

DeltaMaster clicks!

05/2008

Greetings, fellow data analysts!

In a song titled "Work" on his tribute album to Andy Warhol, Lou Reed quotes his former protégé saying: "You ought to make things big, people like it that way." Warhol was a famous member of the pop art scene, which is characterized by themes and practices drawn from the popular culture of the masses. It blends art with real objects, often with sharp outlines and repeatable to the point of industrial production.

Good reports have little to do with pop art. Trendy colors are too distracting and elements should be small instead of large so that we can observe and assess them at the same time. What we *can* learn from this scene, however, is that when creation and reproduction go hand in hand, we can build reports more efficiently so we have more time to concentrate on what they say. The tools of this trade are *DeltaMaster's* graphical tables. And when you use them to create information-dense reports, your readers will certainly pay them more homage than Warhol's allotted fifteen minutes.

When reports are well done, they speak a clear message. Plus, your colleagues won't need to sit around and ponder what "the artist" was trying to say. See for yourself!

Best regards,

The team at
Bissantz & Company



DeltaMaster Matinee

27 May 2008, Hamburg

In this morning seminar at the Louis C. Jacob hotel, Horst Meyer from the Bauer Publishing Group and Detlef Birkhof from Blaupunkt will present their analytical reporting powered by *DeltaMaster*.
www.bissantz.com/matinee

Steeb & Partner Live

29 May 2008, Neckarsulm

Steeb, an SAP subsidiary specializing in mid-market solutions, will be hosting an internal trade fair at the Audi Forum. We will be there to present how SAP users can profit from *DeltaMaster*.

Advanced DeltaMaster trainings in June

Since the training sessions in May are already booked, we are offering two extra classes:
24 June 2008 DeltaMaster II (cockpit constructs)
25 June 2008 DeltaMaster III (ReportServer)
www.bissantz.com/dm@w

DeltaMaster@Work basic seminar

29 May 2008, Nuremberg

Create reports that report something!
www.bissantz.com/dm@w

Archive

www.bissantz.com/clicks/en

Death to business charts!

For more thoughts on graphical tables, check out our blog "Me, myself und BI":

<http://blog.bissantz.com/death-to-business-charts>

<http://blog.bissantz.com/graphic-tables>

<http://blog.bissantz.com/industrial-reporting>

Tip of the month Graphical tables in cockpits and analyses

To present and report your business data, you probably use charts to illustrate a certain context beyond mere numbers. Although the purpose of these charts is explanatory in origin, they often end as pure decoration and require a significant amount of manual work. As these numbers change month for month, you have to move the headline to the right position, adjust the colors, avoid overlapping, and manually fine tune many other aspects of the report. While pure tables are easier to format, they don't visualize the data to give your readers a quick overview.

Graphical tables solve this dilemma by integrating small charts alongside the numbers. For example:

Measures	Scenarios			
	Actual	Plan	ACT-BUD	ACT-BUD%
Revenues	15.590	15.113	476	3,2%
Discounts	551	535	15,56	2,9%
Rebates	982	984	-1,96	-0,2%
Net Revenues	14.057	13.594	463	0,4%
Labor Cost	6.659	6.459	200	3,1%
Material Cost	302	292	9,70	3,3%
Margin	7.096	6.843	253	-6,0%

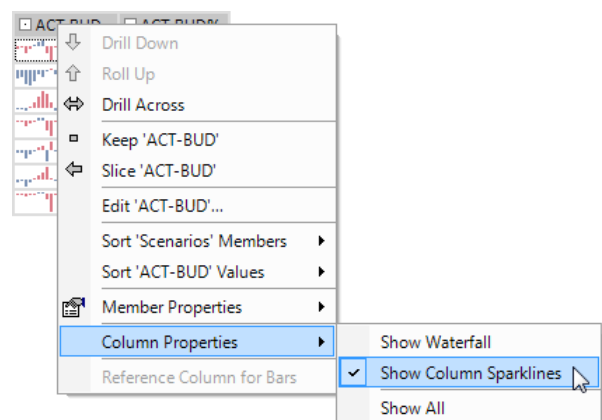
Sparklines from 04/2006 to 03/2007, scaled by cell; 7 rows, 4 columns

This pivot table has a row axis with the measures needed to calculate the margin and a column axis listing the scenarios (e.g. actual, budget and variances).

Beyond the data, the cells contain two types of charts. Thanks to the waterfall chart in the "Actual" column we can understand differences in size more instinctively than if we just read the numbers. The waterfall shows how our revenues (top line) are diminished by various costs and, finally, result in the margin (bottom line).

In the two columns showing variance, the sparklines explain the historical development between April 2006 and March 2007. This graphical context can be very important for the proper interpretation. In the current month, gross margin is about €253,000 higher than planned. Although this news sounds very positive, the sparkline shows that we rarely hit our targets in the previous months and that we still have to make up a large December variance.

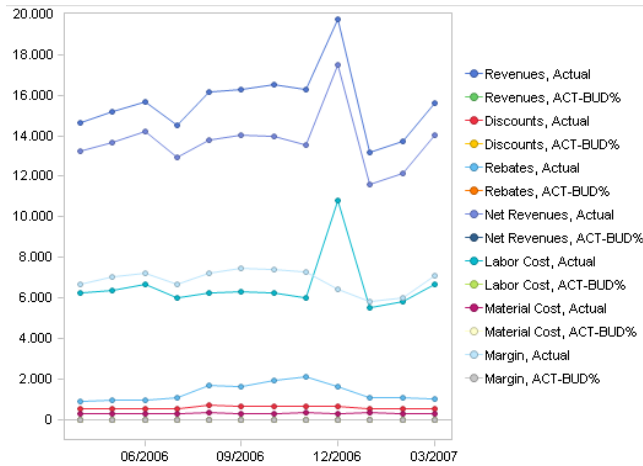
Using the context menu, as seen in the screenshot on your right, you can activate waterfall charts and the column sparklines which are scaled to each individual cell. If you don't want to use these visualizations in a particular column, you can hide them easily in the context menu of the column header. In our example above, we hid the waterfall charts for the variances since these cannot be aggregated.



Alternatively, you could use a table in the *Default* view (context menu, *I want to...* menu) or a collection of pivot charts and *time-series* graphics. Although *DeltaMaster* supports these features, we personally think that graphical tables are the better choice. In addition to packing a high level of

information into an easy-to-read format, graphical tables deal with value changes extremely well which makes them suitable for industrial reporting (see below). Just compare these alternatives below with the graphical tables on the previous page:

Measures	Actual	Plan	ACT-BUD	ACT-BUD%
Revenues	15.590	15.113	476	3,2%
Discounts	551	535	15,56	2,9%
Rebates	982	984	-1,96	-0,2%
Net Revenues	14.057	13.594	463	0,4%
Labor Cost	6.659	6.459	200	3,1%
Material Cost	302	292	9,70	3,3%
Margin	7.096	6.843	253	-6,0%



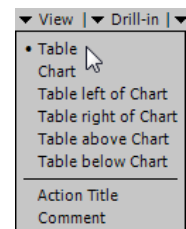
The plain table is more difficult to read and because it lacks visualization. The chart is a nightmare. And compared to the chart on the previous page, both only offer a fraction of the information. When you want to illustrate patterns over time, you need to use graphical tables because the other visualization forms just don't cut it.

Industrial reporting

Industrial reporting transfers the concepts of industrial production into the world of analytical systems. Reports are produced in a series for a large group of recipients. Although each person does not receive identical reports, many elements are similar such as the dimensions on the table's axes or the criteria that are used to create a *Ranking*. Since the authors need to produce these reports in frequent intervals, they shouldn't be bogged down with repetitive tasks. Industrial reporting, therefore, streamlines the report creation process. *ReportServer* (see *DeltaMaster clicks! 08/2005*) is a great help here. Graphical tables also make a significant contribution because these standard, stable elements have predictable dimensions and a "self-building" core that can be used again without any reformatting.

Table views in the analytical methods

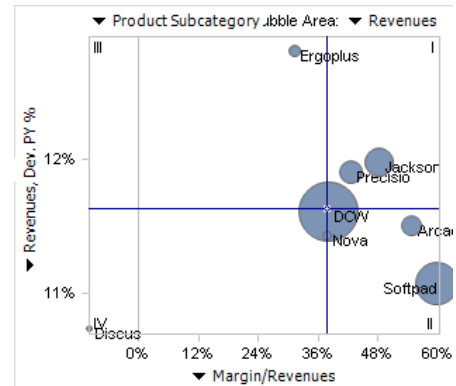
In pivot tables and almost all analysis methods, you can switch between table and chart views. You will notice that a few of these methods display graphical tables as the default setting.



This is the case, for example, with *Ranking* and *PowerSearch*. Horizontal bars make any differences in size even more noticeable.

Top	Customer	Share	Revenues
1.	United Nations Organisation	71,2%	11.096
2.	MCI	11,9%	1.856
3.	Delson	2,1%	322
4.	SuperOffice	1,8%	278
5.	Room and Light	1,4%	216
6.	The Fdne Office	1.1%	176

The *Portfolio analysis* with its four quadrants is also a well-known method. In the screenshot to your right, the different members are clearly labeled and easy to identify. When these numbers change and or there are more bubbles that are all very close and even overlap, however, this chart type has already reached its limits.



In this case, go to the menu and change the *View* to a *Table*. The chart will now look like the screenshot on your right. In addition to visualizing the relationships of the measures on both axes, it also displays the revenues without formatting bottlenecks. (Although this is possible, we didn't display them due to the lack of space. See *DeltaMaster deltas! 5.3.4, feature #15* for more information). The table view for a *Regression analysis* is very similar.

Products	Class	Margin/Revenues	Revenues, Dev. PY %	Revenues
Arcade	II	54,5%	11,5%	7.607
Discus	IV	-9,9%	10,7%	15,45
Precisio	I	42,5%	11,9%	10.377
DCW	II	38,1%	11,6%	87.653
Softpad	II	59,7%	11,1%	41.600
Ergoplus	III	31,1%	12,8%	1.268
Jackson	I	48,2%	12,0%	17.118
Nova	IV	37,6%	11,4%	565

Navigation, which you can use to uncover the causes of variances, always uses graphical tables as the standard format.

Explanation	Margin, Dev. ACT-BUD	Object
100,0%	502	(250) 2007_Q1; Total Customers: Americas; Total Products: All Products; Presentation: Current
-3,4%	-16,97	... (252) Time Zone: Central

Share	Margin, Dev. ACT-BUD	Causing	Compensating	Color
166,7%	-28,29			Silverline
-3,6%	0,61			Antique
-8,7%	1,47			Metal
-54,5%	9,24			Blue Acqua
100,0%	-16,97			Total

Comparator, which helps you analyze how and where two measures differ, uses this concept in the results overview as well as in the individual results (i.e. rules). The rules preview that *DeltaMaster* uses in this overview is very similar to sparklines. For more information on *Comparator analyses*, please refer to *DeltaMaster clicks! 11/2007*.

Rules
(1) Product Category
(2) Color
(3) Time Zone
(4) Product Subcategory

Product Category	Revenues	Rebates
Custom made	115.987 77,8%	35,0% 4.601
Standards	16.917 11,4%	28,7% 3.772
Luxury Division	16.109 10,8%	36,3% 4.771

The renaissance of table designs

Although they contain graphical elements, the previous examples are tables and not charts. At Bissantz and Company, we personally hope that tables will experience a renaissance as design elements (see also <http://blog.bissantz.com/1000-words>). As you can see from the table on the following page, we can use them without compromise. Graphical tables combine the advantages of tables without any of the usual downsides.

Table	Chart	Graphical table
+ simple formatting	– complex formatting	+ simple formatting
– difficult to identify relationships	+ easy to identify relationships	+ easy to identify relationships
+ automatic	– manual	+ automatic
+ robust	– error-prone	+ robust
Ideal for mandatory publications (e.g. stock information in a newspaper)	Ideal for specialized areas (e.g. geographical analysis, consultant reporting)	Ideal for industrial reporting

Guerilla reporting

We know that some of your report consumers would surely object that “we never did *that* before” – which, for the record, is probably the weakest argument on the planet. But be daring and try it! This presentation style has countless benefits for both producers as well as consumers. For the initial strategy, try our guerilla reporting tactics. Here’s your starting game plan: <http://blog.bissantz.com/guerillareporting1>.

Questions? Comments?

Just contact your Bissantz team for more information!