Google Cloud

User experiences with dashboards

So far, you've learned that dashboards are essential tools for a variety of users, including internal teams, departments, and stakeholders. Dashboards provide a high-level overview of insights, and have the ability to drill down into critical points. When designed thoughtfully, audiences can more quickly grasp the main findings in a dashboard to make informed decisions. In this reading, you'll discover the different ways users interact with dashboards, and learn about common dashboarding software.

How users engage with dashboards

Dashboards are a powerful business tool because they offer real-time insights at a high-level. As a reminder, dashboards are built off databases or other data sources that feed data into the display; analysts and engineers determine which ingestion strategy is best.

User roles and permissions determine how members of an organization interact with a dashboard. Dashboard experiences differ significantly depending on a user's role in decision-making, and their intent for the data.

Dashboards

A dashboard is an interactive platform that displays real-time data, allowing users to drill down or filter information based on their needs. The dynamic nature of a dashboard is what makes it such a valuable tool for businesses. Dashboards also support organizations when making decisions that impact things like expenditure, hiring, and product development. Consider an e-commerce company's website during a holiday season. As the holiday approaches, the company has a live dashboard tracking the number of visitors, most viewed products, and sales conversions in real time. The company notices a particular product is getting a lot of clicks, but the clicks aren't converting to sales. Drilling down on the data, they notice the product has poor reviews and issues during checkout. The dashboard helps them recognize problems in real-time, so they can address them promptly.

Snapshots

As the name implies, snapshots are point-in-time references that are useful for historical comparisons. Unlike dashboards, snapshots are static in nature and do not allow users to zoom in or filter data. Take the same e-commerce company example. In this case, the company can take a snapshot of the sales data after the holiday ends. The snapshot is a static view of how the website performed on a specific day, allowing the company to store this information and prepare for next year. Snapshots are useful for reference points to compare and strategize based on the past.

Data analysts

While dashboards are usually seen as the final outcome of analysis, data analysts also use dashboards to explore data in more detail. Dashboards offer point-and-click functionality enabling users to access the specific data they want. Data analysts use dashboards to extract specific insights, generate custom reports, and visualize complex data structures without needing programming knowledge.

Developers

Developers engage with dashboards to extract meaningful insights, optimize data-driven processes, and ensure that business decisions are backed by accurate data analytics. By going deeper into these platforms, they are better equipped to cater to the specific needs of the organization and their stakeholders. Developers usually engage with dashboards at a granular level, or high level of detail, with integrated development environments (IDE) or LookML, Looker's modeling language. Development environments enable users to customize data models, complete complex calculations, and create custom visualizations.

Collaborators and users

Collaborators or general users usually access dashboards to examine data insights relevant to their roles. General users may not need custom calculations, just clear and concise visual representations of data. Collaborators and users can share insights, comment on dashboards, and set up notifications for particular data events. For example, a sales and product team may subscribe to a dashboard relating to the performance of products, and set an alert for when a product drops in sales or is selling out quickly.

Looker

Looker is one of many data platforms that businesses can leverage to make data-driven decisions. Looker provides features for less technical users, like drag-and-drop interfaces, eliminating the need to code. As a reminder, LookML enables developers to create customizations based on their needs. Whether you're an analyst, developer, or a general business user, Looker provides a tailored experience for your user level.

Key takeaways

Dashboards offer real-time, interactive data insights for a variety of users. The user's role determines their interaction with a dashboard, ranging from developers and analysts, to general business users. Tools like Looker help businesses leverage their data to reach powerful insights and make data-driven decisions.