

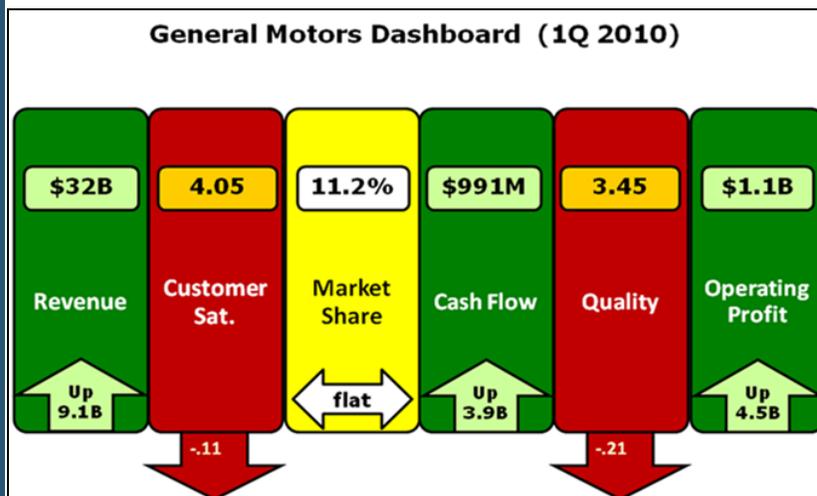
How Much is a Picture Worth? (Part II)

June 2010 newsletter

Last month we wrote about how to communicate data so that stakeholders can easily apply what they have learned. This month we will focus on one application – dashboards – that provide updated metrics to management on what is critical to the success of their business.

The metaphor of a dashboard is self-explanatory; whether you are driving an automobile, piloting an aircraft or flying the space shuttle, it is important to keep your eyes (and your focus) on the landscape in front of you, while having a wide array of data to guide decision-making.

First you must define what is important to your business. The new Chairman and CEO of General Motors, Ed Whitacre, has cut the number of metrics that his management team must to follow to only six: revenue, customer satisfaction, market share, cash flow, quality and operating profit. Here is a mock-up of what his dashboard might look like:



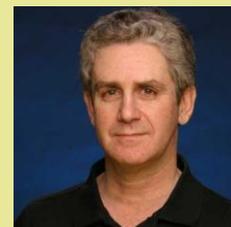
This is a monthly newsletter from Prell Organization.

Prell Organization is a marketing research firm that uses qualitative and quantitative methods to help our clients and their agencies see their brands more clearly.

Brand Clarity is a process by which consumers reveal the essence of a brand to make sure that the products and services being offered are closely aligned to their needs.

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This dashboard, which was created in PowerPoint, is much easier to understand than the rows and columns of numbers that were the standard a generation ago. Now we have a simple way to show information that makes understanding more intuitive and hence more powerful.

But this approach has limitations: the data is static. There are some platforms (like Tableau), that allow data to be manipulated by the user dynamically, by clicking on certain areas to reveal more data. This feature allows the overall dashboard graphic to remain clean and thus easier to understand, while also allowing users to delve as deeply into the data as they want.

While each business will need to define and regularly track different metrics, the clarity and focus that dashboards bring to organizational decision-making can be priceless.

Quote of the day:

"Graphics are instruments for reasoning about quantitative information."

Edward R. Tufte
