Spotlight On
SVERIGES TELEVISION

MIKAEL STERNER

Sveriges Television (SVT) – Sweden's Television – is the largest television channel in Sweden. At the 2011 European Tableau Customer Conference, Mikael Sterner told us how he and his colleagues in SVT's Audience Research team have used Tableau to improve and accelerate their analyses of television viewing behavior in Sweden. They've also been able to communicate much more effectively with the executives who make programming decisions. "You can sit for hours with the data and eventually you see something, but management are pressed by time. You have to be direct, direct, direct."

TABLEAU:
How do you use Tableau at SVT?

MIKAEL:
We're always monitoring television-viewing behavior in Sweden to make better decisions on how to air programs. I came across Tableau on a website, and I saw immediately that I could do my job much faster and easier.

TABLEAU:
What types of data are you looking at to understand audience trends?

"We largely worked in Excel before, and the big benefit now is that everything goes much, much faster. It's more fun. It looks better."

MIKAEL:
We have people meter data that we get through a TV panel that represents the population in Sweden. It's minute-by-minute data of the night before on all Swedish channels. We also have website data, which is getting more and more important. And we do our own surveys to understand even more about the behavior of our audience.

TABLEAU:
Where do you store your data?

MIKAEL:
We store it locally. We have a company that makes the measurement for all channels, and we store it in our own data warehouse.

TABLEAU:
How did you evaluate this data before you had Tableau, and how has your process changed?

MIKAEL:
We largely worked in Excel before, and the big benefit now is that everything goes much, much faster. It's more fun. It looks better. We do the same thing, but we can do a lot more analytics because there's not so much manual work now with Tableau.

TABLEAU:
What Tableau products do you use, and how many people use them?

MIKAEL:
We have six licenses of Tableau Desktop. There are two of us working with it and four people that are starting to learn. We also have 10 Tableau Server licenses, and we're testing to see if that could be a decision support for our management team.

TABLEAU:
Who are the consumers of your Tableau Desktop reports?

MIKAEL:

It's mostly what we call our "commissioning board"—the people who are deciding what shows to air on our channels. It's about six people who are each responsible for one TV genre, like fiction, news, sports, and so on.

TABLEAU:

How has Tableau changed the way you communicate with this audience?

MIKAEL:

It's one thing to have an insight, and it's another thing to communicate it. You can sit for hours with the data and eventually you see something, but management are pressed by time. You have to be direct, direct, direct. We have learned that Tableau scatter plots are a very good way to communicate. They can see immediately what's in the right spot, what goes well.

"I've found it much more interactive and much more engaging for the audience to know that I can shift the analysis instantly."

TABLEAU:

What are the major benefits of using Tableau?

MIKAEL:

Well, again, it's much faster than working in Excel. That's the biggest benefit. Also, you can be more creative with the data. Then it gets fun, and you always want to look at the data some other way. It's easy to do that.

Another big benefit is that building a report and doing an analysis are the same thing in Tableau. Often it's two different work tasks, or even different work skills, but with Tableau you're building a report and doing an analysis at the same time.

TABLEAU:

Can you walk me through a typical analysis from the initial question to presenting the report?

MIKAEL:

We work with a lot of demographics to see what types of people are watching our shows, or a specific show. Tableau is very good at presenting line graphs of who is watching and who is not watching.

I might have a meeting with the people who are producing a show. They want to know more about the audience for their show and their competition in the time slot on other channels. The normal way for me to run a meeting would be to prepare a presentation, but sometimes the audience goes to sleep the minute they see the first PowerPoint picture because they've seen so many.

I've started to use live data to present directly in Tableau, instead of copying graphs to PowerPoint. I've found it much more interactive

and much more engaging for the audience to know that I can shift the analysis instantly.

It's a very interesting way to work. You just work with the data. You have to build a couple of views to start with, so you know you're on track. Then you can be very flexible and collaborative and just keep answering the questions that are coming from the audience. I've heard at this conference of other people that are working the same way, with the same experience. It's impossible to work that way in Excel.

TABLEAU:
What advice would you give to someone who was thinking about rolling out analytics with Tableau?

MIKAEL:
Start small. Just build a couple of dashboards. Show people around you, and they will be impressed. Get feedback from them and just start into it. Don't get started by building a large data warehouse or something. That takes a lot of time in my experience. Just start to work with the data you have.

For me, I had to spend time to understand how to structure data to suit the way Tableau uses data and connects to data because that was new to me. I'm not from an IT background. So, spending that time was key to getting Tableau to work the right way.

And, I also think the education videos on the website are a great resource of knowledge. I really learned a lot from them.

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