Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid in Designing Business Intelligence Dashboards

Don't Over-Complicate the Process

As Jim Collins says in his discussion of Hedgehog leaders in his book Good to Great, "They understand that the essence of profound insight is simplicity."

Don't Clutter the Dashboard with Unimportant Graphics and Visuals

Keep the visual relevant and meaningful and don't exceed a single screen.

Measuring the Wrong Thing

The value of the measure is not in the measurement itself but the questions or answers it provides.

Using Metrics No One Understands

Your metrics should be tailored to a broader audience; otherwise they may not be understood throughout the organization.

Don't Think in a Silo

Engage your workforce in the design and solicit feedback to improve your design.

Waiting for the BIG technology or Business Intelligence Roll-Out

Better to start small and build on success.

Not Matching Metrics to Goals

Your metrics should measure how well you are going to plan so you can take appropriate actions where needed.

Thinking Dashboards Never Change

Of course they do!! Consider periodic views of how well you are using your data to make better, more informed decisions.

Using Ineffective Graphs and Charts in the Design

Know the general rules for using charts; for graphs... is it necessary to make that graph 3D?

Don't Underestimate the Time and Resources Needed to Design a Dashboard

An understandable, but often overlooked, principle.

Determine Your Goals and Develop a Plan

Whether you are designing your first or one of many dashboards, applying some basic design principles will go a long way towards building a successful dashboard. Effective dashboards display important data that can be easily read and easily understood. Dell Services uses proven principles to help our clients design award-winning dashboards that are effective and drive actionable results. We deliver robust solutions that allow our clients to scale their business intelligence applications based on role-based information.

If you want to spend more time analyzing the intelligence in your data and less time worrying about how to summarize and present data to management or your organization, give us a call and we can help you make sense out of your data while turning your information into meaningful, actionable results.

For more information about solutions for your business or organization, contact your Dell account representative or visit dell.com.

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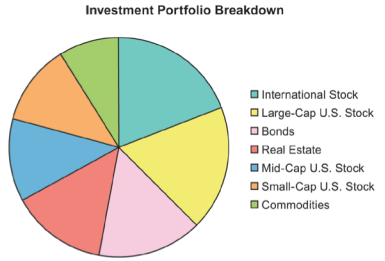
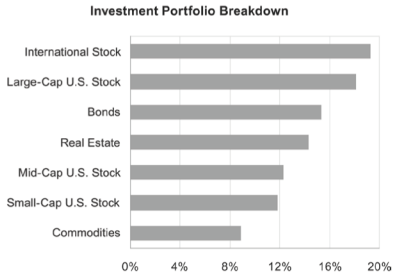
Principles for Visual Dashboard Design

Delivering Effective Business Intelligence Solutions

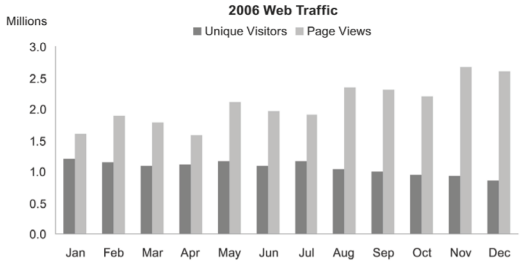
Use the table and graph design tools and tricks that experts recommend to consolidate business information and make reports easier to interpret for better decision making

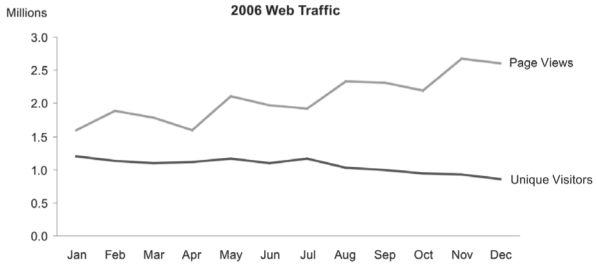
It is much easier to compare the lengths of bars than slices of a pie.





Line graphs display trends and patterns of change through time much more clearly than bar graphs.





Tables are easier to read when lines, borders, and fill colors have been included only where necessary and kept thin and light.

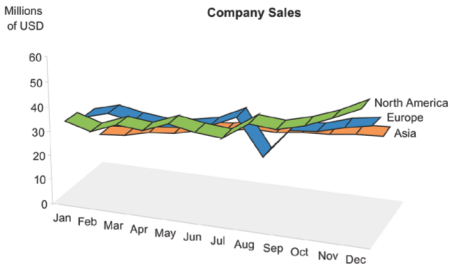
Sales Summary by Region
1st Quarter, 2007
Regions are Sorted by Revenue

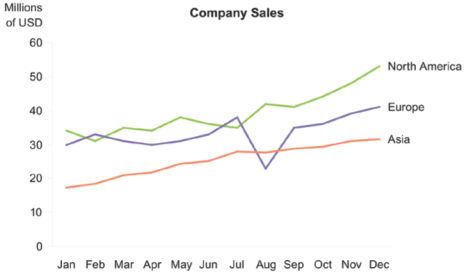
Region	Revenue	% of Total Revenue	Expenses	Profit	% of Total Profit
Europe	$75,904,604.00	31.06%	$40,988,486.16	**$34,916,117.84**	**22.31%**
Canada	$51,572,694.00	21.10%	$17,534,715.96	**$34,037,978.04**	**21.75%**
Western U.S.	$42,660,178.00	17.46%	$11,944,849.84	**$30,715,328.16**	**19.63%**
Eastern U.S.	$33,977,385.00	13.90%	$7,135,250.85	**$26,842,134.15**	**17.15%**
Central U.S.	$26,139,598.00	10.70%	$3,920,939.70	**$22,218,658.30**	**14.20%**
Asia	$14,135,278.00	5.78%	$6,360,875.10	**$7,774,402.90**	**4.97%**
Total (or Avg)	**$244,389,737.00**	**100.00%**	**$87,885,117.61**	**$156,504,619.39**	**100.00%**

Sales Summary by Region (USD)
1st Quarter, 2007
Regions are Sorted by Revenue

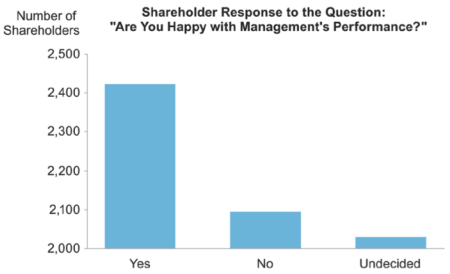
Region	Revenue	% of Total Revenue	Expenses	Profit	% of Total Profit
Europe	75,904,604	31.1%	40,988,486	34,916,118	22.3%
Canada	51,572,694	21.1%	17,534,716	34,037,978	21.7%
Western U.S.	42,660,178	17.5%	11,944,850	30,715,328	19.6%
Eastern U.S.	33,977,385	13.9%	7,135,251	26,842,134	17.2%
Central U.S.	26,139,598	10.7%	3,920,940	22,218,658	14.2%
Asia	14,135,278	5.8%	6,360,875	7,774,403	5.0%
Total (or Avg)	$244,389,737	100.0%	$87,885,118	$156,504,619	100.0%

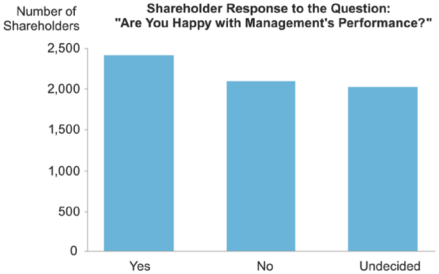
3-D graphs are harder to read than 2-D graphs. It is almost always best to keep things simple, resisting the temptation to add visual fluff.



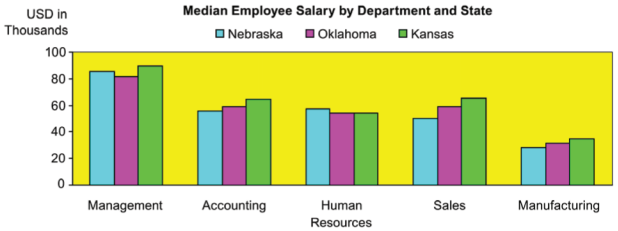


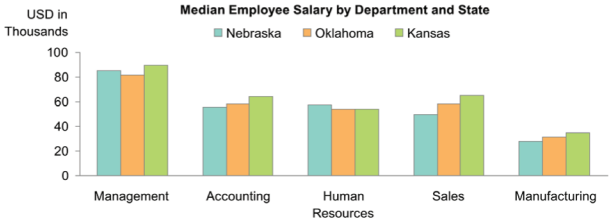
The scale on a bar graph should always begin at zero; otherwise the lengths of the bars do not accurately display the relative values they represent.





Bright colors are harder to look at than medium-saturated colors. A white background features data more clearly in a graph than a colored background.





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