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Financial Planning using Excel

Forecasting, planning and budgeting techniques

Second edition

Sue Nugus



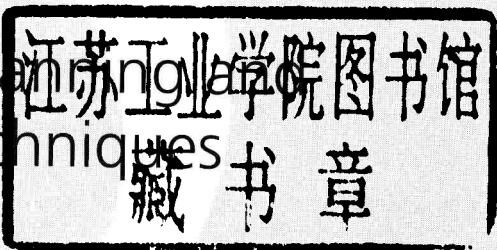
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Preface

The objective of this book is to help financial planners improve their spreadsheet skills by providing a structured approach to developing spreadsheets for forecasting, financial planning and budgeting applications.

The book assumes that the reader is familiar with the basic operation of Excel and is not intended for beginners.

The book has been divided into four parts covering the areas of spreadsheet design for all types of planning, forecasting, business planning and budgeting. Although it is recommended that readers follow the book from the beginning, the text is also intended as a reference book that will be a valuable aid during model development.

The structure of the book has been designed to help financial managers develop Excel skills. The first part on Spreadsheet Design aims to ensure that a disciplined approach to spreadsheet development is undertaken to ensure that whatever the purpose of the spreadsheet, it has been designed in a robust manner that will facilitate updates and enhancements.

In Part 2, the area of Spreadsheet Forecasting is tackled. The focus here is to look at some of the analysis tools provided by Excel that can assist in the forecasting process.

Part 3 looks at Business Planning. A number of different approaches to business planning are considered, including deterministic, stochastic and optimising. Furthermore, in this part of the book what-if analysis is considered in some detail and pivot tables are introduced.

The fourth part looks at Budgeting Techniques, an area that most financial managers have to tackle on a regular basis. The focus in this part of the book is helping users manage modular budgetary control systems, including how to aggregate data from multiple sources.

This edition of the book includes the use of Excel 2007. There is an introductory chapter that explains the key differences between

Excel 2007 and Excel 2003, for example the ribbon menu system. The remainder of the book indicates the menu selections required for both Excel 2003 and Excel 2007 and will indicate new features of Excel 2007 where appropriate. Excel 7 commands are placed in brackets after the Excel 2003 command and are bold.

The CD-ROM that accompanies the book contains all the examples described. Instructions for installing and using the CD-ROM are supplied on the CD itself and it is recommended that readers consult the README file contained on the CD.

About the Author

Sue Nugus has been conducting seminars and workshops for accountants and other executives for more than 20 years. She works with the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, and also with the equivalent institutes in Ireland and Scotland.

These seminars and workshops have mostly involved helping accountants and financial managers get the most from their spreadsheets.

The course on which this book is based runs for management and chartered accountants and other executives at least 12 times a year.

In addition to her teaching, she has authored and co-authored some 20 books on a wide range of IT subjects that have been published by McGraw-Hill, NCC-Blackwell and Butterworth-Heinemann.

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Using Excel 2007

This edition of Financial Planning with Excel incorporates the use of Excel 2007. Excel 2007 introduces a number of new features. However, the most obvious change is the way in which commands are selected.

Ribbon is the term given to the series of **Tabs** that replace menus, toolbars and most of the task panes that were familiar in Excel 2003. The ribbon is located at the top of the screen. The tabs are organised by different types of task. The options on each tab are organized into **groups** and the **buttons** in each group execute a command, display a menu of commands or a drop-down list of options.

Figure 1 shows the ribbon for a new spreadsheet.



Figure 1 Ribbon displayed on a blank spreadsheet

There are three different types of Tab in Excel 2007.

The **standard** tabs can be seen in Figure 1 towards the top of the screen and include Home, Insert, Page Layout, Formulas, Data, Review and View. These will be on view whenever Excel is opened. The Home tab is selected by default and the buttons relating to this tab are then displayed on the lines below. By clicking on the Insert tab the buttons will change to offer the options related to Insert, etc.

There are then **contextual** tabs that only appear when they are needed, and are based on the task being performed at the time. Examples include Picture tools, Drawing, Table, etc.

The third type of tab is **Program** and includes Print Preview, Save, Open and these can be seen in Figure 1 at the top left of the screen.

The symbol at the extreme top left of the screen is the **Office** button and this is used to access the file-related commands.

Throughout this book the selections required from the ribbons and tabs are provided alongside the menu sequences for Excel 2003.

If the functionality has changed or if something is only available in Excel 2007, this will be indicated and explained.

Contents

Preface	ix
About the Author	xi
Using Excel 2007	xiii
Part 1	
1 Spreadsheet Skills for all Types of Planning	3
Introduction	5
Spreadsheet 1: Getting started	6
Spreadsheet 2: Ownership and version	6
Spreadsheet 3: Formatting	7
Spreadsheet 4: Documentation	10
Spreadsheet 5: Minimising absolute values	12
Spreadsheet 6: Separating growth and cost factors	13
Spreadsheet 7: Optimising layout	15
Spreadsheet 8: Arithmetic cross-checks	17
Spreadsheet 9: Charts	18
Spreadsheet 10: Multiple sheets	18
Templates	19
Data input forms	21
Summary	22
Part 2	
2 Forecasting	27
Introduction	29
Approaches to forecasting	29
3 Collecting and Examining the Data	33
Data collection	35
Using statistical measures	39
Summary	45
4 Smoothing Techniques	47
Introduction	49
Moving averages	50

Weighted moving average	51
Adaptive filtering	54
Exponential smoothing	56
Summary	58
5 Regression Analysis	59
Introduction	61
Calculating the least square line	65
Function vs command	68
The graphic approach	68
Standard error	69
Multiple linear regression	71
Summary	74
6 Time Series Analysis	75
Introduction	77
Multiplicative time series analysis	78
A time series analysis model	79
Summary	84
7 Expected Values	85
Introduction	87
A model for analysing expected values	87
Summary	92
8 Selecting and Evaluating Forecasting Techniques	93
Introduction	95
Selecting the right technique	95
Accuracy and reliability	95
Charts	97
Statistical methods	97
Subjective methods	99
Summary	100
Part 3	
9 Business Planning	103
Introduction	105
Approaches to business planning	106
Summary	112

10	Developing a Financial Plan	113
	Introduction	115
	The model	115
	Getting started	117
	Developing the Profit and Loss Account	117
	Developing the Profit and Loss Appropriation Account	121
	Developing the balance sheet	122
	Funds flow statement	124
	Ratio analysis	125
	Cash flow statement	126
	Summary	127
11	Business Plans	129
	Introduction	131
	Capital investment appraisal	131
	Developing a capital investment appraisal plan	133
	Learning curve costing	139
	Break-even analysis	142
	Economic order quantities	144
	Sales campaign appraisal	146
	Summary	149
12	What-if Analysis	151
	Introduction	153
	Three approaches to what-if analysis	154
	Summary	164
13	Pivot Tables	167
	Introduction	169
	Creating a Pivot Table in Excel 2003	169
	Pivot Tables using Excel 2007	175
	Summary	179
14	Risk Analysis	181
	Introduction	183
	Preparing a plan for risk analysis	184
	Incorporating the RAND function	186
	The results worksheet	187
	Frequency distribution	189
	Using the risk analysis model	190
	Summary	191

Part 4	
15 Budgeting	195
Introduction	197
Scope of budgeting	197
Benefits of budgeting	198
Different approaches to budgeting	198
Budget preparation	200
Spreadsheets for budgets	201
Summary	201
16 A Spreadsheet Budgeting System	203
Introduction	205
Preparing the budget template	206
Preparing the actual template	206
Preparing the variance report template	208
Preparing the year-to-date report template	209
Summary	211
17 Consolidating Data	213
Introduction	215
Using the CONSOLIDATE command	215
Summary	219
Index	221



Part 1



Spreadsheet Skills for all Types of Planning

The most popularly claimed pitfall of planning concerns commitment. The assumption is that with the support and participation of the top management, all will be well. But the questions must be asked: well with what and well for whom? For planners? To be sure. But for the organisation?

–Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, 1994.

Introduction

Whether a spreadsheet is being developed as a forecasting plan, a profit and loss account or a marketing plan, it is essential that due care and attention be given to the design and structure of the plan. Establishing some rules as to how all the spreadsheets in a department or organisation are developed enables different people to look at different plans and feel familiar with the layout, style, reports, charts, etc. This is similar to the way users feel familiar with software applications that have a common interface such as those in the Microsoft Office suite of products.

The objectives of good design in spreadsheet terms are exactly the same as those required for any other software development:

- To ensure that the spreadsheet is as error free as possible.
- To ensure that the spreadsheet can be used without much training or control.
- To minimise the work required to enhance or change the spreadsheet.

If care is taken to ensure sound structure and good design, a spreadsheet will be straightforward to develop, easy to read, simple to use, not difficult to change and will produce the required results.

The plan developed over a number of developmental stages in this chapter illustrates a variety of aspects of the principles of spreadsheet design and development. The series begins with a plan that has had little or no thought put into its design and layout, and as the chapter proceeds ways of improving and enhancing the plan are identified and explained. These plans can be found on the CD accompanying the book under the names **STYLE01** through **STYLE10**.