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Microsoft Office 2003 vs. Corel WordPerfect Office 12

The Matchup Between Two Spreadsheet Packages



Microsoft Office Standard Edition 2003
 \$399; \$239 for upgrade
 30-day free trial
 Microsoft
 (800) 426-9400; (425) 706-7329
www.microsoft.com

Corel WordPerfect Office 12
 \$299.99; 149.99 for upgrade
 30-day free trial
 Corel
 (800) 772-6735
www.corel.com



Last month, we began our head-to-head comparison of Microsoft Office 2003 and Corel WordPerfect Office 12 with part 1 on page 90, where we examined the new features in the word processing programs: Word 2003 and WordPerfect 12. In part 2, we'll continue our office suite evaluation by focusing on the financial workhorses in these suites: Excel 2003 and Quattro Pro 12. We'll then wind up our comparison with a look at the presentation programs: PowerPoint 2003 and Presentations 12.

Microsoft Excel 2003

As we mentioned in part 1, the main impetus for the Microsoft Office 2003 suite was the integration of collaboration, usability, and information management features aimed at using the suite in a corporate enterprise environment. As such, when you first launch Excel 2003, there

really aren't a lot of new features that will jump out and grab your attention. In fact, once you get used to the cosmetic user interface enhancements, which amount to new icons and a sprinkle of color here and there, Excel 2003 essentially feels a lot like its predecessors, Excel XP and Excel 2000.

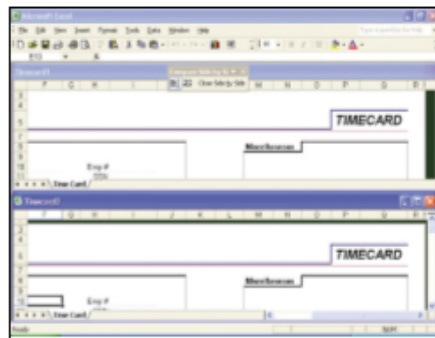
Of course, this familiarity is a good thing because, if you are upgrading from a previous version, you can get right to work. On the other hand, there really aren't enough new features to warrant upgrading—especially if you aren't in need of the overall suite enhancements and are satisfied with the way your current version of Excel works.

Now, if you do make the move to Excel 2003, once you actually begin using it to create spreadsheets you'll discover

its enhancements and new features. For instance, if you regularly work with multiple spreadsheets, you'll appreciate the new Compare Side By Side feature. As its name implies, this handy feature makes it easy to analyze two similar spreadsheets at the same time in the same window by splitting the screen vertically or horizontally, with one worksheet next to the other. The Compare Side By Side feature also automatically synchronizes the two spreadsheets, so scrolling in one identically scrolls the other so it's very easy to compare the contents of specific cells.

Working with data lists is now a more streamlined procedure with Excel 2003's new List command. The List command lets you mark off a column or row of data by enclosing it with a blue border and performing targeted analysis. For example, each column in your list is automatically configured with an AutoFilter drop-down button, making it easy to sort and filter the data in your list. You'll also find that the List toolbar appears when you select the list and targets many common functions of the data in the list.

When it comes to XML (Extensible Markup Language) support, the version of Excel 2003 that comes with Microsoft Office Standard Edition 2003 will only let you save worksheets in the XML spreadsheet format. The more advanced XML tools—XML Lists and the XML Source



The Compare Side By Side feature makes it easy to analyze two similar spreadsheets at the same time in the same window, along with synchronized scrolling.

task pane, which provide advanced XML creation features—are only available in the version of Excel 2003 that comes with Microsoft Office Professional Edition



2003 or the standalone Microsoft Excel 2003 package.

Even so, the ability to save your standard worksheet in XML format is a pretty handy feature because it provides

you with an alternative means of sharing spreadsheets with users on different computers. When you save a spreadsheet using the XML Spreadsheet format, Excel 2003 uses its own XML schema, called

XMLSS, to apply the XML tags. The XML documents created with the XMLSS schema are then compatible with any XML application that can process industry standard XML.

Other new features in Excel 2003 include improved integration with Outlook 2003 via the Smart Tags feature.

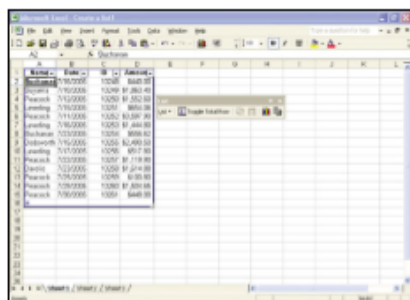
Put Up Your Dukes

Now that we've taken a look at Microsoft Excel 2003's and Corel Quattro Pro 12's new features, let's see how they stand up against each other in the main event.

Features	Corel Quattro Pro 12	Microsoft Excel 2003	The Verdict
Advanced data analysis	The CrossTab Reports feature lets you see patterns, trends, and relationships in your data.	The PivotTable feature makes it very easy to see patterns, trends, and relationships in your data.	Although both programs provide similar features, Excel's wizard makes it easier to compile all necessary data.
Automating tasks	Quattro Pro's macro feature lets you record and run scripts using either of the proprietary scripting languages: Quattro Pro Macros and PerfectScript. However, Quattro Pro provides full VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) support, including the ability to copy Quattro Pro Macros and PerfectScript code to VBA code modules.	Excel's macro command lets you easily record and run VBA scripts. In addition, you can use the Visual Basic Editor for more detailed script work.	VBA is essentially the industry standard tool when it comes to automating applications. Because Quattro Pro offers full VBA support in addition to its proprietary scripting languages, this one is a tie.
Built-in functions	The Functions dialog box uses a wizard approach to guide you through the use of hundreds of built-in functions and takes you right into the Formula Composer, which prompts you for relevant information. Function-specific help is readily available, as are several other function-specific features, on a handy toolbar.	The Insert Function dialog box makes it very easy to access the hundreds of built-in functions. Successive dialog boxes prompt you for relevant information and function-specific help is readily available. A Search panel lets you seek out functions based on your goals.	Both provide you with easy-to-use features for accessing, using, and learning about built-in functions. Considering that there are literally hundreds of built-in functions in both programs, having a Search capability definitely puts Excel up a notch.
Data formatting	The SpeedFormat feature lets you choose from a set of preformatted table templates that include such items as fonts, background colors, alignment, and borders. More granular options let you individually format specific spreadsheet elements such as headings and totals. You can even create a custom template and add it to the list.	The AutoFormat feature lets you choose from a set of preformatted table templates that include such items as fonts, background colors, alignment, and borders.	Both programs provide adequate functionality when it comes to quickly and easily formatting your data for readability. However, Quattro Pro's ability to let you easily create and use custom data formatting templates is handy.
File export (typical formats)	Being able to use the Save As command or the Microsoft Excel Compatibility toolbar to save documents in Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, HTML, or XML (Extensible Markup Language) formats is very nice.	Using the Save As command to save documents in Quattro Pro, Lotus 1-2-3, HTML, and XML formats is easy.	Although using the Save As dialog box is a simple procedure, having a separate toolbar makes the job even easier, so Quattro Pro is on top for this feature.
File import (typical formats)	Importing Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, HTML, and XML files is easy using the File Open dialog box.	Importing Quattro Pro, Lotus 1-2-3, HTML, and XML files is easy using the File Open dialog box.	Both can easily import all the standard file formats, as well as documents from each other.
Graphs and charts	Quattro Pro's four-step Chart Expert makes it easy to graphically represent your spreadsheet data. Use the Advanced Rendering feature to give your charts a professional appearance.	Excel's four-step Chart Wizard makes it easy to graphically represent your spreadsheet data.	Both programs let you create a variety of graphical representations of your spreadsheet data. However, the Advanced Rendering feature puts Quattro Pro way ahead of the competition.
Templates	PerfectExpert provides access to dozens of spreadsheet templates stored locally. A separate application called the WordPerfect OfficeReady Browser provides a more organized approach to accessing local spreadsheet templates. Following the link to the Corel Web site takes you to the Corel store where you can purchase additional templates.	The New Workbook Task pane provides access to literally hundreds of spreadsheet templates both locally and from the Office Online Web site.	The WordPerfect OfficeReady Browser is an awesome tool, but the fact that you must purchase additional templates is a bit of a letdown. The easy access the New Workbook Task pane provides and the sheer volume of freely available spreadsheet templates on the Office Online Web site puts Excel over the top.
Working with XML	Quattro Pro lets you save spreadsheets as XML files but goes further in that it gives you the ability to actually create XML documents using top-level root elements and custom XML tags based on your data.	For more advanced XML creation features, you need to turn to Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003 or the standalone Microsoft Excel 2003 package.	Because Excel is hobbled, Quattro Pro wins this one hands down.



For example, the Date Smart Tag makes it easier to schedule a meeting or display your Outlook Calendar, and the Person Name Smart Tag lets you retrieve data from or add data to Outlook's Contact component. You'll also discover that Excel sports the new Research pane,



The List command brings together several features that make it easy for you to manage lists of data.

which as we pointed out in our coverage of Word 2003, provides access to a selection of online reference material such as the Encarta Dictionary and Encyclopedia.

In the enhancements and improvements category, you'll find that Microsoft has updated many of Excel 2003's basic, as well as statistical, built-in functions. Some of these functions have been improved, and others, which were known to fail due to problems with rounding very large numbers, have been fixed.

Corel Quattro Pro 12

Corel's main focus for WordPerfect Office 12 is to provide greater Microsoft Office compatibility, such that users of Corel's office suite can easily function in a business world dominated by Microsoft's Office products. So, it's not surprising that upon launching Quattro Pro 12 you'll discover the new Workspace Manager. As we mentioned in last month's head-to-head article, the Workspace Manager is a user interface configuration feature designed to reconfigure the look and feel of the main workspace components, such as toolbars, menus, and shortcut keys, to emulate your interface selection.

In addition to letting you move right into the standard Quattro Pro 12 mode, Workspace Manager's options include a Microsoft Excel Mode, as well as a Lotus 1-2-3 Mode. You can see that Corel has

positioned Quattro Pro 12 to offer the same transitional ease to users who decide to migrate from IBM's Lotus SmartSuite that it does to Microsoft Office users, thus expanding its appeal.

In keeping with its support of other spreadsheet programs, Quattro Pro 12 lets you easily open and save files in different spreadsheet formats, including Excel and 1-2-3. In addition to traditional spreadsheet formats, you'll find support in the Open File and Save File dialog boxes for working with HTML and XML formats.

When you launch Quattro Pro 12 in Microsoft Excel mode, you'll find a number of new features designed to help you get right to work. PerfectExpert is a wizard-like tool that will intuitively guide you through all facets of creating and working with your spreadsheet. One very nice feature of Quattro Pro's version of the PerfectExpert is that it's dockable, so when you need to shift your focus to the task at hand, you just click a button and the PerfectExpert window slides out of the way, yet it is readily available when you need it.

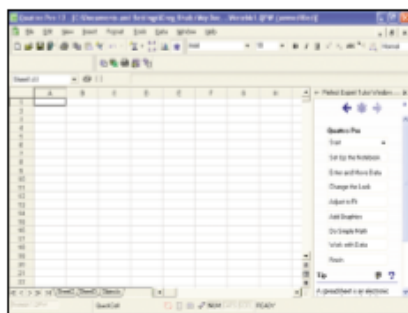
Another new feature you will encounter is the Microsoft Excel Compatibility toolbar, which contains several buttons that give you quick access to numerous helpful functions. For example, you can quickly and easily save files in Excel format, as well as publish your spreadsheets as XML and HTML files. If you need assistance making the transition to Quattro Pro, you can click a button on the toolbar and instantly gain access to the comprehensive Quattro Pro Compatibility With Microsoft Excel Help system.

Beyond its chameleonlike ability, Quattro Pro 12 has several other new features. The most interesting of these is the newest incarnation of the CrossTab Reports function, which emulates Excel's Pivot Tables function and provides you with the ability to compile detailed reports using data stored in multiple spreadsheets. The report then maintains a dynamic link to the data sources in order to receive automatic updates anytime new data is added or altered in any of the source files.

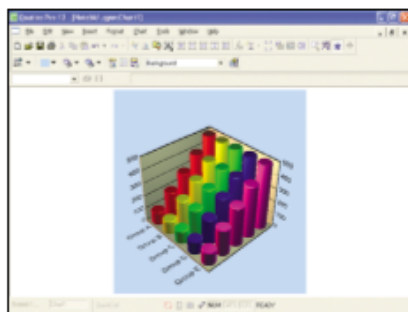
When it comes to working with XML, not only will Quattro Pro 12 let you open XML files and save your spreadsheet files in XML format, but it also lets you create XML files and generate custom XML tags from labels or row and column titles. In addition, Quattro Pro 12 lets you create top-level root elements when publishing your tagged data as an XML file.

As any spreadsheet guru will tell you, Quattro Pro has always provided excellent charting and graphing features. Quattro Pro 12 continues that tradition with a versatile selection of chart styles, 3D effects, and granular property controls that let you craft awesome visual displays of your data. And, to top it off, using Quattro Pro's advanced rendering feature, you can smooth out rough edges of chart items to add a professional touch.

Furthermore, because Quattro Pro has been around since the DOS days, there's no doubt that you'll find everything you need to create basic or advanced spreadsheets. Most notably, you'll discover hundreds of built-in functions, a sophisticated



The PerfectExpert is available when you need assistance, but with the click of a button it slides out of the way to a docking panel when you need to work with your data.



Quattro Pro 12 continues the tradition of producing awesome visual displays of data.



formula creation tool, automated analysis tools, and an ample selection of customizable spreadsheet templates.

Choose Your Financial Software

Excel 2003 and Quattro Pro 12 are great financial applications, and each

provides you with all the tools you need to successfully create powerful and informative business spreadsheets. Of course, there's no disputing the fact that Microsoft Excel is probably the most used spreadsheet program in the business world. However, with its

new Excel compatibility features, Quattro Pro 12 is definitely ready to move right into the Microsoft Office-dominated business world and compete on equal footing. **PCR**

by Greg Shultz

Microsoft PowerPoint 2003 vs. Corel Presentations 12

Presentation Packages Go Head-To-Head

When it comes time to create a slideshow presentation to augment the topic of discussion for a seminar or class, most people immediately think of PowerPoint. Of course, that's not all that surprising because PowerPoint is probably the most used application for creating slideshow presentations in the business world. However, Presentations 12, with its emphasis on Microsoft Office compatibility and new features, is clearly ready and willing to be a fierce competitor. We'll take a brief look at the new features in each package.

Microsoft PowerPoint 2003

Creating slideshows in PowerPoint 2003 is a snap because everything you need to create a powerful presentation is right at your fingertips. Enhancements in PowerPoint 2003 include an improved Viewer, which now provides high-fidelity output for graphics, animations, and other multimedia including the ability to play movies in full-screen mode. A new Slide Show toolbar unobtrusively puts a host of common slideshow tools at your disposal and makes it very easy for you to navigate your

slides when you're making a presentation.

When it comes to taking your show on the road, the new Package For CD tool lets you place your presentation and all of the supporting files on a CD in one step. In the process the program configures the CD with an AutoRun file that will automatically launch the presentation when you insert the CD into a CD drive, without any additional installation. PowerPoint 2003 also lets you easily export a complete slideshow to HTML.

Sadly, PowerPoint 2003 didn't receive any of the

XML (Extensible Markup Language) support endowed on its suite mates.

Corel Presentations 12

In keeping with the Microsoft Office compatibility line of the WordPerfect Office 12 suite, Presentations 12 sports the Workspace Manager, which lets you choose PowerPoint Mode, as well as the standard Presentations Mode. Regardless of which mode you choose, you'll find a nicely arranged interface that makes it easy to access all of the program's features to create professional-looking presentations.

In the export arena, Presentations 12 provides you with many options. In addition to saving your slideshow in PowerPoint format, you can also publish a slideshow in various formats, including PDF (Portable Document Format), XML, and HTML. When you choose HTML, you have the option of saving your animated presentation in Macromedia Flash format. The Show On The Go feature lets you convert your slideshow into a self-contained executable that can run on any Windows computer regardless of whether it has Presentations 12 installed. ■

Trading Jobs

Now that we know a little bit about each presentation program, let's put on a little sparring match.

Features	Corel Presentations 12	Microsoft PowerPoint 2003	The Verdict
File export (typical formats)	Presentations lets you save files in various formats (PDF [Portable Document Format], HTML, and XML [Extensible Markup Language]), as well as the PowerPoint format.	With PowerPoint you can only save files in HTML format. You can't save files in Presentations or XML formats.	If you need alternative methods of distributing your slideshow, then Presentations, with its support for PDF and XML formats, is the way to go.
File import (typical formats)	You can only open PowerPoint files.	You can only open the HTML files you created with PowerPoint.	Considering that neither program provides full support for alternative formats, this one is a tie.
Portable presentations	The Show On The Go feature is easy to use and packs your slideshow into an EXE file.	The Package For CD tool is easy to use and creates a self-running CD that works in any version of the Windows OS.	Although copying a Show On The Go file to a CD is a simple procedure, PowerPoint's all-in-one-step approach makes more sense.