

THE

# CONTENT MARKETER'S

GUIDE TO

# DATA STORYTELLING

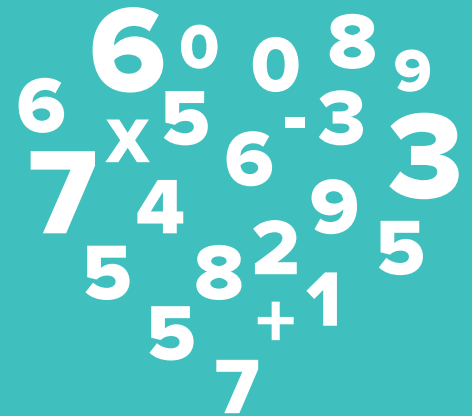


# EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY.

**GOOD CONTENT MARKETING TELLS A GOOD STORY, AND DATA IS ONE OF THE BEST TOOLS TO HELP YOU TELL THESE STORIES.**

But getting your hands on good data, understanding insights, and turning that data into a powerful piece of content isn't easy. Why? Because teams don't always see that they're perfect for each other. Data analysts are dancing in data all day, but content marketers are sometimes too shy to approach. Either they're too intimidated to make the first move, or they have no idea how to get their analysts' attention. And so, content marketers and analysts go about their day, worlds apart, while good data that could make great stories goes to waste. But no more, wallflowers! It's time to step up and start building a life of data stories together.

**GOOD NEWS:  
WE'LL HELP YOU.**

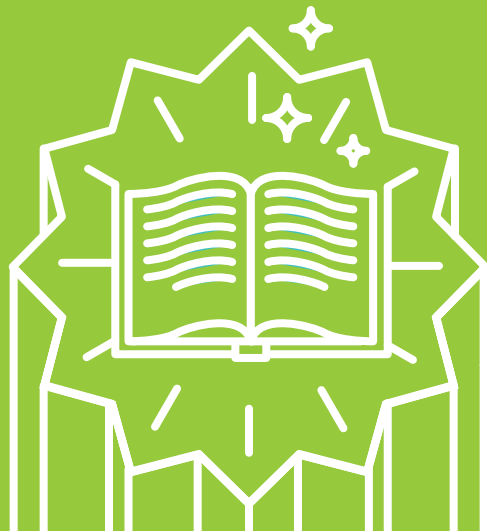




# DATA + STORYTELLING = LOVE

“You may have heard the world is made up of atoms and molecules, but it’s really made up of stories. When you sit with an individual that’s been here, you can give quantitative data a qualitative overlay.”

— WILLIAM TURNER, ARTIST



## WHY USE DATA AT ALL?

Data is more than pretty numbers and visualizations; it is powerful source material. Everyone is trying to capture their audience with compelling content: stories that provide value, insight, and meaning. Using data effectively gives you a huge advantage over your competitors because it enables you to tell stories that are:



### EXCLUSIVE

Using your original data gives your audience access to content no one else has—a huge plus for telling a good story.



### UNIQUE

Your data can shed light on previously unexplored subjects, producing fascinating insights that you and others can build on. Sharing these stories in your data educates your industry, helping you demonstrate your expertise and lead conversations, not just join them.



### OBJECTIVE

Solid data offers objective proof, which bolsters your credibility and builds trust with your audience.

Audiences crave data stories. Through data visualization, information is communicated with more impact, increasing:



## APPEAL

It's difficult not to get sucked into a good story. It's more difficult to ignore good data. Throw in a visually compelling presentation, and it's downright delectable.



## COMPREHENSION

People want data, but they don't always have the time or skills to interpret complicated data sets. Providing context and shaping a narrative makes information easier to understand.



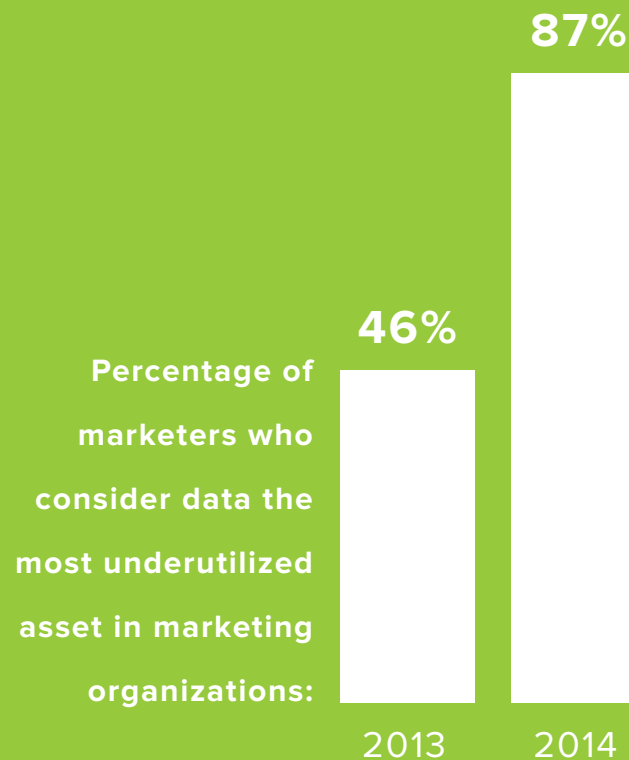
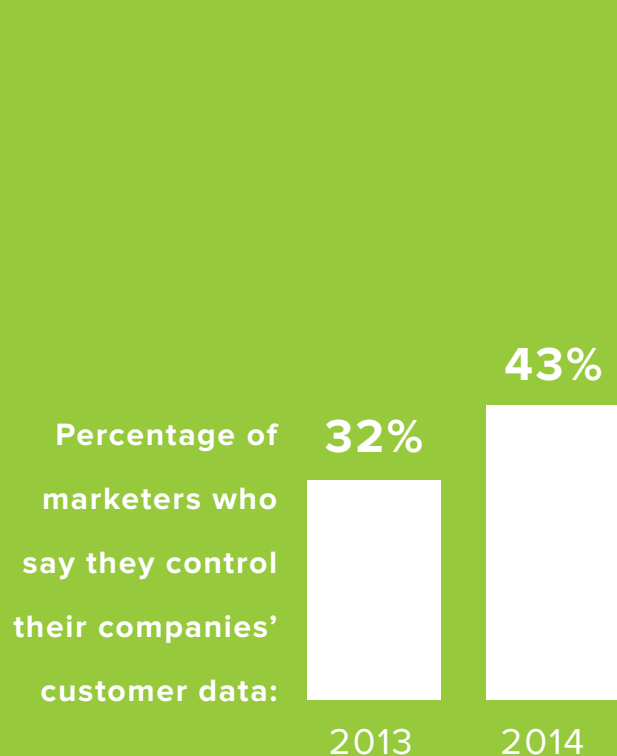
## RETENTION

Data fills in the gaps of your story, anchoring it to fact, ultimately making your story and its key points easier to recall.

**BUT YOU KNOW ALL THIS ALREADY, RIGHT? WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW IS HOW TO GET THAT DATA INTO YOUR STORIES.**

**FOR CONTENT MARKETERS, DATA IS THE SECRET WEAPON TO GREAT CONTENT, AND IT IS MORE ACCESSIBLE THAN EVER.**

**ACCORDING TO THE TERADATA 2015 GLOBAL DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING SURVEY:**





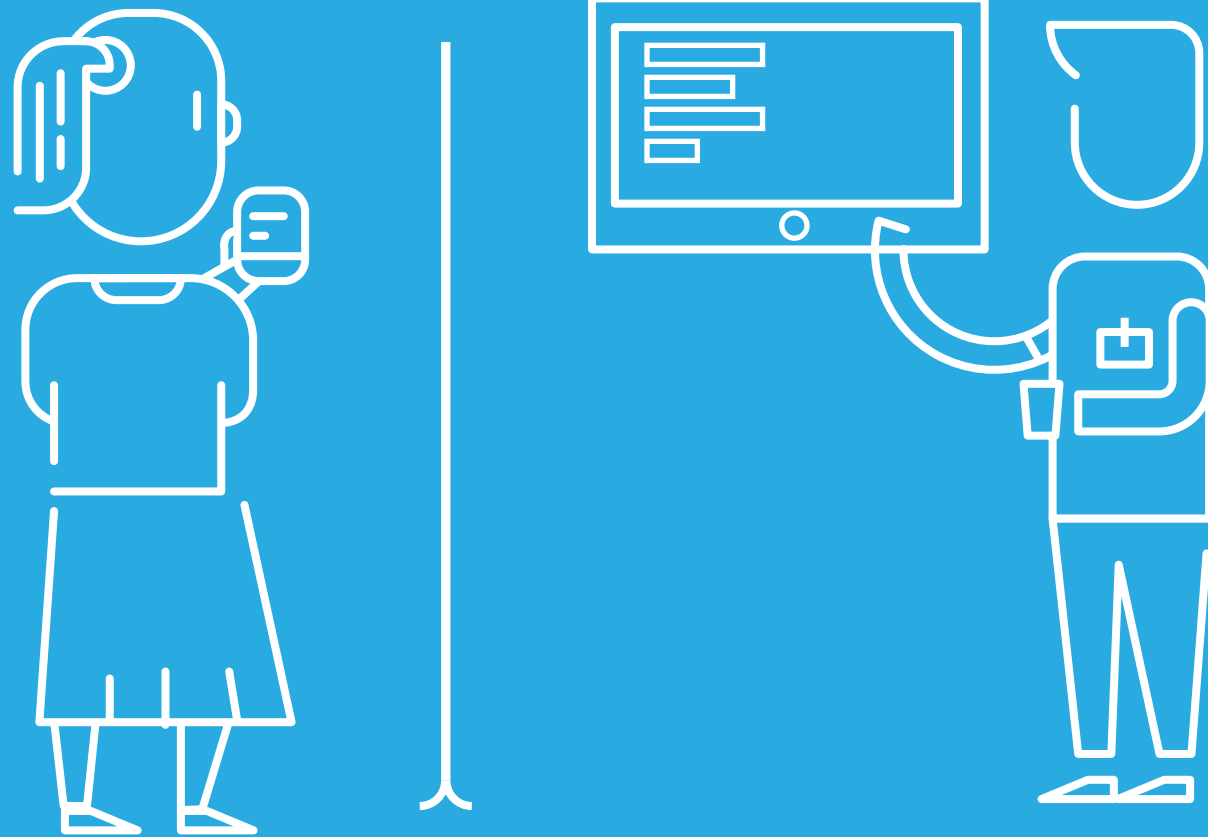
## THE DATA-ING GAME

So, how do you get that data and put it to work for you? It starts with your data analysts. They have the data; it's up to you to approach them.



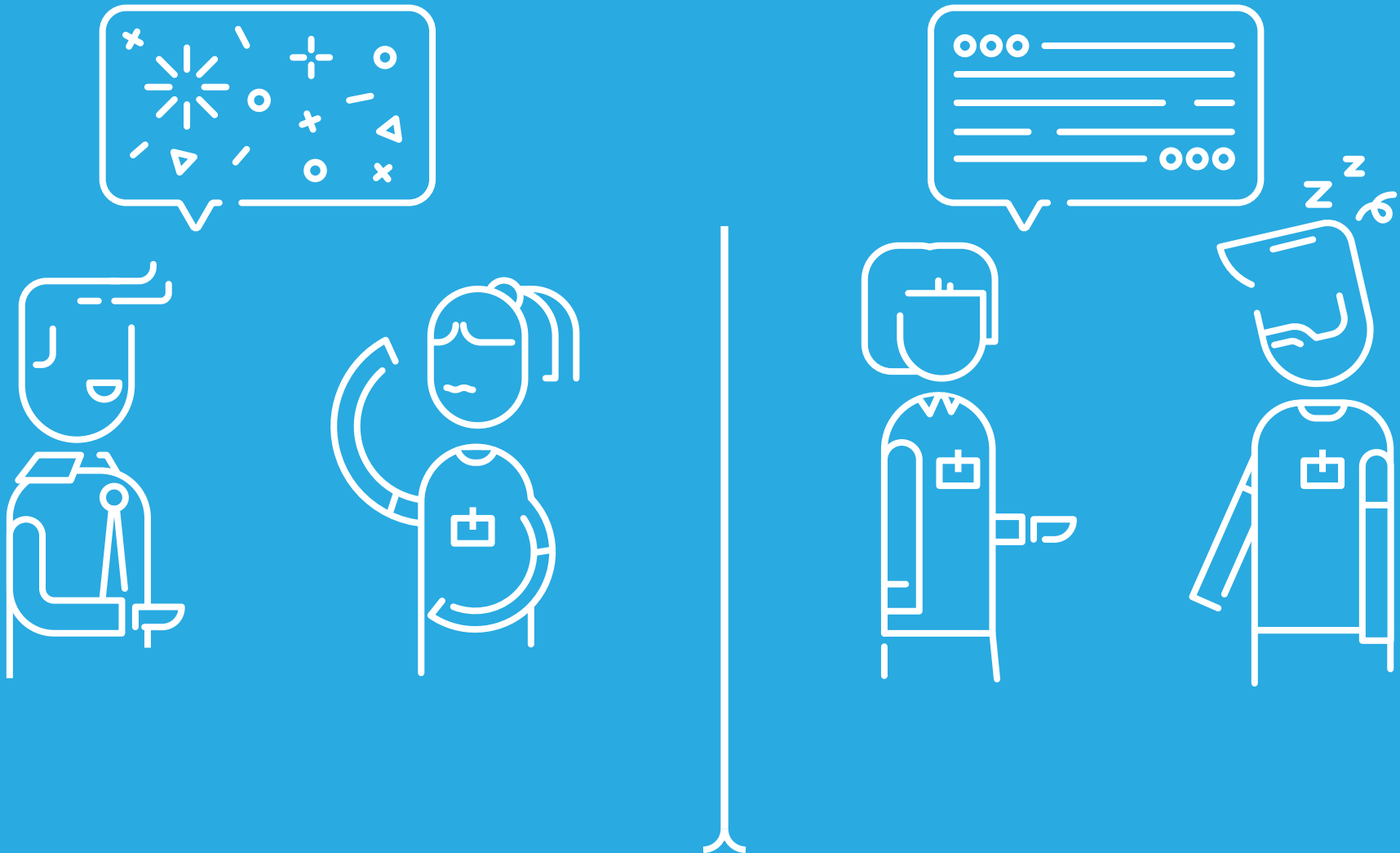
DATA MIXER

But that's not always easy when marketers and analysts seem worlds apart. Marketing teams are focused on their day-to-day duties. Analysts are digging into numbers. Both are in their own worlds.

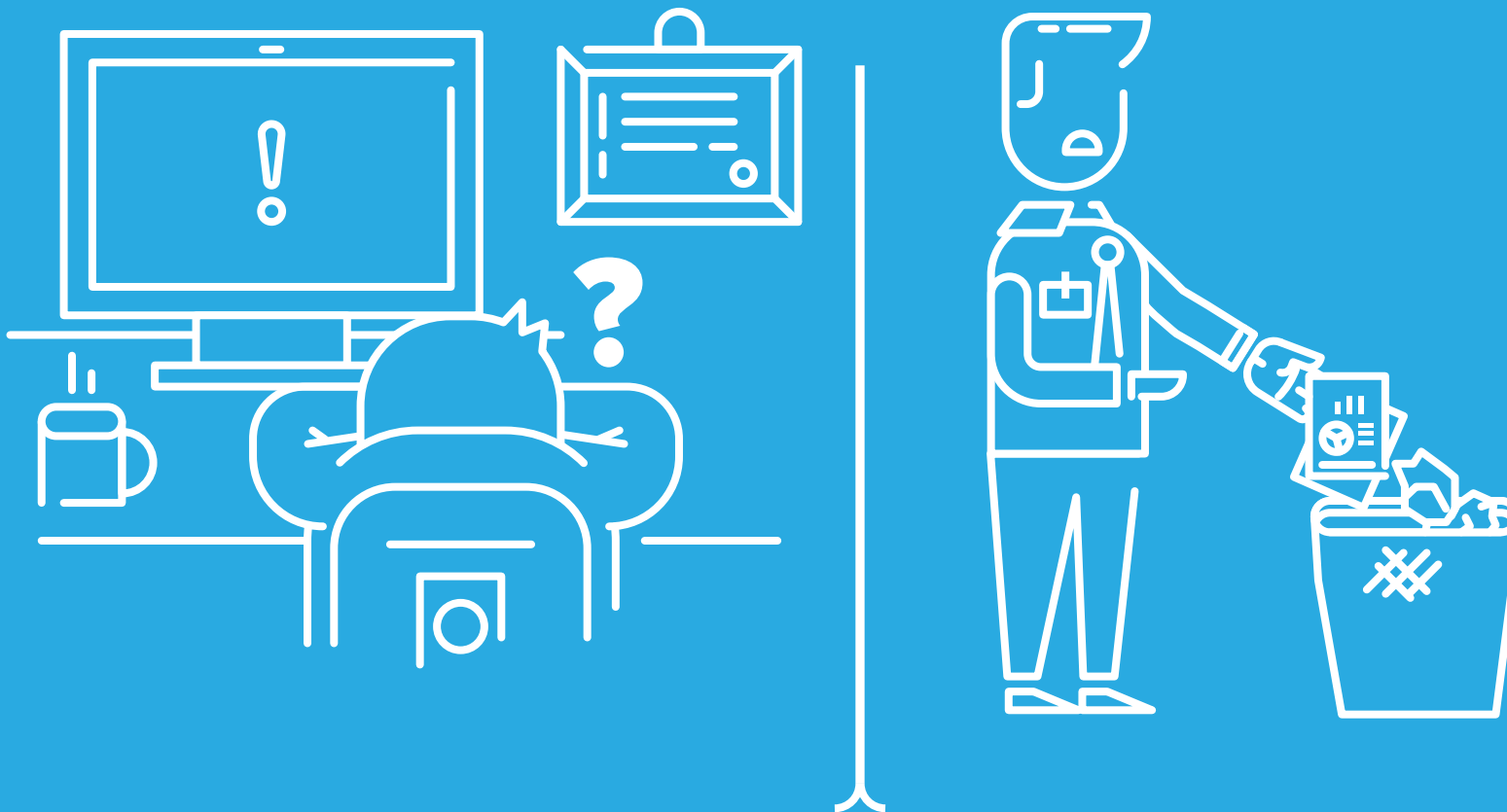




They're in different meetings; they have isolated processes—they don't even speak the same language.



Content marketers are looking for stories to tell but have nothing in front of them. Analysts are too focused on the data that influences business strategy—not thinking about how that data might be editorialized to share with a larger audience.





And on the rare occasions that data does get passed on, content marketers often don't know what to do with it.

**“Despite compelling reasons for the importance of stories, most quantitative analysts are not very good at creating or telling them. The implications of this are profound—it means that analytical initiatives don’t have the impact on decisions and actions that they should. It means that time and money spent on acquiring and managing data and analyzing it are effectively wasted.”**

**—TOM DAVENPORT, DELOITTE ANALYTICS SENIOR ADVISOR**



It doesn't have to be this way. Analysts can give content marketers' stories substance and, in turn, content marketers can transform analysts' data into powerful, persuasive communication.

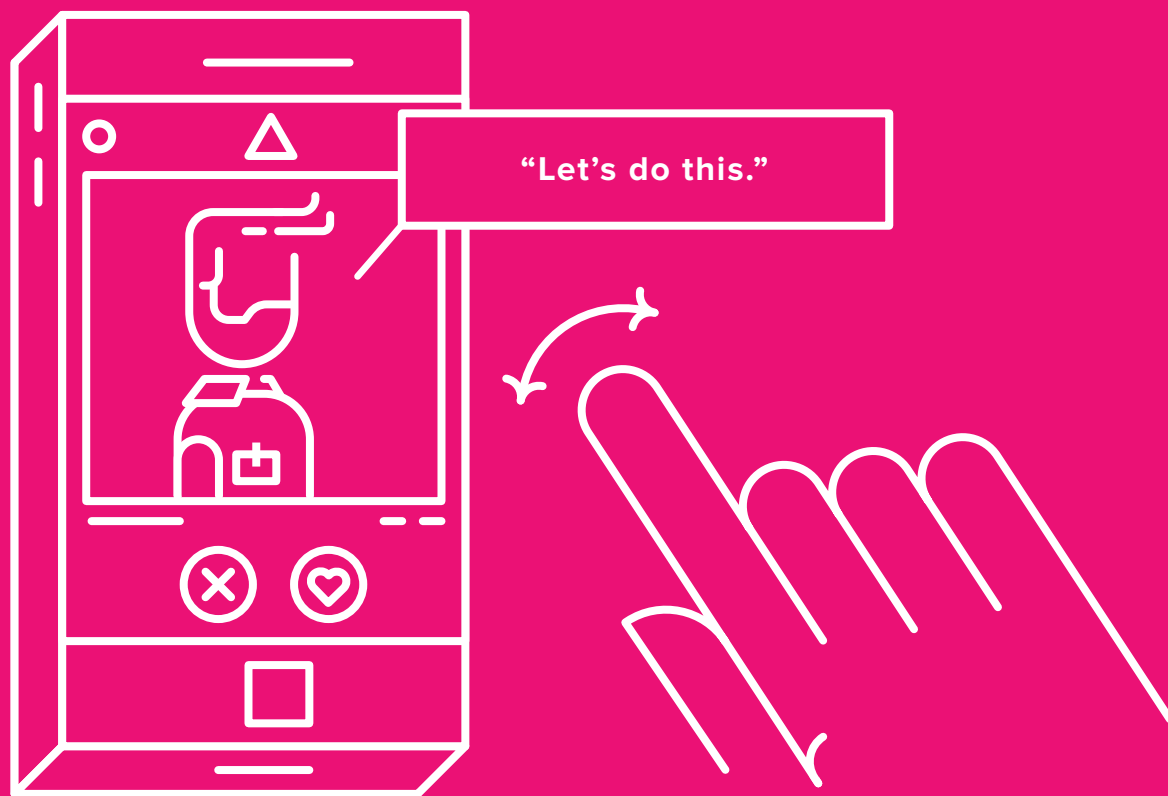


**TOGETHER, THEY CAN MAKE SWEET  
STORIES FROM SOLID DATA.**



# HOW TO FIND YOUR DATA MATCH

So, how do you take the best qualities of each department to create the perfect relationship? It's not as difficult as you think.

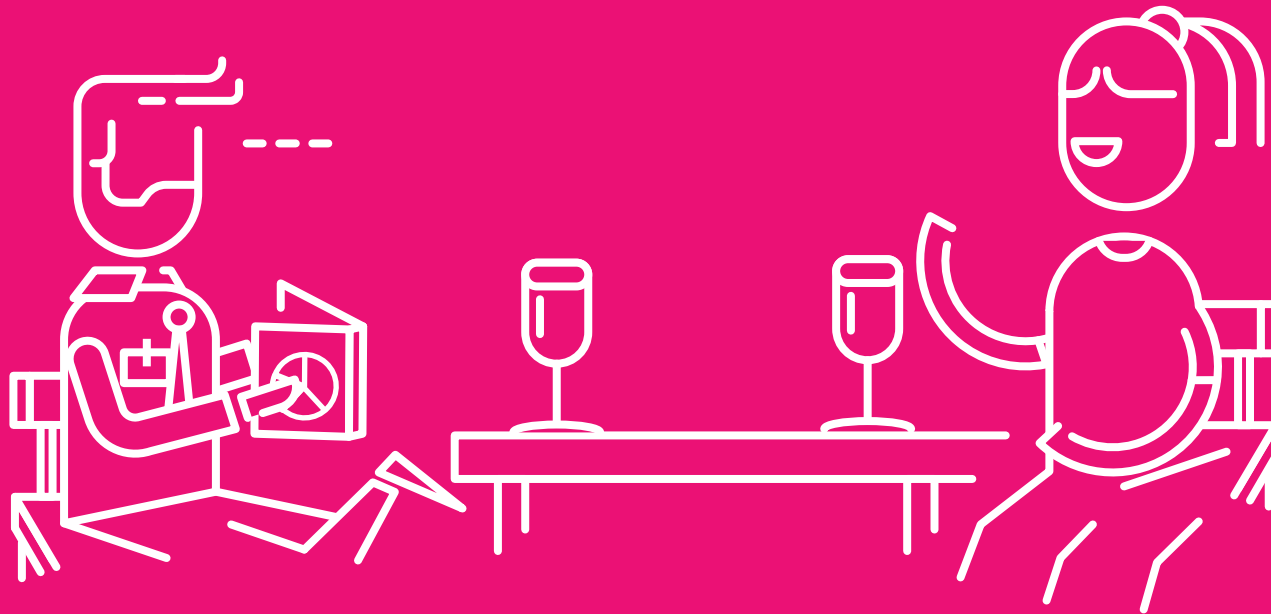


STEP 1



## DESTROY THE “US VS. THEM” MENTALITY.

A sense of competition can exist between people in specialized quantitative and qualitative roles. But it shouldn't. Schedule a sit-down with your teams to have a happy meet and greet. (You can even bring treats!)



**STEP 2****GET ON THE SAME PAGE.**

Most frustration and inefficiency comes from not knowing what another team is aiming to do; however, an analyst's output is fuel for the marketing engine. Realize your common goal by answering these questions:

- What's your organization's main goal?
- What are data analysts doing to help reach that goal?
- What are content marketers doing to help reach that goal?





## STEP 3

**EDUCATE YOUR ANALYST.**

Analysts can only give you the right data if they know what to look for. Have a conversation with your analyst about what subjects would be interesting to explore: Your industry? Customer behavior? Products/services? Analysts often try to find more complicated stories within the data, which is absolutely valid, but oftentimes straightforward and simple stories are best for a target audience.



**STEP 4****EDUCATE YOURSELF ON HOW TO USE  
ANALYST STORIES.**

Data doesn't have to be intimidating. Learning to identify things like outliers, trends, and correlations can help you become literate. Work with your analyst to get up to speed. You may want to set up a regular meeting to stay educated.



## STEP 5



## DETERMINE A PROCESS THAT WORKS FOR BOTH TEAMS.

Outline the clear ways you can regularly get your hands on data. You need the right type and amount of data to tell your story the right way.

Keep in mind:

### AMOUNT OF DATA

A single stat is too little, and a million cells are too much. A solid set provides enough context to tell your story without overwhelming the reader.

### DATA FORMAT

Discuss and agree on how the data should ultimately be organized and delivered.





# TELLING YOUR DATA STORY

Data alone doesn't make the story. It needs a compelling presentation.



## FIND THE STORY IN THE DATA FIRST, THEN WORRY ABOUT PRESENTATION.

To be a good steward of storytelling, you need a strong understanding of what's at your story's core and what the main points will be. Only then should you move onto the bells and whistles.



## USE DATA TO ANCHOR YOUR NARRATIVE.

It should both give the reader key points to retain and further your story along. By structuring your narrative for impact, you should be able to follow a hierarchy and move away from any tendency to sound salesy or biased.



## TELL IT LIKE IT IS.

To effectively communicate with your target audience, don't try to retrofit your data analysis to support a preconceived story. The data story should be straightforward; insight pulled from data carries with it an implied responsibility to be upfront and honest.



## FOLLOW DATA VISUALIZATION BEST PRACTICES.

The fact that data is merely present is not enough for a good story. It needs to be presented for maximum appeal and comprehension.



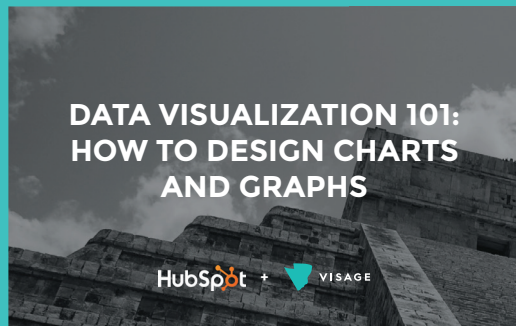
**REMEMBER: ALWAYS  
DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR DATA.**

If the data includes relationships between variables, be sure any analysis was performed accurately. Erroneous conclusions, if brought to light, can erode trust—which is difficult to remedy. Someone out there will always be looking to call you on sloppy analysis; don't give them the opportunity.

**ALWAYS KEEP THE PRIMARY  
RULE OF DATA ANALYSIS  
IN MIND:**

**GARBAGE IN = GARBAGE OUT**

Download these free e-books for more on how to tell good data stories.



DESIGNED BY

COLUMN FIVE



VISAGE IS A CRAZY-EASY TOOL FOR DESIGNING BEAUTIFUL DATA VISUALIZATIONS. EMPOWER YOUR TEAM TO CREATE BRANDED VISUAL CONTENT EFFICIENTLY AND AT SCALE.

VISAGE.CO  
COLUMNFIVEMEDIA.COM

5151 CALIFORNIA AVE #230  
IRVINE, CA 92617



Copyright ©2015 Visage. All rights reserved.