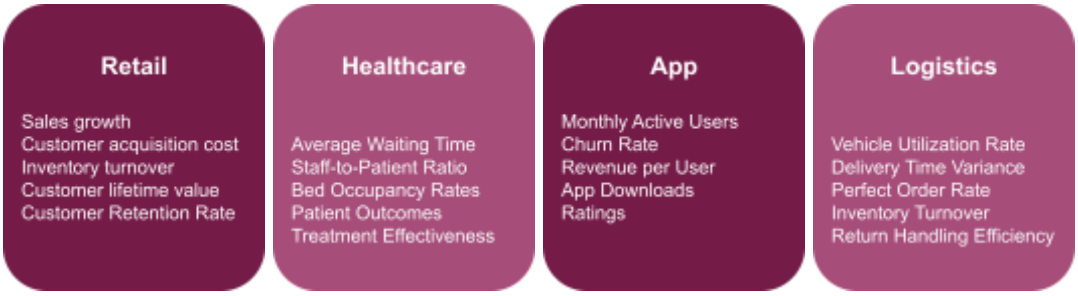
Title: Laying the Groundwork: Why Context is Key in Data Visualization

Understanding the Context
Before creating a dashboard, it's essential to grasp the context behind the data. Skipping this step and jumping straight into visualization can result in good graphs but fail to guide decision-making effectively. A well-designed dashboard isn't just a collection of visuals—it's a strategic tool to uncover insights that inform better decisions.

---

1. Understand the Domain

Each industry has critical metrics that define success. Understanding these domain-specific metrics ensures your dashboard aligns with the right goals.



Knowing your domain helps you focus on relevant data that adds value to your dashboard.

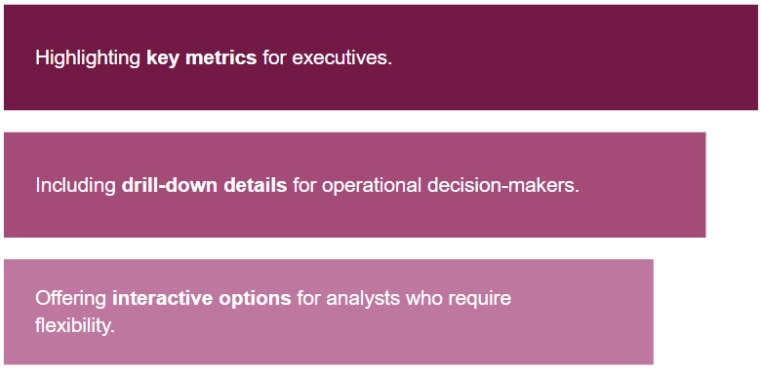
---

2. Define Your Audience

The audience's needs directly shape your dashboard's design. Ask yourself:

- Are you presenting high-level trends to **executives**?
- Are you providing granular details to **operational teams**?

Tailor your visuals accordingly by:



Framing key questions like, “Which region is outperforming in sales?” or “What factors are driving customer churn?” ensures your visualizations remain purposeful and relevant.

---

3. Enrich the Data with Context

Critical insights come when data is placed in context. To achieve this:

- Compare metrics across **timeframes** (e.g., month-over-month growth).
- Benchmark against **industry standards** or past performance.
- Add **dimensions** like demographics, regions, or product categories for deeper insights.

Context enriches the quality of insights, enabling informed decision-making.

---

4. Create a Metric Spreadsheet

A **Metric Spreadsheet** is your blueprint for consistent and clear dashboards. Use it to:

- Define each metric (e.g., Lifetime Value = Average Revenue ÷ Customer Churn Rate).
- Document calculation methods, filters, and grouping criteria (e.g., by region, product category).
- Specify the **filters** your dashboard should include (e.g., timeframe, location, user type).

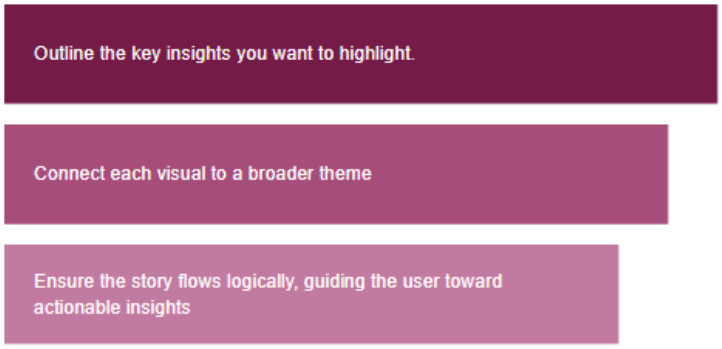
This step ensures all team members have a shared understanding of metrics and prevents inconsistencies.

Metric Name	Formula	Aggregation	Grouping	Filter	Example Calculation
Customer Lifetime Value (LTV)	Average Revenue per Customer / Customer Churn Rate	AVG	Customer Type (e.g., new vs. returning)	Timeframe (monthly, quarterly)	If avg. revenue = $200, churn rate = 5%, then LTV = $200 / 0.05 = $4000
Average Order Value (AOV)	Total Revenue / Total Number of Orders	AVG	Product Category, Region	Date Range (e.g., last 30 days)	If revenue = $10,000, orders = 250, AOV = $10,000 / 250 = $40
Churn Rate	(Lost Customers / Total Customers at Start of Period) * 100	SUM	Customer Segment, Subscription Type	Specific Region (e.g., North America)	If 50 lost customers out of 1000, churn rate = (50 / 1000) * 100 = 5%

---

5. Build a Storyboard

A great dashboard tells a story. To craft a compelling narrative:



Your storyboard acts as a framework, keeping your design focused and your message clear. While exploring data, your story might evolve—that's okay. A structured start ensures coherence throughout.

Context is the cornerstone of impactful data visualization. By understanding your data's domain, defining your audience's needs, and structuring a cohesive story, you create dashboards that don't just present data but drive informed decisions.