



CLOUD REALITIES

CR072

The art of data visualisation
with Krishnan Venkata,
LatentView Analytics

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[00:00:00] That's my kids coming home. My apologies Krishnan. We've both been completely intervened on by our children in this. Have you told your kids they don't have to ask permission to re enter the house, that they live there and they're alright to come in Dave? I think that's maybe a fatherly bit of information.

I lock the doors when they leave, Rob. You don't let them back in. No, you're sleeping in the garden tonight. Welcome to Cloud Realities, a conversation show exploring the practical and exciting alternate realities that can be unleashed through cloud driven transformation. I'm David Chapman and I'm Rob Kernahan and this week we are going to be talking about data and we talked about data quite a lot on the show, but this time we're going to take it from a slightly different perspective, which is what is the best way to visualize data?

Data to help drive action and help drive decisions. [00:01:00] But before we get to that, Rob and I had been doing some work on, on the notion of visualization. And there was one time I walked into the office and Rob who had got very carried away with this idea had lent a lot of canvases. Against the office wall and was walking around daubing paint onto these canvases.

And it was causing a great deal of confusion and mess, I hasten to say, Rob, and you're the sort of guy who would normally expect to keep offices in decent condition for some reason. In your pursuit of visualization, you were just throwing oil paint around all over the place. I was, uh, yeah, creativity got the better of me, Dave.

I was trying all the different combinations to see which worked best of, of, you know, what does a good visualization look like? I saw the facilities team that run the building, they were having to sort of mobilize squads of cleaners and robbers holding them all back. But anyway, we'll get onto visualization a bit later.

The next great work of art. Yes, what else is confusing [00:02:00] you this week? So apart from color on canvas, um, have you heard Dave of the great unbossing? Now I've got to be careful how I answer this question. It feels well, so it's a, it's a trait that has started in America and it's basically this bit of economic headwinds.

We're looking at our company. We're just going to basically sack middle management. You know, massive clear out of teams, right? So it's called the Great On Bossing, and there are two sides to the story of the Great on Bossing and I'm I'm getting more and more confused about it. Of course, we saw what happened.

I thought you were talking about embossing. No, no, it was very, very different. This is a visualizations. No, I said it's a different thing. It's a different thing. Got it's the so you got the one side, which is have we built organizations over many years, incredibly inefficient, and that's just layers and layers and layers and it stops empowerment.

And it stops the organization being agile and effective. So there's a, there's an argument to say you create a [00:03:00] completely flat structure. You empower your troops and off you go. And empowerment's a really important thing in organizations. And there's a lot to be said for that. And I would always advocate for empowered personnel to be able to do their job.

However there is a other side to the great unboxing, which is you are removing a conduit of interaction for the person in the workforce and through that removal of interaction, you're starving them of leadership because there's fewer bosses making decisions. Therefore, you've got far less time with them and things like mentoring and seeing how others approach their work and the ability to learn as you go is quite affected.

And actually, some studies are starting to say it massively reduces morale in organizations because you're just going back to startup culture and you're getting burnout situations



where people feel like they're running up the hill all the time with limited support. Now, if you have a hugely resilient workforce, then maybe that's the right thing.

But in very large organizations, workforces are very diverse and need lots of support in different directions. So you've got this. Is it just providing massive [00:04:00] efficiency and performance? But actually, on the flip side, is it creating a workforce that is, um, basically. Um, sad and not enjoying their work anymore.

And so I can't work out from which side it's going to fall. Do we actually need more interaction to make sure the human touch is still there in your organization or actually is it a completely flat management structure is the future we'll work it all out. And that'll be the future of, uh, what's going to happen.

And I'm confused. Isn't there a middle ground that has got the, the advantages of the, the flatness and the agility that the flatness can bring, but with a decent level of communication? Or is it the, is the issue you think the one to many spread is too difficult? From what I've read about it, Human interaction and human touch points on a regular basis are very important, and I'm sure we'd all agree that's a part of life.

So you need that effectiveness of human, the human side of work. And what you can't do is just expect that a three-minute conversation with the leader and then you have to go and execute [00:05:00] on it is good enough for many. Now, some might get on with that, but some don't. And there's this study that's starting to rise up that says, um, actually, It doesn't make the workforce better it just makes them sadder because they don't get that the words are the human touch right and did they cover how supportive leadership fits into that you know the notion of you lead from the back in support of.

Kind of amplifying what the individuals want to do versus leading from the top where you're effectively just telling them what to do and this is the problem, isn't it? So what you've just said is a great way to do it, which is everybody feels supportive. Psychological safety. I can get on and do my job, but I know there's something there to help me.

Whereas what this is and the grey on bossing is is literally the removal of the middle management layer with, I think, not so much thought about what you replace it with to support people. The human in the system. Well, in that case, I think that gets us actually for a change to a bit of an answer [00:06:00] to your conundrum, which is, I think it has to come with culture change.

I don't, I don't think you can, I don't think you can switch from a middle management heavy organization, which is effectively a hierarchy to a flatter, more networked organization, which is, it can be like startup or it can be like organizations that have grown in a pod like way. So hierarchy is not the only way to run organizations, you can run them in multiple different ways, but it has to go hand in glove with leadership style.

It has to go hand in glove with the correct type of delegations, and then it has to go hand in glove with, you know, kind of support and culture. And I think then the wipe out of this middle management tier, then you'll get some situations where maybe the organization will learn and adjust to create a different structure to support the human in it.

But I think there'll be some tears on the way by the sounds of it from what I'm reading. Well. Let's keep an eye on that because I actually, uh, I sort of advocate for moving towards the sort of organization you're suggesting as part of [00:07:00] interesting digital transformation. Uh, but it has to be done with, with the scaffolding that I was describing.

With thought and care for the human, I think. There you go. There you go. Well said. Well,



moving on to our main subject today, I'm delighted to say that we have with us Krishnan Venkata, who is the chief client officer at LatentView Analytics. Krishnan, how are you doing today? Good to see you. Do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself and a little bit about LatentView?

I'm doing well. Thank you. Myself, Krishnan Venkata, based out of sunny Seattle. Been here for 14 years and been with LatentView Analytics for close to 16 years now. I started out as a person that was supporting sales and today managed the North America business for LatentView that comprises about 95 percent of our business overall.

LatentView was set up in 2006. When I joined them in 2008, it was a 10 member organization. Today we are close to 1,500 people globally. We are listed, and we are the only analytics consulting firm that's listed in the Indian [00:08:00] stock market. And our stock was the most oversubscribed IPO in the history of the Indian stock market.

And we are an exciting company to work with, and I look forward to this chat, Dave and Rob. So let's maybe start with latent view themselves. Just give us a little bit of an insight into how you got going. So what did you see in the market that made you think that there was a need for another organization in this space?

And what purpose did you specifically have in mind? That's great question, right? Um, we were set up about 18 years back in 2006 when At that point of time, there was about a couple of decades where data warehousing, data technologies were extremely popular with information services companies. So there was a lot of companies, the Informatica, the Teradata of the world that were set up, that were looking to organize a lot of the organization's data.

And there were a lot of projects [00:09:00] that we were executing. I was working with a fairly large IT services firm, and my founder of the firm as well was working there. And we used to do a lot of projects called data warehousing projects or database projects where we were building some of these big data warehouses.

The interesting thing was there was a lot of money that was going into that, but very little money going into analyzing the data that was stored in the data warehouses. And we felt that it's just a matter of time before organizations will want to make better sense out of the data that is there in the data warehouses.

That's kind of the genesis and we actually found that there was not many firms doing that. And we operate in a very unique global delivery model where we look at India as a big center for our delivery excellence because of the kind of talent capabilities that are there in math and science. And we felt that the organizations across the world will need this a lot more in the coming couple of decades.

And boy, have we been proven right. Um, it's just been, uh, a big ride upwards from there on, [00:10:00] in terms of analytics becoming mainstream in organizations. And not just, uh, not just the technology firms like the Microsofts etc. Even smaller firms that are out there, industrial firms, um, auto manufacturing firms.

Name the firms and we have seen that there has been an explosion in terms of the need for analytics across across the board for somebody that's been in the space for that entire journey. How would you characterize that rise of analytics? Because I actually I hear what you're saying that at the time it felt like a bet.

I know at the time the organization I was working in, um, had one of those leader of the future courses that they would send their card as a people on to and we were on one of them



and it was all about like, analytics and predictive analytics and data and analytics, depending on what phrase you decided to use that day.

And it was a very new concept, wasn't it? That is true. And so what do you think has managed to bed it in over the course of the last 15 years? Obviously, these days you could [00:11:00] easily look at the rise of AI and say, actually, the rise of AI, that's, that's created a context for data that makes it very clear that you need to do something with your data.

But it wasn't that clear 20 years ago, was it? Yeah, no, I think initially we, we also started out as predictive analytics consulting firm, which was to predict the future with limited amount of data that quickly moved to becoming a business analytics rather than just predictive analytics, where we said.

That it's great to say what will happen, but a lot of organizations were not even making sense of what is happening right now, which is where are you looking into developing better insights into what is happening? And then we felt that there was a huge potential in terms of untapped data for some of these insights.

And so we pivoted to doing more broad based analytics than just predictive analytics and two things that I think became very important in this journey. One was cloud coming into the cloud becoming mainstream, which reduced cost of storage [00:12:00] and second, I feel that Analytics platforms started becoming smarter and smarter, right?

So you were able to do analytics on the fly. Even today, Excel is the biggest analytics platform that's out there, but newer platforms like Tableau, uh, things that came and emerged made analytics much more easier for people to develop and also consume. Right. And I think, when I think back about analytics.

There's always been an understanding that getting a view of the current and trying to predict the future is highly valuable for a few and those organizations. They say, but over the past sort of five, six years, particularly the plumbing for analytics, which was always a very complicated part of getting all the data together before you did the analysis.

And before you did the, the big reveal to say you should really be looking over here has massively improved. Whereas years and years ago, you used to spend so much time doing some very basic things just to get data to come together so you could run something over the top. I've seen [00:13:00] that radically change.

And I'd be interested to see your, your position on the, the enablement and the plumbing, almost removing all that toil from data and making it just easier, not saying it's an easy thing, but easier to, to get things together. It's absolutely right. I mean, we used to take a lot of time to develop some things which are now basic and almost table stakes.

And I'll give you an example. 14 years back when I moved to the U. S. Um, I had come on an engagement where my job was to develop a set of reports and dashboards. Actually, just a set of reports. They were not even dashboards. And that used to take weeks to actually develop provide. And we used to have weekly iterations, monthly iterations, quarterly iterations of these reports that were developed.

Today, all of these reports are real time, available, and self serve. And that's such a change, isn't it? You have to wait for your day to day, just log into a dashboard, and you've almost got the [00:14:00] near real time view of this just happened in your organization. I did wonder though, Rob, back in 2006, what level architect were you?

I was, you know, didn't, I was just, uh, 2006. I was still a, um, I was, uh, still in software back then, Dave. I was still cutting codes. So it's still an aspiration at that point. Yeah, yeah, yeah.



The, uh, architecture was the heady heights of my future. That was, that was in the far and distant future. I could only dream.

And now you look back on those days from the top of the mountain. With all the enriched data that I need to make good decisions. Exactly. Look at that. Look at that. And talking of which, what I wanted to come on to from a, from a data perspective, Because we've, we've, we talk quite a lot on the show about the nature of data and how a lot of organizations are still struggling with getting their data together.

But one thing I know that you guys do Krishnan and you spend a lot of time on is something we haven't spent a [00:15:00] great deal of time on on the show. And I personally think it's one of the more important aspects of using data and predicting off data and things like that, which is about visualization. And turning the data from being, you know, I don't know, lines in a spreadsheet into something actually much more intuitive, something much more action orientated and something you can do something with.

So let's let's dive into visualization a little bit. So first of all, what does it mean to you? And what does it mean to latent view to actually create visualization? I think for us, visualization is very simplistically data storytelling, right? The ability to tell stories from your data to help making decisions.

And that's basically visualization. It's not about creating charts and graphs and just multiple such of things that people think about visualization. It's about being able to just tell a story better from your data in a simple manner in which businesses are able to make decisions. And what are the core elements in that for [00:16:00] you then?

I think the first part of this is obviously to make sure that the data that you have, is a good version of the truth, right? You will never have the perfect version at any point of time, but you need to have a good version. You're working with good data. Um, so I think the data plumbing that was just talked about a bit is fairly important to making sure that you have got the right amount of data at the right amount of time.

The second part of it is to have a navigational element in your dashboards, so to say. And what I mean by that is, typically a lot of times analysts tend to put a lot of information out there as visualization, but it becomes just too overbearing for the person to consume. So just provide enough information and enough insight for the person to ask the next question saying, Hmm, why did that happen?

You've hit the nail on the head. And if you're able to present data in a way. That conveys the story quickly and simply you've cracked it. I, and you just brought back a memory for me, which is when I discovered that information is beautiful, which I don't know if you know, the guy wrote the book, David [00:17:00] McCandles.

He has a book where he shows the world in graphics terms, and there's no explanation of the picture. You just look at the picture and what is incredibly powerful is with no explanation. I understand the domain. I understand the, uh, the scale of the issue. I understand how it, is delineated, you know, and he's got a great website with things like solving the plastic crisis and stuff like this.

But you just look at them and he's absolutely cracked the, I understand through simple pictographic terms. And I think what you've just said, just there was a point in my life where I understood the power of the visualization. Yeah. And I think it's important to make the visualization simple and powerful, which provokes a conversation.

Right? A lot of times people think about presenting all the information as a one way traffic.



So anytime a visualization is used as an assistant to assist a conversation, that's what makes it powerful. And I think that is the [00:18:00] key of trying to not make the visualization or the dashboard the star, but an effective platform which enables conversations between the business and analytics.

And I think that differentiation, it took us a while to understand that as well, because in our quest to do great work, we used to think providing as much amount of information sliced and diced in multiple formats and making the dashboards complex was the answer, but actually it's the inverse. It has to be made very simple so that people adopt it.

And adoption is the key. And you find when you get that simplicity, you get curiosity and then the ability to actually data sets together. So I can look at a picture. I go, Ah, I'm now interested in that click. Now I get another visualization. I go, Ah, now I'm interested in this. And what I find is with the power of data when it's easy to navigate in simple terms, suddenly people with domain expertise can engage much more effectively.

So there's this this this first understanding point and then the inquisitive with it. I want to go somewhere through this data to find out what's [00:19:00] going on down there as also, again, another very powerful thing that can happen. And one of the things that we notice in a lot of our dashboards that we developed, um, is about 80 percent of the people just use about 20 percent of the dashboards, right?

The number of views that are there. And what that told me was that 80 percent of what is being developed, um, or 80 percent of the people use only that, or 80 percent of what is being developed is not used at all. Right. And that was a place where we built the conversational interface. In fact, we built this about, I would say about eight to nine years back, which was basically a conversational interface on top of dashboards that users can just ask questions and get answers.

And that's what chat GPT has done now is the ability to make that mainstream, which was something that was available, uh, seven to eight years back. And now we are seeing a lot of our visualization. People are asking for the conversational element on the top so that users can just ask questions. And don't have to come do the filters and create those views and that's one of the reasons I [00:20:00] think visualization has gotten a step change in terms of adoption in these days.

And it's a great combination. You get the human like interface connected to the engine that has the power to present you the answer really quickly. Rightly, unlike the boss who rings up their reporting team and says, create me an Excel dashboard on this. And then four weeks later, some abomination pops out the other side via email.

It's like it's completely changing the paradigm about how you can consume and process. It wasn't, it wasn't too far back. About a, even a decade back when analyst teams used to sit in the background out of the meeting for people to be pinged during a board meeting and getting insights, saying that, Hey, can you just tell me this quick analysis or quick cut of this perception metric by this, et cetera.

And we used to sit that imagine all of that now being self serve. You don't need an analyst to be spending an entire hour. Just being on standby mode. Um, I think the quality of analysis will take a step change. If you get your visualization [00:21:00] story along with Jenny, I write, I was also intrigued by one of your concepts when we met before the show about this move from dashboard to decision board.

That's correct. I mean, it's a neat bit of language, but in your mind, what are the core



differences between even like a good dashboard and a decision board? I think a good dashboard is one which is presenting the data in a. Easy and understable, understandable manner, but that doesn't necessarily help the business unless you are able to get an insight, which enables a decision.

So a lot of times what we do is start with the dashboard, which is saying we present the information that is available in some good form that is that is that to the business, and then we get them to see whether they are asking the questions. What we notice in that working session of the businesses come back and say, Oh, you know what, we would have loved this information in this shape and format.

While we like this, uh, we would like a different kind of representation because this is why we would use this and we will try to probe around why [00:22:00] they are asking for this information rather than saying, Oh, this looks better in this way. Why do you want the information in this? Will this insight help you?

When will this help you? Right? And if you're able to ask the business around what it will help them do, you will be able to create a visualization, which this one so that dashboard we slowly migrate to being able to enable those decisions that the decision or the business wants to make. And that's where it transforms into a decision board at the end of the day, a dashboard in itself doesn't really solve anything other than making the business.

Okay, all of these metrics help unless it enables a business decision with insights. It's, it's not useful. And that's why we say that actually dashboards are really not existent. Decision boards are the future. Right. And have you seen yet an organization that can get from dashboarding and basic data visualization through to decision boarding through to innovation, for example?

Yeah, absolutely. There are quite a few organizations that [00:23:00] are now there of the first important thing is to keep pushing the envelope around it, right? It's a journey. It's not a, it's not an end state. And what we have realized, I think Rob just highlighted that first is to start small and not start with a Cadillac on day one, right?

It's to start with something that works and then incrementally improve it in every iteration. And that's what we have done in a lot of cases where in the first six to eight weeks, we come up with the first version of Decision board that enables macro level decision, and then the businesses ask a few questions that the current infrastructure is not able to, um, support.

And that's where we start adding additional layers of decisions and data, etc. which enables those future decisions. So I think as long as you are going with that approach, we have done this for innovation. We work with Unilever on the innovation labs site where we are helping them look at R and D data, the data across their enterprise, external data [00:24:00] and present that in What we call a decision board kind of format through the Delphi platform that we are building for them.

And we are part of that ecosystem within Unilever. And that's because they have moved from being, uh, using dashboards to going towards decision boards. There must be quite an ice. Approach you can take around how you think differently about decision boards, the process, how you collect the what's needed, understanding the problem and the process because you really have to get inside the business and what they're trying to do to create something like a decision decision board.

Often a dashboard was a request that came out. I want to see this, but actually, when you're coming to the decision boards, there's a much. greater depth in understanding what needs



to be done so that you can provide the information in the right way. Do you have a particular approach to that, that gets the right information out of people's heads because that is, it's getting the human side of it down on paper to allow you to build this thing that's probably, I'd imagine, quite complicated.

I would say [00:25:00] it's, it is made to be more complicated than it is, but I think we keep it very simple. The first part of it is to work with the business to understand what are the key performance indicators that they are looking, um, looking at any point. What are your north star metrics? What are the key metrics that you're tracking?

And that's extremely important. Simple. But we realize when we do these discussions that different organizations have different parts of the organization that different views on what the metrics is. So get your metrics right first. Second, um, You should look to visualize these metrics across different dimensions and being able to aggregate data at some points of time or even decompose data into my new form.

So we call it the decomposition tree that we create. The third part is. The ability to build smart narratives. So this is the place where when we get a visualization built, we try to use things like the language generation part, which is NLG or the smart narrative, where we are able to get insights for a, uh, dashboard.

And then you also have alerting [00:26:00] mechanisms, which says if there is a metric that goes beyond a certain threshold, you are alerting this mechanism. And then you add predictive components like forecasting, anomaly detection, et cetera, depending on what is required. So that's how we start and we build this out further.

business user. And I suppose when you present them the first time and they see the difference and understanding that must be a nice experience because I'm sure there's a fair few eureka moments where they see a different style of consuming data and suddenly they're, you know, I could have lived with being poor if I hadn't seen such riches and I think we try to take this as an iterative process with the business, right? I don't think we can build anything which can be built, you know what I call a room outside where the business has got access to it. So we keep going back doing these brainstorming sessions with the business. And at the end of the day, the decision board or whatever you build is only useful if the business can make a decision out of it.

And for that, they need to adopt it, [00:27:00] give us feedback, and we continuously improve on it. And that's extremely critical to this process. So data innovation to you then, what does that look like? Because a lot of organizations are just getting their heads around what it means to mine data, you know, architect their data correctly and then, you know, I think we're still in quite early days of visualization and I think I agree with your, uh, take on it that actually natural language questioning is going to be a natural partner if not the successor to very strong visualization.

What is the goal of innovating your data, do you think? And where do you think I can get to? I think the important part of this is to understand what are the core questions that your business needs to absolutely answer. And when you are able to answer what is core to your business, so it could be understanding competitors better, it could be understanding what are the product needs better or the consumers needs better, uh, features of your product that need to address these needs better.

So first [00:28:00] you need to understand what is extremely core to your business. That kind of goes to what kind of data you will need to be able to answer those questions better in a faster format. And that is a very critical part of understanding what data will you capture



at what frequency, whether it should be real time, whether it should be batch, whether it should be.

Even every month, right? How should I consume this data? Who should consume the data in my teams? And how will I make those decisions? Which will help me become better than my competition. I think it's appreciation of understanding the business realities and understanding what is important for the business and whenever data supports business.

That's when we find it's being extremely effectively used for empowering decisions.

So Dave, what exciting research [00:29:00] have you been conducting this week? Well, I thought I'd knowing that we were going to talk about visualization of data, which to your point in the main conversation, you know, when you see it done. Well, you're like, Oh my God, I intuitively understand a very complex picture.

And I see far too many things in my day to day life. It just took like lists of 50 things that, that draw no, no distinction to relevance or impact or action orientation or anything like that. So I thought with that in mind. I would have a look at what designing effective visual communication looks like.

Oh, hello. Here we go. This sounds impressive, Dave. A little bit left of field on this, but I think, given the conversation we just had, there's some relevance here. Yeah? Everybody loves a tenuous link. Yes. Well, I'm Krishnan. I wonder if, as we go through this, you could bring your storytelling view to it. So I'll go through the 10 things and then perhaps you can just go like, Oh, well, yeah, that's fascinating.

But [00:30:00] from a graphic design point of view, where's the story in that? Have you spied the deep irony in what's about to happen though, Dave? What's the deep irony? Rob, you're about to talk about the power of things that aren't just lists and you are presenting us a list. True. But I, but I, you know, I'm gonna try and use the sort of poetry that you did in the, uh, in the main thing,

Go on. Then I will, uh, you know, like in strictly come dance at the end where they bring the paddles up and score you on your performance. I think we're gonna, uh, we're gonna do that on this one. I, I, I feel you're gonna cheat with that, but, uh, let's come to that at the end. Great. So top 10 tips for designing effective visual communication.

Uh, thank you to brave the woods. com for this, uh, for this, uh, I thought pretty helpful, pretty helpful piece. So the first two are bracket together. Um, you probably shouldn't, but I will in the interest of time. The first one is color. So using no more than five colors on a single layout and then the second one is typography.

So font should be legible and approachable and usable for the communication. So EG [00:31:00] Rob. E. g. Your use of wingdings at this point has gone too far according to this list. Every, you know what, that's a font that will stick in my memory for a long time, finding all the different parts of wingdings. Always a good one, wingdings.

Also, I think you need to roll back on Comic Sans.

The next one is, and I think, I think, Krishnan, I think this might have a part to play in some of the things you were talking about, which is around layout. So presenting context in a way that's guiding the readers through a logical hierarchy. I mean, that to me from a from a from a storytelling point of view, that has got to be a core component.

Absolutely. And I think that in a lot of our cases is a very core part of it. I think the design element is extremely important from the look and feel as well, but I think the ability to



hierarchically build decision, the [00:32:00] decision matrix is extremely critical for good visualization and good decisioning using dashboards.

Very good. The next one in particular, I think, also goes to that, which is using call outs to highlight sections of information, but using them sparingly, e. g. Not everything, not everything can be top priority. Well, it's that, it's that information explosion when somebody presents something and there's just, it just looks like, I'll use the phrase I use a lot of times with integration architecture, it just looks like an explosion in a spaghetti factory and you can't disseminate, your brain can't disseminate the information quickly and it takes hours.

you know, ages to have to go through it all simplicity is king. And then if I want more detail, I can find more detail. So it's optional detail when required, I think, as well as big thing for me. Well, exactly. And I, and I actually think the, uh, the next one goes to the same point, which is the use of space and the use of negative space.

So whether you're doing architecture and actually in an architecture, when you've got way too much. on the same level. You're like, I'm not sure you've got your levels of abstraction right on this [00:33:00] architecture. It's the power of lenses day. If you say this is a thing I found very useful when it was a bit of a eureka moment for me when you understood.

What is this person interested in seeing? Apply my lens to the data and only show them what they really want to see and remove all the other stuff around it. So a business person wants to see one thing, a software engineer wants to see another, you know, a data expert wants to see another. And so as you present them.

Your, your view of the world. It's done through multiple lenses and through those lenses, you can simplify the information and you can always say another lens if you're interested, but actually the simplicity of the first few, which is anchored to your world, then brings a lot of empathy with the data that you're presenting.

I find. Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. And moving on number six is illustration. So the use of illustration to draw out detail and Create context is important and it being the reverse is also true, which is if you mismatch an illustration to content, you could [00:34:00] confuse e. g. If you're trying to talk about something that's operational and you use a picture of a rocket.

Or a moonshot not necessarily sending the same message is it it's not it's almost as if you just double clicked on add some graphics to make my presentation look pretty I can't imagine that anybody would ever do that Rob but let's but let's say but let's say that happens occasionally one thing that we notice is when we work with businesses the first few points that you mentioned are extremely core.

Uh, to do this, which is in terms of creating that informational hierarchy, have minimal call outs for decisions. Some of these parts of it, I would say, are the adding that color or the cream to the cake, so to say, but the foundation of the cake is extremely important, which is being able to provide that information in a logical format.

And being able to highlight a few things, um, and not too many things, which makes it very hard for the business to do indeed. Indeed. And the next point they [00:35:00] move on to, which I think also goes into what you're saying is the use of iconography similar, you know, that like comes to pull out certain points and then goes to the same thing.

Now, number eight, which I think is very pertinent to our conversation is data. So their position on data is don't overwhelm the reader with multiple graphs of single data points when one combined will suffice, which I think goes to the heart of what we're talking about, isn't it? Which is a contextual data that's pulling things together with an action orientation or



with a decision orientation is far more informative than just a lot of data.

And then the final two, which are about proportion and simplicity, which, you know, proportion is, is very much about the specifics of the visualization itself. And then simplicity, which is, you know, like not going mad with your graphics or illustrations or extraneous elements that are not particularly helping with the story.

And I thought, Krishnan, at the end of that 10, before Rob gives [00:36:00] me a mark for how well that went, I thought it might be worth looking at a case study. So have you got any where you think the use of storytelling, decision boarding and, and visualization was specifically effective in driving business results?

Right. So there are multiple case studies that I can talk about, but I'll just take a couple of them. In one of our consumer goods firms that we were actually working with, they had a lot of brand managers that were looking at feedback on what's happening on their brands in the market, and we found that a lot of times they had the current.

I mean, there was a lot of dashboards that they had access to, but it had that issue of a lot of information. That was presented in a flat format, which made them very hard, which made it very hard for them to really get insights from the data, which is where I think what we did when we took that over is actually first simplified.

We said, don't give them all this information at the first go, which is, I think, a bit of [00:37:00] information overload. The second part is we just incorporated a few things like analyzing The ability to drill down, drill through, adding smart narratives to this whole thing in terms of saying, okay, once you're able to come at a view, get a quick insight from what, uh, using, using natural language generation for that, right?

Um, So we were able to tell them why a certain flux sales fluctuations happening. What is the drivers that we think are showing this, which specific category and what, what is contributing to them, right? And what does actually help them is to be able to have a conversation with the dashboard and able to come up with a quick insight on what's happening.

And then able to take decisions effectively. And I think this helped them significantly reduce usual back and forth using. They used to come up with a question, then the analyst will go take some hours to analyze and come back. And by that time, the brand manager didn't even know why he had asked that question, right?

And now having a self serve BI solution [00:38:00] with all of these features helped them take decisions faster, but also saved a lot of analyst time around it. And I thought it was very powerful because of the way it was adopted and helped in decisions significantly. It's brilliant to hear that. And do you have any insight into, did they make any materially different decisions after having access to this than they might've done before?

Absolutely. Yeah. And I think there were a lot of cases where they were able to identify certain channels which were over ordering. Right. Because if the sales managers would assume they will go to the channel partner and they will over order assuming that you know what, oh, the sales are going to be big and they had some reasons for their reason for why they thought that would happen.

But that never actually in reality came and there were a lot of returns that were coming through these channels. Now using data and using these dashboards, we were able to effectively communicate back to these brand managers saying, you need to talk to your channel partners and reset their forecasting and reduce the returns.

And returns is a big problem in [00:39:00] this one because you're now getting goods back



and they're stale and they cannot be sent out in inventory, right? It was extremely powerful in reducing their return rates across the channels. Very cool. Very cool. So Robert, let's go to our judges. How'd that, how'd it work out for you?

Do you know what, Dave? I didn't expect you to take that, that line, but I enjoyed it. So I'm going to give you eight for that one. Eight. You take that. Yeah. Yeah. That'll get you through to the final of the competition. That's the best thing that's happened all day. Brilliant. Well, look, uh, Krishnan, thank you so much for spending a bit of time with us today and, uh, sharing your insight into actually a bit of the process.

It's so incredibly important and, and people that. You know, I'm hoping it's given some insight into just displaying all of the data doesn't necessarily give you what you need to make decisions. So thanks for your insight today. No, thank you for the time. And I really enjoyed the conversation and appreciate the questions and appreciate you giving me a platform to express my views.

I enjoyed it. Our pleasure. Now, we end every [00:40:00] episode of this podcast by asking our guests what they're excited about doing next. And that could be something in your personal life, like you've got an exciting restaurant booked at the weekend, or it could be something in your professional life. So Krishnan, what are you excited about doing next?

I'm actually off for a month with family to India. And it's been about eight years since we have had a vacation to India. So the family is extremely excited about it. My kids. have been born and brought up in the States. So for them, going to India is always a special moment to meet with the family there.

Um, and we're also planning to take a few trips around there. It's going to be extremely hot, but hopefully we're going to be so excited that we won't, we'll enjoy it despite the heat. Well, uh, have a wonderful time. Uh, you know what, I've, I've yet to make it to India. I think it is now pretty much on top of, of my list to go this fabulous country to visit.

All parts of it are great to see. So, uh, yeah, you should go. Dave. Dave, this is it. You, you, you need to get the yourself there. I do, I do. I do. I do. I do. So, Krishnan, have a, have a wonderful time. I [00:41:00] appreciate it. Thank you. So a huge thanks to our guest this week, Krishnan, and thank you so much for being on the show.

Thanks also to our sound and editing wizards, Ben and Louis, our highly experienced taxi driving producer, Marcel, and of course, to all our listeners. We're on LinkedIn and X, Dave Chapman and Rob Kernahan. Feel free to follow or connect with us and please get in touch if you have any comments or ideas for the show. And of course, if you haven't already done that, rate and subscribe to our podcast.

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