



BUSINESS ANALYSIS CONFERENCE EUROPE

16 - 18 September 2024 • London, UK

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MISCHIEF MANAGEMENT

HOW TO BE A MORE
STRATEGIC
AND IMPACTFUL BA

INTRODUCTIONS

Karen Newnham
Principal BA
The Coal Authority



AGENDA

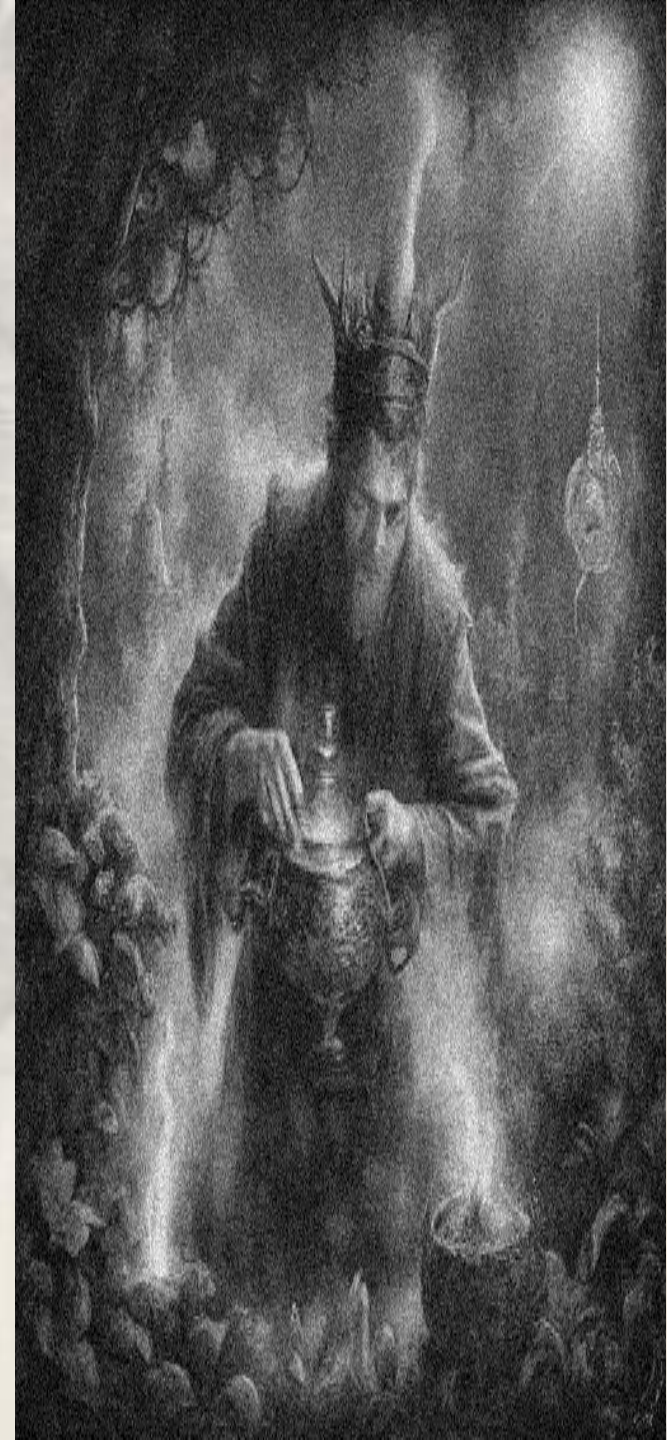
How to spot *Mischief*

The *Mischief* Management Framework

Strategic Skills Assessment

HOW TO SPOT MISCHIEF

The classic signs
of mischief and
why you should
do something
about it



MISCHIEF – A SUMMARY

The classic signs

- A problem area keeps coming up but no clear scope or way forward gets defined.
- A project has been kicked-off but the stakeholders can't agree on how to move forward and planning is proving impossible.

Why should you care?

- It's wasteful and demoralising if we keep revisiting the problem with no agreed way forward.
- Delivery teams will struggle (and if a persistent issue – they may leave).
- Failure is more likely.
- It's just plain exhausting!

What should you do?

- Use your BA skills to help
- Clear away the myths that get in the way of decision making.
- Draw out the key areas of context.
- Help the decision makers to come to an informed decision.

THE SIGNS OF MISCHIEF

Lots of opinion,
little fact

Discussions
being going on
for long time
(years)

A culture of not
finishing
things

No clear
problem
statement
emerging

Consultants
been and gone
– no progress

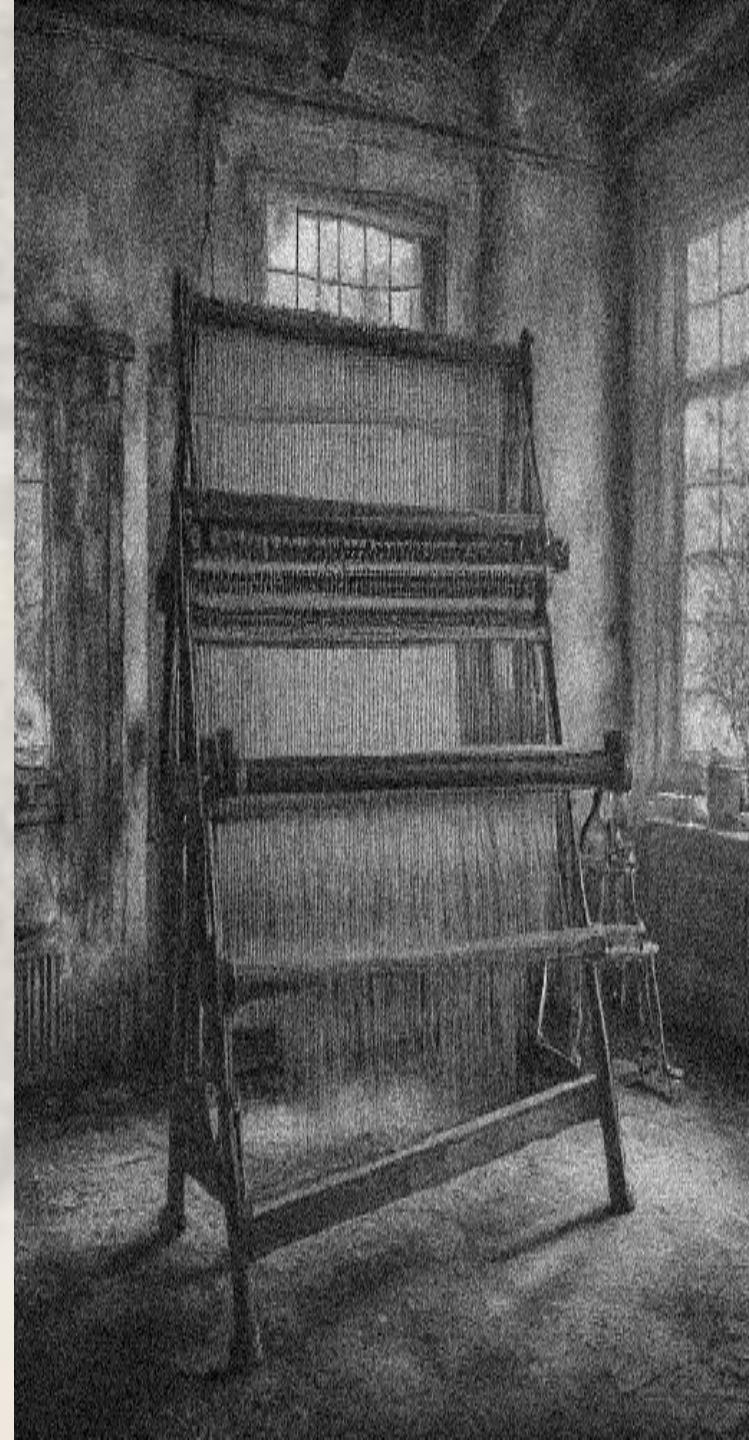
Business case
lacks a clear
and compelling
narrative

Multiple
'thought
papers'

Projects not
progressing

MISCHIEF MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

*An overview of the key steps
to mischief management*



THE FRAMEWORK - OVERVIEW



Created by Smalike
from Noun Project

Myths

- Identify the key myths
- Tell the new story



Context

- Frame the problem
- Highlight the trade offs



Recommendations

- Make a recommendation
- Describe next steps

Expect to Iterate. Ask for feedback

MYTHS

Where to look for
myths and what
to do about them



THE FRAMEWORK – MYTHS

Simple
Argument

Confirmation
Bias

Folklore

Data
Aversion

Deference to
authority

stereotyping

Echo
chamber

Anecdotal

Nodding!

THE FRAMEWORK – BUSTING MYTHS

- Look for existing sources of qualitative and quantitative data or collect new data
- Show what the data tells us (the new story)
- Explain the ‘so what’

Techniques

- Interviews
- Observation
- Sampling
- Data Analysis/Trend Analysis

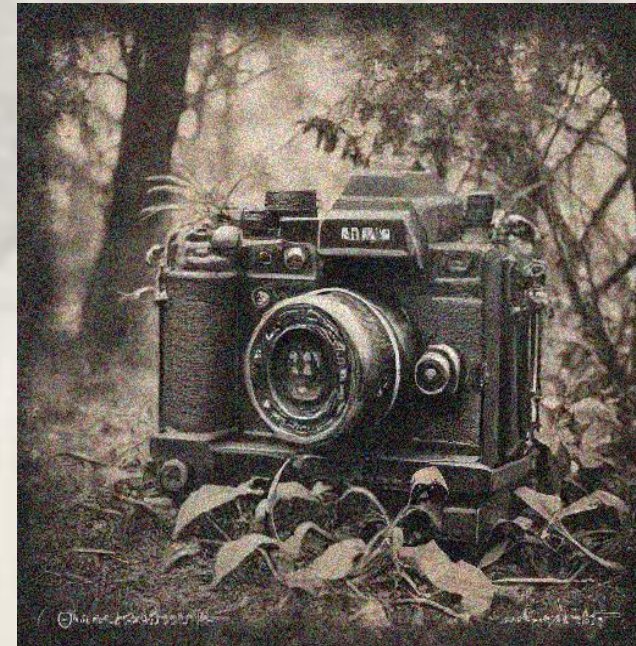
THE FRAMEWORK CASE STUDY A

A leadership team had a view of a supplier based on anecdotal data and confirmation bias. They wanted us to put together a case to bring the service in-house.

Instead, by busting the myths, we showed how investing in the internal team and allowing time to build the supplier relationship would be a more cost effective way to address the current issues.

CONTEXT

How to put the
situation into the
right context that
will drive decision
making



THE FRAMEWORK – CONTEXT

- Identify the key aspects of the situation.
- Consider possible options – how can we make some progress.
- Gather data so you can put options into context for comparison.
- Before using - test views with stakeholders who know the domain area. Remember they will all have their own perspective.

Techniques

- Interviews
- POPIT
- Rich Pictures
- Mind maps

THE FRAMEWORK CASE STUDY B

Department A wanted to make a data archive available online. We didn't have resources available to extend our internal solution and so we were asked to look at what it would take to repurpose a 3rd party platform being used in another department.

The cost and effort to use the platform was still significant. We presented another option to invest in customer research as a low risk and more feasible way to move the proposal forward and provide better information for a business case.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to position a
recommendation
and next steps



THE FRAMEWORK – RECOMMENDATIONS

Use context areas relevant to decision makers. What do they care about?

Call out key assumptions

Option	Description	Cost	Key Risks	Timescale	Customer experience	Conclusion
A (Meaningful Title)	A business focussed summary (not technical)	e.g. cost range or key elements	e.g. regulatory			
B	..					
C	..					

Include existing options for comparison

Comparative RAG (Red Amber, Green) to show trade offs

Summarise each option

THE FRAMEWORK – MAKING A RECOMMENDATION

You can choose to share the table or use it to help structure your argument

A simple table makes it easy to digest why an option is recommended and enables discussion.

Option	Description	Cost	Key Risks	Timescale	Customer experience	Conclusion
A (Meaningful Title)	A business focussed summary (not technical)	e.g. cost range or key elements	e.g. regulatory	Contributing factors	Call out any gaps or issues	
B	..					
C	..					

Option X recommended because

Provide a short rationale (if no clear recommendation emerges pose key questions instead)

CASE STUDY B – FRAMEWORK

How do we make our data archive available to the public?

Option	Description	Cost	Insight	Timescales	Resource	Conclusion
A - Develop existing application	Resolve issues with internal solution so we can use it externally	Issues with existing service likely difficult to resolve – increasing cost	Can embed customer research as part of project	Currently low priority on roadmap	Dev and data resource required	No resource availability
B – Use 3 rd party application	Extend existing 3 rd party service to add in extra data	Cost for data mapping and integration	Can embed customer research as part of project	Currently low priority on roadmap	Dev, Data, and procurement	Still requires internal resource for integration and data mapping
C – Invest in customer research	Gain customer feedback to better inform solution direction	Small cost outlay	Dev team not involved in research	Can start immediately	Focussed team (UR + some dev support)	Allows us to gain feedback now (to enable better evidenced decision for online service)

Option C recommended because of the ability to obtain earliest feedback with low investment

Clear information on who needs to be involved

CASE STUDY B – NEXT STEPS

- Identify opportunities to make elements of the archive available through partners to raise awareness of the archive and test demand.

- **Next Steps (to be performed by User Researcher)**

1. Identify partners (with help from Directors)
2. Interview participants on how they wish to interact with the archive to gain understanding on motivation and need.
3. Use the findings to test whether a future online service is viable.

Next steps are achievable and realistic

SELF ASSESSMENT

Do you understand the framework area and why it is important?

Where can you practice new skills?

Who can support you?

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Framework area	Skillset question	Confidence	Experience	Key concerns	Who can support?	Existing skills to build on
Myth	Do I know how to recognise a myth?	H/M/L	H/M/L	e.g. not knowing how to show data findings	Managers, BA's, ex-colleagues, family	Data analysis, interviewing, mind map, sampling
Myth	Do I know how to bust a myth?			e.g. not knowing how to present a new story		
Context	Do I know how to frame the situation?			e.g. not knowing how what areas are best used to frame		
Recommendation	Do I know how to evidence a recommendation?			e.g. not feeling confident in drawing out a clear recommendation		
Recommendation	Do I know how to define next steps?			e.g. not knowing how to identify key next steps		

L – Low confidence/experience
M – Medium confidence/experience
H – High confidence/experience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Careful framing of a problem helps gain consensus on next steps.
- You can use your BA skillset to help decision makers focus on the key discussion points and see where the key trade-offs are for different options.
- Lots of practice is required to get the balance right – start small and share findings to get the best out of your initial trials.
- The techniques are designed to be adapted to the context rather than being a template to ‘fill in’. Use your BA experience to guide you.



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