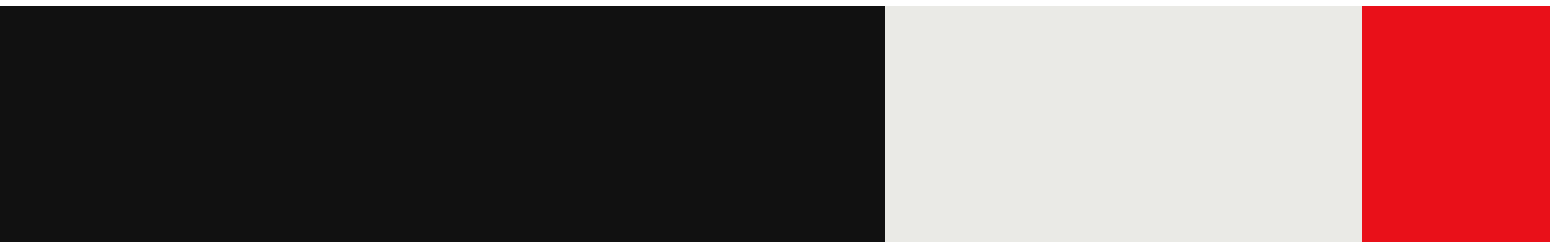



6 steps to tell effective data stories

Article



To be effective communicators, marketers must convey data in easy-to-digest ways. Whether they're advocating for more resources, delivering a performance report, or influencing strategic decisions, marketers should integrate data at every step, presented in a cohesive way. Here are six steps to tell data stories effectively.

1. Consider your objectives and audience

Be clear with your objectives and who your audience is so you can look at data with a purpose in mind, Vladimir Hanzlik, executive editor and senior vice president of content at

EMARKETER, said during a [webinar](#). “It just helps us focus on a hypothesis and makes the analysis far more efficient than if you're just trying to boil the ocean.”

Think about what you want to communicate to your audience and what’s important to them, then create a story outline. At this stage, you may not have looked at the data, so it’s normal for your hypothesis to be a placeholder with unanswered questions.

2. Close data gaps and untested hypotheses

“This is really where our analysis starts, by looking at the best data,” Hanzlik said.

To avoid questions about the accuracy or reliability of the data, gather information from both internal and credible third-parties. Use your own logic to ensure that the data aligns across multiple sources and that definitions and measurements are consistent.

3. Keep an open mind for new findings

“As we work with the data to test our hypotheses and plug in any data gaps, we always try to keep an open mind for new, interesting, and important things that we might learn,” Hanzlik said. Changing trends, contradicting data, and outliers deserve attention as well, helping the audience get a more well-rounded, unbiased picture.

“It's always tempting to dismiss an outlier as something that doesn't fit neatly with the rest of your analysis, but you can learn a lot by figuring out what is special about them,” he said.

4. Revise your story based on the data you find

“We very often find analysis that conflicts with our initial hypotheses. And when we do, we need to revise our story,” Hanzlik said. “Don’t sweep them under the carpet.”

5. Present the data in a relevant way

“The best way to present the data can be very different to what your analysis looked like at the analysis stage,” Hanzlik said. As tempting as it can be to data dump and show off the breadth of research, try to show only what’s relevant to your audience.

To keep it simple, work off one key, compelling insight.

6. Help your audience interpret the data

“Direct the attention of your audience and tell them exactly what you think they should be taking away from your analysis,” Hanzlik said, whether it’s an actionable takeaway or a thought exercise.

This step ensures you build influence with your audience, especially if you deliver it with confidence. “You’re probably far closer to the data than anyone else in the room, so you’ve earned the right to have an opinion on it,” Hanzlik said.

[Watch the full webinar.](#)

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