

The odd couple: storytellers and data miners



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AT THE CLINTON Health Matters conference in Palm Springs earlier this year, data and how to make sense of it were the highlights of many conversations, both on- and offstage. It got me thinking about how critical interpreting data is to an industry that's growing in transparency. Without someone to turn data into stories, the central points can get lost in translation.

To effectively leverage data to create better outcomes, storytellers need to breathe life into the data that will ultimately drive

change globally. Storytelling is more than just a way to order our world. It is also how we express beliefs and move our neighbors to action. Stories help us take action in a complex world of constant stimulus.

Physicians have long used stories to educate and motivate patients. And we in marketing have seen the power of patient stories in helping guide others down paths to improved health.

But the ongoing challenge with storytelling and data analysis is that a story is most powerful when it's personal—and personal typically means one data point. Talk to any data analyst and you will learn that basing any decision on one data point is not a sound strategy.

But there is a way to build meaningful stories through

data: You need storytellers on your team. Storytellers are well versed in how to leverage elements such as action, conflict, character and conclusion. Working with data analysts, they build story lines out of trend lines, compelling plots out of scatter-shot and rationales out of ratios.

of this. The financial scandal was reported in the news diligently, but until it was connected to human stories—employees who lost their retirement savings, for example—the story had little meaning for most Americans. The personal story was critical to a call for change.

Storytellers can build meaningful story lines out of trend lines and construct rationales from ratios

Storytellers can also build a narrative based on the data that affects change and connects with people on an emotional level. Relevant and impactful data lessons will fail to inspire change if they aren't—well—inspiring. The Enron scandal is a great example

Healthcare is undergoing a dramatic change, and the way that data is put into context will shape how it changes and how quickly. To paint a picture of a healthier future, the partnership of storytellers and data miners is increasingly critical.

**“Those pills make me feel worse...
I don't think I need them anymore”**

Our solutions target the real reasons why patients don't follow prescribed treatment. **Ask us how** health psychology is changing the face of nonadherence.



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