Category

Data & AI

KPI, Metrics & Dashboard Design Playbook

A step-by-step method for choosing the right KPIs, defining them so two people can never disagree on what they mean, and building dashboards people actually use to decide.

- Practitioner
- Intermediate
- Template Included
- Workshop Ready

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Overview

A practical playbook for selecting, defining, and visualizing KPIs so dashboards answer real business questions instead of becoming ignored vanity-metric walls. Includes ready-to-use templates.

How many KPIs should a single dashboard actually show?

Tier 1 executive dashboards should cap at five to seven metrics — enough to answer "are we winning" without requiring the reader to scan and prioritize on their own. Diagnostic and operational tiers can hold more because they are visited with a specific question already in mind rather than browsed.

What's the difference between a KPI and just a metric we track?

A metric becomes a KPI only when it is tied to a specific, named decision and has an agreed threshold that defines good versus bad performance. If you can't name the decision it informs or the number that would trigger action, it belongs in a detail report, not on a KPI dashboard.

How do we handle it when two departments define the same metric differently?

Surface the disagreement explicitly in the DEFINE workshop rather than letting it hide in separate dashboards — write both definitions side by side, ask which decision each version actually serves, and in most cases one is measuring a genuinely different thing and deserves a different name, not a different number under the same label.

How often should we revisit a KPI's definition?

Set a six-month review cadence tied to the metric owner, plus an automatic trigger whenever the underlying source system changes (a new CRM, a re-platformed order system, a shift in how refunds are recorded). Metrics silently drift out of accuracy far more often from system changes than from bad initial design.

What's the fastest way to identify dashboards we can safely retire?

Pull usage logs from your BI tool and flag anything not opened in 90 days as a sunset candidate, then confirm with the presumed owner before deleting — in most organizations a third or more of active dashboards clear this bar on the first pass.

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