

THAT IS NOT WHAT I MEANT!

**Stop taking notes and start
solving problems**

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Why I Wrote This Book

Ever worked on projects? You worked hard, and everything went (mostly) according to plan. Yet the outcome isn't what was intended somehow. The outcome falls short of expectations, the collaboration didn't go smoothly, or so many adjustments were made along the way that the original goal has become barely visible.

That is exactly where analysis makes the difference. If you blindly trust what someone says they want, or assume too quickly that you understand the question, you often end up with something that is well-intentioned, but solves little. This book is for everyone who wants to prevent that. Whether you are a subject matter expert, hold conversations with customers, or just often find yourself thinking: "Couldn't we have done this smarter?"

I started my career in software development in the early 2000s. I was mainly busy programming. I received assignments and plans on my desk, but I had little insight into the why. If the result didn't work, or the customer wanted something else after all, we adjusted it. And again...

When I made the switch to an analyst role, I thought: now I'm going to do it better. But in the beginning, I made exactly the same mistake as my predecessors. I neatly wrote down everything the customer said, nodded during meetings, but sat behind my desk afterward still having questions.

It finally clicked when a customer said to me: "You are not an analyst; you simply take notes." That wasn't nice to hear, but he was right. I noted what was said, but I didn't ask critical questions. I didn't sufficiently understand why something was important and simply translated wishes into documents, instead of solutions.

From that moment on, I changed course. I dove into the theory but noticed that many books were unnecessarily complicated or technical. That is why I developed my own approach: simplicity, working visually, and digging deeper until you reach the core. That turned out to be much more effective.

What You Can Expect From This Book

In this book, I share what I have learned. No thick, theoretical manuals, but practical tips and simple techniques that really work. Whether you are naturally analytical or not, this book helps you to think more focused. That starts with listening, digging deeper, and understanding what is going on. If that succeeds, collaborating suddenly becomes a lot more enjoyable, and results improve.

The focus lies on analysis in a flexible environment, where you can always adjust. However, the insights are applicable more broadly; everywhere people work together, this book applies. As my background is in IT, many examples come from the software world. But don't let that scare you: I have written it in such a way that you can easily apply the content to your own situation, whether you are building software, want to improve a process at work, or are organizing an event.

This Book Is Written Simply On Purpose

You will notice that I choose short sentences and have tried to avoid difficult words. That is not a coincidence, but a conscious choice. In a profession like information analysis, things are quickly made unnecessarily complicated.

Just compare:

“Within the context of agile development, it is crucial that requirements are evaluated iteratively to be able to respond adaptively to changing business needs.”

Or simply:

“Stay critical of requests, because what the customer says today, can change tomorrow.”

I choose the second.

About Information Analysis



About Information Analysis

There are many misunderstandings about information analysis. That it is only for IT professionals, that it takes days of work, and that it is unnecessary in modern ways of working.

In this chapter, I'd like to clear up these misunderstandings. Information analysis is applicable everywhere, whether you are an IT professional or an office manager who has to organize an event. Thanks to analysis, you understand why and for whom you are doing something, and the what and when then do always improve.

In this chapter, we look at exactly what the profession entails, why projects without analysis fail so often or take longer than necessary, and when you use it.

What Is Information Analysis?

You take something that is still vague, unclear, or half-expressed, and you make it usable. A wish, an idea, or a complaint lands on the table:

- “It all needs to be a bit easier.”
- “We want to be able to handle this ourselves from now on.”
- “There just needs to be more overview.”

Everyone nods, but you think: “Why? What exactly do we mean by this? And what specifically needs to happen to achieve that?”

That is exactly where your work begins.

No Lists, But Meaning

A good analyst is not a note-taker who simply writes down what someone says. You listen, you dig deeper, and you unravel what is really meant.

- You translate vague statements into concrete goals.
- You turn words into behavior.
- You turn feelings into action.

Someone can tell their story perfectly, without it really working in practice. What sounds logical to one person, can be disastrous for the work process of another. That is where your craftsmanship comes in: translating nice words into a working system or process.

Example: “It Needs To Be More Customer-Friendly”

A sales manager says: “The system needs to be more customer-friendly, because customers are getting lost.”

The beginner analyst notes: “Requirement: System must be customer-friendly.” A developer can’t work with such a requirement. As an experienced analyst, you dig deeper:

- “What is happening now that makes you say it isn’t friendly?”
- “When does the customer get stuck?”
- “What do you want them to be able to do?”

After a few questions, it turns out that new customers can’t find their invoice on the website and then call the company.

The real request is therefore not “customer-friendliness,” but: “After logging in, a customer must be able to open their invoice within three clicks, without help from support.”

But Isn't That Business Analysis?

The terms business analysis and information analysis are often used interchangeably. Yet, there is a difference in focus.

Simply put, business analysis looks at the 'why', and information analysis looks at the 'how'.

	Business Analysis	Information Analysis
Focus	Goals, processes, strategy, money	Requirements, sources, data, solutions
Result	Opportunities, business cases	Clear and testable solutions
Core Question	"Why are we doing this and what does it deliver?"	"What must the solution do?"

My definition: You do both. In this book (and in practice), that line blurs. As a good information analyst, you also need to understand *why* something is needed before you can figure out *how* it should work. You don't have to write business cases, but you do need to understand how something fits within something existing, like a way of working.

That is why in this book I use the term **information analyst** for the entire spectrum: from understanding the value to working out the behavior.

Why Projects Fail

Everything went according to plan. You had gathered the requests, the team was running smoothly, progress was tracked neatly, and the deadline was met. Every step delivered visible results.

And yet... no one is really happy with the end result. Not the user, not the organization, and actually, not even you.

Frustrated, you shout: "But wasn't this exactly what you asked for?"

The responses:

- “Yeah, we thought this would be useful, but now that we actually use it, it really isn’t.”
- “It does exactly what we agreed on, but it doesn’t really fit our process.”

Before you know it, you are in ‘phase 2,’ which is actually just an expensive correction round with more frustration and less budget for actually delivering value.

So What Goes Wrong Here?

Whether you work flexible or with a project plan set in stone: the problem often lies not in how you build, but in what you assume. Often, building is based on an assumption that hasn’t been investigated enough, or a request that has been taken too literally.

This is exactly why information analysis is not a ‘chore,’ but the foundation of success. Analysis does not start with the solution, but with the questions: *Why* and *For whom*? Only when you have those answers, do you start thinking about the *What* and *When*.

Good analysis delivers three things:

1. **It prevents waste:** You build the right thing immediately. Expectations are aligned beforehand instead of corrected afterward (which is always more expensive).
2. **Concrete results:** It delivers requirements that you can build and test directly.
3. **Trust:** Perhaps the most important one. Trust with your customer that they are understood, and trust with your team that they are doing the right thing.