9 Principles of Killer Dashboards

salesforce

Introduction

Simply going with your gut to make difficult business decisions doesn't cut it any more. These days, your strategies need to be supported by data, backed up with facts, and capable of delivering real ROI.

The good news is that we have access to more data (customer data, performance data, financial data) than at any other time in history. The bad news is that it can be hard to find the data that really matters in the ocean of sales and customer information.

Dashboards are an essential tool for making the data that really matters accessible to those that need it. They also allow your team to align around similar objectives, track success in the same ways, and focus on moving the same needles.

Let's take a closer look at the nine principles of creating a killer dashboard.

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PRINCIPLE 1

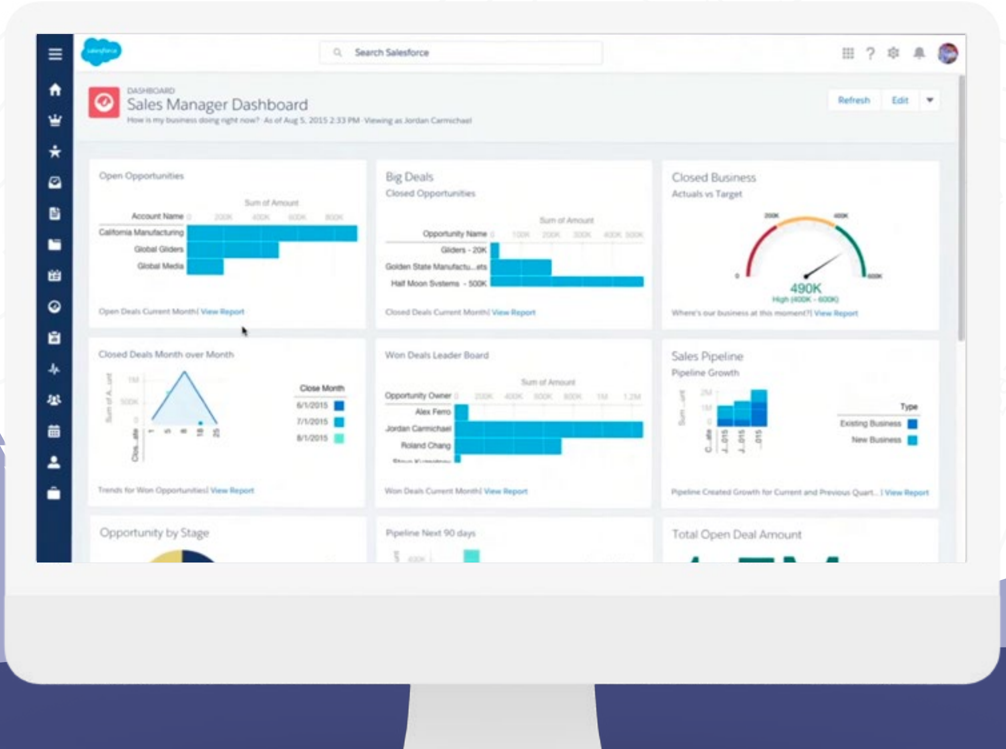
Align Around Dashboards

Each team can benefit from having its own dashboards to track campaigns and projects.

These dashboards provide convenient score cards for how a team is performing at any given moment and allows them to adjust their strategy accordingly.

But it is also important to have one single dashboard that your sales and marketing teams agree on as your primary revenue creation tracker. This keeps all teams aligned across your entire revenue creation operation. This dashboard needs to use consistent metrics agreed to by all teams. It's critical that everyone understands the definition of each metric that you're tracking.

So what might this dashboard look like? A typical Salesforce dashboard has three columns. Column 1 could be used for closed business status. Column 2 could track the sales pipeline and opportunities. Column 3 looks at big deals and top performers. This setup allows you to view your complete sales cycle and a top level overview of your operation at a glance.



PRINCIPLE 2

Map Your Purchase Cycle

One of the most powerful things you can do in your dashboard is to track all leads as they turn into prospects, opportunities, and deals – although your definitions for each stage may differ slightly.

Set up as many stages as make sense for your business, then build a report that feeds your dashboard.

For many companies, their sales cycle is just an abstract concept. They may be able to identify how many leads they have created, but will have no clue how many of those have turned into opportunities and how. While this hazy understanding of the sales cycle used to be the norm, it is now a major liability for a business.

You should be absolutely clear on how a lead is moving through your sales cycle to close. This understanding allows you to identify any weak points in your sales funnel, experiment and adjust on the fly, and automatically see the impact of strategies on your bottom line.

PRINCIPLE 3

Define the Metrics to Track

There are many ways to track specific metrics across your organisation.

Having separate teams track their own metrics can stand in the way of alignment and create all sorts of confusion during meetings. That's why it is incredibly important to spend time defining the metrics you want to track, agreeing on the metrics that matter, and building reports for those metrics that can feed dashboards.

There is little room for subjectivity, especially when analysing your purchase cycle. Everyone in your organisation should be able to glance at your dashboard and pull the same conclusions.

A purchase cycle stage is not an abstract idea. It's a specific state that's defined by the actions taken by the prospect, your sales team, or both. To track your leads and deals through the cycle, your team needs to agree on what specific actions define each stage, then build these into your reporting and dashboards.

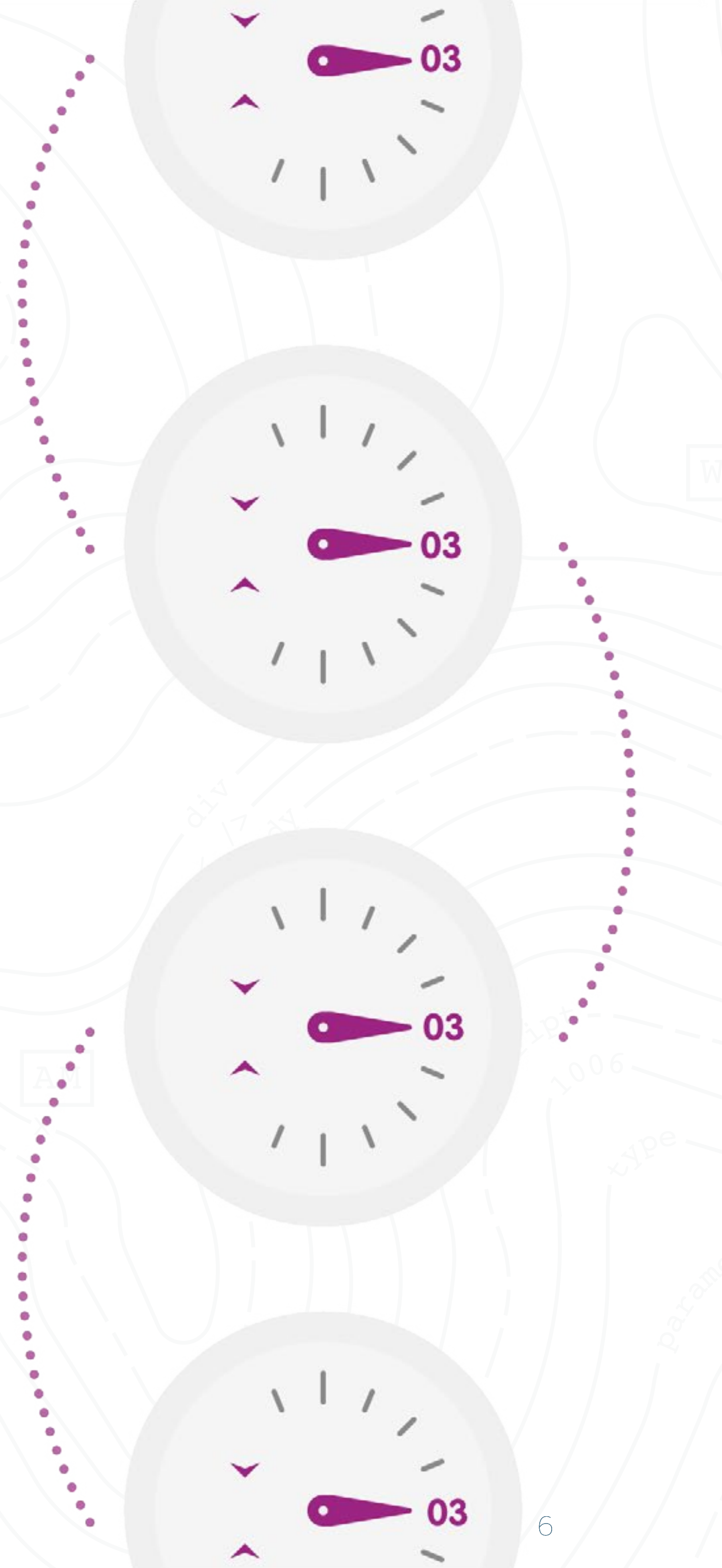
PRINCIPLE 4

Iterate

Nobody is an expert at something the first time they try it and dashboards are the same way.

We've never seen a great dashboard that was perfect in its first incarnation. Just get one out there, live with it a while, get feedback from the people using it, and improve it over and over again – this process is known as iteration. Your dashboard should be a living platform that is continually changing and adapting to better suit the needs of its users.

This iteration improves the functionality of your dashboards, but also ensures everyone has the dashboard experience they really want and can't live without. If you can't easily create new dashboard components, edit them and swap them around, you need a new CRM system. This stuff should take minutes (or you'll never do it and find you're stuck with a sub-optimal dashboard).



PRINCIPLE 5

Drill Down

The first generation of dashboards were just static snapshots.

They showed top-level data for a specific snapshot in time. Today, business is much faster and demands more specific data. Depending on your business, data that is even a few minutes old or data that is too general can cripple your decision-making capabilities.

Your dashboard needs to be a live, real-time view of your data. That means you can click on just about anything and drill down to the underlying reports, data, and customer profiles. If you spot an anomaly or point of interest in your dashboard, it should take seconds for you to click through and discover its source. This functionality means that the dashboard data is not just helpful, but actionable.

PRINCIPLE 6

Social Power

Early dashboards were silos of information. You opened them up, got what you needed and went somewhere else to act on the information.

This made dashboards just another tool in the long list of convoluted and inefficient business process. Today, great dashboards are the center of collaboration for the entire sales and marketing team.

Social turns your dashboards into collaboration engines. It's like having your company's own internal platform for collaboration built into your dashboard. So people can 'follow' a metric or an activity, share it with other team members, comment on it or open a conversation around it. This may sound like a bell or a whistle – but in reality, it's hugely powerful.

Using your dashboards as active collaboration platforms allows you to share information faster, facilitate communicate around results more easily, and quickly gather feedback to iterate and make adjustments on the fly.

PRINCIPLE 7

Integrate Tasks

While old dashboards were static data slices, new dashboards are active productivity environments.

This means that from within the dashboard, you can capture tasks and activities. No logging in and logging out. No sending emails or chasing with phone calls. Social features are just the beginning of what you can do with today's dashboards.

This makes common business activities dramatically more streamlined. Because you can make real work happen right there in the dashboard, that means there's no time wasted jumping between tools and systems. Just take meaningful action right from your dashboard. You'll spend less time on process, more time dedicated to tasks that really matter – like prospecting your next deal and staying in touch with your leads. After all, more selling means more revenue.

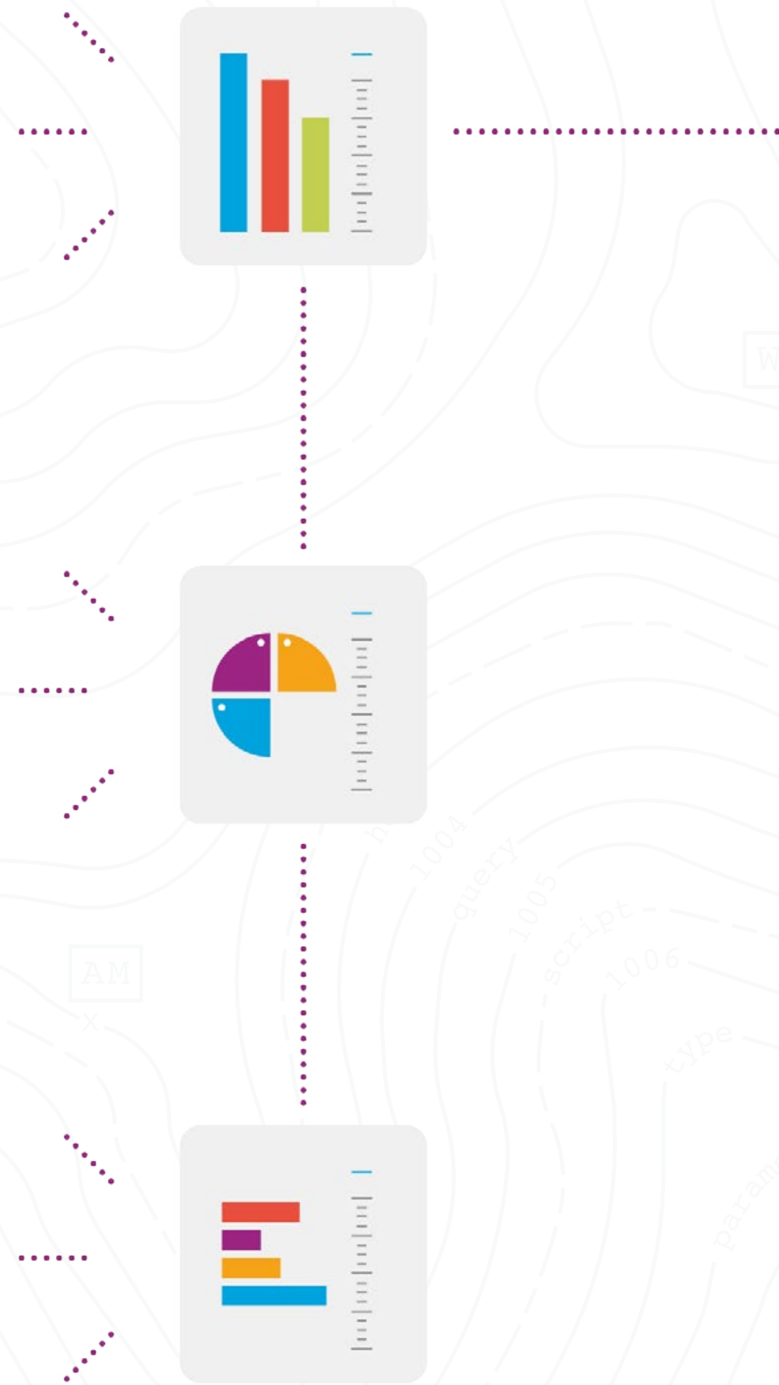
PRINCIPLE 8

Make it Beautiful

When it comes to our daily online tools, looks matter.

We've logged enough time in mind-numbing spreadsheets to know that an aesthetically pleasing and well-designed tool is functionally more effective. It gets used more often – and with considerably more joy. Which means a greater ROI on your investment.

If you want people to really use your dashboards, add a bit of design. Colorful, simple, easy-to-read charts, graphs, and dials make important data jump out from the background noise. And people enjoy them. Consumer apps have proven this design principle again and again – beautiful, well-designed tools get used most. There's simply no excuse for ugly dashboards any more.



PRINCIPLE 9

Make it Mobile

Dashboards are too important to lock to the desktop. You need to be able to access your dashboard wherever you are.

This means tablet and smartphone versions are absolutely essential. A good mobile app should let you do pretty much everything you could do from your desk, including:

- Search for and browse the dashboards you're following
- View any and all charts or graphs
- Share a dashboard or individual chart or graph
- Collaborate with colleagues inside the dashboard
- Access recently viewed reports and dashboards when you're offline

The best platforms will provide you with this functionality automatically. If you've created the perfect dashboard on your desktop, it should appear automatically on your phone, formatted, and optimised to make viewing easy – so you can take action from wherever you are.

The best dashboards don’t just report on revenue generation, they generate revenue.

Dashboards can and should be essential tools for your organisation. Dashboards highlight the most relevant, actionable data, and present them to your team in a beautiful, real-time, format. They help put your entire team on the same page and make educated decisions in a fraction of the time.

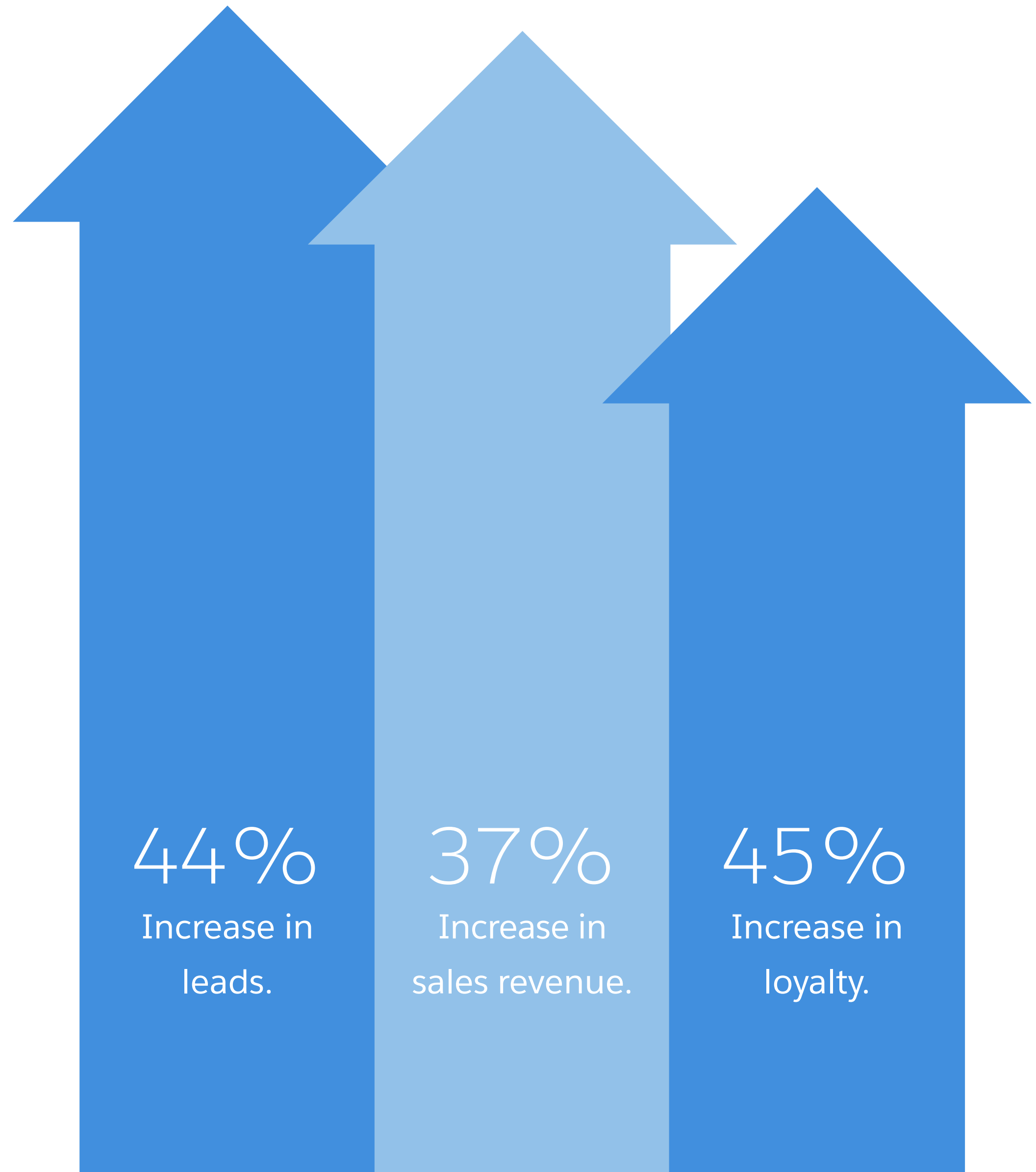
With the nine principles listed in this book you can create exceptional dashboards that will start shaping the way your team operates, and create more efficiency and revenue than ever before.

Cloud Solutions that will make your business more productive

If you want to grow your sales, market to the right prospects, keep customers happy, and connect everything you do, you need an easy-to-use Customer Relationship Management system. Salesforce allows you to store customer and prospect contact information, accounts, leads, sales opportunities, cases and more in one central location to give you a complete view of your customer.

LEARN MORE

Source: Salesforce Customer Relationship Survey conducted May 2015, by an independent third-party, Confirmit Inc., on 4,600+ customers randomly selected. Response sizes per question vary. Note: Performance metrics are intended as a guideline based upon historical results from a sample set of customers. Results are dependent upon many different factors that are customer-specific. Therefore, actual results will vary.



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