New Approaches to Presenting Data
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Dashboards: The New PowerPoint?

Ken Brewster, E-Tabs Ltd

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Ken Brewster
Director of US Operations, E-Tabs Ltd

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PowerPoint is a universally accepted medium.... (nearly) everyone uses it....think VHS v Betamax.

The software is feature-rich and very flexible.

It is possible to reproduce very complex drawings, sound, pictures and even clips in your presentation relatively easily.

You can prepare slides at work and at home.

Added speed: it is quicker to add information on slides/transparencies than to write it all on a whiteboard.

It is possible to ‘build up’ an argument: by showing one sentence after another e.g. this slide!

It is easy to disseminate the information to others.

The audience can receive the slides in advance and use them in their preparation for attending the presentation.

It is easy to customize presentations for each audience.

Looks very professional.

Graphical presentation is often an excellent complement to an oral presentation.
Funky effects such as this are great but do they really get the message across....or do they get in the way?

Basically, is PowerPoint always the best tool for reporting data?
These days clients want SPEED, EMPOWERMENT and FLEXIBILITY
Dashboards can provide all of this.. and more..
So why are they not making more of an impact?

Speaker: Ken Browster, E-Tabs Limited, UK
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There are many different definitions of a dashboard – just try putting the term into Google and see what you get.

This is one that I have selected as I think it conveys my understanding of what a dashboard is in this context.
Some examples to show the power and variation possible with dashboards.....

Maps, filters.....
Radial gauges, linear gauges, pyramid charts.....
Line and Area charts......
More of a typical car dashboard look.....
Dashboards have been prevalent in BI for many years and their value has been proven
These are tasks that dashboards in BI are considered to be best at......it is clear that many of them are equally applicable to MR.
Similarly, many of the reasons why firms start a dashboard initiative also apply to MR
Yet in MR evidence of dashboard use is very low.

In the 2010 GlobalPark MR Software Survey by meaning, PowerPoint is the prevalent deliverable by far followed by several other offline methodologies; with only 6% using dashboards.

Dashboards were only added to this question in the survey in 2009 but there was not increase in usage in 2010.
However, if this data is split regionally, there is a marked difference in usage with North America showing much higher numbers for dashboards.
Looking ahead, 22% of respondents to the survey indicated that they expected increased demand for dashboards in coming year.

So despite a slow start, perhaps there is growth around the corner.
So what is it that is stopping people in MR from adopting dashboards?

In our research we identified 3 main areas....
- Data Issues
- Cost
- Skill Set
The general feeling is that MR data is very different to BI data.

BI data is very straight-forward and additive, whereas in MR context is everything. For example, the concept of multiple response data just doesn’t exist in BI.

So it is felt that traditional BI dashboards cannot cope with the nuances of MR data.
In reality though, there isn’t much difference. This may have been true once but the two worlds are converging.

The technology in BI dashboards allow us to mirror MR functionality now.
There are a lot of factors that can add to the cost of a dashboard setup. Many of them would not be natively present in an MR organisation, so the costs cannot be offset against anything else.
In reality, there are services out there to help. Gone are the days when you would have to do everything in house.

The emergence of Cloud Computing and hosting companies makes it easier. Such companies offer services which you can pay for on a monthly, or per usage basis.

This drastically reduces the burden of a huge initial capital outlay and enables even smaller companies to at least dip their toe in the water.
Given that the technology is very different, it is believed that a whole range of new skills are required to support a dashboard initiative.
Yes, an understanding of database technology is important, but in reality, there is a lot of overlap, so many of the skills will already be present in a typical MR firm.

Furthermore, the quality and user-friendliness of software today makes the learning curve very gentle.
Migrating to dashboards opens up a whole new world of possibilities in terms of how we present data.....is data visualization.

Gone are the days of just showing a basic, lifeless bar chart......at least they are going!

Illustrating data in ways such as this – the aeroplane – is far more impactful.
Data visualization is nothing new….it is infiltrating our everyday lives.

Many news websites now have sections dedicated to interactive graphics like this example from the Wall St Journal.

So the general public are used to interacting with data in this way.
This is an amazing chart – it is about the last Football World Cup in 2010. It illustrates where the players in each of the national teams play their club football.
This is another wonderful diagram. How else could you show such big numbers and put them into context.

Just look at the estimate and actual figures for the Iraq war in the top right hand corner!
...and here’s another example from the Canadian election this year.

This was available to the general public. It enables the user to click on any constituency and not only see the result of the election, but also compare it what happened last time round.

They key point here being that a lot of information is delivered in an impactful, user-friendly way and it is intuitive to use.
Finally, what about Social Media.

Dashboard vendors are already working on building Social Media information into their offerings.
Here’s a good example from the NCAA....
Finally, a thought about MR dashboards.

Whenever I demonstrate a dashboard to someone in MR, two questions I get asked without fail are....

Can I print it.........and........can I export it to PowerPoint?

So perhaps all MR dashboards should be produced with buttons for these two items very prominently displayed.
To conclude, dashboards do have a place in MR and the things that are traditionally considered to be barriers are not really barriers at all.

I am not advocating that dashboards will replace PowerPoint.....
.....but the two technologies can compliment each other and happily co-exist.
Thank you

Questions?

Ken Brewster
E-Tabs

Sue York
The Future Place
Finally - A market research specific dashboard.

Contact our offices, visit www.e-tabs.com or follow us for further information.

Europe
Unit 2 Technology Park
Colindeep Lane
London, NW9 6BX
United Kingdom
T +44 (0) 20-8205-4665
F +44 (0) 20-8205-7375

United States
201 Houston, Suite 308
Batavia
IL 60510
United States
T 888-823-8227
F 888-680-9009

Asia Pacific
Suite 14, Unit 2A
215 Rosedale Road
Albany 0632
North Shore City
Auckland, New Zealand
T +64 9973 5310

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www.linkedin.com/company/e-tabs

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