

Collaborative dashboards

So far, you've learned that dashboards are visual representations of analyzed data. They provide a high-level overview of metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that are essential to a business. Dashboards are meant to be shared throughout a team or organization to foster collaboration, and ensure everyone involved in a specific project has the same information. In this reading, you'll explore the importance of building and designing collaborative dashboards.

The power of collaborative dashboards

A dashboard designed with collaboration in mind ensures data will not just be viewed, but acted upon. When you design a dashboard, you must consider your audience and how they'll use the insights you present through your visualizations. You can ensure that your insights are relevant by framing your data exploration around key business questions. As a reminder, stakeholders and business leaders may use the insights presented in your dashboard to make tangible decisions that impact teams, product development, and hiring.

Different teams have different needs

As an analyst, you must understand the unique needs of each team to ensure the dashboard you're creating is relevant and useful. Keep in mind, sometimes you might create a dashboard as a solution to a specific problem, or to serve a single purpose. In other situations, you might create dashboards for multiple purposes. This is likely if you're working in a large organization where teams work cross functionally.

In larger organizations, each department uses data as a compass to navigate their specific functions, ensuring they meet their objectives, and improve their processes. Sometimes, these initiatives overlap. For example, consider a human resources (HR) and finance department. HR uses industry standards data, including salary information, roles expectations, and employee performance to set organizational standards and policies. The finance department can also use this information to create hiring forecasts, and calculate employee retention rates and hiring costs. This is just one example of how the same data points are crucial for more than one team.

Benefits of dashboards for presenting data

One of the benefits to presenting data in a dashboard is the ability to access data in real-time. Usually, dashboards connect to databases or another data source to display the most up-to-date information. Dashboards are also interactive, giving the audience the ability to drill down into specific data points. Regular updates and scheduled sharing amongst teams

ensures immediate access to updated data, allowing for timely decision making and quick adjustments in strategy. Teams that share and access dashboards regularly can stay informed on business performance and updates, and aligned on business strategy.

Another benefit to dashboards is their ability to provide alerts. As an analyst, you can set notifications and alerts for specific behaviors in data so your audience can act quickly. For example, a dashboard created to track the functionality of smoke detectors can alert subscribers when a smoke detector is not working properly, or is low on battery power, so stakeholders can take action immediately.

Best practices for collaborative dashboard design

Keep these considerations in mind when you design a collaborative dashboard:

- Be consistent with formatting, fonts, and design elements to reduce mental and visual load on your audience, and ensure main insights are emphasized and easily understood by all.
- Prioritize clarity and ease of understanding by only using visuals when necessary, and only including need-to-know information.
- Ensure all graphs, charts, tables, and data points are clearly labeled so your audience knows exactly what they're looking at in each data presentation.
- Implement a design that requires minimal maintenance and can be easily adjusted to suit evolving business needs.

Key takeaways

Dashboards are a powerful communication tool designed to be shared. Collaborative dashboards foster an aligned, data-driven culture within an organization. As an analyst, you must consider how various teams may use your dashboard for their specific data needs. Follow best practices like implementing consistency, clarity, and relevance in all your dashboards.