

# Data Storytelling: Starting with a Fairytale Ending

Your Guide to Using Data to Craft  
Compelling Stories that Resonate  
with your Target Audience

By Victoria Stapleton, Vice President, Digital Analytics



## Key Elements of effective data storytelling

### INSIDE:

- Know Your Audience: Tailor your data story to resonate with your readers.
- Define Your Goal: Set clear objectives to guide your narrative.
- Quality Data Matters: Build trust with reliable data sources.
- Visuals That Speak: Enhance your story with strategic visuals.
- Streamline Your Message: Keep your narrative focused and effective.
- Bring It All Together: Use a structured approach to influence your audience.

# Data Storytelling: Starting with a Fairytale Ending

Data storytelling seems simple enough. After all, humans are wired to tell and listen to stories starting from our first fairytales all the way to Shakespeare. Stories are one of the most powerful tools we have to understand and simplify complex experiences<sup>(1)</sup>. We're surrounded by stories every day of the same format: a beginning, middle, and end with waves of rising and falling action. If we all know this almost intuitively, then using data to tell a story can't be that hard, can it? Well, there are some key differences to ensure you are communicating your message effectively. Let's follow the story pattern and start at the beginning!

## The Beginning: The Audience

Typically, when you think of a story you might start with the protagonist - their characteristics and the conflicts they'll endure, their interactions with other characters perhaps. Of course, this is important, but the most important person in your data story is not going to be in the narrative directly. The most important people are your readers – your story exists solely for them. Knowing your audience and understanding what they care about is exactly where you need to start. For example, you might ask yourself who comprises your audience. Is it executives, analysts, your customers, the public, or some other group entirely? Each will have their own needs in terms of presentation style, granularity, and narration to ensure that your story is understood. You want your story to have an influence on your reader, so you will need to know what they want!



As an example, if you are designing a presentation for your marketing performance for a team of executives, they will not care about individual tactics or small changes you made to the campaign – they will only care about the impact. How much revenue have you delivered? What was the impact on the customer's journey? For a team of analysts, you will need to dive much deeper into your tactics, your results, and certainly more data points that you would include in the executive version.

### Let's look at an example:

#### Executive Example

This campaign delivered \$15K in incremental revenue due to its focus on repeat sales from our most loyal customers.

#### Analyst Example

This campaign drove \$15K in incremental revenue with a ROAS of \$12.54 due to its focus on customers with registered accounts who had also visited the Sale section of the site. The mix of Pardot drip campaigns and YouTube ads increased repeat sales over the last 30 days.

It's immediately clear in the examples above that we are speaking to two different audiences with completely different needs from campaign reporting. Your audience, and the impact you want to have on them, should dictate how you structure everything in the analysis.

## The Middle: The Impact

Every story is meant to impact the reader in some way. It's not always a strong call to action, but perhaps the author wants the reader to think, or feel, or to provide a new point of view. Think about how you want your reader to react.

If you could choose a verb, and convey more action and energy, what would it be? Do you want this person to reconsider, to celebrate, to support, to invest, to implement? Defining the 'verb' of the story will help you to define the most important question in data storytelling – the “so what?”

Determining your goal for the reader from the start ensures that you incorporate the right data points, narrative, and context from the start.

For example, if you run an A/B test on your website to trial Klarna and you discover that your conversion rate doesn't improve for customers who are offered this option, what would you like to see happen? Should you expand the partnership, or perhaps try another vendor? Or, should you abandon this idea entirely? Defining the answer to this question will drive the narrative.

## The End: The Story

Now that you know your audience and the impact you wish to have, it's time to write your story! There are a few key elements to writing a compelling story:

- 1. Leverage reliable, complete data:** As data will be the building blocks of your story, ensure that you are leveraging the highest quality data sources that you can.
- 2. Use effective visuals:** Although we may have long outgrown storybooks, leveraging visuals to tell your data story should certainly not be discounted! Using an effective visual is an excellent way to highlight your key points by using color, positioning, labels, and choice of chart strategically. Of course, data visualization is a topic in and of itself, but knowing a few key principles should help you.
- 3. Edit ruthlessly:** When reviewing your story, there is a famous Coco Chanel quote you should keep in mind: “Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take one thing off.” You always need less than you think. Remaining laser focused on the message you want to impart will help you use text, data points, and visuals more strategically. If something isn't serving your message to your audience, it can fall to the cutting room floor.

## The Epilogue: Tying it All Together

Telling effective data stories is critical to influencing your audience. The framework above will help you influence your audience to see your point of view and act upon your recommendations. And who knows, your audience might just deliver your fairytale ending.

By mastering the art of data storytelling, you can transform complex data into compelling narratives that resonate with your audience and drive meaningful action. Whether you're aiming to influence executives, engage analysts, or connect with customers, starting with a clear outcome and working backward ensures your story is both impactful and memorable. Ready to elevate your data storytelling? Reach out to Acronym for expert guidance and support in crafting data-driven stories that deliver results.

CONTACT US TODAY!

#### Sources:

(1) [Why data storytelling is so important—and why we're so bad at it | Deloitte Insights](#)

