Chapter 9

Make Calc Spreadsheets Dance for You

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“Advanced” doesn’t necessarily mean “complicated.” With a little practice, OOo Calc’s advanced features will help you make elegant spreadsheets for almost any home or office need.
Creating “Natural-Language” Formulas

OOo Calc can compute any formula as long as the syntax is right. With Microsoft Excel, you have to know the coordinates of the values you want to compute. But OOo Calc has a “natural language,” meaning you can create formulas using column and/or row labels.

Using the file Sales.ods, you will make a “natural-language” formula.

Our original formula in cell E4 was =D4*0.3. Instead of using that formula, let’s change the coordinate D4 to the word Sales, because we are computing sales multiplied by 0.3, or 30 percent. The results are the same.

Using the “Intelligent Sum” Button

Making a “natural-language” formula is fine, especially when you’re working with only one cell, but the Intelligent Sum or Sum button can change a formula for a number of cells at the same time.

For example, if you want to know the total amount of the figures in the Sales column, type “Total Sales” in C15 and change the font to bold 15-point Garamond. Then place the cell pointer on the cell where you want to put the total sales amount. (Changing the font is optional, but it helps your calculation stand out.)
Click the Intelligent Sum button. It shows a blue border around the column with the sales values. You can adjust the cell range by using the arrow key. Press Enter.

You see the Total Sales amount.

How the Intelligent Sum button works.

Working with Stylist and Autoformat in Calc

Next you will work with styles and formatting using the Autoformat function in OOo Calc. In other words, you will design (style) your table to make it more presentable. There are two ways to do this.
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One way is to put in styles manually. Highlight the cell range you want to format, and then select Format > Styles and Formatting or press F11.

Choosing a range to format.

You see the Styles and Formatting box. Click Heading. All the headings in your table automatically change.

The Styles and Formatting box.

Styles output.
Another way to format styles is by using the AutoFormat button. Unlike Styles and Formatting, AutoFormat has its own templates for the whole worksheet. Let’s see how it works.

Highlight the main worksheet. In this case, this is all the cells from A3 to F15.

Select Format > AutoFormat or click the AutoFormat button.
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This displays the AutoFormat box. Here you can choose from several formats. It has a preview feature so that you can easily visualize the output. You can also add custom formats and formatting options, such as the Number Format, Borders, Font, Pattern, Alignment, and AutoFit Width and Height. Choose the Default format and uncheck the AutoFit Width and Height, because you want to retain the original dimensions. Click OK.

The spreadsheet now has a new look.

The AutoFormat box.

Letting Scenario Manager Help with What-If Projections

The Scenario Manager is another useful OOo Calc tool. It is used to make in-depth calculations or to create formulas that include a what-if situation.

Let’s look at our table. Let’s say the Incentive formula needs to be changed because you want to give a 30% incentive for every salesperson who makes sales of $4,000 and more. You also want to note that those with sales of $3,999 or less are not eligible for the incentive.
First, I put the incentive multiplier—0.3 percent, or 30% of a salesperson’s production—under the Total Sales figure.

Next, you change the formula in cell E4. Type =IF(D4>4000;D4*$D$17;0). The incentive is now automatically computed if Sales is greater than $4,000, and 0 if it’s less than. Remember to use a ; (semicolon) as the formula separator. You should also put a $ (dollar sign) before and after the D in D17 in the formula to make it an absolute value. You can now copy the formula from cells E5 to E13 to automatically get the incentives for the other salespeople.

In other words, the formula says the following: If a certain salesperson achieves sales of $4,000 or greater, his or her incentive is the result of Sales multiplied by 0.3. If his or her sales are less than $4,000, no incentive is given.

The incentive multiplier.

The what-if projection.

Final output.
You also want to know who your outstanding salespeople are, so you will make another formula using the what-if projection. If E4 equals 0, it generates an “Amateur” remark in column F4, and “Outstanding” otherwise. So type =IF(E4=0;“Amateur”;“Outstanding”).

Using and Creating Spreadsheet Themes

OOo Calc comes with a default set of formatting themes that you can apply to your worksheet. Click the Choose Theme icon; the Theme Selection box appears. Choose from several OOo Calc themes, and then click OK.

You can't add spreadsheet themes using OOo Calc, and they cannot be modified. But you can change their styles after you apply them in your spreadsheet, in essence creating your own themes.

Using DataPilot to Import and Manipulate Information from Databases Created with Other Software

Another feature of OOo Calc is the DataPilot. You can summarize your data and then arrange it so that you view only the data you need. It works like Microsoft Excel's Pivot Table. However, DataPilot has limitations. For one thing, it has no PivotChart feature. Also, you cannot have more than eight fields in the data, row, or column areas. However, you can use the data you already have to make a simple summary.
Going back to the sample table, let's make a summary showing only the Last, Sales, Incentive, and Remarks columns.

Select Data > DataPilot > Start. This automatically highlights your data.

The DataPilot menu option.

The Select Source box appears. Choose Current selection and click OK.

The Select Source box.
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You now see the DataPilot options box. Place the fields you want to include in your summary in the desired box. In this case, you want only Last, Sales, Incentive, and Remarks. In the Results to box, choose new sheet and click OK.

The DataPilot options box.

The summary is placed in a new worksheet. Now you can view only the data you need.

Sample output from DataPilot.

Mail Merging with OOo Writer Documents and Calc Data

Mail Merge is probably one of OOo Calc's most helpful features. What if you have a letter or email you want to send to all your salespeople? Let's say the body of the letter for each salesperson is essentially the same; the only things you need to change are the names of the recipients and information on their sales performance. Imagine how long it would take you to create all those letters if you did so manually and you had thousands of salespeople. Mail Merge does this tedious task for you.
I made a simple letter, mail.odt, using OOo Writer. Take note of the words that are in bold italic. Those words will be replaced automatically with the data in your sales and incentives table in OOo Calc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Last</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>Incentive</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. John</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jane</td>
<td>Doe</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jack</td>
<td>Frost</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>$7,000.00</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. George</td>
<td>Bates</td>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
<td>$2,300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Bob</td>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
<td>$2,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Eugene</td>
<td>Kirby</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Bill</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>$3,300.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Connie</td>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$5,500.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Camilla</td>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
<td>$1,650.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Charlie</td>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The edited sales and incentive table.

First, you need to tell OOo Writer what data you need for merging. Click the Data Sources button. You see a window containing files for Mail Merge.

The Data Sources button.
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Because the file you need is merge1, click the + box next to merge1. You see the categories under merge1. Click the + box next to Tables; it shows Sheet1. When you click Sheet1, the whole table shows on the right side.

Replace all the bold italic words with the corresponding fields by dragging the field name from the OOo Calc table to the letter. It is replaced by the field name enclosed in angle brackets.

You are now ready to run the Mail Merge Wizard.

The data sources directory.

Click-and-drag fields.
Select Tools > Mail Merge Wizard.

The Mail Merge Wizard gives you an easy step-by-step process. First, select the starting document. You will use the default, which is “Use the current document.” Click Next.

Mail merge step 1.
Now you need to select the document type, which in this case is Letter. Click Next.

The wizard asks for the address list. Because you have already defined the OOo Calc file to use, you will skip this. Click Next.
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You don’t need to create a salutation for this document, so click Next.

The wizard skips step 5 because you don’t need to adjust the layout. In step 6, you have the option of previewing and editing your document, but because you’ve already edited the file, just click Next.

When you click Next, the Mail Merge process starts.

The mail merge process.
In the next step, the wizard asks if you want to personalize the mail merge document. Skip this for now and click Next.

You will save the merged document as a single file, so enable the “Save merged document” and “Save as single document” options, and click Save Documents.
Give the file a name, such as mailmerge.odt, and click Save.

You’re almost done. Click Finish.
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Open mailmerge.odt to view the merged file.

Opening the merged file.

You now have the final merged file. Whether you’re dealing with several dozen letters or several thousand, Mail Merge does the work quickly and painlessly.

Final mail merge output.

Summing Up

So there you have it. You’ve seen how useful and practical Calc can be in several common spreadsheet situations. Keep in mind that the more you use Calc, the more you’ll appreciate and become familiar with its time-saving features.