

# Microsoft Power BI vs Tableau

**Microsoft Power BI vs Tableau Verdict:** Microsoft Power BI is rapidly becoming the signature data visualisation platform in an age of democratised business analytics. This trophy has been held very firmly by Tableau for several years, and Tableau came to market claiming that ease of use was its primary differentiator. In reality there are now several data visualisation platforms that can claim similar ease of use, and so the differentiator is becoming diluted. Until recently Power BI was a set of Excel add-ons and a cloud service for sharing reports, data sets, dashboards and charts – and it was not particularly user friendly really. This all changed early 2015 when Microsoft announced what are now called Power BI Desktop and the cloud Power BI service. Power BI Desktop is a data visualisation platform evolving at a frightening rate, and providing pretty much all the functionality of the Excel add-ons in a user friendly drag-and-drop, visual environment. It has also embraced the Q&A natural language interface, and even the Cortana speech capability. So the ease-of-use title is slipping away from Tableau, and the firm will have to seek higher ground, possibly with more advanced forms of analytics.

Power BI is the tip of a very large Microsoft business analytics iceberg. It includes the Azure machine learning platform, SQL Server Analysis Services, real time data streaming, and several Azure database offerings. Microsoft also acquired Revolution Analytics, an enterprise environment for open source R analytics. Tableau cannot compete with this, and would be foolish to try and do so. However Tableau is effectively a self-contained data visualisation platform with good scalability and sophisticated visuals. While Power BI can be used as a self-contained environment, it does imply to some extent use of a broader Microsoft architecture.

If data visualisation is the alpha and omega of your business's analytical activity then Tableau is a good option. However, if a broader analytic landscape is being viewed (reporting, predictive modelling, optimisation etc.), then Power BI and accompanying Microsoft products will be much more suitable. And it should be obvious that Microsoft products will cost less in many cases, and provide pretty much the benchmark for ease-of-use.