

SAS OTTAWA PLATFORM USERS SOCIETY



“DON’T YOU SAS[®] ME!”: FOSTERING SAS ADOPTION IN AN EXCEL-BASED ORGANIZATION

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PREMISE FOR THE TABLE TALK

- 60 minute open discussion at SAS Global Forum
- **Never** a single way of doing things.
- **Code vs. click**; ‘power user’ data tools vs. Excel
- Different tools = different vocabulary & experience
- Strategies for SAS adoption



WHICH TOOL IS 'BETTER'?

○ SAS:

- Joining multiple data sources
- Implementing conditional logic on a series of variables
- Automated processing/summarizing of data using several changing input sources

○ Excel:

- Performing a calculation using a value that is, say, “2 *columns over and 3 rows back*”
- Sharing data or results with others
- Quickly testing calculations (i.e. being a spreadsheet)



FINDING COMMON GROUND

- The SAS programmer and the Excel programmer speak different languages!

SAS term	Excel term
variable	column
observation	row
merge/join	VLOOKUP()
proc FREQ	Pivot Table
SUBSTR()	MID()



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What are some tasks that one tool performs very easily that the other doesn't?
- What SAS terms/concepts have you found Excel users to have a hard time understanding?
- What roadblocks or challenges have you encountered when trying to encourage Excel users to learn/use SAS?
- What other strategies have you found effective for fostering adoption of SAS?



WHAT'S WRONG WITH EXCEL ANYWAYS?

- Multiple versions of the truth
- Linked/shared workbooks become unmanageable
- Excel is slow; memory/row limits
- Management insists on it
- Difficult to use for database access
- ***“Excel is a yoke of a mind frame”***
 - People phrase projects and tasks in terms of excel



OVERALL STRATEGIES FOR SAS ADOPTION

- Win by *slow* increments
- Be open-minded and leave out opinions and dogma about which tool is 'better'
- Demonstrate the time saved for analysts, reporting
- Share SAS-processed, ready-for-analysis data, rather than doing all the analytical work
- If new to SAS, start small with server then spread out



SPECIFIC THINGS THAT ARE WORKING

- Use Enterprise Guide to engage new users
 - Let them do the drill-down and analysis on processed data
- SAS Add-In for Microsoft Office
 - Users can read/write Excel data directly via SAS
- SAS Visual Analytics was a huge success:
 - Interactive visuals
 - Sharing
 - Can export to Excel, of course

