

Productivity Puzzle - are spreadsheets holding you back?

Spreadsheets can be rapidly configured and spreadsheet packages are widely available and inexpensive, consequently their use has become ubiquitous.

In many situations however, there are superior solutions, the use of which could result in significant productivity gains.

Because there appears to be little if any cost associated with an incumbent spreadsheet application and because the direct, quantifiable savings (as opposed to the potential productivity gains) may be only marginal, the challenge is in developing a compelling case for change.



If it's not broken...

Over many years, we have seen a lot of organisations, large and small, who make use of in-house developed spreadsheet applications to record or process operational data and calculate key performance indicators.

An electronic spreadsheet solution can provide a significant productivity boost when it is used to process manually collected data or replace hand written forms, by reducing the amount of time an operator or supervisor has to spend on clerical tasks. And because spreadsheet software is inexpensive and ubiquitous, there is usually someone in the organisation with the skills and enthusiasm to build a bespoke application that is better than the current method.

The problem however is that once established these prototype software applications can act as a barrier to further development and enhanced productivity improvements.

Imagine the situation where the replacement of an in-house developed spreadsheet application with an automated data capture and reporting application, is estimated to save 30 minutes per day of direct operator labour time and 2 hours per week of direct supervisory labour time. Whilst there are likely to be other benefits (e.g. fewer transposition errors, real-time information) these are usually the easiest to quantify.

If this available labour time can't be shown to result directly in additional output, then it's unlikely that the development will progress on the basis of reduced labour input because these marginal savings would probably not result in reduced head count.

Not enough hours in the day...

If however, as a result of having more time available each week a supervisor was able to investigate and implement a project (or improvement) that resulted in increased output or reduced input that easily justified the investment, then it's likely that in this situation, the investment would proceed.

'Time' and 'Investigate' are the key words in the scenario described above. If one hasn't got the time to investigate, then opportunities are likely to remain undiscovered and associated productivity improvement projects, unrealised. It's a classic Catch 22, so what inevitably happens is the status quo persists and people make do with what they've got. Output and input stay the same and productivity stagnates, which is what's been happening in the wider UK economy since 2008.

It can be done (we've done it)

So let's help you migrate from your over dependence on spreadsheets and unlock productivity gains that exist in your organisation.

We can investigate productivity improvement opportunities on your behalf as we have the necessary skills, expertise and experience.

We will quantify the costs and benefits, so you can make sound investments, progress beyond spreadsheets and achieve real productivity gains.

Contact us [here](#) for an initial discussion.



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