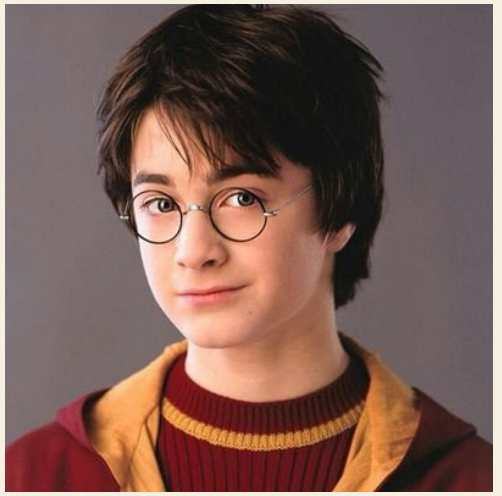
Designing Dashboards That Drive Decisions

The Power of Preparation Before Visualization

Justin Woodall
Energy Engineer, Grifols

How Well Do You Remember a Great Story?

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone



QUESTION 5 OF 5

What is the number of the high-security Gringotts vault that held the Stone?

A Vault 394

B Vault 719

C Vault 713

Answer: C Vault 713

Choose A, B, or C

Why Do We Remember So Much?

We remember the details because they were not presented as an unorganized collection of facts. They were placed inside a deliberately constructed experience.



What made the details stick?

What guided your attention?

The Story Was Designed Before It Was Told

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone



Exposition	Conflict	Rising action	Climax	Falling action	Resolution
Harry discovers Hogwarts	A mystery around the Stone	Clues and challenges build	Harry reaches the Stone	Dumbledore explains events	House Cup and return home

Freytag’s Pyramid: an analogy for intentional planning, not a dashboard formula

The audience never sees the planning

STORY PLANNING	DASHBOARD PLANNING
Audience	**Audience**
Conflict	**Decision**
Theme	**Message**
Supporting details	**Evidence**
Resolution	**Desired action**

The finished product is visible. The preparation is not.

Five questions before you visualize

01	**Audience**	Who is the audience?
02	**Decision**	What decision are they making?
03	**Message**	What is the one message?
04	**Evidence**	What evidence supports it?
05	**Focus**	What can be removed?

Design Should Reinforce the Message

Design gives the message direction.

Audience
Decision
Message

→

Hierarchy
Color
Placement
Focus

Red

Cost, loss, delay, or urgency

Blue

Water, operations, or neutral information

Green

Positive outcomes, solutions, or progress

Dashboard examples, not universal rules. Choose a language that fits your audience.

The reclaimed-water decision

The goal was to support a capital decision

AUDIENCE

Leadership and project stakeholders

DECISION

Whether to support and fund a reclaimed-water project

CENTRAL MESSAGE

Every day the project was delayed, money was being lost

WWTP Water Reclaim Project – Cost, Usage, and Discharge Reduction Overview

100.6K
Projected GPD Reclaimed

Date
1/1/2026 — 10/29/2026

10/13/26
Today's Date

11.14%
Discharge Flow Reduction

Cost of Inaction (Financial Impact)

$0.031
Cost per gallon

$3.07K
Daily Cost

$92.12K
Monthly Cost

$1.12M
Annual Cost

Total Cost of Inaction This Year (as of Selected

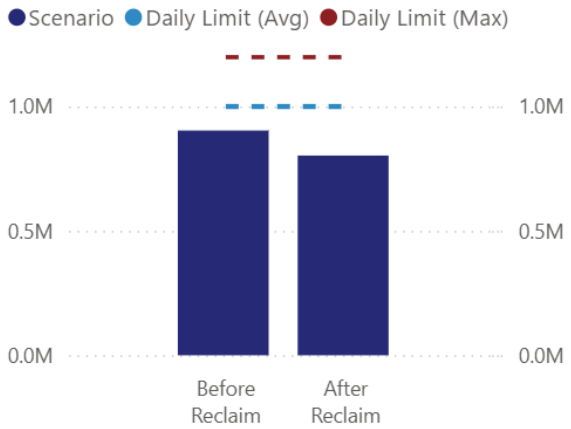


Use the date slider above to see how much money has been wasted up to that day.

Our WWTP process spray systems are currently supplied with city water. A fully engineered reclaim system for this water is in the early stages of design and will require time for engineering development, review, approvals, and final installation.

To avoid ongoing water and discharge waste during this extended project timeline, we are proposing a temporary reclaim system that draws treated effluent from just upstream of the flume and returns it to the process spray systems in place of city water. This temporary approach provides immediate operational, financial, and compliance benefits while the permanent engineered solution progresses through its full design and implementation cycle.

Daily Discharge vs. Permit Limits



Discharge Data (Gallons)

903.47K
Daily Discharge AVG (2025)

100.61K
Daily Discharge Reduction

802.86K
New Adjusted Daily Discharge

704.24K
Weekly Discharge Reduction

One page. One decision. One central message.

Simplicity is the result of preparation

Simplicity is not less analysis.
It is more deliberate communication.

All available analysis

Depth stays in the work

Relevant evidence

Purpose guides selection

One clear message

Attention stays on the decision

The analysis can be complex. The experience should not be.

Pause before you build

There is power in preparation

Audience
Who needs to understand this?

Decision
What are they trying to decide?

Message
What is the one thing they need to remember?

Evidence
What proves the message?

Focus
What can be removed?