

AMA WHITEPAPER 2014:

What Gets Measured Gets...?

In February of 2014,

the Atlanta chapter of the American Marketing Association (AMA) convened its Executive Advisory Board (EAB) for a round-table discussion on the topic of dashboards.

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“What gets measured gets done” is how the maxim goes. But in this era of big data, that saying comes with a question mark. Companies collect far more data than they can or should act on, and the challenge is to identify which data merits attention and of that, what should drive decisions.

Dashboards have come into increasing use as a way to focus on the data that should drive what gets done.

This paper is about how some of Atlanta’s top companies are using dashboards. The topic seemed like a natural evolution from last year’s AMA Atlanta white paper on big data, since the consensus of the AMA EAB was that the focus needed to shift from the size of the data to the decisions it enables. And that’s what dashboards are all about—connecting data and decisions.

It’s hard to create a cut-off between dashboard use and management of metrics overall, as they are directly connected. To the degree possible, we have attempted to keep the focus on dashboards.

*Dashboards seem
to be like snowflakes –
no two alike.*

*There are similarities of
purpose and intent, but
very wide differences
in execution.*

What makes a dashboard valuable is focus and actionability.

Companies use dashboards to help them focus on the few “metrics that matter.” In the era of big data, filtering and focusing is all the more important and challenging. But it’s critical to make those choices and “put a stake in the ground,” as Tom Lowry, Director of Technology at Google, puts it.

Metrics that matter are universally defined as those tied to company objectives and the drivers of performance. They include internal measures, such as company performance (vs. goals and vs. competitors), and external measures, such as competitive activity and economic and social trends.

Daniel Goleman, author of the recent best seller, Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence, says that, “Directing attention toward where it needs to go is a primal task of leadership. Talent here lies in the ability to shift attention to the right place at the right time...”

Active utility is the other driver of dashboard value. Here, both content and form come into play. Strong dashboards clearly call out what needs to be questioned, delved into, fixed or taken to the next level. Ideally, they also point toward root causes so that analysis and resources can be focused as well.

Dashboards vary significantly on many fronts.

- The number of different dashboards in a company—from one to dozens
 - What's on them and how they're used
 - How much data is on the dashboards: from 5 items to 44+
 - The field of view: the mix of internal and external; behavioral and attitudinal; backward-looking report cards and future-facing predictions
 - The frequency of reviewing: from multiple times a day to monthly
 - The dashboard management within a company: from centralized to decentralized
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There are numerous challenges to creating and using dashboards. Issues include technology, people, structure and complexity of the business.

There are great success stories in using dashboards. We included three from three very different sizes and types of business: Dragon Army; the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau; and Chick-fil-A.

Dashboards are evolving quickly and, in a few years, may bear no resemblance to dashboards of the recent past.

What's next for dashboards? Some of our experts provide their predictions.

But first, a look at the past.

Dashboards: A Brief History

“Dashboard”?

“Dashboard” is one of those terms with only a loose connection to its original meaning. Several centuries ago, “dashboard” denoted the board in the front of a carriage that stopped mud from being splashed into the carriage. When cars came along, the name carried over to the instrument panel that occupied the same location in the vehicle. To some degree, business dashboards still fulfill the same function – they keep things from getting muddy.

The dashboard as we know it

As J. Walker Smith, CEO of The Futures Company, tells us, business dashboards have been around for a long time, and have been used in all parts of corporate organizations, and especially in manufacturing. Dashboards came of age with the development of grocery scanner systems in the 1980s. “It was digital scanner data that suddenly gave marketers a great ability to diagnose performance,” says Smith; “and that made dashboards a bigger part of marketing management.” True “analytics” were born when companies developed the ability to look at exception reports (vs. all the data). Companies could generate reports showing the individual markets where they had problems, and they could designate specific metrics as important to track just those metrics. This ability to select and filter enabled the creation of a dashboard.

The popularity of dashboards really took off in the mid-1990s with the introduction of the Balanced Scorecard, according to Ken Bernhardt, Regents Professor of Marketing Emeritus at Georgia State University’s Robinson College of Business. The Balanced Scorecard was developed to create a more holistic view of an organization’s performance that incorporated internal business practices and external outcomes like customer satisfaction, instead of just financial results.

Next came the Net Promoter Score (NPS), introduced by Fred Reicheld in 2003. NPS took the notion of focus to the nth level, promoting the score—the net difference between the percentage of your customers who would recommend your brand (“promoters”) minus the percentage who wouldn’t (“detractors”)—as “the one number you need to grow.” Many companies still use this metric, says Bernhardt, but they use it alongside other numbers. Also contributing to the rise in use of dashboards is the recent explosion of data and the rise in digital marketing.

“We have a better ability to model the flow of activities through the pipeline or purchase process,” says Smith.

“We’ve gotten better at deciding what we want our activities to do.”

Having that increased focus on a narrower set of metrics lends itself to the use of dashboards.

Marketers are late to the game on dashboards, according to Smith. Manufacturing plants, for example, have long looked at the key metrics of how their plants are running. And B2C marketers are later to the game than B2B marketers and sales organizations, who “look at pipeline flow and conversion metrics every step of the way, from phone call to meeting to pitch to sale.”

Dashboard Differences

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT DASHBOARDS

One Dashboard

Very few companies have one dashboard. All of the one-dashboard companies have fewer than 200 employees and have a very focused set of product offerings.

ControlScan, which offers payment security and compliance solutions to payment service providers and merchants, has one dashboard, according to Heather Foster, Vice President of Marketing. “We use it to understand how we’re doing. ‘Are we making progress?’ ‘Are we meeting goals?’ We’re a B2B organization, and we focus on lead conversions and the activities that are driving those leads. Our dashboard provides visibility to the organization as to what’s moving the needle.” Subsets of the dashboard are shared with different areas of the organization to keep them focused on the data most relevant to their spheres.

“We use it to understand how we’re doing. ‘Are we making progress?’ ‘Are we meeting goals?’

The Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau also has one dashboard (see page 18 for the full story), and the organization also creates subsets for different departments to provide additional focus on function-specific issues.

Multiple Dashboards

Though the majority of companies represented by AMA’s EAB have multiple dashboards representing different functions and lines of business, most echoed a desire to find a means to consolidate the data.

Cox Communications has opted for multiple dashboards. “We have a large number of dashboards,” says Kirk Gripenstraw, Executive Director of Marketing Analytics at Cox. “We have dashboards at the enterprise level that help us understand how we are doing from a macro perspective. Additionally, most departments have their own set of custom dashboards that tend to be more granular in nature and that measure the things that are most important to that department’s function. Some groups, like Marketing and Customer Experience, are working to develop more holistic dashboards across departments, but we haven’t solved for a single dashboard that the whole organization can use that meets every need of every individual.” Why?

For one, says Gripenstraw, each department frequently wants access to data that may be very detailed and granular for their own use, but that may not be relevant or useful for the organization as a whole. But it’s not just about optimal tailoring of data; there are actually risks to sharing some data outside the department that generates and uses it. “Different kinds of data may sometimes require specific expertise to analyze accurately,” says Gripenstraw.

Dashboard Differences

“For example, perhaps sales are down in a certain area, but perhaps this was due to a severe weather event rather than due to a marketing program. We have learned the importance of analyzing data with the proper context and background information so that accurate conclusions can be drawn.” So, for now, multiple dashboards are the solution for Cox.

As you would imagine, The Coca-Cola Company, with its 500-plus brands sold in over 200 countries, has a hard time putting all its “metrics that matter” on a single dashboard. Each brand has a dashboard, each country has a dashboard, and many functions have their own dashboards. Marketing has several. According to Rebecca Messina, Vice President of Global Marketing Capability & Integration at The Coca-Cola Company, there’s a move toward more cross-functional dashboards that service the business as a whole. “They’re more objective; there’s less duplication, and they can lead to richer insights,” says Messina.

There are no apparent right or wrong answers, but rather trade-offs to having one or multiple dashboards. Multiple dashboards meet the specific needs of individual groups, says Gripenstraw, but they may not help generate insights about how to optimize outcomes for the enterprise as a whole. Companies that use multiple dashboards tend to use multiple types of dashboards as well. Again, there are pros and cons. “Different dashboards are good at different things,” explains Gripenstraw.

“Some can be developed in a highly automated fashion, others enable slice-and-dice capability, while others are stronger at data visualization.”

However, a proliferation of technologies means a proliferation of experts needed for the development and measurement of each one. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

WHAT’S ON YOUR DASHBOARD AND HOW IS IT USED?

While there is general agreement that the purpose of dashboards is to create focus, there are a number of companies that ignore that principle. One executive reported that a department in his company had a 44 page ‘dashboard.’ “The word ‘dashboard’ is used freely,” he said, “As long as someone has a picture of a speedometer with red, yellow and green, they call it a dashboard.” Evidently, saying you have a dashboard is a must, even if it’s designed in a way that defeats its main purpose.

Companies large and small use their dashboards to reflect both internal and external conditions, behavioral and attitudinal measures, and both past results and future projections.

Dashboard Differences

WHAT'S ON YOUR DASHBOARD AND HOW IS IT USED?

IBM is an example of a company that looks at all the above. The IBM team reviews hard numbers like client transactions and also estimates of future quarter pipeline build and projected market share (as a measure of IBM's portion of estimated eligible customer spending). They look at quantitative data on customer loyalty but also qualitative measures of brand health (which they define in terms of the strength of customer relationships).

The Coca-Cola Company reads both behavioral and sentiment data, as both a report card and a projection of the future. At Coca-Cola's new Listening Centers, where social media is monitored in real time in a mission-control-like setting, teams of people around the globe monitor and participate in the conversations around the company's brands. These centers keep a finger on the pulse of global sentiment. "Sentiment is important to Coke. It's an indication of things to come," says Messina. "We monitor what's topical and what issues are trending. These are our forward-looking measures." People in the organization can log in at any time to view the multiple feeds. "People in marketing are looking at this constantly," says Messina.

"We communicate trends to our supply chains – things like the population shifts toward cities or preference for small store formats or consumption of artificial sweeteners." These are critical pieces of information for projecting resource needs.

"The ability to analyze the external environment is going to be a real point of differentiation from one company to another."

***- Tom Davenport,
Distinguished
Professor in
Management
and Information
Technology at
Babson College***

Georgia-Pacific also uses its dashboard data to look ahead. Douwe Bergsma, Chief Marketing Officer of Georgia-Pacific Consumer Business, talks about the company's "foresight scorecards" that create a picture of demographic and behavioral shifts affecting the purchase of its products. One of their main products is toilet paper, and they monitor changes in "toilet behavior" as a way to project demand and provide direction to product development and manufacturing. A preference for improved toilet paper quality results in the use of fewer sheets per "occasion." Health factors, like obesity, can also affect toilet behavior. "Predicting how consumers of the future will behave also tells us what ranges of production capacity to consider," says Bergsma,

Dashboard Differences

WHAT'S ON YOUR DASHBOARD AND HOW IS IT USED?

Cox Communications also keeps macro trends in its sightline in order to project future business. “We have discovered that certain macro-economic data are leading indicators of how our business may perform in the future. For example, if the unemployment rate is increasing, we can anticipate higher non-pay rates. Increased housing starts means new homes to sell to,” says Gripenstraw. At Dragon Army, Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cox and ControlScan, competitors and market changes are in their fields of view, if not all on the dashboard. “Marketplace changes and market trends are external to the dashboard,” says Foster, “but still monitored. We identify them mainly in our monthly financial reviews, and competitive activity is reflected in the pricing compression measures in our dashboard.”

Companies vary greatly in how frequently they consult their dashboards, from monthly to weekly to daily. Gripenstraw best expressed the pros and cons of each. “We have an amazing array of daily reports, and there are important things like hold times for customer service that we need to jump on quickly,” he says. “But for other metrics, if we analyze too frequently, the risk is missing the forest for the trees. When you look at some numbers too frequently, you can miss macro trends. You can over-react to things that are just a short-term blip. If short-term demand looks light, you may be too aggressive in taking corrective action, but the data point itself may have been a short-term blip and you risk being sub-optimal by reacting too quickly. We have made great progress in developing the right cadences for data review, and determining what kinds of metrics we should be looking at either more or less frequently.” The issue of frequency of viewing, as Gripenstraw and others pointed out, is closely tied to decisions about actionability. Merely seeing the numbers can create pressure to respond immediately

Cox has discovered how to deploy dashboards as essentially an “early warning system” to flag a potential metric or issue that may (or may not) warrant further attention.

A wise caution on this danger of being reactive to data comes from Tom Davenport, the President’s Distinguished Professor in Management and Information Technology at Babson College, “...Technology allows (companies) to monitor the data as it comes in, and they say, ‘Oh, look—opinion is up, it’s down, it’s up, it’s down.’ But they don’t really know what to do with the results, and they never set up any criteria for when and how they should take action.” Setting up “cadences” of reviewing key metrics, as Cox is doing, and also criteria for actionability are important guardrails as companies have more access to streaming data.

Dashboard Differences

MANAGEMENT OF ANALYTICS

For most companies, the status quo is managing data analytics within the departments that generate and use the data. Other companies are centralizing data analytics. EAB members cited a variety of pros and cons to each.

Having each department generate and manage its own data keeps a close connection between insights and decision-making. Cox is one of the companies that generally manages reporting in a decentralized fashion. One important reason, according to Gripenstraw, is that each department may have its own objectives and requirements for data, in terms of granularity, availability, KPI's, etc. "We do have some dashboards that are intended to be used across the enterprise, but frequently each department requires more granular and customized information. For example, most groups just need to understand how total customer demand looks, whereas Marketing and Sales will want to drill down into customer demand from a very detailed perspective." The risk of centralizing is that it may become more difficult to leverage the domain expertise within each functional area that may be needed to interpret specific data, and it may not answer the very specific questions that individual departments need answered for their particular function."

There was a lot of conversation about pulling data analysis out of the departments that are evaluated based on the results. Why? As Carol Godfrey, Vice President of Marketing and Product Development at Southwire put it, "Data can get hijacked by people in the organization to meet operational demands. You have to stay open to insights but also watch out for manipulation." There's no more important factor in metrics than credibility. Data that isn't trusted isn't used. So the issue of who generates, analyzes and selects data for distribution is important, as it affects credibility.

At ControlScan, sales, marketing, development and support all provide the needed data for their respective departments, but finance takes the lead in defining the metrics to view at monthly meetings.

Dashboard Differences

MANAGEMENT OF ANALYTICS

Georgia-Pacific's Consumer Business has a separate insights organization to "maintain integrity" in the data gathering, analysis and reporting. The VP of Insights reports to the CMO. At the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, the dashboard is generated by a group completely independent from the marketing function, and at The Coca-Cola Company, business insights is in the process of moving out of marketing.

As Gripenstraw pointed out, centralizing data outside the departments that are judged by it does not necessarily eliminate the issue of bias. "A centralized business intelligence group does not automatically become more independent than one that rolls up through business departments."

Some challenges

TECHNOLOGY

Technological issues can create a strong challenge to creating dashboards. Multiple databases and legacy systems plague companies large and small. For Southwire, it's the legacy systems from a business it purchased years before. For Cox, The Coca-Cola Company and Georgia-Pacific, it's the constant stream of new data sets coming on board and the challenges of integrating the new data with the old. Sometimes, the new data is incompatible with the old systems. As Rebecca Messina describes it, the complexity of the marketing mix has created an explosion in the types of data coming in, which have vastly outgrown the "buckets" to sort them into. "There are six buckets for two thousand data points. The general ledger has not kept up," says Messina.

PEOPLE

There are two kinds of people issues that complicate the creation and active use of dashboards. One is the range of attitudes toward data within organizations. (The exceptions are tech start-ups staffed wholly by digital natives.) Chick-fil-A found pockets of people who are hungry for data in their store operators; William Pate spent six years converting his organization to day-to-day data users. As Douwe Bergsma put it, "Many organizations' sophistication has not kept up with the technology and the data.

Organizations need to be reinvented around the insights supported by the data." But the bigger issue that's most talked about is the dearth of data analysts who can "turn data into insights into action," as Bergsma puts it.

"Few people have the skill set to do this." And when you do find them, says Carol Godfrey, it's hard to keep them. "They want to work on the big cool stuff. And if they're really good, they get scooped up to run a business."

Some challenges

STRUCTURE

Organizational issues also can compromise companies' ability to extract actionable metrics. One problem is the many silos that data can live in and never be integrated.

Another is organizational complexity. Ken Bernhardt talks about focusing on "what's causing red and not what's red" but sometimes those causal relationships are hard to tease out. When there are hundreds of types of consumer touchpoints or a blurring of lines among channels, it's more challenging to identify root causes or drivers. "Amazon is both a media ecommerce provider and a retailer," says Bergsma. "And many people search online and buy in-store. This blurs the lines between sales and marketing expenditures". This blurring of lines makes it hard to assess what's attributable to marketing vs. sales effectiveness, and confounds the search for the root cause.

Some companies do look at their dashboards to reveal root causes; but others, like Cox, see the limitations in the role of dashboards. "We see the role of the dashboard as answering the question of 'what' is happening—but not the 'why,'" says Gripenstraw. "The ladder generally requires deeper analytics."

Stories of dashboards in action

Here are three stories of EAB member companies and how they have put dashboards to active use in their companies.

Dragon Army – Game On

Dragon Army is a newly formed mobile game studio, founded by Jeff Hilimire, a serial entrepreneur and charter tenant of the Atlanta Tech Village. As a tech start-up, Dragon Army has significant advantages in both creating and maximizing company-wide use of a dashboard:

- Simple business model and only one product
- Small group of employees who are all digital natives and highly tech-savvy
- No legacy databases
- Starting the habit of using the dashboard from the outset

Purpose

“A good dashboard needs to translate to the goals of the company. You’re on a journey and the dashboard should tell you where you are on the journey,” says Jeff Hilimire.

“Our dashboard helps my team understand the important metrics and it keeps people focused on the important things. Everyone is aware of where we stand, how we’re performing against plan, and where we’re behind or exceeding plan. The dashboard keeps people accountable.”

Stories of dashboards in action

Form & content

Dragon Army uses Geckoboard for their dashboard and has nine sets of metrics, including five types of data.

“We track things like 5 star reviews, total downloads, the number of people playing right now and the percent of people converting to in-app purchases. We can also look at a map of where people playing the game at any given moment and the number of players by country,” says Hilimire.

“For an app company, Apple’s iTunes app store is a dashboard,” he says. “We can look at our ranking in the app store in each category (e.g., arcade games, top grossing games, and number of reviews by category).

Who generates, who uses & how often?

Hilimire works with his lead developer to determine what goes on the dashboard and to what databases the dashboard connects (Dragon Army’s is connected to its Salesforce database).

Dragon Army’s dashboard is projected onto a wall of the office so employees can look at it every day. “We talk about it in meetings. Everyone gets it,” says Hilimire. “I like [having the] ability to ask anyone in [the] company how many downloads we have.”

Hilimire looks at company sales on a daily basis and at retention of games on a weekly basis, but with a real-time, streaming dashboard, viewing intervals are moot. As Hilimire says, “time periods are a relic of the pre-digital era. Information streams constantly. I get the data from widgets on my phone to see how many people reading which of my blog posts,” he says.

The real-time accessibility is important to Dragon Army. “It could happen that we have to jump on something.”

Stories of dashboards in action

Actionability

Feedback on the games can't help Hilimire make course corrections for current games. "The game is out there," he says. But feedback does tell them if they should turn up or down the marketing dial on a given game. "If lots of people are giving 5 star ratings, that says get this game into more people's hands."

Most importantly, data helps him assess what to do for future games. If a game is successful, they start working on a sequel or do more of same genre. If they invest in cool graphics and they don't translate to downloads, they know to take a different tack in the next game.

External data like the iTunes app store data and trends are also a source of data to determine future direction. "We look at what's hot on the app store and what themes are popular—e.g., match or puzzle games. We look at what's oversaturated. We keep an eye on movies and pop culture, and we also look anecdotally at trends like vampires and zombies."

Dragon Army's first game, Robots Love Ice Cream, is averaging 4 ½ stars in its iTunes app store ratings, and climbing the charts. Stay tuned for a sequel.

Stories of dashboards in action

Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau – Counting Heads in Beds

Purpose

“I’m very metrics oriented,” says William Pate. Pate is an early adopter of metrics in marketing, starting 25 years ago in his days at MCI and honed during his 11 years as CMO of Bell South.

When Pate arrived at the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) nearly six years ago, there was not much use of metrics.

“Most people think about metrics as a way for people to take money away from you at the end of the year,” he said. “I had to convince them that data helps them understand what’s happening in the business. We can identify any negative signs and jump in and change the trajectory before hitting any downward spirals.”

“One of the mistakes people make,” says Pate, “is thinking that if you measure one thing you should measure a hundred things. We keep our dashboard simple. You can scan it in two minutes, and it tells you about the major drivers in each part of the business. It tells leadership what to pay attention to. We use color coding to show how the numbers should be interpreted: green is 95%-plus of goal; yellow is 85-95%; red is below 85%. Our board is trained to look for red. They know where to be asking questions.”

Stories of dashboards in action

Form & content

The mission of the ACVB is to stimulate tourism and bring convention business to Atlanta through their sales and marketing programs.

The metrics ACVB monitors are straightforward and focused: they look at sales (number of room nights) city-wide, through 8 years out (their planning horizon). They look at sales tax revenue and corporate revenue from things like co-op programs (with hotels or local attractions, for example). ACVB is a dues organization, so they also measure membership—both new members and retention.

Market share is another key metric on ACVB's dashboard. "The pie is not stagnant – it's growing. If you're not taking share while the pie is growing, you could be losing. We look at top 15 and top 25 markets to see who's taking share."

Who generates, who uses & how often?

ACVB's dashboard is created by an analytics team who work in the administrative area with finance and HR. They do not report into the businesses. They collect both the internal and third party metrics.

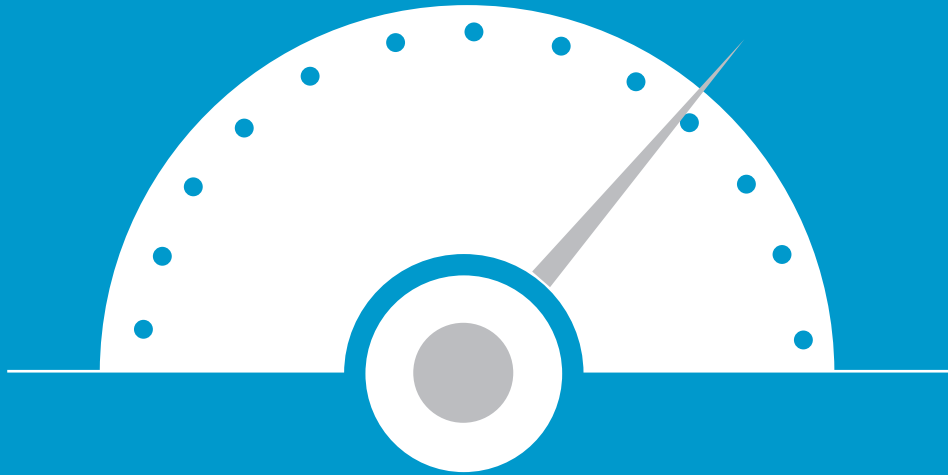
Pate's staff looks at a dashboard of about eight metrics on a monthly basis. Each of his direct reports has another set of metrics that are a deeper dive below the main eight numbers; they include things like web hits and social media interactions. Pate reviews these metrics quarterly. He advises his staff that, "five numbers is better than twenty".

Actionability

"We look at the individual numbers but also the trends. If there are three data points in the wrong direction, then I meet with my staff to dig in and find out why and what to do," says Pate.

the new number should be the new floor.

***“We constantly move up,”
says Pate.***



They also set a goal of 20 city-wide conventions a year, up from 15 when Pate arrived. “We’ve been meeting that every year since 2010, so we’re moving it up to 23.”

Pate is now a dashboard evangelist. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce has adopted ACVB’s dashboard, and Pate has created a dashboard for Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, whose marketing committee he chairs.

Stories of dashboards in action

Chick-fil-A – Feed the Hungry

Purpose

Dashboards are not complicated at Chick-fil-A. “We’re a privately held company in a business that’s not super complicated. We serve customers. Our mission is to be remarkable, and we measure ourselves against that,” says Jon Bridges.

Chick-fil-A’s big success story in dashboards, according to Bridges, is the operator scorecard. It’s a recipe for success:

- 1.** Take a group within the company that’s hungry for data. As Bridges advises, “focus on bringing data to willing customers.” Chick-fil-A’s operators came forward and asked for data to help them improve their stores.
- 2.** Find metrics people are hungry for. Pick a few things—no more than five to seven things—that are connected to your highest-impact recurring decisions. For operators, it’s decisions that affect customer experience.
- 3.** Validate the connection between the dashboard metrics and sales. Chick-fil-A can show operators the correlation between numbers on customer experience and store sales.
- 4.** Make it “Apple-simple,” as Bridges puts it. And make it accessible everywhere, including mobile.

Chick-fil-A’s operator scorecard equips operators with tools to keep a finger on the pulse of customer experience. It shows them customer feedback and provides operational assessment—diagnostics that help them improve their business—all in one place. It points to improvements like “make your French fries crispier” or “clean your restrooms more thoroughly” that are proven to improve customer experience and sales in their stores.

Stories of dashboards in action

Form & content

Chick-fil-A's first dashboard—its corporate scorecard—was developed based on Kaplan's Balanced Scorecard. That scorecard includes same-store sales growth, operator income growth (tied to profits), customer satisfaction (measured by a modified Net Promoter Score), team member retention, industry ranking, and "remarkable scores" —based on their brand performance monitor.

Bridges looks on a daily basis at sales (topline and same-store), profit, customer experience and chicken prices. He gets alerts on operator excellence scores, customer experience and profit gap/opportunity.

Who generates, who uses & how often?

Chick-fil-A's scorecards are created by their Business Analytics group in partnership with Marketing, Operations and Quality Improvement. The analytics group reports to the CFO and always has, according to Bridges.

There's a strong partnership between Marketing and the Business Analytics group. "We use about one third of their resources – we have lots of projects going with them. They are partners in assessing new products," says Bridges.

Actionability

The operator scorecard gets a lot of use. "The customer experience tool we created for them, which lives on our intranet, averages two hits per day, per store. It's one of the most used features on the intranet."

Observations

What's clear about the future of dashboards?

- The purposes of having a dashboard—focus and better decision-making—are not being well fulfilled by most dashboards. Some lack any focus; some create too narrow a focus; some don't provide clear direction for decision-making; some contain data that is not universally trusted.
- Companies with complex businesses that can't crystallize their data into a universal set of "metrics that matter" still need to find a way to focus their people on both the big picture and the granular details that can lead to deeper insights about their specific customers and markets. If companies are becoming more data-driven, they need to make sure data doesn't drive them into tunnel vision.
- The question of who in the company manages and controls data and dashboards is a strategic one, related to the above. Dashboards have no value if the metrics that (should) matter aren't credible or aren't interpretable outside the department that generated them. Again, if companies are becoming more data driven, they need to create company standards for the data that drives them.
- Dashboards can help focus companies on the metrics that matter, but even the clearest red or green lights on the dashboard don't provide "the answers," just guidance. To act or not to act, how to act, when to act—this "last mile" between data and decisions still has to be covered by judgment. So companies can't forget that they still need to help develop employees' judgment along with their analytical skills.
- Dashboard leaders can help educate their teams by driving the conversations around data, and creating shared understanding, pointing to clear actions, accountabilities and next steps.

The future of dashboards

What does the future look like for dashboards? As with all things digital and data-related, the speed of change is accelerating and the next five years will likely bring more changes than the past 25 years.

Content

Per Walker Smith, the EAB member who looks into the future for a living:

- We will be tracking more data on behavior, much of it from “Passive Digital.” Consumers will be required to do less for us to gather information about them.
- We will be looking more at geo location (cell phones).
- There will be more monitoring of your physical state (wearable fitness).
- Data will be used to anticipate purchase intent, and this will trigger the logistical process sooner. Going back to predicting what consumers will do and marketers will be taking back control of the marketing process.

Tools

There will be more use of dashboard tools. There are already dozens of dashboard tools that have appeared on the market in the last few years –Domo, Tableau, Klipfolio, RecordedFuture, Geckboard, PureShare—and no doubt many more to come.

Usage

One thing that’s certain is that data will be playing a more central role across the company, not just in marketing. “Data is more appreciated more than ever. Everyone wants more of it,” says Gripenstraw.

“Analytics is on the move at Coke,” says Rebecca Messina. The most successful business units use analytics as part of their daily decision-making. Instead of taking actions and analyzing afterwards, they are now asking the question, ‘What does the data say?’ before making decisions. It’s like having another person at the table,” says Messina. “Someone whose perspective I have to have.”

Data will be managed differently, according to a McKinsey Quarterly article by Brad Brown, David Court and Tim McGuire. “Companies will move to centers of excellence,” which will be run by data scientists, business specialists and tool developers. They will be able to develop and deploy analytics rapidly and to “boost the impact” of the hard-to-find talent in the area of data translation.

The future of dashboards

As a final note, here is a look outside the EAB to a company that is taking dashboards to a new level. Procter & Gamble has created “decision cockpits.” The goal, says Filippo Passerini, P&G’s Business Services Group President and CIO, is to help employees understand quickly what’s going on in the business and spend less time talking about the data and more time determining ways to address the problems and opportunities that the data reveals.

P&G’s “decision cockpits” reside in “collaborative conference rooms” around the globe where dashboard data is displayed on projection screens. P&G executives around the world meet weekly to review the latest results and forecasts. Decision cockpits are used by more than 60,000 employees worldwide, and reportedly, P&G has been able to eliminate 80% of its business intelligence reports. “What’s different now versus what we did three years ago is that all this data is coming together in the context of the business discussion,” Passerini says.

“We make better decisions faster in every single business review we do.”

Shared vision of the “truth,” wide usage within the company, real-time actionability and 80% fewer reports—is this dashboard nirvana?



prepared by:



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