Daniel Sanchez

MIS 505

Dr. Christopher Sibona

Module 2 – Design Critique

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**Happiness Scoreboard**

This chart highlights the disparity in the level of reported happiness between the top-scoring and low-scoring countries from a “World Happiness Report” (date unspecified). There is an extraneous data point to show where the U.S. falls in the mix. A helpful subtitle of the chart reveals what it hopes to convey through the data. However, some of the chart elements are not as effective in steering the reader more naturally toward this conclusion.

Here are a few positive notes about this chart design:  
- The scaled lengths of the horizontal bars show the differences between the groups; it does appear as though the X-axis begins at zero (as it should in a bar chart).  
- The countries are ordered and grouped together by score, and the vast middle section is mostly ignored  
- Clutter is minimal, with no X- or Y-axis labels. Data labels provide context, and even “points” in the label is offered only once at the top.  
Here are some criticisms:  
- The highlighted colors of Finland and U.S. indicate similarity, which I doubt is the intent. It is not actually clear why this color-coding is applied. Without reading the subtitle, the reader is led to believe that it is a comparison between the U.S. and Finland.  
- The “-“ row labels that flank the U.S. position imply skipping over numerous countries; this is not very clear. Taking the U.S. out of this comparison between high- and low-scoring countries would help alleviate this concern.  
- The dark background makes the colors more difficult to discern. A white background may provide more contrast, especially with the blue bars.

**IT Job Postings**

This chart shows the trend in IT job postings over a 12-month period, from May 2018 to February 2019. The story this chart is trying to tell is not quite clear. However, the scaling of it may be attempting to highlight the general upward trend, in spite of the dip near the end of the calendar year. Attention is somewhat focused on the downward trend in Nov-Dec and the upward trend in Jan-Feb. The contrast in the data label in Feb 19 captures additional attention.

Here are few positive elements of the chart design:  
The chart includes a reference for the source data. This helps with generating future reports of a similar type.  
The design attempts to reduce clutter by remove the y-axis.  
Here are some aspects that are less effective:  
- It is difficult to tell if the chart is branded with the NC Tech Association theme colors simply for the sake of branding, or if those colors are meant to infer meaning. Using that much color in the chart seems like too much, especially between March and October. Using red and green is not ideal for color-blind viewers. Instead of this rainbow effect, using a simpler color scheme may be more appropriate.

- For column charts, the Y Axis should start at Zero. In this case, the scaling is such that it appears as though IT Job Postings grew three- to four-times by Feb 19. In actuality, they rose from 22,927 to 28,634. The current scaling of the Y Axis is misleading in this way.

- Including data labels on each month is also distracting. It may actually be better to reintroduce the Y-Axis label, and only add data labels for certain months.