

ACCESS <<<<<<<

By Patricia Cox

The Master Budget Project: Analysis Wrap-Up

In our analysis of the Excel Master Budget project to date, we concentrated on the main data tables as well as some temporary tables for staging data for complex or nonstandard reports. This month we're going to go through the spreadsheet again to look for anything else that we need to design in order to capture other data needed for the project. The plan is to move sheet by sheet through the workbook, looking for any raw data that wasn't included in the tables outlined in the October column.

Basic Data

In a nutshell, this project includes a relatively small amount of basic data that's used to create a wide variety of reports. The Basic Information Sheet in the workbook contains the raw data that's used throughout the project. We've already discussed tables that will store the Product, Material, and Parts data, including variable data. But we haven't yet talked about the fixed expenses in columns N through T of the Basic Information Sheet. We can store this data in simple tables, or we can create places on forms in which to enter the data to use when creating the various reports. The method

we choose for storing the data will affect some of the ways we create the reports. One question that will help us think about how to store the data is how flexible we want to be with the numbers and if we later want to know what was used in the calculations.

Budget Sheets

If we move to the other sheets—the Sales Budget, for example—and click on any of the cells with numbers, you will see that they reference the Basic Information Sheet. The content of the sheets could be considered reports, but we may also want to treat them as raw data and make temporary tables for them because the Pro Forma financial statements use them. The data in the budget sheets are in a form that's called a crosstab. The periods are column headings, and the categories are rows on the left. Sometimes storing data in a form doesn't provide the most flexibility for all the potential uses of that data, so we may want to store the data in a manner that's more effective for a wide variety of reporting purposes. We'll devote a month to the details of this so you can see what I mean.

Analysis Wrap-Up

The Ending Inventory Budget is a little different because it sets up the detail to calculate the ending inventory, which is used in the income statement calculations area of the Pro Forma Income Statement Sheet. That covers all the data in the Excel workbook file. As we have been analyzing the data, I have been making some design recommendations. Next month I'll share with you design documents that I developed from this analysis.

Reader Questions

At this point, I would like to address some of the questions that people have been asking. I have received questions about the section of *LinkUp IMA* that has links to all the Access columns in one place. The IMA website underwent a major design change, and some of the details needed to be ironed out to make the links easier to find. Here are the instructions on how to get to the column links in *LinkUp IMA*:

Begin at www.imanet.org, and be sure to log in. Under the Groups & Networking menu, select *LinkUp IMA*. On the next page that comes up, select the

link to continue to the *LinkUp IMA* site. Once there, go to the Groups dropdown menu at the top of the page and select Search For a Group from the dropdown. In the keywords box that comes up, search for “Publications.” Click on the IMA Publications Discussion Group to get to that group’s Welcome page. In the Group Content box on the right, the “Excel & Access article reference” link will take you to where the columns are posted.

While you’re on the IMA Publications Discussion Group page, I encourage you to join the group. You can post questions and join in discussions about this column and any other stories and articles from *Strategic Finance* and other IMA publications.

Another question I get is readers wondering when to use Access vs. Excel. The simplest answer to this question is that you use the tool that allows you to complete your work in the most efficient and effective way. In the November 2008 column, I mentioned several signs that might suggest your work is growing out of a spreadsheet and in need of a more powerful tool such as a database. In the case of the Master Budget, it’s a matter

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of wanting to make it into a system you can use each year as well as the number of products you have. As mentioned previously, if you have only two products, Excel may work just fine. But if you have dozens or hundreds, Access may serve you better.

Keep in mind, however, that sometimes using the two programs in conjunction with each other is beneficial. For example, you’ll see that some of the reports are quite a challenge to create in Access. As we move down the road in this project, there may be times when the best option will be to export a data subset to Excel and do some work in that program. The great thing about this

project is that it gives us concrete cases to explore all of these issues.

Access File

Once we have an Access file to begin working with, that file will be made available in the IMA Publications Group of *LinkUp IMA*. It will be posted in the Reference Workspace area. (Nonmembers who don’t have access to *LinkUp IMA* can e-mail me for the file.) Each month, I will upload the updated database that will include the new concepts we cover. The files will be named accordingly. I will create the files in Access 2007 but save them in a file format Access 2003 users can open. There are a number of nuances to database file use, so please ask questions as we proceed. **SF**

Patricia Cox has taught Excel and Access to management accounting students and other college majors and has consulted with local area businesses to create database reporting systems since 1998. She is also a member of IMA’s Greater Milwaukee Chapter. To send Patricia a question to address in the Access column, e-mail her at kathrynmann@tds.net.