

Transcript | How to Use Data to Tell Better Stories

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Hello, and welcome everyone to this event on data storytelling. My name is Alana Moncton, and I am the vice president of community engagement and growth here at apolitical as you're joining us, it would be so great to hear from all of you that are joining today. So do post in the chat. Where in the world you're coming from, and what organization you work for today, we're going to be exploring how to craft stories with data that move beyond charts to engage, persuade and drive public impact.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: We'll delve into data strategies, audience segmentation and building an organizational data culture that is set up for storytelling.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: and for those of you who may be joining us for the 1st time. A big welcome. Apolitical is the world's largest network for global government used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries, and I can see you starting to introduce yourselves there, which is great. Our mission is to make government smarter, and we do this by putting the best knowledge and skills at the fingertips of public servants like you around the world.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Welcome. I can see lots of folks now joining in in the chat. Lots of folks from Canada, City of Toronto, Ontario, but Roger from London at Westminster City Council. Welcome, Roger Paula from Essex.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Rebecca also in London. Welcome! Lots of introductions. Keep them coming. It is lovely to meet all of you, Pablo, from New York City. Wonderful, Joseph from Athens, Georgia. Amazing! Keep them coming! As I say.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: we are so thrilled to be meeting all of you. And we're also thrilled to extend an invitation to our data skills network. This is an online community to build your data skills through connection and conversation with peers across global government. This space is,

of course, open to all, whether you consider yourself a data novice or a data expert. And the link you can see on your screen, and will pop up near the bottom of your screen as well.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: and if you want to return to it, it can be found by selecting resources here on zoom and navigating to links, and I would love to see as many of your voices there in the community as possible. So please do join us.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: I'll move on to just get a few technical notes out of the way before we get into the depth of today's conversation. So 1st of all, this event is being recorded for on demand. Viewing on Apolitical's website, we ask that you please don't record it yourself. Contact details for any privacy concerns are on the apolitical website in the homepage footer, and finally, closed captions are of course, available and be toggled on or off in your screen settings.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: so you'll see just a note to remind you of that coming through to you in the chat. There. It is perfect. Now, before I introduce our brilliant speaker. We're going to just run a few quick polls to get a sense of your context, and where you're coming today's conversation from. So let's have a look at the 1st poll. We would love to know what is the greatest challenge you face when telling stories with data.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: have a think about that. Read through the responses. I can see you starting to vote, which is great, identifying the most relevant narrative, simplifying complex information, designing clear and effective visualizations, tailoring the message or establishing trust. All challenges you might face, and we'd love to hear what is the greatest challenge you are facing when telling these stories with data. I can see lots of votes. Wow! Hundreds of votes already coming through which is amazing.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: perfect. Keep them coming, and I will reveal the answer very shortly.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Can see some other folks in the chat introducing themselves. Welcome. Okay, simplifying complex information without losing essential meaning. Almost 50% of you finding that the greatest challenge you face when telling stories with data. Well, hopefully,

we can help you with that as we go into today's session. So I'm going to just now move on to one more, Poll.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: and I'd love to hear from you what is the primary source of data that you're working with in your work.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: So, and also you can see what's on the screen. But if you think of something that isn't listed as an option, do feel free to submit your response in the chat instead, we'd love to hear from you. But let us know, is it internal government data, perhaps survey data, open data, external research. Or, again, anything else. Please do share it in the chat and let us know. And again, I can see lots of votes already coming through.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: We've got a clear winner. So far, this is very interesting.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Madeline says, all of the above.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: okay, so nearly 60% of you internal government data, such as administrative or performance data is the biggest source of data that you are working with. That's really helpful as a bit of context before we get into the conversation. Okay, thank you so much for taking part in those polls. Now to the main event introducing our speaker, we are very fortunate today to have anil, Aurora joining us.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Anil is the former chief statistician of Canada and a leading global expert in digital governance and data strategy with a career spanning senior roles across government, international organizations and industry. He's advised leaders at the highest levels and currently works with the World Bank to support countries in developing data and digital strategies and Anil is also an adjunct lecturer at Harvard Kennedy School and a board member at the Center for International Governance Innovation.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: You can read Anil's full Bio by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your zoom screen and heading to the speakers section. We'll just pop a link down there shortly, but without further ado.

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Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Let's hand over to you, Anil. For the next 30 min.

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Anil Arora: Thank you very much, Lana. I hope you can hear me and welcome everybody. It's such a pleasure to have you all at this particular session.

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Anil Arora: you know, in Ottawa it's a beautiful morning, and I hope it's nice wherever you are. So you know. What else would you do on a nice, beautiful day other than talk about telling stories, right? And the difference here is, of course, you know, it's not fiction. What we're trying to do is tell some compelling stories using it using evidence and data. And and

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Anil Arora: you know, I just want to start off by saying that

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Anil Arora: you know when you talk about administrative data. When you talk about surveys. You know, data are essentially a byproduct of the methodology that you use, and so know that it's not perfect. To begin with, right? And you have to leave room

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Anil Arora: for the fact that you know better strategies, better methodology, increased coverage may actually nuance and even tell that story a little better, a little, maybe even different. As things move on. So

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Anil Arora: and so it is. It's not a concoction, but it's the best data which then results in the best insights and stories that we can tell for the moment. Right? And that's still a heck of a lot better than you know, alternative facts and fake, you know, news and and all those kinds of things. So

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Anil Arora: for us. And we'll go right into these slides, so we'll move on to the next slide. Don't worry. I'm gonna go quickly through the slides. I'm trying to tell the story, so don't get bogged down if you don't get every single word on every single bullet in in these slides. you know, I think what we're trying to do here is give you a sense of

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Anil Arora: in a in a very, you know, concentrated and short time give you a sense of what are the essentials? And this is not a technical session per se. As Lana mentioned in the in the beginning. I'm trying to help

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Anil Arora: those that are managing data shops. Those are in data shops. Just get a better sense of what is that?

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Anil Arora: You know, framework? What's that ecosystem that you're going to build to be able to allow you and your staff to be able to tell those compelling stories, use data responsibly and set up that trusted relationship with your consumer. So data are given to us generally in the governments.

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Anil Arora: by by businesses, by, of course, citizens organizations with some implicit and some explicit understanding right? They expect us to make sure that their data that they've entrusted us with is safe. And it's going to be, you know, going to do more good than harm. They have expectations of keeping their

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Anil Arora: personal details, whether it's a business in terms of confidentiality, or whether it's individuals in terms of privacy. They expect us to keep that private, and they expect us to keep it safe. They expect us to adhere to some norms and laws and obviously policies and regulations. So they anticipate that it's not just. Trust me, but there's a whole system within which we operate

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Anil Arora: that we're beholden to, and that we're going to live up to those expectations that they have encoded in those policies and laws.

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Anil Arora: In a sense, they expect us to be good data stewards, and they want us to be able to convert that raw material that data that they've given us and

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Anil Arora: turn it into a consumable product that serves a public good. It's our responsibility that goes beyond. Simply, here's the data, good luck with it, and we go to responsibly consuming or enabling those users to be able to consume that information to better our society and our economy. So in a sense, we enter into this

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Anil Arora: social contract every time we trade that data into, you know, generating public good. So we'll move to the next slide. Now, of course.

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Anil Arora: you know, don't. Data don't just feed into a model right? They don't just go into a spreadsheet. They don't just go into a formula. There are some uses there are some users that's what they rely on, and we'll get into that in a little bit more detail. But the idea is that when they get combined with context, with other sources of information that they're responsibly manipulated with a specific aim or a perspective, they compete

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Anil Arora: for space. They compete for that mental space, they compete for influence and they compete for outcome. So in that sense they can be used for good or bad. And so data are now so

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Anil Arora: prolific. They're everywhere. And they originate from immeasurable sources. Many of you in that opening poll talked about, you know, all the different sources of data that you use. But they're coming from sensors. They're coming from your Fitbit, they're coming from, you know, all sorts of various devices, your phones, etc. And it's

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Anil Arora: the fastest growing source. Right now. The data are just exploding, and arguably our most valuable assets today and our resource so move to the next slide.

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Anil Arora: And

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Anil Arora: just to build on that, you know, you can't start with the assumption that data are neutral. Right? They are that they're consequence free they are not. And you know, if you don't know how the data were collected, where they were coming from, what was excluded, how they were included, what the methodology was.

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Anil Arora: You know, you just can't take the data from their starting point and say, Well, you know, that's the feedstock. It must be good. Right? So data management these days is what I call now a full contact sport. And so you have to roll up your sleeves. You have to understand that you are now in a highly competitive and in a lucrative space

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Anil Arora: with both good and bad actors. Public sector is not immune. You might think well, we, you know, public sector. Of course, we're not impacted by these things, but we are not immune. We are lobbied just like everybody else before, with. Look at our data. Look at. You know we did the survey. We did this. We did. You know a poll, whatever it is. And look at the media right.

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Anil Arora: They're doing polls all the time. They're generating news in some sense. So you know it is, we are not immune to being lobbied and being influenced. So whether it's politics, whether it's policies, politicians, or even public servants. We are now highly dependent on data, the analysis, interpretation. And I would argue.

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Anil Arora: we are also responsible for good decisions that are based on them and not just by, you know the government of the day or the policymakers, but actually all consumers. Our role is to better society. It's to better our understanding of things. Of course, people will make decisions as they see fit.

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Anil Arora: you know. Just a little bit from my, you know background, I think. As was introduced, I was a chief statistician

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Anil Arora: of Canada, so I was responsible for Canada's Statistical Agency, called Statistics Canada. We were the 1st in the world to come up with some experimental estimates on the outputs of the value of data, and what we found in that 1st iteration back in 2018, that the value of the stock of our data in the country were actually even more valued, even more in terms

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Anil Arora: of dollars and perspective, with some limitations on even what we were able to count than our natural resources, and I suspect that if you looked in your individual country settings that you'll find something similar to that, and not only the stock, but, in fact, on an annual basis. We were investing more in generating data and enabling data as a country than in many of our sectors

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Anil Arora: combined. And of course there's now more work in the system of natural accounts. In the next version iteration that starts to give a little bit more methodology and precision to what we're experimental estimates. So stay tuned in this space. And I would say, you know, inform yourself a little bit more. So we'll move on to the next slide.

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Anil Arora: So, as I mentioned earlier, you know, our responsibilities are really as data stewards, right? That extend that full lifecycle right from the collection.

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Anil Arora: And whether we're doing the collection or we're enabling it. Or we're putting standards. We're putting methodologies we're putting out, you know, good guidance on, how do you collect information in a responsible way to how we? How do you process it? And more and more. As you know, we're using machine language, and we're learning, you know, using AI to do a number of the functions that were previously done by people. So the algorithms are

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Anil Arora: are very helpful in terms of coding and being able to impute. And so I only see that getting more and more important, obviously, the quality that we put in every single step of you know, from collection, as I said, to processing tabulation, and ultimately the use of that information, so we can't, as public servants say. Well, look here it is.

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Anil Arora: Know we were the truck we just drove by through the data off the back. And good luck, right? We have a responsibility as public servants that goes beyond that. So invariably right. We're now concerned with how the data are used as well, and when they're used well, great! When they're not used. Well, we also have a responsibility to call out people and say, Well, actually, you misinterpreted that, or you didn't quite get.

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Anil Arora: You know the the you know what what we intended by this right, and, as you know, in this day and age, misinformation, disinformation. It travels very fast, much faster than good statistics, and it can inflict a lot of damage, and it can upset political systems. It can, you know, divide populations. It can actually result in a lot of damage.

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Anil Arora: not only reputational damage, but also in real dollars and and cents, or whatever currency you're in. So

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Anil Arora: I think you know we cannot have weaknesses in any of the areas of that chain, and whether you use these models like the one that one of my colleagues at statistics Canada had developed Eric Rock, or called the 4G's, which is, you know. How do you gather information? How do you grow it. How do you guard it, you know? And how do you give it to? You know from the output side of things

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Anil Arora: the framework that Wilkinson had put together, which is, you know, how do you make sure that the data are findable? They're accessible. They're interoperable and reusable. Fair principles for short. So you know, start to look at these kinds of frameworks, because I think they provide some really good guidance. So move on to the next slide. But most people who need to make these decisions come face to face with data.

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Anil Arora: and unfortunately, they don't come in at the collection side of things they don't even know or care much. What they're interested at. That point is, what do you got for me? Because I need it now? I need it yesterday, right? And they come in at the end of that data lifecycle. So they're generally, you know, under huge time pressures, you know, are trying to answer specific questions. They're in that competitive space as well. They're trying to gain an edge.

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Anil Arora: you know, over other sources and providers of data, and they have to make that information coherent. Tell this compelling story in as small a real estate, you know, and a timeline that is possible. And they're competing now, for you know, a decreased population, public attention span as well. So you can see why, you know the sensation.

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Anil Arora: you know, gets the headlines. And for, of course, as public servants, you know we also have those time crunches right? How many of you have had a minister, or secretary, or boss, or whatever it says. I need that information right now, you know, like I, you know, in the elevator, or whatever it is, as we run up to brief the you know, whoever it might be. So we're not devoid. And we're not. We're not immune from that either. Right? So we just have to understand some of these consumption

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Anil Arora: realities that we work under. So you know, the perfect is sometimes the enemy the good enough right? So if we can get a direction, or we can give some sort of a trend with some, you know caveats in it sometimes. That's better than you know somebody saying, Well, you can't give it. So I'm just gonna Google it, or or we're going to get, you know, something from somewhere else. So don't get in that perfection kind of disease as well. Right?

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Anil Arora: Let's move on to the next slide, please. So

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Anil Arora: we have many masters as public servants. Right? Everybody's our boss, right? As you know. So our data users. You know, every business, academic institution, every non-government organization, any level of government, you know, other government departments, citizens, investors, whether it's a bank or the media associations funded, you know, and thought leaders all want you to serve their specific needs

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Anil Arora: personally, right? Not only do they want you to provide the data, they want to make it simple right. They want you to make it simple. They want you to not only answer the what, but the so what? And even the now, what sometimes you know, provided in their favorite format, of course make sure that you can subject it to some scrutiny, and answer some of the coherence. You know we saw this. But how come your data? Say this right?

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Anil Arora: And even now, with what their AI agent or Google may have served up. And you know you don't know right. Some don't even know what they want until you show them something, and then they tell you, I don't want this, but you know which then leads to more pointed questions and even more specific demand. So sounds a bit overwhelming. Well, that's our job, right? I mean, that's you know why we signed up to be public service.

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Anil Arora: and that's what, in a sense, makes our jobs so much more challenging and interesting right in the public service as compared to, you know, in in some of the other sectors that people work in. So

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Anil Arora: let's go to the next slide.

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Anil Arora: What are some of the principles that I like to adhere to right. You know you've heard this a thousand times. Well, it's worth saying it a thousand, one times, which is a 1st principle is

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Anil Arora: be user centric, right? So you have to engage the user. Right? Ask them a series of pointed questions about what they're trying to solve, like, what are you trying to do with that data? Right? Why do you need it? Right? What are your pain points? And even you have to set in a sense, help them refine their question because they might not even know. And they just want something, and they want to run away with it. And then.

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00:21:01.870 --> 00:21:26.810

Anil Arora: course they're going to tag you and cite you and say you said it right. So if you don't know the question, don't give them the answer because you're likely to give them the wrong answer, and then you're going to be solving the after effects of having given them what they didn't really want. You gave them what they wanted, but not necessarily what they needed. Right? So when do they need it? What are they accountable for? Right? Where does this their responsibility.

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Anil Arora: start and end. You know, how often are they going to need it updated? Right? Is this a 1 off? Right? So the key is to understand well and give them what they need, and don't frustrate them right? So move on to the next slide.

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Anil Arora: Now

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Anil Arora: let me just segment a few of the types of users that you're going to be confronted with, because this is important to that storytelling, and even how you present it. You know how much time you spend on it. You know, as I said, giving them something, you know, that's perfect perfectly after they needed it. Right? Doesn't really help right? So you're going to have to contend with all

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Anil Arora: you know the context around these queries just as much as you are with the query and the format. And how do you present it? Right? Media generally have tight timelines unless it's a data journalist, and we'll get into that a bit right, maybe doing a longer piece, you know, over several months, and iterations, and so on, you know, on one example, like in Canada, was, there was a big piece that was done on hate crimes.

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Anil Arora: you know, and how the police classify them and handle them. And you know they had a whole series of stories. And there's many stories like. There are many different themes like that, and what they wanted to do was, you know, just add some facts and the latest data and the trends right

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Anil Arora: in most of the media that are looking to you to get something right. In my case it was either the Cpi or the labor force that's just been released. They've already written the story right? In many cases the story on affordability or job losses at a particular plant, or in a community, or a family or something like.

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Anil Arora: and they want the number for that particular geography, you know, whether it went up or down, and they want it like right now, right? So they want to be able to embed it and move on. How many of you have seen, though? Okay, well, this was the trend more to come right. So you know, they're obviously timing and them getting, you know, to market as the 1st ones out is for them very, very important. So to frustrate them with the

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Anil Arora: a bunch of context when they're looking just for that number isn't isn't going to really help. So you can make the fanciest tables. What they're looking for is what was the number last month? What is it this month, you know, and if you're forecasting or doing a flash estimate, or something for the next month. What is it? Right? So if it's a data journalist, on the other hand, they're looking, as I said, for a number of the tables. You know, they're looking for the data. They're going to filter it.

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Anil Arora: They're going to visualize it. They're going to embed it in their story. So they have more time. And they're going to be more interactive with you. And they're not looking for fancy. They're looking for raw and understanding and meaning. So that you're going to have a different kind of.

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00:24:12.460 --> 00:24:25.569

Anil Arora: you know, interaction with them. They're not necessarily even looking to you to do the interactive dashboard. They may be doing that. So what they're looking for is the data that then allows their users to be able to, you know, slice and dice it as they see fit. So

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Anil Arora: let's go to the next slide. The next 3 slides, you know. I'm going to focus a little bit, you know, on, you know, if you're the if you're let's say one of the you know, if you're serving the Deputy Minister or the Secretary in your particular context, you know which is the intended audience. They're not looking generally for a lot of background or context, but they're looking for that latest data point just

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Anil Arora: similar to what the media are looking for, you know, some aggregate summary tables or data to help garner support for a particular policy option. You know, they're obviously going to look for things that take their particular view and move it forward.

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Anil Arora: But it's your job to give them the full information, not to say, Oh, well, if that's where you're going, you know. Here's the data point that supports your narrative. So you're gonna have to be a bit more discerning right about. Well, what are the facts, you know. Here's what it is, and if they're going to put the context on it again, we talked about, if somebody's being irresponsible, what do you do. But if they're being responsible, you know, at least you've given them the facts and you've given them. You know the context within which

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Anil Arora: those data to be used, and sometimes you live in. Maybe even put a little cautionary note saying, Don't push it too far right on this, but they're, you know they obviously have a particular, you know, a perspective in mind. They have a particular policy, or they want to kind of move a particular agenda in their in their direction, in their favorite direction. And and they're looking for your your information. So find out right. Are they looking at

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Anil Arora: looking for your information as a speaking point or looking for this graph? Are they looking to garner support for a particular option, you know? Are they going to be answering a question with a data or a fact as part of a question period or a media scrum in the political system that they're in? Or are they looking for facts to put into a speech. Right? So it's really important. Just again.

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Anil Arora: that user centric focus. What do you need it for? You know, what are you trying to achieve with it, and then being helpful. And again, you know, perfect being the enemy the good enough in many cases. Don't. The one advice I would give is

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00:26:33.920 --> 00:26:56.161

Anil Arora: you shouldn't push the data beyond their intent if they do it. That's their prerogative, in a sense. But at least you've given them the facts. And and you've even given them the cautions about not going too too far. Right? So bringing relevant information together under a hub. So here's a few examples, right of of the types of things that my statistical agency did. We'll move to the next slide.

89

00:26:56.690 --> 00:27:15.089

Anil Arora: you know. So again, as I said, key facts, policy support. What is it speaking points? Is it a speech? Right? Again, keeping it succinct, targeted, but sufficient information to make sure that they're not going to misquote you for their particular objective the next next slide here.

90

00:27:15.090 --> 00:27:38.469

Anil Arora: and then, you know, in many cases, if you are, let's say you do have a prominent position, you know you may actually have hubs and portals right that you can draw them to rather than you know. Just give them that particular information. I spent quite a bit of time modernizing the agency, and you can do that within your own area. So if you see these frequent kinds of questions.

91

00:27:38.470 --> 00:28:05.530

Anil Arora: It's better not to develop a system of one off, but, you know, bring these hubs and portals so that you can drive people to it, and they have the latest. And that way you've got more time to curate and present the information rather than be responsive in a sense. So here's a few examples on infrastructure, transportation housing. I'm assuming here for most of the people that are on this call. Those are all relevant issues. So next slide.

92

00:28:05.850 --> 00:28:30.139

Anil Arora: So now, if you're you know a lot of times you're supporting actually a corporate role, right? So if you're in a corporate particular situation, and you're providing important trends on, let's say, hiring or procurement acquisition. You know. Budgets. Well, guess what you know. You're going to produce dashboards that are consistent month over one month with a clean look. You know, highlighting change or variance from a target.

93

00:28:30.140 --> 00:28:54.790

Anil Arora: Maybe you have Kpis, you know, keep performance indicators that help senior managers track and monitor progress make business decisions. It's really important to keep that look clean, not cluttered. Use color. So look for things like color, blindness and accessibility. Look for simple tools like arrows, you know, beside the number to, you know, make things apparent whether it went up or down. Draw the attention, don't frustrate the user.

94

00:28:54.790 --> 00:29:15.629

Anil Arora: Keep it simple, right? Focus on utility and efficiency in these cases. Resist that urge to have things, you know, move or make them 3D. If it doesn't really add value. And if it doesn't, it's likely not. Gonna you know, it's going to be a distraction. And you don't want distractions less really is more right? Do the number crunching double, check it for accuracy?

95

00:29:15.630 --> 00:29:40.610

Anil Arora: Do the analysis and focus the reader's attention on the important kpis and change that they need to be made aware of in making important decisions. Right? So take account of translation right if you need it in multiple languages, ensure that quality assurance, right? Is there for consistency even things like color? Right? Give us a subconscious message, right? If it's red. Well, you know, there's usually this

96

00:29:40.610 --> 00:30:03.520

Anil Arora: kind of danger or caution that's associated with it. And green, which says, Yeah, everything's fine, you know. Just keep going. So if you get those mixed up sometimes, you know the subconscious can take over, and they can glance over the actual facts next slide, please. So

you know. Look now, you can get really fancy right? So here's a Sankey diagram, for example, in that corporate role, right? This is one which shows

97

00:30:03.520 --> 00:30:26.709

Anil Arora: how fast people are moving. How many are moving from one particular position to, let's say, feeder groups into the executive ranks. And you can see here in the middle of the slide. There's this one number 3.3 right, which is which, where your eye goes to right, which is what is the average promotion time. And then you can now start to go back into that diagram and say, Well, why did certain groups.

98

00:30:26.710 --> 00:30:32.469

Anil Arora: you know, take longer? And why do certain groups, you know, take take less time, so we'll move to the next slide right

99

00:30:33.220 --> 00:30:58.140

Anil Arora: again. Here you can use, you know. Let's say, an org chart right where you're using color. This is the classic kind of traffic light sequence which says, you know, draw your attention to these areas because you know, maybe the you know public service employee survey results are showing, you know pockets where you know. Maybe you need to pay a little bit more attention to than you know to other areas. So we'll move on to the next slide.

100

00:30:58.813 --> 00:31:23.179

Anil Arora: Again. Don't worry about these slides too much, because I'm trying to tell the story here. It's a lot of information right? Now, if it's the analyst like, it's the super user, right? And and they're using their favorite tool tableau, you know, power bi snowflake, whatever it is right, anticipate like, think about. You know. How is it that they might need the tables in a particular format.

101

00:31:23.180 --> 00:31:47.969

Anil Arora: you know, anticipate that second and 3rd question that they're going to have generally not going to be interested in a lot of minimal visuals. But you'll want to kind of get involved in the if they're putting together an interactive dashboard that there's data, you know, coherence and consistency across a lot of data sources will have the same label. But they are no way interoperable. So yeah, you have to understand the metadata. You have to understand what are the exclusions.

102

00:31:47.970 --> 00:31:53.919

Anil Arora: and a lot of people get into trouble when they don't take those things into account next slide, please.

103

00:31:54.030 --> 00:32:18.989

Anil Arora: If you know, obviously, you're talking about academics and researchers. A lot of them are looking for raw data with the metadata that goes along with it, with even the paradata that go along with it. They're interested in standards and biases and breaks in time series, and even standards that come in over time, because they can do a lot of havoc with a presentation. If somebody something's been rebased at a particular point in time. It looks like

104

00:32:18.990 --> 00:32:36.220

Anil Arora: everything's converging at that point and then back on. So you have to. You have to kind of know the data. And in many cases, you even have to kind of go beyond just providing the data. You have to look at things like formal. You know, data sharing agreements or many academic and research

105

00:32:36.220 --> 00:33:00.040

Anil Arora: needs go beyond just aggregate data. They're looking for the actual micro data. And that's where those agreements may actually have some limitations on what they can or cannot do so. You have to be aware of those things, you know, public resources are at play here, and you have to make sure that privacy and confidentiality are assured. Next slide, please.

106

00:33:00.080 --> 00:33:24.960

Anil Arora: You know. Yeah, look at, you know, indigenous governments right? There are many indigenous governments that have ownership control access and possession requirements. So it's a previous slide. So we just, you know, we have to ensure that we build those legal and those privacy constraints have to have an engagement. We have to have transparency and public accountability. You know these are public resources that generally you're expending.

107

00:33:24.960 --> 00:33:40.830

Anil Arora: and data are not exempt from those right. How much time do you spend on a particular constituency as opposed to another? Do you give somebody a competitive advantage, for example? So you have to be aware of some of the strategic considerations. Next slide, please.

108

00:33:40.830 --> 00:33:42.489

Anil Arora: Again.

109

00:33:42.650 --> 00:34:06.050

Anil Arora: with AI. Obviously, if you're planning to use AI to augment your work, you're going to have to look at things like ethical considerations. And is it you that decides ethics, or do you have some sort of a panel and policies that help you decide where those limitations are in consideration. So it's best to be transparent. Have policies that

110

00:34:06.050 --> 00:34:16.720

Anil Arora: are available to others in terms of, you know, decreasing the the kind of you know surprises, and preferably not after the fact. Right? So next slide.

111

00:34:16.719 --> 00:34:40.769

Anil Arora: Look, there are now dozens and dozens of online courses out there that go into helping you decide on things like, what's the most appropriate graph design, color or shape. There's a whole community of data skills network that apolitical has I encourage you to join that I encourage you to look at those things. I'm encouraging you to consult them and familiarize yourself with good protocols and standards for use.

112

00:34:40.770 --> 00:34:52.589

Anil Arora: you know. Is it important to show a table when you need to highlight or draw attention to a small number of data points that kind of makes sense right? Place the context within the specific cells that you want to draw attention to

113

00:34:52.590 --> 00:35:14.119

Anil Arora: me. I try not to have a table that shows more than about a you know, a dozen cells right with data points in it anymore. And you start to now risk making the user do unnecessary gymnastics right? That's that front part of your brain which is rational and reasoning to the kind of visual part of your brain. The back part, which is like boom. You know. What is the what is the message? So

114

00:35:14.120 --> 00:35:33.239

Anil Arora: try to make sure that you, you know you make it easier. Don't frustrate the user and and and get them going with what they needed. Right? So less is more simple is better. And those are some of the mottos that you know that that I use use the labels correctly. So we'll move to the next slide.

115

00:35:33.970 --> 00:35:58.270

Anil Arora: you know, when I you know there are, you know. There we again I honestly, we could spend another hour just talking about design. You know. How do you subtract? How do you simplify? Where addition is the wrong answer. You know less is more. As I said, you know. How do you simplify formats, you know. Don't make. Don't make the user do a scavenger hunt, you know, for

116

00:35:58.270 --> 00:36:23.039

Anil Arora: it's not a mystery for them to solve. Right? I also say there's some cautions to be had with pie charts, for example. You know too many slices, and you lose the message right? So you have to know the data. And if there is something that's sticking out well, and you know, a pie chart can be very easily used to illustrate, you know, so infinite slices. Not very helpful. Use some other way to, you know. Kind of talk about the proportion.

117

00:36:23.040 --> 00:36:47.959

Anil Arora: you know. So the titles to me are really important. I generally start with a header and a footer right? And if I just read the headers and footers, and nothing else on each of the slides. Does it tell a coherent story? Right? Does it guide visually, and so use the visual and the text together that the text is not an enemy of the visual. The text is, is actually quite helpful, and I'll give you a couple

118

00:36:47.960 --> 00:37:12.920

Anil Arora: of examples on that look. So storytelling right? This from now, data presentation to a storytelling. You know the classic story right? There's a you know, you start with a context. You have characters, you build the characters, you know. Then you present a situation, or a crisis, or a dilemma, or some sort of a twist right? Something that's unpredictable, you know. A tragedy to a you know, or a moral kind of you know. And then

119

00:37:12.920 --> 00:37:37.859

Anil Arora: ethical dilemma might be in order to show good or bad characters, and then maybe a happy ending right? Hopefully. Not a tragedy, right? That leaves some sort of a lasting impression. That's the way that the human brain kind of works with stories. Right now, I'm not suggesting that you turn your data into a comedy or thriller or tragedy. But is there a message right? A lot of people will put stuff on a slide.

120

00:37:37.860 --> 00:37:55.879

Anil Arora: make it look really fancy, but I have no clue what the message was right. I say, just turn it around like what is the message, and then pick to see how best to convey that message with all the principles that I was mentioning earlier. So don't make it a twister

121

00:37:56.030 --> 00:38:20.140

Anil Arora: with a lot of mystery, I would say, keep it simple right? Context here really matters if it's a weekly progress report with senior managers. Usually, you know, you have some sort of a sequence and a template already been established. Everybody's familiar with it don't change it every week, right? They're used to looking at things in the top left corner, which is where your eyes usually go in the Western world, and then they kind of move to the right.

122

00:38:20.140 --> 00:38:44.420

Anil Arora: and then he's exact down, and then, you know, across. So keep things simple. Show the variance from last month with, you know, the colors and the arrows that I was telling you about, and so use some of those good principles to demonstrate how it is that people actually go about. So here's a couple of examples, right? You know. So in this slide, you can see the left graph.

123

00:38:44.420 --> 00:39:02.050

Anil Arora: you know, 2 variables. Real Gdp, you know, and in the red line, you know, the bank's policy rate. So you're seeing kind of this correlation, right? This inverse as the economy sort of starts to go down, you know. You see what the bank rates do. And in the right hand side, you know, here's

124

00:39:02.350 --> 00:39:19.450

Anil Arora: you know, I've shown a graph which shows the impact of more expensive imports. You know, post Covid. And and you know the impact on inflation. What's contributing to inflation in this case. It's the demand side. That was, you know, drawing a lot more of

125

00:39:19.450 --> 00:39:40.469

Anil Arora: of that contribution to inflation. Right? So simple. There's my story right? And and, as you can see, I don't share. I don't have any problems with having a good title that takes the mystery out of it. You know what I'm trying to get at. And then I use text to kind of supplement the graph. So next one we'll go to the next slide. Here.

126

00:39:41.370 --> 00:40:05.910

Anil Arora: there we go, you know. So here's another one again. It's intended to, you know, convey a very simple message, right? Economic dependence on household spending. That's what's really driving the economy. But of course, with, you know, debt. So it's borrowed money on household spending. That's kind of driving the economy. And so no mystery. You've got it already. You can read the you know the text, and then

127

00:40:05.910 --> 00:40:26.510

Anil Arora: the graph is now showing, you know, below the line what's what's either decreasing or subtracting versus what's adding in terms of dependence, and then the various sub components. If you want to get at it right? So it's stacked bars, you can see the the various different, and you can see a little bit of color that's drawing attention to a few aspects. Next slide, please.

128

00:40:27.380 --> 00:40:51.999

Anil Arora: again. Here, you know, simple slide. As you can see. You know, you can see kind of a normalized line there you can see the actual data, and then I'm drawing attention. And this one is about Gdp per capita and the impacts to label productivity in Canada not unlike in some other countries as well. Although I think in Canada. We've got a special issue that we've got to contend with, and we're all struggling to see how we can fix this.

129

00:40:52.000 --> 00:41:09.920

Anil Arora: So again, you know, very easy. And then I break down in here the labor productivity components. Right? Next slide, please. Right? Again, these are just illustrative examples. So you know, most of this data is in the public domain. You can see it now, you know, here's a slide

130

00:41:09.920 --> 00:41:34.850

Anil Arora: too much red for my liking, right? So it's kind of telling you what maybe not to do, but it's still got some illustrative, you know. Piece of the headline is good, a lot of text. You can see some of the numbers jump out of the page right? It's showing you about Cpr inflation. And what are the things that are contributing to it? It's showing, you know, you can see the labels at the bottom, too crowded right? You can't really make sense of it. There's a lot of stacking and stuff

131

00:41:34.850 --> 00:42:00.415

Anil Arora: so, but we could still get some good data out of this. So there's a lot of you know, there's things that you can take from this and and and make it even even simpler. So it's not all perfect, right? We we don't all get it right, and, as I said, don't don't perfect it. Sometimes it's good enough. Given the time constraints given the user demands and so on. Look, there's let me move on to the next slide.

132

00:42:01.246 --> 00:42:11.419

Anil Arora: again. I I just, you know, want to be able to introduce some of these these concepts of storytelling. You know about applying that flow.

133

00:42:11.420 --> 00:42:34.810

Anil Arora: The narrative flow to the data products. But don't go beyond what the data allow you to tell. Don't make you know we're not there to, you know, get sensational headlines right in many cases. Guess what if there's no change? Right? There's no change. And sometimes that's the story that things stayed the same, whether it's unemployment, whether it's, you know, the cost of living or

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00:42:34.810 --> 00:42:51.559

Anil Arora: or inflation, or Cpi. So just you know, there's some cautions there. We're not. We're not, you know we're public servants, we have responsibilities that go much greater. I'm not saying that everybody else manipulates it, but they're, you know, they've got different.

135

00:42:51.560 --> 00:43:20.209

Anil Arora: There's revenue targets. There's all sorts of other things. Let me move on to the next slide. Now, there's a there's a lot of other ways to tell, you know stories as well. Again, here's another example of affordability cost of raising a child, and you know what the implications are to fertility. So 2 slides boom! It tells you what the impacts are, and you know, makes it obvious why people aren't having kids, at least one of the major factors, which is the affordability next slide, please.

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00:43:20.300 --> 00:43:39.329

Anil Arora: I'm gonna try and wrap it up here so that we have a few minutes for for questions. You know. So right right kind of format to be able to save yourself a lot of grief, but also to be able to, you know, reflect the audience that that you're dealing with. And so in in many cases, dashboards versus presentations.

137

00:43:39.330 --> 00:43:53.700

Anil Arora: I like placemats and infographics. You know. They're simple. You constrain to a particular format in real estate, and that helps you tell a story in, as you know, an efficient a manner as possible. So next slide

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00:43:55.070 --> 00:44:15.930

Anil Arora: you know hubs and portals again, I mentioned them earlier, you know. These are convening spaces. They're virtual, you know. Bring different thematic across aisles. They bring data from even different sources. But you have to be careful, right in terms of that mashing of data that may not actually be coherent. So there's some cautions to be, you know, to be had here next slide, please.

139

00:44:16.230 --> 00:44:36.529

Anil Arora: You know, here's a an example of the Canadian internal trade data and information hub. Many of you, I'm sure, have gone to many of these hubs and portals, so I encourage you to have a look at them and decide for yourself. Right? What? What makes sense is a clean look what you like. It's giving you information, and you know what perhaps may be cluttered next slide, please.

140

00:44:38.165 --> 00:44:43.910

Anil Arora: You know, here's 1 of of a portal on the Cpi next slide, please.

141

00:44:44.990 --> 00:45:08.159

Anil Arora: You know, videos. And you know, videos are now really important as well. Webinars are really important. So if we could go back to that slide a bit, you know. Here's a screenshot of, you know, a person, you know, explaining. You know the pyramid right? So you can see that sometimes. Some of these concepts are better, you know, kind of explained, rather than just put a static.

142

00:45:08.160 --> 00:45:20.759

Anil Arora: So don't be afraid to use some of those media to help as well. Again, think about accessibility. Closed captioning, you know. Think about those kinds of things as part of your process. Move on to the next slide.

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00:45:22.190 --> 00:45:45.159

Anil Arora: look, capacity building is really important. I mentioned the, you know, joining communities of practice. There's lots and lots of courses. Many of them are available for free apolitical has them, but many other organizations have them Moocs, as well, you know, building those networks and sharing and learning, so don't be afraid to join, and don't be afraid to learn, and I would say, contribute you know, as a quid pro quo next slide.

144

00:45:45.360 --> 00:46:10.900

Anil Arora: please again look! I could have look. Honestly, I teach an entire course on this slide, you know. How do you develop governance for trust? So we're not going to get into a whole lot. But you're going to have to worry about these. You know. You're going to have to ensure that you have the proper processes and procedures. And it's not just a willingness. There's good practices that you have to put in place to make sure that you're protecting privacy, that you're using AI ethically

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00:46:10.900 --> 00:46:35.280

Anil Arora: and responsibly. So. The culture that you inculcate and you and you build within your organization is absolutely important. You know we even have a trust centers. Now with external advisors. So people can see that you're being transparent, and it's not being transparent when everything goes well, it's being transparent when things don't go right. And when you're taking accountability and owning up for things that maybe not don't go so

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00:46:35.280 --> 00:46:39.452

Anil Arora: so while at times, and that happens next slide, please.

147

00:46:39.940 --> 00:47:09.079

Anil Arora: Obviously, if you build it, they will not come right. You have to actually market. You have to get out there. And now it's, of course, social media, traditional media, you know. Optimizing how people can get to you. And you have to start to. Now look at things like client relation management tools that are getting quite sophisticated and understanding your users again. Ethical use. You're not. We're not generally in the revenue generation business, right? So next next slide, please.

148

00:47:10.510 --> 00:47:28.349

Anil Arora: And you know, here's like a few examples where I've literally gone out across the country and done engagement sessions with thousands of people to be able to bring data to them. Tell the compelling story. So you have to go out and then build that kind of engagement and use for the data next slide, please.

149

00:47:29.190 --> 00:47:53.980

Anil Arora: Obviously, if I'm a big believer in evaluating the impact. And then, you know, monitoring and shifting things that work and abandoning things that don't work, maybe they're a little too ahead of their time, so that you can actually invest in things that actually matter. Next slide, please. So evaluate. And so, in conclusion. Look, build, trust through responsible use, tell meaningful stories, but don't push the data beyond.

150

00:47:54.100 --> 00:48:22.950

Anil Arora: You know what they're telling. You know, that data are going to change and are subject to methodologies. And they're a model right of of what? What our approach is at that moment invest in people invest in skills, the governance and marketing. You know that, and our responsibilities go well beyond just putting it out there and saying good luck. You know, we want to make sure that society makes better decisions. Our politicians make better decisions. We make better decisions so that we have a stronger economy and a stronger society next slide, please.

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00:48:24.320 --> 00:48:37.539

Anil Arora: And I think that's it. And so I know I've gone a little bit longer, Alana, but I'll turn it back to you to see if we can have a bit of an interactive session. I hope there's a lot of information there, and I hope that it was helpful to you.

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00:48:38.070 --> 00:49:03.039

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Thank you so much for that brilliant presentation anil. That was amazing. We're going to get straight into the Q. And A before we do that anil. You mentioned the importance of capacity building and networks, and I just want to reiterate for everyone here that we'll keep sharing ideas and challenges long after today's event in the data skills network. And as a special thank you to everyone who's here, I'm excited to announce that we're giving you all access to

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00:49:03.040 --> 00:49:27.710

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: a very practical guide to improving your data visualizations, and he also already shared the importance of using visualizations that work. And this guide is a great opportunity to start implementing some of the broader principles explored today in your everyday work and storytelling to claim your link to the guide. Just go to the data skills network and leave a comment on my post that you'll find pinned to the top of the community page. And my colleague is also just popping a link to that in the chat right now.

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00:49:27.710 --> 00:49:31.830

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: and we'll send you a link to the data visualization guide after the event.

155

00:49:31.830 --> 00:49:50.919

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: But before before we do that. Let's go on to the Q. And a. There were lots of great questions that we've received, both before the event and during via the Chat and the Q&A, so let's get into some of them. And any that we can't get to today, let's continue the conversation in the data skills network.

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00:49:51.334 --> 00:50:08.319

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: One question that came in before the event pre-submitted question. And this was around the preparation. So when someone has completed a data set and a draft presentation. How would they test the narrative to be even more effective and persuasive.

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00:50:08.880 --> 00:50:36.229

Anil Arora: You know. Great question. I'm always a big believer of test. Drive it you know, before you put it out. Now, of course, the significance in the user of that, you know, particular output determines how much time and effort you want to put into it. Right? So if it's relatively low impact. It's not, gonna you know, result in in a big change. It's fairly straightforward. Well, then, you got a lot more latitude, especially if you have the.

158

00:50:36.230 --> 00:50:41.200

Anil Arora: you know, if you don't have the time, and you want to get something out there, you won't have the luxury to do it. But

159

00:50:41.200 --> 00:50:58.089

Anil Arora: if all the reverse of those arguments is true. Then, yeah, guess what? You know better to take a small focus group. I know the old saying, all right. Could your mother understand it? Well, a lot of mothers are very sophisticated. So you know. I would say, you know, try and get a representative.

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00:50:58.673 --> 00:51:23.549

Anil Arora: You know, group that that you can bring like. There's a lot of people. We have recruits, we have new entrants, and it's a great learning opportunity for them. You know people that you can. You put together a diverse group, as diverse as you can with more experience, less experience, different, you know backgrounds and and different skill sets and and and don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to say, look, I'm looking for constructive feedback.

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00:51:23.550 --> 00:51:41.149

Anil Arora: You know what works, what doesn't work, am I clear, does this visual work for you doesn't work for you and the information. You'll be surprised. Don't do it during the moment of a crisis. But do it, you know, when you've got the time and the energy to be able to do it, and you'll be surprised how much that feedback can actually help

162

00:51:41.565 --> 00:51:54.030

Anil Arora: for future projects and future products. Now, in many cases, I mentioned, you know, experimental, you know, many organizations like statistical organizations, will actually put things out for comment.

163

00:51:54.030 --> 00:52:19.659

Anil Arora: and they will call them experimental for that reason to say, Look, we're putting this out. We're still working on it. But we're really interested in your feedback. Right? So even in a real context, you can do that and subject it to much. So don't be afraid, right? You have to

understand the context, you have to caveat it with the realities you have to state your purpose, and then you have to be explicit about what is it that you're learning.

164

00:52:19.660 --> 00:52:38.150

Anil Arora: and then be diligent in applying that those learnings and know that you know what learning evolves? Right? You know, do we still consume information on the web the same way we did 5 years ago or 10 years ago. Clearly not right? So so know that it's going to be an ever learning journey right, know that.

165

00:52:38.810 --> 00:52:57.570

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: That's fantastic. And what you were talking about there with user testing. Another source of data in itself, right? Qualitative data, which is a really great segue into a question that came in during the event from Donna and she asks, Do you have any recommendations for presenting good data stories based on qualitative data.

166

00:52:57.570 --> 00:53:20.370

Anil Arora: Yeah, look, quality data is really really important. I mean, a lot of surveys are assessing people's feeling or what weight they put on a particular aspect as opposed to another aspect. So generally, economic data is more objective. But even in the economic field, right? We're asking for what are your intentions.

167

00:53:20.490 --> 00:53:44.860

Anil Arora: you know, like Banks, for example, will routinely ask, you know, where are people feeling where organizations feeling? Are they kind of, you know, looking at tariffs going up. And so they're now going to hoard things, or you know, before the prices go up. Or it may not be, you know, that may be a very good business strategy to actually increase your inventories, you know, before things go up. But qualitative data can be very helpful

168

00:53:45.000 --> 00:54:06.770

Anil Arora: in looking at, you know, when we do see the quantitative data come in, you can now take those 2 things and say, well, that was, you know, expected things. Things change right are people still as concerned about environmental issues or diversity and equity and inclusion types of issues today as they were, let's say, 6 months ago or a year ago. So

169

00:54:06.800 --> 00:54:31.719

Anil Arora: it's important to know the qualitative measures. You know, what do people think about crime? And sometimes there's a disconnect between what people are thinking is happening and what's actually happening that also gives you a clue to saying, Whoa, we're

clearly not as effective, right? And there's other players or misinformation or disinformation that's having a far greater impact on people's understanding.

170

00:54:31.720 --> 00:54:45.109

Anil Arora: And so it can also help you as a decision maker or policymaker, or what advice you may give to say, Look, you need to do more work on this, because the narrative is getting ahead of the facts on this particular thing. So qualitative data

171

00:54:45.320 --> 00:55:01.729

Anil Arora: absolutely important when used responsibly and in conjunction with with quantitative data. So I do not dismiss qualitative data in any way. Or as a second tier, it's actually a supplement and an important aspect of telling the story.

172

00:55:04.040 --> 00:55:27.639

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: That's fantastic. Thank you so much. And we've had so many questions, so many more questions than we have time to answer today, including unsurprisingly a number of questions on the theme of AI. So let's promise to continue that conversation in the community. But for now we've had just such incredible wisdom from you, anil, and I'd like to ask everyone to join me in giving a huge virtual round of applause.

173

00:55:27.640 --> 00:55:34.190

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: So thank you so much, and, thanks to you the attendees as well for investing in this topic and being so engaged today

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00:55:34.190 --> 00:55:54.929

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: in the name of good data, our team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today. And that's just going to be really helpful in making sure that we can continue to improve our content. And so we really appreciate your responses. You should shortly see that coming up on your screen and on a scale of one to 10, just rank your agreement with this statement. This event was a valuable use of my time

175

00:55:55.850 --> 00:56:17.109

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: while you're responding to that. If you enjoyed today's session, I want to share a few more events that you can register, to join us at again soon, and as a reminder, if you're not available to join live registering for the event always means that you'll get the recording to catch up on demand whenever works for you. So we have coming up how to solve complex policy problems next Wednesday.

176

00:56:17.110 --> 00:56:41.769

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: We also have quick hacks for better slide decks coming up in 2 weeks. Quick! 30 min session with tips and tricks on how to maximize your proficiency with whatever presentation tools you're using and related to today's storytelling theme. Next month we'll be talking about how to be an impeccable conversationalist. So look forward to joining us at those events. And again, my colleagues hopping the links to all of those in the chat for you to register.

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00:56:41.930 --> 00:57:02.030

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: That is all we have time for today. I really hope you found it helpful and just want to say a huge thank you once again to anil. And everyone who's made today happen, and thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules. Keep an eye out for an email coming your way soon with today's recording and resources, and I hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon.

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00:57:02.210 --> 00:57:04.580

Ilana Munckton, Apolitical: Have a great day and goodbye.