## About Me

I have been at the right place at the right time. I am a reformed accountant. You might think that is wildly different from data visualization and analysis, but I assure you – it is a natural progression.

Most users seem to come from backgrounds in development. It is a conscious decision for them to select this field and it is a by product to necessitate learning Tableau or any other visualization software. I’ve learned it out of necessity. I needed for my users to come to the same conclusions and ideas that I had. Most people think that it is easy just looking at the numbers in a pivot table, but I have had multiple conversations with executives about why expenses are not shown as a ‘negative’ on a profit and loss statement or balance sheet.

I do not want to bore you with the details of my experience, but I would like to pass some knowledge on that I have learned from over a decade in this field.

1. **You should be the smartest in the room (about the data).**

It is best to use the visuals to guide your users along with you. They do not have the depth and breadth of knowledge that you have about the data, and you will lose your audience if you do not keep it simple. You can still tell a story but think of it as a series of ‘short stories’ instead of a LOTR marathon.

1. **You are the Subject Matter Expert (SME), act like it.**

You might have just started on this journey, but you will be the SME for everyone on your team. You do not have to know everything (and you *shouldn’t)* but wavering and indecisiveness will kill your career. There is a very large community of users and we are ALL willing to help. Do not be afraid to tell your team that you will research and reach out!

1. **Be prepared for pushback.**

At first, there will be people that question the validity of your data. They will inevitably do this in front of everyone at the first ‘showing’ of your work. They might have had plenty of time to question before, and just trying to show out in front of others, who knows?! You be prepared to have a discussion about that . Offer to meet with a smaller group of interested users to explain the technical magic that you have incorporated in this dashboard. Don’t dig into the details in front of the entire audience, you’ve lost them.

1. **You will be frustrated**

You are on the forefront of a huge movement. You will create a masterpiece and your users will not be prepared for it, *yet.* Don’t let that throw you. You need to bring your users along with you. You are in the position you are because you are ahead of the curve. Your users might (and probably will not) be at the same level of data maturity. If you know what the user will eventually ask for your masterpiece, keep it in your back pocket. Even if you don’t use it for this project, you will eventually.

1. **Data visualization is more important than you realize**

You have done the analysis, all the data prep and work. You should just be able to tell people what to do, right? Nope! People will remember things presented visually long after they forget the actual data. You should strive to present your findings in an easy to understand way. If you are building a project for someone else, you will also be the visualization subject matter expert, so you really need to take that into consideration. Anything that can build cognitive friction or dissonance, will draw your user away from the point and make your hard work useless.