Based on the feedback from the internal team, a few changes were made to our metrics to really make everything a more cohesive presentation. Whereas before the color choices were arbitrary, our company favors the blue and orange color scheme – it has served us well for 63 years. The PowerPoint design reflects this design choice as well.

Amongst the metrics developed for our dashboard, we made one change to the Fatal and Total Incidents chart, as we felt some of the messaging was lost by having a dual chart. An X-Y scatterplot was utilized instead.

For each chart, key points were pulled out to be highlighted in the presentation. This could include specific, quantifiable trends – “Total Incidents declined 57% over the previous period, while fatal accidents declined 30% over the same time period”, or a general summary – “As number of miles flown increased, incidents decreased, while those incidents were less fatal overall.” These allowed us to highlight specific takeaways from each chart.

Thought was put into the ordering of the charts as well. We started with two metrics that spoke specifically to our initial question – “Is air travel becoming more dangerous over time, and how does it compare to other modes of transportation?” – by showing that both the number of incidents and the number of fatalities had declined, and that, on a per mile travelled basis, plane travel was an order of magnitude safer than automobile travel.

Given that we were presenting to an executive team, we felt it was important to next concern ourselves with the financials. Showing that global revenue had doubled in the last 25 years, we were also able to show the impact of continuum-shifting events like the September 11th attacks and the 2009 Great Recession did impact the bottom line but revenues recovered quickly.

Finally, the last 3 metrics helped support the idea that incidents, while well publicized, only affected a small portion of the industry. 7 carriers were responsible for 69% of all airplane-related fatalities from 2000-2014, a quick look at Fatal and Total Incidents by region, and finally a look at which plane models are involved in crashes.

All of this together brings us to the meat of what we discovered; that despite the picture painted by the media, airplane travel is safer than it has been in years. We do foresee that the economic downturn will have an extreme effect on industry revenues in the short term, but even 9/11 and the Great Recession proved to be minor blips. In this age, people are travelling far more often they had in the past, and a seismic shift like travel habits are unlikely to be permanent changes. Finally, we found that safety incidents are on the decline and confined to a handful of carriers.