Use Data to Drive Action at Your Next Event

FINDING THE NARRATIVE IN DATA

By 2020, 1.7 megabytes of data will be created every second for every person on earth, according to an IDC Digital Universe Study. In her new book DataStory(™), Nancy Duarte says there's narrative to be found in all this data. You just have to know "what darlings to kill to pull out the insights in finding a story." Nancy says, "Strong storytelling through data is about emphasis and contrast in hierarchy."

data footprint of humans

44 zettabytes

PROJECTED VOLUME OF GLOBAL IT TRAFFIC BY 2020

40 zettabytes

VOLUME OF DATA CREATED BY 2020, UP 300% FROM 2015

2.3 zettabytes

VOLUME OF DATA THAT HUMANS PRODUCE EVERY DAY

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She also says, you also need to "form a point of view about the problem or opportunity your data uncovered," and then "apply story structures that give meaning to the data, so it sticks." In other words, you need to humanize the data and give it meaning to make it work for you.

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—IDC DIGITAL UNIVERSE STUDY

"You've probably been surprised by a story and physically reacted with a gasp of awe or shudder of horror as you empathize with a character encountering the unexpected. Data revealed over time elicits similar reactions from an audience.

—DATASTORY, NANCY DUARTE

In his TEDx Talk, data storyteller Ben Wellington recommends sharing data about your audience and making them part of your story. He also believes "effective data storytelling offers a takeaway."

Ben recommends following these simple rules for successful data-driven storytelling.

1. Connect with people's experiences. Find your common ground and create a connection around that.

2. Try to convey one idea. Focus your audience's attention around a single concept. Then, communicate that idea with data.

3. Keep it simple—not just one idea, but one simple idea.

4. Strive to change minds—the overarching goal should be to drive change or action with your data insights. Make an impact.

Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, author of *Storytelling With Data* says "a robust understanding of the situational context" is essential for determining what's interesting in the data and why your audience should care.

When it's time to tell the story, most people start with the hypothesis, then talk about the data collected, then the methodology used, and then the findings. While this may feel natural, Cole says that's not a story and it's not effective. "What's the tension that's going to make them pay attention? It's by keeping the audience in mind throughout the process and designing everything with them in mind that we put ourselves in a position for success."

The growth of data is only going to accelerate. Companies that make their data work for them will have a huge competitive advantage. Master the art of data storytelling at trade shows and customer events and you'll make stronger connections that drive action.

"Never simply show data; rather, make data a pivotal point in an overarching story and use it to drive your audience to action."

—COLE NUSSBAUMER KNAFLIC, *STORYTELLING WITH DATA*

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