

Chapter One: The Importance of Context

1. Exploratory vs. explanatory analysis
 - a. Exploratory analysis
 - i. What people do to understand the data and figure out what might be noteworthy or interesting to highlight to others.
 - ii. Specific thing people might want to explain, a specific story people want to tell
 - iii. It is not important to show the audience everything
2. Who, What, and How
 - a. Explanatory analysis
 - i. To whom are you communicating → need a good understanding of the audience and how they perceive you (help identify common ground that will help ensure they hear your message)
 - ii. What do you want your audience to know or do → clear in how you want your audience to act and take into account how you will communicate to them and overall tone
3. Who
 - a. Audience
 - i. The more specific you can be about who your audience is, the better position you will be in for successful communication
 - ii. Avoid general audience → narrow your audience
 - iii. Creating different communications for different audiences
 - b. You
 - i. Helpful to think about the relationship that you have with your audience and how you expect that they will perceive you
4. What
 - a. Action
 - i. What do you need your audience to know or do?
 - ii. How to make what you communicate relevant for your audience and form a clear understanding of why they should care about what you say
 - iii. Always want your audience to know or do something
 - iv. When not appropriate to recommend an action explicitly, encourage discussion toward one and suggest possible next steps to get conversation going
 - v. Ask for action and not simply present data → more productive reaction from your audience and therefore a more productive conversation

- b. Mechanism
 - i. How to communicate with audience → amount of control you will have over how the audience takes in the information, level of detail that needs to be explicit
 - ii. Presentation
 - 1. Presenter is in full control
 - 2. You determine what audience sees and respond to visual cues to speed up, slow down, or go into a particular point in more or less
 - 3. Also can answer questions
 - iii. Email/Written document
 - 1. Less Control
 - 2. Audience is in control of how they consume information
 - 3. Level of detail needs to be higher because you aren't there to see and respond to your audience's cues
 - 4. Sparse slides for live presentation and denser documents when the audience is left to consume on their own
 - 5. Rise to slideument → a single document meant to solve both of the needs
- 5. How
 - a. What data is available to that will help make the point?
 - b. Data becomes supporting evidence of the story you build and tell
- 6. Who, What, and How: Illustrated by Example
 - a. Situation
 - i. Wrapped up an experimental pilot summer learning program on science that was aimed at giving kids exposure to the unpopular subject
 - ii. Survey shows that the data shows a great success story
 - iii. Want to continue to offer the summer learning program on science
 - b. Who
 - i. Parents of participants
 - ii. Parents of future participants
 - iii. Future potential participants themselves
 - iv. Teachers who might be interested in doing something similar
 - v. Budget committee that controls the funding
 - vi. The call to action would be different for the different groups and the data you would show could be different for the various audiences
 - c. Example
 - i. Who: The budget committee that can approve funding for continuation of the summer learning program
 - ii. What: The summer learning program on science was a success; please approve budget of \$X to continue

- iii. How: Illustrate success with data collected through the survey conducted before and after the program

7. Consulting for context: Questions to ask

- a. Often, the communication or deliverable is at the request of someone else: client, stakeholder, or boss
- b. You may not have all of the context and might need to consult with the requester to fully understand the situation
- c. Some of the questions you can use to tease out the information
- d. Requesting side:
 - i. What background information is relevant or essential?
 - ii. Who is the audience or decision maker? What do we know about them?
 - iii. What biases does our audience have that might make them supportive of or resistant to our message?
 - iv. What data is available that would strengthen our case? Is our audience familiar with this data, or is it new?
 - v. Where are the risks: what factors could weaken our case and do we need to proactively address them?
 - vi. What would a successful outcome look like?
 - vii. If you only had a limited amount of time or a single sentence to tell your audience what they need to know, what would you say?

8. The 3-minute story & Big Idea

- a. 3-minute story
 - i. Have to know what the most important pieces are as well as what isn't essential in the most stripped-down version
 - ii. Being concise is often more challenging than being verbose
- b. Big Idea
 - i. So-what down even further

9. Storyboarding

- a. The single most important thing you can do up front to ensure the communication you craft is on point
- b. Establishes a structure for your communication
- c. Visual outline of the content you plan to create
- d. Can be subject to change as you work through the details, but establishing a structure early on will set you up for success
- e. Start with low tech and avoid starting with presentation software (use Post-it notes)

10. In Closing

- a. Being able to concisely articulate exactly who you want to communicate to and what you want to convey before you start to build content reduces iterations and helps ensure that the communication you build meets the intended purpose