

The 3 Stories

Using a single story consistently over time provides clarity to your audiences. There are three common stories. Use one of them and simplify the process of communicating your performance.

1 CORPORATE

KPI analysis only at the corporate level. May include comparison with peers or industry averages.

2 DIVISION

Focus on a set of KPIs same as or drivers for Corporate priority KPIs. Analysis of drivers within the division. Compare to same KPIs in other units.

3 BUSINESS UNIT

A set of KPIs for the Sub-unit (plant, store, district) is same as or drivers for Divisional priorities. Compared to other sub-units.

Whitepaper courtesy of:

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Use Stories to Keep Your Reports Focused

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR CURRENT REPORTS?

The large amount of numbers which are collected and reported monthly lead to confusion. It has been reported that an average manager receives over 100 reports a month. What questions they are supposed to answer is not clear.

Current reports don't answer the four key management questions:

- What is the focus?
- What is our history?
- How are we doing now?
- Where are we headed?

Few reports address specific current needs. Most existing reports deliver a confusing and inconsistent set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). If reports can be changed, more data is added. More is not better, it only adds to the confusion.

To create clarity, you need to rethink the purpose of your reports. Your audiences at all levels need the reports to answer four questions.

- What is the focus of your report?

- How have we performed in the past?
- How is our current performance?
- What is our future performance likely to be?

The answer is to use known and consistent stories. Familiarity with these patterns reduces the learning curve and helps teams to focus on achieving results.

THE 3 STORIES

There are three basic stories which can be applied to reports. They are:

- Corporate
- Division
- Business unit

Whichever you use, keep your storyline pure so each report conveys only one message. If you have more than one message, package each in its own report and presentation.

CORPORATE

The Corporate story presents a big picture overview. The report presents the relevant major KPIs for the company and its main competitors and/or its major divisions. This report shows how well the current actions are working.

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Show the same KPIs for your peers to showcase relative performance versus over the same time.

It is important to avoid drilling down into business units in a Corporate story. Adding the Divisional story only muddies your message. Keep the focus on Corporate level performance.

DIVISION

The Division level story depicts a subset of the KPIs for the goal, which are within the control of the Division.

The drill down into the major sub-units is the heart of this storyline. Sub-units can be included based on different criteria:

- Best performers
- Worst performers
- Highlight a significant change in sub-unit business, or
- A different line of business

BUSINESS UNIT

A business unit is any more granular division of your business below Division. Examples include plant, product line, store, district, city, and Zip code.

The business unit story is very similar to the Division story. The difference is that the story begins at the business unit level and rolls up. One or more roll ups to the Division

or even Corporate levels can be used to highlight the business unit's contribution to the company as a whole. You could also drill across, to compare your unit with other business units within the Division or across the Company.

CONCLUSION

It is not enough to just track and report KPIs to be effective. Your reports must tell a clear and consistent story to every reader.

Keep your story clear. If you have more than one message don't combine them. Instead create a report for each message. This will keep the evidence and conclusions distinct in your audience's minds.

Use either Corporate, Division or Business Unit stories and repeat the same story with new data as it becomes available.

Apply and stick with this one concept and you will noticeably improve the quality and value of your reports and presentations.

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