

1 One Message Per Chart: Lead-In Headlines

- ✓ Every chart must convey exactly one distinct takeaway; cramming multiple unrelated metrics into a single graphic causes cognitive confusion.
- ✓ Replace passive descriptive labels (e.g., 'Q3 Regional Sales Performance') with active lead-in headlines (e.g., 'Western Region Underperformed by 18% Due to Distributor Churn').
- ✓ An executive skimming the deck should understand the entire strategic storyline simply by reading the chart action titles across consecutive slides.

2 The Waterfall Chart: Visualizing Net Dynamics

- ✓ The waterfall (or bridge) chart is an essential consulting graphic that illustrates how an initial baseline value shifts across positive and negative drivers to reach a final total.
- ✓ Whether explaining EBITDA variance or operating cost bridges, waterfall charts clearly isolate the exact variables responsible for profitability gains or leaks.
- ✓ Visualizing dynamic flows demystifies complex financial statements, enabling executives to see which operational levers produce 80% of net variances.

3 Chart Hygiene: Eliminating Chartjunk and Visual Clutter

- ✓ Maximize the data-to-ink ratio: ruthlessly purge 3D visual effects, unnecessary color gradients, decorative clip art, and redundant gridlines.
- ✓ Use contrast and color deliberately: apply a bold brand color exclusively to emphasize the strategic focal point, leaving baseline comparison series in muted grey.
- ✓ Clean, minimalist graphics convey intellectual rigor and professional confidence, directing executive attention solely toward actionable data patterns.