DATA STORY ACADEMY

TOOLS & GUIDE

Transform confusing data into stories that create clarity & inspire action

special edition in partnership with

narrative science

LIMITED TIME ONLY

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USE CODE: NSDATASTORY
Thank you for purchasing the Data Story Academy (DSA) foundational courses.

These courses were designed in a specific order to build on one another; therefore, we recommend you go through the courses in order of appearance in the workbook. A lot of information is packed within these courses, so we encourage you to:

1. Watch the Videos.
2. Download the Workbook & Files.
3. Apply the Concepts.

As you begin to see results, please share your story with us. We love to hear how DSA is helping people grow in their careers and make a positive impact in the world. Share your story at https://datastoryacademy.com/whatsyourstory.

Finally, we at DSA believe everyone has unique creative capabilities. We encourage you to lean into your creativity as you move through these courses.

Our hope is that these courses not only inspire you, but also give you the tools and confidence to turn your data into compelling stories.

Sincerely,
Zack Mazzoncini | Founder | Data Story Academy LLC.
Why is telling data stories so effective? What are stories doing to the brain, and how can we use this knowledge to transform the way we identify and communicate insights in our data? When we communicate with stories, we actually accomplish something quite powerful. Good stories release two chemicals in the brain: cortisol and oxytocin.

The cortisol released in our brain causes us to focus or concentrate on something important.

The oxytocin released in our brain evokes emotions, such as care and connection.

When we tell data stories with our information, we captivate our audience and focus their attention on what matters most. The neural effect of storytelling is why telling data stories is such an important capability to master.
Your Blueprint

Apply the Process
Map out an important story you plan to tell with your data. (If you are creating multiple data stories, fill out one blueprint for every story.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
<th>Yield</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>What actions can be taken?</td>
<td>What are the expected results?</td>
<td>What data is needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>What is the data story?</td>
<td>What questions does the story answer?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
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Visualization Guide

Use the “VISUAL PLACEMAT” as your guide for selecting intuitive visuals when designing your data story.
**TIME**
Visualizations that show the data over a time period as a way of finding trends or changes.

**RANK**
Visualizations that show the data ordered by size as a way of displaying high and low performance.

**WHOLE**
Visualizations that use size or area to show differences or similarities for parts of a whole.
**DISTRIBUTION**
Visualizations that show data in groups as a way of displaying the frequency or shape of the data.

**COMPARISON**
Visualizations that show the relationship between two or more variables as a way of comparison.

**DEVIATION**
Visualizations that show the differences in the data based on a fixed reference point which can often be zero.
20 DATA STORYTELLING KEYS FOR SUCCESS

A guide for turning your data into compelling narratives that help you grow your business and career.
The importance of developing data storytelling capabilities.

Over the years, I’ve had the opportunity to help hundreds of individuals and businesses learn to communicate clearly with data. I continue to see people who develop data storytelling capabilities land better jobs, get paid higher salaries and advance their career more quickly. The 20 Data Storytelling Keys for Success is your guide to understanding and developing data storying skills of your own. These keys are often what separates a clear message or data story from a confusing one. The keys cover three critical categories that are often missed . . . how to effectively find, design and present the most important stories in your data. I encourage you to read each key and the supporting explanation then apply what you learned to the next data story you create.

Sincerely,

Zack Mazzoncini
Founder, Data Story Academy LLC

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Focus on valuable priorities by finding the most important stories in your data.

The amount of data and information available to us is increasing at an exponential rate, thus creating a major challenge in identifying what matters most. Always ask the question, what are the most important stories in my data? Answering this question before being our data discovery and analysis allows us to eliminate useless information and focus our time and energy on the most valuable priorities.
Use questions as a frame for your visuals and deliver back to your audience insights they care about most.

Questions are the framework for your visuals that deliver back to your audience the answers and insights they care about most. Oftentimes, we jump right into designing our data stories and never stop to think about the questions we are trying to answer. We want to validate that the data stories we are finding are actually the stories our audience wants to see and understand. Use a question as the title for your visualization to increase the clarity and understanding for your audience.
Reduce time and save money by identifying what data is needed in your story.

*FINDING YOUR DATA STORY*

If you’ve done the work to identify key questions your audience wants to answer, you can now use the questions as a guide for preparing the data. Work to focus your time and energy preparing only the data that is needed to deliver visual answers at the level of granularity your audience needs.
Ensure your data story is successful by understanding what actions your audience plans to take.

FINDING YOUR DATA STORY

It is important to understand how your data story will be used to make decisions. Identify what actions will be taken once the visual insights are revealed. Understanding how the data story will be used ensures you design features and functions that allow your audience to take action and make decisions.
Identify expected results to ensure everyone knows when the data story has been successful.

Results are what your audience cares about accomplishing. How will your data story create value and make a positive impact? Understand what success should look like and define it to ensure the main goals of your data story are achieved.
Lay out your visuals in a purposeful way to help your audience clearly understand what story you are telling.

DESIGNING YOUR DATA STORY

Your data story should follow an intuitive path. It should take your audience through a clear path or narrative that you’ve thought out for the specific story you are telling. Purposeful layouts create connection, flow and correlation in the data story you are designing.
Choose intuitive visuals that create quick clear insights for your audience.

*DESIGNING YOUR DATA STORY*

Intuitive visualizations achieve the goal of creating clear cognitive insights for your audience. When someone looks at the visuals you create, the signals and critical information should almost instantly stand out. Oftentimes we think more complex visuals will create a richer experience. However, what we find is simple visuals are often more effective. The increased complexity of a visualization can be confusing to our audience so work to keep it simple and select intuitive visuals.
Use color in a purposeful way.

Color is one of the most important tools we can utilize to communicate clearly with data. It can also be distracting and detrimental, if used incorrectly. Your color choice should be purposeful. Ensure you always have a reason for why you are using specific colors in your data story.
Design flexibility in your data story to allow for additional questions from your audience.

DESIGNING YOUR DATA STORY

People sometimes think additional questions from our audience are a negative thing. However, these questions are often a sign that our audience wants to do some additional data discovery. Work to design flexibility in your data stories by anticipating the additional questions your audience might ask before they ask them. When you create flexibility, you allow your audience to self-serve and answer important questions on their own.
Remove distractions, noise and clutter and allow your audience to focus on the visuals.

DESIGNING YOUR DATA STORY

Oftentimes, distractions are referred to as non-data ink. What is data-ink? Data-ink is the pixels within the visuals themselves. The goal is to remove as much of the clutter and the noise as possible from the background of your data story. Removing distractions allows your audience to focus on and see the insights being revealed in the visualizations.
Use text to create visual clarity, consistency and different levels of focus.

*DESIGNING YOUR DATA STORY*

Text is often overlooked when designing our data stories. Thoughtful text allows you to create a more professional feel. Choose a font, format and size that create a theme and balance for your data story. Use text as a visual design element to draw your audience’s attention to key values and focus areas.
Optimize your data story for sharing by designing multiple versions.

Understanding how your audience will access and use the data story is important. Will they view it from a desktop or mobile device? Is the data story being used as a static image or will it need to be printed? Depending upon the answers to these questions, you may want to design multiple versions of your data story.
Your audience will decide in the first 30 seconds whether or not you’re worth listening to.

Presenting Your Data Story

What do you want to communicate with your data story? What impact, emotion or change do you want to occur within your audience? Is there an action you want them to take after listening to your presentation? The opening of your presentation frames the entire story. Therefore, it is important to take some time to plan your opening and ensure it accomplishes the impact you hope to achieve.
Pause to regain your audience's attention when they lose interest or get distracted.

One of the most overlooked parts of telling a successful data story is regularly checking in with your audience. Pausing at natural points throughout the presentation to engage your audience and ensure they are still listening can make a huge difference. Use regular check-ins, if the form of a simple pause, to regain your audience's attention when you see they are starting to lose interest or get distracted.
Engage your audience in a way that feels as though you are discovering insights with them.

*PRESENTING YOUR DATA STORY*

Often our personal discovery in the data happens before we actually get to the presentation. Therefore, we run the risk of presenting in a way that lands flat. We don't bring the same excitement around the insights we once had when we discovered them. However, often our audience is seeing these insights for the very first time. The more we can engage our audience in a way that feels as though we are discovering with them, the more enticing and interesting our data story becomes.
Work to identifying and eliminating bad habits from your data story presentations.

PRESENTING YOUR DATA STORY

Stopping bad habits in your data story presentations is a lifelong pursuit. You must continually work towards identifying and eliminating bad habits. A few bad habits to watch out for are speaking with demo language vs. telling your data story, distracting movements with your cursor vs. only making purposeful movements and surprising unplanned pauses in your presentation due to applications running in the background. Working to remove these bad habits and others allows your audience to stay focused and engaged in what you have to say.
Create positive moments that leave a lasting memory in your audience’s minds.

PRESENTING YOUR DATA STORY

Work to prepare and deliver a presentation that is positively remembered by your audience. The goal is to inspire your audience and provide them with valuable answers they didn’t have before. Plan for two or three impactful moments in your presentation. You know you have been successful when your audience shares and talks about the specific moments you created for them.
Bring emotion to your data story presentation.

The audience's response to your data story is directly tied to the emotion you bring as a presenter. The energy and emotion you bring are contagious. The audience will feel your emotion, whether or not they show it externally. Therefore, you want to narrate with emotion as much as possible. Doing so will draw your audience in and keep them interested in what you have to say.
Practice to reduce your nerves and fully engage your audience.

It is important to train for the data story presentations you are giving. The more you practice, the more natural your presentations become. Your willingness to discipline yourself and practice prior to presenting is directly tied to reducing your nerves, connecting with your audience and delivering a successful data story.
Review and implement data storytelling keys 1-19.

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Review and implement what you just learned in keys 1-19. We all enjoy reading new keys and techniques for increasing our knowledge, but rarely do we actually do the hard work to implement what we’ve learned into our daily routines and disciplines. Make a conscience effort to review and implement these data storytelling keys for success. As you do, you will see a signification increase in your ability to communicate clearly with data.
If your data stories are confusing, nobody will listen.

Data visualization expert Zack Mazzoncini is the founder of Data Story Academy™, Co-Founder of Seattle-based data and analytics firm Decisive Data and Co-Creator of the Art + Data initiative. Over the years Zack has helped hundreds of organizations and individuals develop data-driven cultures centered around data storytelling.

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WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

“As the data footprint continues to grow, it is becoming increasingly important to not only focus on insights, but rather focus on ensuring your insights drive action, through the experience you provide in telling meaningful, purposeful insights enriched stories, which is an expectation of stakeholders in the digital / post-digital age. Zack simplifies this, providing key principles and guidelines to deliver on the value of data driven story telling.”

Vinay Patel | Cloud Engineering Senior Consultant at Deloitte Consulting

"The Data Story Academy courses are a must for any student or business professional who uses data to make decisions and inspire action! My students are required to take the courses and apply the frameworks to prepare them for success in their careers."

Elissa Fink | 11-year CMO of Tableau Software | Board Member

"The Data Story Academy courses are wonderful material for any professional wanting to gain core skills when it comes to communicating with data. A key for businesses today is making sense of all the data at hand, and proper data visualization is one of the best ways to do just that. These courses help you learn how best to present your data, showing a huge amount of information in minimal space and making sure to get your point across. Highly recommended!"

Christina Stathopoulos | Data Expert at Google, Professor - IE Business School

"I had a chance to purchase the DSA courses. That was really great decision and experience! Zack provided very informed & inspiring content packed in three very well-organized courses. For sure I will be using the ideas in practice on a daily basis. Excellent structure, content and teacher. Thank you!"

Anna Dzikowska, PhD | Health Systems Researcher, NLP Quid Analysis

Hi Zack, I just watched your recordings and have to say they were fantastic . . . because how often do you actually find courses worth watching?! It’s very rare. The title of the email I sent to my boss and co-workers was “It’s like finding a unicorn!” Thank you for the valuable insights!

Deb Hawkins | Senior Analyst, ECommerce Data & Analytics
Zack graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in communications, rhetoric and public speaking. He is considered one of the most entertaining and informative speakers in the analytics industry. His audiences are inspired to find the most important stories in their data and lean into their creativity.

When Zack is not serving customers and coaching teams in the art of data storytelling, he can be found spending time with his wife and three boys or fly-fishing.

HOW TO IMPROVE DATA STORYTELLING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

1) JOIN THE ACADEMY: If your data stories are confusing, nobody will listen. Join Data Story Academy and learn how to tell impactful stories with your data. https://datastoryacademy.com

2) SCHEDULE AN EVENT: Inspiring and training your teams is a critical part of building culture and retaining top talent. Schedule Zack to speak at your next data analytics event. https://datastoryacademy.com/scheduleevent

3) HIRE A DATA EXPERT: Maximize your investment and increase the velocity of your data strategy. Hire a data expert to support your analytics solution. https://www.datastoryacademy.com/hireanexpert

Send me an email zack@datastoryacademy.com
Give me call 425-610-8647 or connect on LinkedIn
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