Sharing your Story using a Dashboard

Description:

This tool provides tips and the steps to creating a dashboard and shares a sample dashboard.

How it can be used:

Organizations need to share information on their progress with their community and with other stakeholders. How this is done can make the difference between a confusing collection of information and a clear story supported by data. Consider using a dashboard to illustrate your progress on key performance indicators within your organization's programs and services.

Every community and organization needs to tell their stories. What they are accomplishing. Where they struggle. What matters.

Sometimes data are used to share this information, however, that can be dry and not accessible to everyone. An effective way of telling your organization's story is by using a dashboard.

Dashboards (not the ones on cars) are used to present key data in a clear, concise and visual way. An effective dashboard can tell a story about how your organization is making a difference.

Benefits of using a dashboard

- Better communication – A dashboard serves as a highly efficient and effective form of communication because it presents information that stakeholders might have difficulty finding or understanding.
- Better accountability and transparency – Through using a dashboard, stakeholders can more easily find meaning and relevance in the "sea" of data.
- Demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness – Dashboards allows for comparison across different types of data and across time.

Steps for creating a dashboard

1. Start with your goals. Your organization has strategic goals or annual goals or targets. This is what you will be reporting on with the dashboard. For example, if one of your annual goals is related to increasing the number of children immunized according to provincial schedules, then your dashboard can show your progress to date.
2. Ensure you have relevant performance indicators for each of your goals. Effective performance indicators will demonstrate how you are progressing toward achieving your goals. They have to be measurable and trackable so you can assess and report on your progress. An example of an

effective performance indicator "*% of children immunized according to the provincial schedules*". An example of an ineffective performance indicator is "*better immunization*".

3. Track your data according to your performance indicators. Presuming you have creating effective performance indicators that are measuring your performance in specific areas, you will have data that you can illustrate using a dashboard.

4. Determine the best way to illustrate your results. Is it a graph? A pie chart? Or another visual? Your dashboard will report back on a few performance indicators, not all of them. Decide which ones are most important for your organization to share or for your community to hear.

5. Transfer the data on your performance indicators to the visual formats that you've decided upon. Maintain a similar format so the community recognizes your "brand".

6. **Share your dashboards regularly to demonstrate accountability and transparency.**

Tips for creating a dashboard

- Use only the details or data that matter – Information overload is a common pitfall so avoid trying to include as much data as possible.

- Establish context - Context can help establish a relationship between your data and your community. Once your community becomes interested and invested in your data, they may be keen to participate in those activities that help improve your performance indicators.

- Illustrate your data – Spice up the dashboard with colorful charts and graphs, which offer easier visualization and better comprehension. You can completely customize the colours, background, and design of your dashboard[1]. However, you want to be careful about how you use them. When people see data, they can quickly become overwhelmed, even if the numbers are presented in a pie chart or bar graph. Some key factors to consider:
    - Use gentle and contrasting colors but avoid overly bright colors.
    - Explain what each of the colours mean.
    - Write your text in a complementary color that is easy to read. Remember that a lovely soft grey looks pretty on a page but may be hard for seniors to read. Make sure text and numbers are written large enough to read.
    - Don't use too many colours or designs.
    - Keep your visuals clean (no beveled edges or fancy fonts) and keep them flowing from left to right like reading a book.
    - Don't use too many illustrations as this might cause information overload, which defeats the purpose of having a dashboard.

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[1] There are several software programs that you can use to create your organization's dashboards. Some are free, some have a nominal charge.

Sample Dashboard

The dashboard below includes a number of different visuals you could use to illustrate your data. You may find that two to four diagrams are easier to format and more effective at getting your message across.