Prior to today’s lecture I had no idea there were so many useful tools for creating quick and meaningful visualizations. In my career I’ve only ever used Microsoft Excel graphs or matplotlib and seaborn in python for telling stories. Both tools have drawbacks – Excel’s graphing leaves a lot to be desired in terms of the information density you can put on one graph, and the matplotlib/seaborn options in python are more difficult to configure (although you can get very creative with these). I was truly impressed with not only how easy to use but how much information density you can display using tableau – I can see why it’s so widely used.

The concept of the three tiers of audience (executive, managerial, and operational) is a useful way of categorizing your audience. I could see this being especially useful if you need to design a dashboard for an audience that you haven’t met - if you have all 3 types of dashboards created you are likely to provide something useful for everyone (although obviously the most useful thing to do before embarking on a task like this would be to get to know your audience).

I think that touching on understanding the periodicity of reporting was very important to include in this lecture. When I had just started what was to become a career in data science I made the mistake many times of creating interesting graphs and tables for my audience only to realize that they would want to see this with updated data on a weekly basis. Having not considered the update process prior to embarking on this task I realized that I had hard-coded a lot of information which made it more difficult to just simply “update” it every week. Since these days I have tried to create flexibility in my solutions even if it doesn’t immediately seem like it will call for it.

The concept of discrete vs. continuous in Tableau was interesting. The example given in class where the year value was treated as continuous but the user wanted to group by year so they switched to category seemed like a smart distinction – and it also demonstrated the power of the tool.

I had a question that I forgot to ask in class – are people switching from presenting in PowerPoint to using the Stories feature in tableau? From a first perspective it seemed like stories would be a more powerful and sleek presentation tool. Would there be any major drawbacks to this?

Thanks and see you Thursday,

-Oliver