first that they are vulnerable themselves.

This notion that the leader needs to be “in charge” and to “know all the answers” is both dated and destructive. Its impact on others is the sense that they know less, and that they are less than. A recipe for risk aversion if ever I have heard it.

Shame becomes fear.

Fear leads to risk aversion.

Risk aversion kills innovation.”

_Brené Brown_  
_Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead_
What we know:

Some flexibility is built into the system.

Meaning, the “ingredients” can alter in volume and intensity without compromising the abundance and beauty of the grown flowers.
What we know:

If the one or more of the “ingredients” deviate too far from what works, the outcome is different.
Let’s say:

Seeds = stakeholders and flowers = requirements

Can we influence the quality of requirements using the same formula of Warmth + Oxygen + Water?
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WARMTH
Warm behavior creates a safe environment

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WARMT H
Warm behavior creates a safe environment

Never miss a good chance to shut up.

~Will Rogers
WARMTH | BEING QUIET

Warm behavior creates a safe environment

Benefits

• Creates thinking space for both the stakeholder and the business analyst
• Sets the stage for the stakeholder to come back with more info after conversation
• Provides an opportunity for context to solution scope

Challenges

• Knowing when to be quiet and when to not be: Balance and pace is key!

Clues

• Stakeholder appears to be contemplating something
• Stakeholder is unable to find their words
• Stakeholder is reserved

Looks like

• Patience
• Active Listening
• Respect
Nothing is personal.

*Teach your ego to stop reacting as if it were.*

~Roxana Jones
Warm behavior creates a safe environment

**Benefits**
- Assists with removing bias and judgement from interaction
- Keeps roles within conversation clear: the stakeholder is the expert of their needs, the business analyst is the analyst
- Reduces influence on solution scope

**Challenges**
- We’re human and are wired to have egos
- Business analyst is interrupting or leading the stakeholder
- Stakeholder interactions become reserved
- Stakeholder may become frustrated with the business analyst

**Clues**
- Humbleness
- Curiosity
- Validation of understanding
OXYGEN

Validation that data has a soul and stakeholders are worthy

“This notion that the leader needs to be “in charge” and to “know all the answers” is both dated and destructive. Its impact on others is the sense that they know less, and that they are less than.”
“Rabbit's clever," said Pooh thoughtfully.
"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit's clever."
"And he has Brain."
"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit has Brain."
There was a long silence.
"I suppose," said Pooh, "that that's why he never understands anything."

~A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh
OXYGEN | DATA SOUL
Validation that data has a soul and stakeholders are worthy

Benefits
- Genuine understanding demonstrates caring and value of this interaction
- Validation of how stakeholder may be affected physically or emotionally by the conversation, topic, process, or organization can provide innovative opportunities within the solution scope

Challenges
- To represent the data soul without carrying personally

Clues
- Stakeholder provides insights on how they and/or their team feels and the physical/emotional impacts of current state
- Emotional/Physical themes begin to emerge across stakeholders
- Business analyst begins to become emotionally invested

Looks Like
- Advocating
- Attention to satisfaction
- Compassion
Among the things you can give and still keep are
your word,
a smile,
and a grateful heart.

~Zig Ziglar
**OXYGEN | GIFTS**
Validation that data has a soul and stakeholders are worthy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Builds trust with stakeholders</td>
<td>• Easy on a good day, maybe not on other days</td>
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<td>• Can assist with connecting to “aloof” stakeholders</td>
<td>• Gratitude may not be easy to communicate</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates value of stakeholder interactions and stakeholder/business analyst relationship</td>
<td>• Needs to be genuine</td>
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<td>• Recognizes the stakeholder for their contributions to the outcome of the solution</td>
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<td>• When genuinely used, stakeholders will recognize this behavior and acknowledge it in some way</td>
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<td>• Gratitude</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Kindness</td>
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<td>• Appreciation</td>
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"If you want a culture of creativity and innovation, where sensible risks are embraced on both a market and individual level, start by developing the ability of managers to cultivate an openness to vulnerability in their teams.

And this, paradoxically perhaps, requires first that they are vulnerable themselves."
One of my greatest strengths is knowing my weakness.

~Maria Flynn
WATER | WEAKNESS
Vulnerability and reframing

Benefits
- Recognition of weakness within a context allows for the opportunity to compensate for “weakness”
- Creates an opportunity to collaborate with a stakeholder that has a strength within context
- Ensures the solution scope is comprehensive and complete

Challenges
- Belief that one is weak can create a negative mindset and/or cycle that can become toxic in other relationships
- Reframing a weakness into a strength
- Being “ok” with natural strengths

Clues
- When accomplishing something seems harder than it should be
- When others seem to easily accomplish the same something you’re struggling with
- Others indicate something doesn’t have to be so hard

Looks Like
- Self Acceptance
- Reframing
- Demonstrated value of team/situation/effort
- Strategic planning
Success is not built on success. It’s built on failure. It’s built on frustration. Sometimes it’s built on catastrophe.

~Sumner Redstone
Vulnerability and reframing

Benefits
- Demonstrates humanness
- Paying attention to clues can provide time to alter or clarify the solution scope for a successful solution

Challenges
- Experience can be emotional
- Managing ego(s)
- Potential high visibility
- Giving/accepting grace and forgiveness
- Reframing failure

Clues
- A sense of “writing on the wall”
- Elicited data isn’t aligned with solution scope
- The feeling that something is “missing”

Looks Like
- Grace & Forgiveness (self and to/from others)
- Learning
- Experience
- Reframing
- Strategic planning
Let’s say:

Seeds = stakeholders and flowers = requirements.

Can we influence the quality of requirements using the same formula of Warmth + Oxygen + Water?
The Basics applied to eliciting requirements

Answer:

Yes.

Warmth provides a safe environment for stakeholders.

Oxygen validates the human side of the stakeholders and the data they provide.

Water provides a view that business analysts are human, too, and the opportunity to plan for alternative scenarios and/or solution scope.

All three “ingredients” create an environment that removes shame, and reduces fear, influencing stakeholders to share sensitive information that ultimately leads to high quality requirements – the basis for a strong and effective solution.
THANK YOU!

Your time spent here today is appreciated!