SumProduct

SumProduct turned three

at the end of January. Personally, I can't believe it – the time seems to have flown by so quickly. And we have already turned three with our newsletters. This month, we look at the DATEDIF function, calculation issues with tables and another way to mess with an unfortunate colleague's spreadsheet. If you'd like to suggest future topics for discussion, please drop us a line at contact@sumproduct.com – we don't bite!

Liam Bastick, Managing Director, SumProduct

SumProduct is pleased to announce that our MD, Liam Bastick, has been re-awarded Microsoft's Most Valuable Professional (MVP) award for Excel for 2013.

This award recognises exceptional technical community leaders from around the world who voluntarily share their high quality, real world expertise with others. Microsoft MVPs are a highly select group of experts representing technology's best and brightest who share a deep commitment to community and a willingness to help others. Worldwide, there are over 100 million participants in technical communities; of these participants, there are fewer than 4,000 active Microsoft MVPs. In Excel, c.80 people have received this award.

Microsoft's MVP Award evaluates technical expertise and voluntary community contributions for the past year, considering the quality, quantity and level of impact of contributions. It's a difficult award to attain and just as difficult to retain.

At SumProduct, you can rely on our experience.

Formulae not to be mentioned in polite conversation #2: DATEDIF

Following on from last month's newsletter, here is another useful undocumented function in Excel:

DATEDIF is one of several Excel date functions that can be used to calculate the number of days between two dates, which in this case, can also be performed by simply subtracting one date from another. However, it can also be used to calculate the number of complete months or years.

To use DATEDIF you must type the function in manually; it will not appear to be recognised by Excel. Indeed, although this function is available in all versions of Excel since Excel 95, it has been documented in Microsoft's Help file once only, in Excel 2000. Fellow MVP Chip Pearson refers to DATEDIF as "...the drunk cousin of the Formula family...".

The syntax for the DATEDIF function is:

```
=DATEIF(start_date,end_date,"interval")
```

The function has three arguments that need to be entered as part of the function:

- **Start_date** – Required, this is the start date of the chosen time period;
- **End_date** – Also required, this is the end date of the chosen time period; and
- **"Interval"** – This must also be entered and mandates whether the function should return the number of days ("d"), complete months ("m") or complete years ("y") between the two dates specified. The syntax for the interval is strict: the letters must be entered between inverted commas.

In fact, the Interval argument can also contain a combination of days, months and years in order to increase the variety of answers returned by the function. For example:

- **"ym"** – calculates the number of complete months between two dates as if the dates were in the same year;
- **"yd"** – calculates the number of days between two dates as if the dates were in the same year; and
- **"md"** – calculates the number of days between two dates as if the dates were in the same month and year.

Watch out for two common error messages with this function:

- **#VALUE!** appears in the answer cell If one of DATEDIF's arguments is not a valid date (e.g. the date was entered as text); and
- **#NUM!** occurs in the result cell if the Start_date is larger (i.e. later in the year) than the End_date argument.

You can find more on dates at http://www.sumproduct.com/thought/asking-for-a-date.

Each newsletter, we'd like to introduce you to three useful keystrokes you may or may not be aware of. Whether you're an avid mouse user or a cool keyboard cat, these are suggested as useful Excel shortcuts. This month we focus on numbers:

Keystroke	What it does
Key Strokes	
CTRL + 1	Shortcut to the 'Format Cells' dialog box.
CTRL + SHIFT + 3 (or 4, 5 or 6)	Shortcut to format numbers to appear as dates (or currencies, percentages or exponentials respectively).
F11	With data already selected, this creates a 'quick chart' ready for formatting / editing.

There are over 540 keyboard shortcuts in Excel For a comprehensive list, please download our Excel file at http://www.sumproduct.com/thought/keyboard-shortcuts.

Who says Excel can't be fun..?

Be the envy of your friends and climb to the top of the local social ladder with this month's trick. Or maybe not. There's a little known setting in Excel ("right-to-left") that swaps spreadsheets round when you open a file:
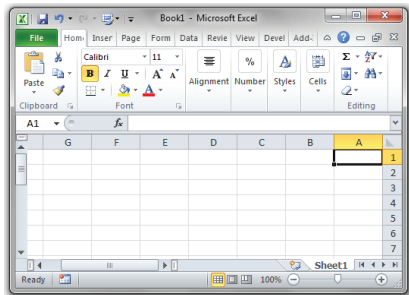
In Excel 97-2003, the option can be selected via Tools -> Options -> International tab.

In Excel 2007 onwards, the option can selected by right clicking on the Quick Access Toolbar and choosing Customize Quick Access Toolbar… Select 'All Commands' In the 'Choose commands from' dropdown, select 'Right to Left Document', click on 'Add' and press 'OK'.

Also, in Excel 2010 you can also change it in the user interface: File -> Options… Advanced -> Display section.

Excel Gotchas

Excel is an incredibly user-friendly piece of software, frequently used by many finance professionals. However, there are glitches and here's one that affects Excel 2007 onwards:

- In a blank workbook, ensure the 'Calculation' settings are set to 'Automatic'.
- Enter =MAX(A4:A5) in cell A1
- Enter =A1 in cell A2
- Insert a Table with a header row (row 3) in cells A3:A5
- Label cell A3 "Summation"
- In cells A4 and A5 enter the values '1' and '2' respectively
- Cells A1 and A2 should now both be displaying the value '2'
- Type the value '3' into cell A6
- Confirm one of the key properties of a Table: the Table has automatically been extended
- The formula in A1 has now changed to =MAX(A4:A6)
- Cell A1 now shows '3' (correctly)
- Cell A2 has not recalculated properly, as it still shows the value '2' F9 does not fix this but CTRL + ALT + F9 will.

CONCLUSION: *Always* create a Table first and then write formulae that refer to it *afterwards*. Find out more about Tables at http://www.sumproduct.com/thought/tables.

Why SumProduct..?

We have and use some of the most experienced modellers around. We pride ourselves that the team you meet is the team that will actually work on your project (subject to timing). All of our consultants, modellers and trainers have at least 10 years' experience, yet we remain competitive not only on ideas, quality and timing, but pricing too.

With associates in the accounting, banking, tax and training sectors, SumProduct is well-placed to provide you with first class, fully integrated, consulting services. Feel confident you can discuss your business needs with us.

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SumProduct offers a wide range of training courses, aimed at finance professionals and budding Excel experts. Courses include Excel Tricks & Tips, Financial Modelling 101, Introduction to Forecasting and M&A Modelling.

Check out our more popular courses in our training brochure:

Email us at training@sumproduct.com for a copy or download it directly from: http://www.sumproduct.com/training.

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M&A Modelling 5th - 6th March

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M&A Modelling 8th - 11th April

Brisbane:
Valuations Modelling 15th April;
M&A Modelling 16th - 17th April

Sydney:
Valuations Modelling 1st May;
M&A Modelling 2nd – 3rd May

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- Model reviews / audits for internal and external purposes
- M&A work
- Model scoping
- Project finance
- Real options analysis
- Refinancing / restructuring
- Strategic modelling
- Valuations
- Working capital management

If you require modelling assistance of any kind, please do not hesitate to contact us at contact@sumproduct.com.

Please forward!

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Any questions?

If you have any tips, comments or queries for future newsletters, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Please drop us a line at newsletter@sumproduct.com.