



SharePoint and Excel: The Perfect Partnership

This is a book about collaboration; specifically, how you can collaborate with others you work with to get the job done with style and grace. It's a book about how you can take a tool you're probably intimately familiar with—Microsoft Excel—and extend the data you collect there to members of your team. But most importantly, it's a book about how you can solve common business problems with another sort of collaboration: the collaboration of two pieces of software, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft SharePoint.

In this chapter, we'll look at the richness of Microsoft Excel and the enhancements in Excel 2003 that make true collaboration possible. We'll also look at this thing called SharePoint. We'll differentiate between Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server and Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services. We'll explore how these technologies can change the way we work together. And we'll look at why tools such as SharePoint matter in today's business environment.

Finally, we'll examine the interaction between Excel and SharePoint, because when you understand how these products work together, you'll see a whole new world open before you. You'll begin to see solutions to business problems that in the past would have taken a cadre of database administrators and months of programming to solve. You'll begin to see how in a couple simple steps you can not only provide access to information, but also get incredible potential for data sharing.

Before we look at Excel 2003, we'd like to make a disclaimer. Although Microsoft Excel has been around for many years and is probably one of the most developed products on the market, SharePoint Technologies are the new kids on the block. As a result, some of their features are awkward to use, some things you'd like to be able to do are missing, and some things just don't work as well as they should. We'd like to emphasize, though, that this shouldn't discourage you from using SharePoint. In this book, we've tried to point out the awkward places, and whenever possible, we include workarounds for those missing features. SharePoint takes what previously was a convoluted and hard-to-manage process—that is, effectively sharing documents and data with coworkers—and makes it not only possible, but easy and accessible to all levels of users. Combined with Excel, SharePoint has tremendous potential and abundant possibilities. It's worth whatever challenges it presents.