

10k signups. Zero revenue. Great dashboard.

D8A . ACADEMY / RESOURCES / VANITY - VS - ACTIONABLE

01 Two kinds of numbers

Both are real data. Only one can change a decision.

VANITY

- Total signups, all time
- Pageviews, downloads
- Followers, app installs
- Only ever goes up

ACTIONABLE

- Signup to paid, this month
- Activation rate per cohort
- Churn, repeat purchase rate
- Can go down. That is the point.

02 The 3-question test

Run any metric through these. Three noes = decoration.

decision? If it dropped 20% Monday, would anyone do anything differently?

denominator? 10k signups out of how many visitors? A count without a base is a headline.

owner? Who is paged when it moves? No owner means no action, means vanity.

→ The test comes from Lean Analytics. It has aged better than most dashboards.

03 The translation table

Every vanity metric has an actionable cousin. Swap, do not delete.

INSTEAD OF	MEASURE	BECAUSE
total signups	signup → active, 7 days	growth that sticks
pageviews	visits that reach the goal	traffic with intent
downloads	weekly active users	installed is not used
followers	qualified leads / month	audience that converts
revenue, all time	MRR movement	direction, not history

△ COMMON TRAPS

04 The dashboard graveyard

Four smells that a metric is decorative.

always up	Cumulative anything. See also: the keynote chart trick.
no target	A number with no threshold cannot be red or green.
no segment	One blended average hides the cohort that is on fire.
no owner	A metric everyone watches and nobody owns changes nothing.

→ A good BA deletes more charts than they add.