Introduction

Nothing is difficult once you have learned it. That applies to Excel as well, and once you have learned it, you will be able to do things you never dreamed of! You will be able, to make calculations more complex than NASA did when they sent the first man to the moon!

It may sound like big words, but in the case of Excel – or spreadsheet programs in general – it is quite true. Spreadsheets can process large amounts of data and give you the calculation results in no time. And when the calculations are made, you can have them presented as beautiful tables and graphs.

I know of many who are reluctant to engage with Excel because they find it difficult. Granted, Excel is a program that requires some basic skills before embarking on it, and if you have no feeling for or interest in numbers it can appear meaningless. With word-processing programs like Word, you can basically just start typing right away, but with spreadsheets it is a different story.

In return, you can achieve some pretty amazing results when you master Excel at a reasonable level. I have made such diverse things as budgets, accounting, production planning, production simulation, energy accounting and quality statistics in Excel, and as long as it involves numbers, the only limit is your imagination.

Excel is a program that you never quite finish learning about. I have used Excel for many years and have tried most things, and I still find it challenging.

Even if you are familiar with all the basic functions, you will find occasion to continue challenging yourself and find new things you can squeeze out of the program. And when the program cannot perform the tasks you require, it also has an entire programming language, enabling you to make your own small programs inside Excel!

I would think Excel is the program in the Office package which over time has had the greatest impact on the business sector. Word may be far more sophisticated than even the most advanced typewriter, but Excel enables you to make calculations in a few hours that previously would have taken several days, weeks or even years to perform.

Being a “numbers nerd” I find it hard to hide my enthusiasm for Excel. I hope that, after you have finished reading this book, you will also have discovered how powerful a tool you now have at your disposal.

A Small Reader's Guide

If you have not worked with Excel before, I would recommend that you read the entire book from one end to another. You can subsequently use it as a reference. I have tried to arrange the book in a logical manner so you can quickly find a chapter that deals with a problem similar to the one you are trying to solve.

If you have already worked a lot with Excel, you can probably skip some of the first sections if you want to get to the really "cool" stuff as quickly as possible.

The book has a number of progressive exercises that illustrate what Excel can do. Of course you can just read through them, but I would advise you to sit down by a computer and perform them as described. It is simply a much better way to learn, and it allows you to experiment beyond the requirements of the exercises.

I have chosen to keep the exercises very simple, using very little data. These exercises can in some cases appear absurd, but the purpose is for you to understand the various points, so that you can exploit the functionality for more complex tasks. I have therefore taken great pains to avoid involving you in something too difficult. There is nothing worse than having to give up on an exercise because you are stuck. If you get stuck anyway, I recommend that you call a good friend or your clever nephew. There is always someone nearby who has worked with Excel and can help you out.

Many exercises require that you type a few things into the spreadsheet first. It is important that you type in these things exactly as described. If I ask you to write something in cell B2, and you type it in cell C2, you will probably have problems with the exercise later. The same goes for spelling. Always spell words in exactly the same way I did when you type them into the sheet.

When I ask you to "click" on something, it is a click with the left mouse button. A double click is two fast clicks with the left mouse button. If I want you to click the right mouse button, I call it a "right-click".

Buttons and menus that you can / must click are always written in underlined font. This means that when you see underlined text you should be able to find something similar on the screen that you can click on.

If I want you to type something in your spreadsheet, it will appear like this:

```
Type=sum(a1:b3)
```

Now we are ready to start up the program and look at all its wonderful features!