

Making Reports Easier to Read



Try to avoid reports that look like The Bronx from 24,000 feet up. The kind with blocks of numbers in 4-point type. Using the Fit to 1 page option in Excel.

As an alternative, do you spread your report across multiple pages? These are great... if your boss has A 'FILING BARN' IN HIS/HER OFFICE.

Here's a better solution.

Before. Here we have a typical "Has Anyone Got a -&\$\$#@# - Microscope?" report.

After. Here's the same report, using 5 simple ways to make the fonts bigger. A lot easier to read, no?

So try using these tricks with your next report. And score brownie points with the Big Kahuna.

Before

Annual Website Gross Revenue MassiveMarketer.com							
Order Year	Source	Travel.com	Art.com	PC.com	TV.com	Sports.com	Total
2000	New Buyers						
	Banner Ads	\$ 624,474.76	\$ 5,587.91	\$ 209,604.66	\$ 616,878.28	\$ 312,099.18	\$ 1,768,644.80
	New Space Ads	\$ 177,974.94	\$ 990.59	\$ 738,733.32	\$ 572,935.16	\$ 337,378.04	\$ 1,828,012.05
	New Permission Email	\$ 103,211.68	\$ 682.13	\$ 311,236.99	\$ 7,557.30	\$ 601,035.73	\$ 1,023,723.82
	New Miscellaneous	\$ 853,207.15	\$ 1,293.15	\$ 869,810.16	\$ 431,534.55	\$ 983,211.38	\$ 3,130,076.39
	TOTAL NEW BUYERS	\$ 1,728,868.53	\$ 8,553.77	\$ 2,129,385.13	\$ 1,628,905.29	\$ 2,233,724.33	\$ 7,759,437.46
	Previous Buyers						
	One-time	\$ 60,063.88	\$ 8,356.80	\$ 495,118.88	\$ 593,694.19	\$ 409,572.67	\$ 2,624,975.00
	Two or More	\$ 836,864.75	\$ 987.30	\$ 423,305.55	\$ 773,890.88	\$ 882,007.76	\$ 664,857.00
	Total Previous Buyers	\$ 896,928.64	\$ 9,344.10	\$ 918,424.43	\$ 1,367,585.08	\$ 1,291,580.43	\$ 23,289,792.00
2000 Total	\$ 2,655,797.17	\$ 17,897.87	\$ 3,047,809.56	\$ 2,996,490.36	\$ 3,525,304.76	\$ 31,049,229.05	
2001E	New Buyers						
	Banner Ads	\$ 780,593.45	\$ 6,984.89	\$ 262,005.83	\$ 771,097.85	\$ 390,123.98	\$ 2,210,806.00
	New Space Ads	\$ 222,468.67	\$ 1,238.24	\$ 923,416.65	\$ 716,168.95	\$ 421,722.55	\$ 2,285,015.06
	New Permission Email	\$ 129,014.60	\$ 852.66	\$ 389,046.24	\$ 9,446.52	\$ 751,294.66	\$ 1,279,654.77
	New Miscellaneous	\$ 1,066,508.94	\$ 1,616.43	\$ 1,087,262.70	\$ 539,419.18	\$ 1,229,014.23	\$ 3,923,820.48
	TOTAL NEW BUYERS	\$ 2,198,585.67	\$ 10,692.22	\$ 2,661,731.41	\$ 2,036,151.61	\$ 2,792,155.41	\$ 9,699,296.32
	Previous Buyers						
	One-time	\$ 75,079.85	\$ 10,446.00	\$ 618,898.61	\$ 742,117.74	\$ 511,965.83	\$ 2,821,193.75
	Two or More	\$ 1,046,080.94	\$ 1,234.12	\$ 529,131.94	\$ 967,363.60	\$ 1,102,507.70	\$ 831,046.25
	Total Previous Buyers	\$ 1,121,160.80	\$ 11,680.12	\$ 1,148,030.54	\$ 1,709,481.35	\$ 1,614,475.54	\$ 29,112,400.00
2001E Total	\$ 3,319,746.46	\$ 22,372.34	\$ 3,809,761.95	\$ 3,745,612.96	\$ 4,406,630.95	\$ 38,811,526.32	

☞ The "x 1,000" trick.
Redefine the numbers so that they are "x 1,000", or agree to report fewer decimal points so that you can make the font bigger.

• Use tighter typefaces.
Use fonts with the word "narrow" or "condensed" in the font name. These narrower, sans serif fonts enable you to save room. This way you can show your data in a much bigger font.

After

Annual Website Gross Revenue (x 1,000) MassiveMarketer.com							
Year	Source	Travel	Art	PC	TV	Sports	Total
2000	Banner Ads	\$ 384.8	\$ 9.7	\$ 866.9	\$ 253.4	\$ 647.1	\$ 2,162.0
	Space	\$ 296.6	\$ 0.4	\$ 507.1	\$ 863.8	\$ 862.2	\$ 2,530.1
	Email	\$ 261.2	\$ 8.4	\$ 287.7	\$ 497.0	\$ 288.1	\$ 1,342.3
	Misc.	\$ 215.1	\$ 4.3	\$ 419.5	\$ 159.5	\$ 83.0	\$ 881.4
	TTL NEW	\$ 1,157.7	\$ 22.8	\$ 2,081.2	\$ 1,773.7	\$ 1,880.5	\$ 6,915.9
	1x	\$ 594.8	\$ 3.7	\$ 606.4	\$ 518.9	\$ 658.9	\$ 2,382.6
	2x+	\$ 68.3	\$ 3.8	\$ 942.4	\$ 152.5	\$ 4.4	\$ 1,171.3
	TTL PRIOR	\$ 663.0	\$ 7.4	\$ 1,548.9	\$ 671.3	\$ 663.3	\$ 3,554.0
	2000 Total	\$ 1,820.7	\$ 30.3	\$ 3,630.1	\$ 2,445.0	\$ 2,543.8	\$ 10,469.9
	2001	Banner Ads	\$ 481.0	\$ 12.2	\$ 1,083.7	\$ 316.8	\$ 808.9
Space		\$ 370.8	\$ 0.5	\$ 633.9	\$ 1,079.7	\$ 1,077.8	\$ 3,162.7
Email		\$ 326.5	\$ 10.4	\$ 359.6	\$ 621.2	\$ 360.2	\$ 1,677.9
Misc.		\$ 268.9	\$ 5.4	\$ 524.4	\$ 199.4	\$ 103.7	\$ 1,101.8
TTL NEW		\$ 1,447.1	\$ 28.5	\$ 2,601.5	\$ 2,217.1	\$ 2,350.6	\$ 8,644.9
1x		\$ 481.0	\$ 12.2	\$ 1,083.7	\$ 316.8	\$ 808.9	\$ 2,702.5
2x+		\$ 370.8	\$ 0.5	\$ 633.9	\$ 1,079.7	\$ 1,077.8	\$ 3,162.7
TTL PRIOR		\$ 851.8	\$ 12.7	\$ 1,717.5	\$ 1,396.5	\$ 1,886.7	\$ 5,865.2
2001 Total		\$ 2,298.9	\$ 41.2	\$ 4,319.1	\$ 3,613.6	\$ 4,237.4	\$ 14,510.1

☞ Eliminate white space.
Use a single ruled line or bold type to separate parts of a table—not white space. Also reduce row height and column width to save space.

• Shorten copy.
(Body) Re-word descriptive copy to something shorter. Or break it up into pieces on separate rows. Abbreviations work too, with a footnote to ensure clarity.

• Isolate with graphics
White space is nice to the eye, but tough on real estate. Instead, separate summary rows and columns with special borders, bigger or bolder typefaces, or shaded backgrounds.