AMATIS INSIGHT 001

Business Analysis Capability:
The Foundation of Successful Public Sector Transformation

Evidence, Strategic Insight and Practical Guidance
for Public Sector Leaders

AMATIS
TRAINING

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

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Intended audience: Executive Leaders, Chief Digital Officers, Transformation Directors, Heads of Business Analysis, Learning & Development Directors, Programme Managers, and Procurement Leaders.

Editorial principles:

Every edition of Amatis Insight will be:

- Evidence-led
- Vendor-neutral
- Informed by recognised industry practice and academic research
- Written for leaders responsible for delivering organisational change
- Designed to provide practical insights

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the UK public sector, organisations are being asked to deliver unprecedented levels of change whilst operating under increasing financial pressure. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, workforce shortages and rising public expectations are reshaping how services are designed and delivered. Yet despite significant investment, many transformation programmes continue to fall short of their intended outcomes. (National Audit Office, 2023; Infrastructure and Projects Authority, 2024).

Technology is often seen as the catalyst for transformation. In reality, technology is only one part of successful organisational change. However, evidence from government reviews, independent assurance reports and academic research consistently demonstrates that technology alone does not determine the success of transformation programmes (National Audit Office, 2021). Successful organisations first understand the business problem before selecting the technical solution.

Organisations that skip Business Analysis rarely avoid complexity– they simply postpone it until delivery. It connects organisational strategy with operational delivery by ensuring that change initiatives address genuine business needs, involve the right stakeholders, define measurable benefits and deliver sustainable outcomes.

Despite its importance, Business Analysis capability remains inconsistent across many organisations. Skills are often concentrated within a small number of experienced practitioners, methodologies vary between projects and valuable organisational knowledge is often lost when individuals move on.

This Insight explains why Business Analysis capability has become a strategic organisational asset and outlines the practical steps leaders can take to strengthen transformation capability across their organisations.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

227 Major Programmes. £834 Billion of Investment.

The UK Government's Major Projects Portfolio currently comprises 227 major programmes with a combined whole-life cost of £834 billion. At this scale, the quality of decisions made before delivery begins can have profound implications for public value, organisational performance and the successful delivery of change.

Source: Infrastructure and Projects Authority, Annual Report on Major Projects 2023–24.

Public sector organisations are being asked to achieve more than ever before.

They must improve services whilst operating within financial constraints. They must introduce new technologies without disrupting critical services. They must improve productivity whilst maintaining quality, resilience and public trust.

At the same time, expectations continue to rise.

People increasingly expect public services to be as accessible, responsive and intuitive as the digital services they use every day (Government Digital Service, 2021). Organisations are therefore expected to modernise legacy systems, improve data quality, strengthen cyber resilience and embrace emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 2025).

These ambitions are substantial. They also introduce complexity.

Transformation is no longer limited to implementing new software. It frequently involves redesigning services, changing organisational structures, introducing new operating models and influencing behaviour across multiple stakeholder groups.

In this environment, understanding the problem becomes as important as implementing the solution.

Business Analysis provides the techniques and governance needed to reduce uncertainty before significant investment is committed. It enables organisations to ask better questions, evaluate evidence objectively and make decisions based on clearly defined outcomes rather than assumptions.

The result is not simply better projects. It is better organisational outcomes.

THE MISSING CAPABILITY

Despite unprecedented investment in digital transformation, independent reviews continue to identify recurring organisational challenges. The common factor is rarely technology itself. More often, organisations lack a consistent capability for understanding problems, engaging stakeholders and making informed decisions before implementation begins.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

Independent reviews of major transformation programmes reveal remarkably consistent themes.

Reviews by the National Audit Office and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority consistently show that major transformation programmes are more likely to experience difficulties because of governance, unclear objectives, stakeholder management and capability than because technology itself is unavailable (National Audit Office, 2021; Infrastructure and Projects Authority, 2024).

> **Digital transformation is about changing organisations, not simply implementing technology.**
>
> **Synthesised from Government Digital Service guidance**

Instead, programmes often experience difficulties because organisations begin implementation before fully understanding the business need.

Common issues include poorly defined requirements (Infrastructure and Projects Authority, 2024), inconsistent stakeholder engagement, unclear benefits, weak governance and inadequate understanding of existing business processes.

These findings have appeared repeatedly in reviews of government programmes over many years.

Research also demonstrates that organisations achieving consistently successful transformation share several common characteristics (Government Digital Service, 2021).

- They invest time to understand organisational objectives before designing solutions.
- They involve stakeholders throughout the change lifecycle.
- They define measurable benefits before delivery begins.
- They establish governance that supports informed decision-making.

Most importantly, they build capability rather than relying on individual expertise.

This distinction is significant.

An experienced Business Analyst can improve an individual project.

An organisation with strong Business Analysis capability improves every project.

Capability therefore becomes a multiplier rather than a resource.

FROM INDIVIDUAL EXPERTISE TO ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

Many organisations continue to view Business Analysis as a specialist role.

While specialist practitioners remain essential, this perspective no longer reflects the demands of modern transformation.

Today's Business Analysts contribute across strategic planning, service design, operational improvement, procurement, policy development, data analysis, organisational change and benefits management (The Chartered Institute for IT, 2024).

Their influence extends far beyond writing requirements.

The more significant opportunity lies in embedding Business Analysis principles throughout the organisation.

Organisational capability means that effective practices become part of the culture rather than dependent upon individual experience (John P. Kotter, 2012).

It creates consistency.

Projects begin using common terminology.

Requirements are documented using agreed standards.

Benefits are defined in comparable ways.

Stakeholder engagement follows recognised approaches.

Lessons learned are retained rather than forgotten.

> **Key Insight** (Source: Amatis Insight)
>
> "Organisations do not become better because they employ talented individuals. ▶ They become better because good practice becomes standard practice."

When these practices become embedded, organisations become progressively more capable of delivering successful change regardless of which programme team is leading the work.

Capability therefore represents organisational resilience.

CAPABILITY MATURITY MODEL

Figure 1

An illustrative model that shows organisations develop Business Analysis capability over time. Progress begins with individual good practice and evolves through common methodologies, organisation-wide standards and continuous improvement. As capability matures, Business Analysis becomes embedded within organisational culture rather than relying on individual expertise alone.

Reactive ▶ **Developing** Individual Good Practise ▶ **Defined** Common Methodologies ▶ **Managed** Organisation-wide Standards ▶ **Optimised** Continuous Improvement

Evidence

Skills shortages are consistently identified as one of the biggest barriers to successful digital transformation.

Source: Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (2025)

WHY CAPABILITY MATTERS MORE THAN TRAINING ALONE

Training remains an essential component of professional development (Peter M. Senge, 2006).

However, capability cannot be achieved through isolated training events alone.

A programme of learning delivers greatest value when it supports a wider organisational objective.

Successful organisations align professional development with strategic priorities, governance arrangements and workforce planning.

Learning pathways ensure that individuals develop progressively.

Communities of practice encourage knowledge sharing across teams.

Consistent methodologies reduce unnecessary variation between projects.

Leadership actively supports continuous improvement (Jeff Hiatt, 2006).

Together, these elements create an environment in which learning translates into measurable organisational performance.

This shift changes the conversation.

Rather than asking, “How many people attended a course?”

Leaders begin asking, “How has our organisational capability improved?”

That question focuses attention on outcomes rather than activity.

TRANSFORMATION DECISION CYCLE

Figure 2

An illustrative model that shows how Business Analysis provides the critical link between organisational strategy and successful transformation delivery. The cycle demonstrates that effective Business Analysis does not end with solution implementation. Lessons learned and benefits realisation create a continuous feedback loop, enabling organisations to improve future decision-making and increase organisational capability over time.

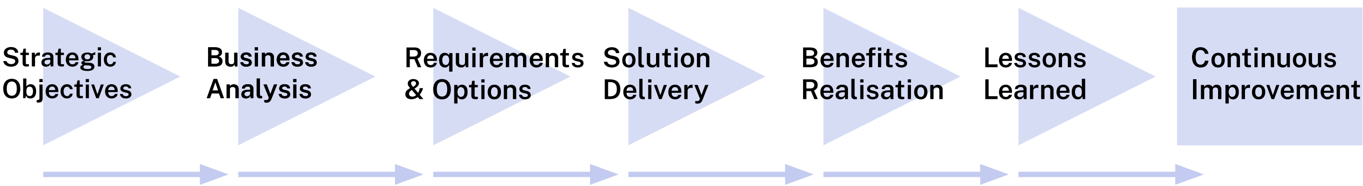

Figure 2 illustrates that successful transformation is not a linear process. Organisations that consistently deliver successful change treat Business Analysis as a continuous discipline that informs strategic decision-making before, during and after implementation. This continual learning cycle strengthens organisational capability and increases the likelihood of future transformation success.

THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF BUSINESS ANALYSIS

Business Analysis creates value throughout the lifecycle of organisational change.

Before investment decisions are made, **it helps clarify the problem that requires attention** (The Chartered Institute for IT, 2024).

During solution design, it ensures that proposed changes remain aligned with organisational objectives.

Throughout delivery, it supports effective stakeholder engagement, risk identification and governance.

Following implementation, it contributes to evaluating whether anticipated benefits have actually been realised (Association for Project Management, 2019).

Viewed collectively, these activities reduce uncertainty.

Reduced uncertainty improves decision quality.

Better decisions improve organisational performance.

The relationship is straightforward, yet frequently underestimated.

Investment in Business Analysis capability therefore supports more than project delivery.

It supports better strategic decision-making across the organisation.

Key Insight (Source: Amatis Insight)

> “Capability is built through consistent investment over time. ▶ Not through isolated training events.”

When Technology Wasn't the Problem

Many public sector transformation programmes begin with a clear ambition: improve services, increase efficiency and provide better value for money. Yet independent reviews consistently show that challenges often arise long before technology is introduced.

The following composite case study reflects recurring themes identified across government assurance reviews and public sector transformation programmes. It describes a large public sector organisation embarking on a programme to replace several ageing digital systems. Funding had been secured, procurement timelines were ambitious and there was strong executive support. The expectation was that a modern technology platform would improve service delivery and reduce operating costs.

As delivery progressed, however, the programme encountered increasing difficulties.

Different departments described the same business process in different ways. Stakeholders held conflicting views about priorities and expected outcomes. Requirements continued to evolve because the underlying business needs had never been fully agreed. As new information emerged, additional functionality was requested, increasing both cost and delivery timescales.

An independent assurance review concluded that the technology itself was performing largely as intended. The principal challenges lay elsewhere. Business processes had not been analysed consistently, governance arrangements lacked clarity, benefits had not been defined in measurable terms and stakeholder engagement had been insufficient during the early stages of the programme.

The organisation responded by pausing implementation and strengthening its Business Analysis capability. Cross-functional workshops were established to build a shared understanding of existing processes, benefits were redefined, governance arrangements were clarified and stakeholder engagement became an integral part of decision-making.

Although the programme required additional time, subsequent phases progressed with greater confidence and fewer significant changes. More importantly, the organisation developed a repeatable approach that could be applied across future transformation initiatives.

The lesson is clear: successful transformation depends as much on understanding organisational needs as it does on implementing technology. Business Analysis helps organisations ask the right questions before committing significant investment, reducing uncertainty and increasing the likelihood of delivering meaningful public value.

LESSONS FROM THE CASE STUDY

- Early investment in Business Analysis reduced later delivery risk;
- Shared understanding of business processes improved decision-making;
- Clear governance reduced unnecessary changes during delivery;
- Stakeholder engagement strengthened organisational ownership of the solution;
- Business Analysis capability created benefits that extended beyond a single programme.

Questions For Leaders

Before approving your next transformation initiative, ask:

- Have we clearly defined the business problem?
- Do stakeholders share the same understanding of success?
- Have expected benefits been quantified?
- Do we have sufficient Business Analysis capability to support delivery?

PRACTICAL ACTIONS FOR LEADERS

Organisations wishing to strengthen Business Analysis capability do not necessarily require major structural change.

Incremental improvements often deliver substantial benefits.

Senior leaders should consider five practical actions.

1. Treat capability as a strategic investment.
Capability should be discussed alongside workforce planning, digital strategy and organisational development rather than viewed solely as a training requirement.

2. Develop structured learning pathways.
Different roles require different levels of Business Analysis knowledge. Progressive development creates greater consistency than isolated learning interventions (The Chartered Institute for IT, 2024).

3. Establish common standards.
Shared approaches to requirements, stakeholder engagement, modelling and benefits management improve collaboration across programmes.

4. Encourage knowledge sharing.
Communities of practice, mentoring and cross-programme collaboration help retain organisational knowledge and reduce dependence upon individuals.

5. Measure outcomes rather than attendance.
Evaluation should focus on improved project performance, stakeholder satisfaction, benefits realisation and organisational maturity rather than simply the number of training courses delivered (Association for Project Management, 2019).

These actions require commitment rather than complexity.

Over time they contribute to a culture in which better decisions become routine.

LOOKING AHEAD

The pace of organisational change is unlikely to slow.

Artificial intelligence, automation, evolving expectations and continuing financial pressures will increase the complexity of transformation rather than reduce it (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 2025).

Technology will undoubtedly automate many routine activities.

However, understanding organisations, facilitating difficult conversations, balancing competing stakeholder needs and defining meaningful outcomes remain fundamentally human capabilities (John P. Kotter, 2012).

In this environment, Business Analysis becomes increasingly valuable.

Its purpose is not simply to document requirements.

Its purpose is to help organisations make better decisions.

That role is likely to become even more important during the coming decade.

The quality of organisational decisions determines the quality of organisational outcomes.

Source: Amatis Insight

CONCLUSION

Every transformation programme begins with an assumption that change will improve organisational performance.

Whether that assumption becomes reality depends on the quality of decisions made long before implementation begins.

Business Analysis provides the discipline that improves those decisions.

It helps organisations understand problems before proposing solutions.

It aligns stakeholders around shared objectives.

It defines measurable outcomes.

It reduces uncertainty.

Most importantly, it builds confidence that investment will deliver meaningful public value.

For public sector organisations facing unprecedented change, Business Analysis capability should therefore be viewed not as an operational specialism but as a strategic organisational capability. Investment in this capability is an investment in better organisational decisions, stronger governance and more effective public service transformation.

Technology will continue to evolve. The organisations that succeed will not necessarily be those with the newest technology, but those that make the best decisions about how technology supports people, services and public value. Business Analysis capability is what makes those decisions possible (National Audit Office, 2023).

As this Insight has shown, the missing capability in many transformation programmes is not technology. It is the organisational capability to understand problems, evaluate options and make better decisions before implementation begins. Organisations that invest in that capability are better equipped to deliver successful transformation, not just once, but repeatedly.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Business Analysis is no longer confined to documenting requirements; it supports strategic decision-making across the entire change lifecycle.
- Most transformation challenges originate from organisational issues rather than technology alone.
- Building organisational capability produces greater long-term value than relying upon individual expertise.
- Capability requires aligned learning, governance, leadership, standards and continuous improvement.
- Organisations that strengthen Business Analysis capability improve the likelihood of delivering successful, sustainable transformation.

SELECTED REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

This publication draws upon established themes found within publications from the National Audit Office, Infrastructure and Projects Authority, Government Digital Service, NHS guidance and the wider academic literature relating to Business Analysis, organisational change, project management and public sector transformation. The following publications informed the evidence and perspectives presented throughout this Insight.

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