Data-driven storytelling

Data-driven storytelling explained

- Stories in which data are at the center point
- Where hard data meets human communication
- Tailored to a specific audience and the context in which it is consumed
- Promotes change (e.g., guide decision-making, influence attitudes, alter behavior, etc.)

Benefits of data-driven storytelling

- Adds meaning and value
- Is engaging
- Helps message stick
- Is credible
- Is versatile

How to tell an effective data story

1. Know your data
   - Must come from a credible, reputable, non-biased source since data can easily be manipulated, misrepresented, or misinterpreted
   - Data should help you tell the truth, align with the audience's needs and support them in learning exactly what they need to know to make a key decision
   - Determine key insights and then filter and group the data to get there
2. Know your audience
   - It is impossible to satisfy all audiences, bridge all gaps, and cover all bases
   - Think of your audience as a silent partner who also pours their own meaning into the data story
   - Obsess about your audience – who they are, what they know about the topic, what concerns they have
   - Six discussion-starter questions
     1) Who is our audience? Prioritize if you list more than three.
     2) Internal or external?
     3) What actions should be taken?
     4) How many points in time?
     5) What types of comparisons? Compare by time, subgroup, location, goal, or spread.
     6) Which formats are best for each audience?
3. Identify your narrative
   - Data placemats is a facilitative technique that gets stakeholders involved in the sense-making process
     1) Phase 1: data placemats. Preliminary findings are organized into data placemats using a monochromatic color scheme with generic titles, subtitles, and labels.
     2) Phase 2: data interpretation meeting. Stakeholders verbalize the story being told in their own words.
     3) Phase 3: final deliverable. Stakeholders' input and reflection are used to craft stories.
   - Clear narrative with a beginning (introduction to topic), middle (data finding), and end (call to action)
4. Craft your story
   - Write for your audience; good stories are relatable and insightful
   - Focus on a single concept
   - Use appropriate language
   - Incorporate storytelling elements: characters, setting, conflict, plot, end
   - Use visuals as support
   - Follow design best practices
   - Check your blind spots

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