**[Vlookup is overrated. What functions & features of Excel you really use in your day-to-day work, that is an absolute gem?](https://www.quora.com/Vlookup-is-overrated-What-functions-features-of-Excel-you-really-use-in-your-day-to-day-work-that-is-an-absolute-gem" \t "_top)**

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There are two kinds of people: those who see a hundred dollar bill lying on the sidewalk and immediately pick it up, and those who do not. Perhaps the bill is counterfeit they wonder. Perhaps it is a trick to make them look foolish on Candid Camera. Such people need an “expert” to tell them that one should always pick up hundred dollar bills. Given the richness of Excel features, which kind of person are you?

I use the VBA feature in Excel to perform substantially all the engineering calculations in my day-to-day work. Most calculation needs are repetitive, with trial and error pursuit of an optimized design. Even if I only need to perform that kind of calculation once or twice a year, the productivity improvement makes it worthwhile. And colleagues doing similar kind of work can take advantage of a VBA-powered tool I built, increasing their personal productivity.

At one previous job, I spent idle time automating my job. As a result, engineering productivity increased 100%—two engineers could now handle double the sales volume. Deliverables quality improved, with major reductions in the number of redline markups when customers reviewed our deliverables. Every engineering deliverable was finished early. And we began assuming the responsibilities of other people who left the organization.

[Tatsuo Horiuchi uses Excel to make classic Japanese landscapes.](https://www.boredpanda.com/80-year-old-excel-paintings-tatsuo-horiuchi/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic) Why did he use Excel? He had a copy, and found that its drawing features were capable of doing what he wanted. Excel might not be the best tool for the purpose, but there’s a lot to say for zero cost when you are a recently retired worker looking for an inexpensive hobby.

Color control, check. Able to zoom in and out, check. Draw a sprite large, then shrink to fit, check. Draw any shape needed, check. Print out both finished works and those in progress, check. Sell a digital masterpiece, check.

Tatsuo gave himself ten years to become good enough at making drawings. That was twenty years ago, and he is still at it. And still using Excel.

My friend Thuong measures the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns. Her employer pays a lot for digital advertising. Are those ads paying off?

She uses the Power BI tools within Excel to merge data from disparate sources. Scrub that data for typos and inconsistent ways of entering data. Perform statistical analysis on the data to see if a webpage tweak works better than the baseline.

Her reports go to top management. They must convey a confident story, because “I don’t know” is never a good answer to the CEO.

Are there better tools for this purpose than Excel? Of course. Thuong uses Tableau to analyze information coming from the data warehouse. But it’s all too easy to draw an incorrect conclusion in Tableau because of the way data are aggregated, so she uses Excel on a subset of data to make sure the results are consistent.

My friend Jim used to sell business analytic software for IBM. He built a tool in Excel that replicated what the analytic software did. It was easy to set up demonstration cases relevant to his client’s industry in Excel.

The demo tool used VBA to reformat the spreadsheet models, bring in client data, and remove said data when the demo was over. That way, proprietary info remained proprietary, but the customer’s management team got a good feel for the capabilities of the IBM package.

You might think that IBM would have a back office full of people to build demo software. But you’d be wrong. Jim, a career salesman with almost zero ability to write VBA code, did it all himself. He’d post questions in Excel help forums, and paste the answers into his workbook. I’d get involved a couple of times a year when the various pieces didn’t quite work together perfectly. It’s amazing what you can accomplish using that approach.

My client Joseph runs his multi-million dollar Amazon store using Excel. Various workbooks track profitability of each item sold, inventory levels at Amazon warehouses, and product sourcing.

He uses AutoFilter to identify the colored rows that need immediate attention. VBA code takes workbooks supplied by vendors or Amazon, and integrates the information they contain with the workbooks Joseph uses to run his business.

And oh yes, there are VLOOKUP formulas to copy information from one table or worksheet to another.

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