

THE DEADLY SINS OF QUANTATION

quantation (kwŏn-tā'-shən) *n.* [English, c. 2008, from QUANTitative + communicATIOn.] The act of presenting numbers, such as financial results, electronically or in written form for the purpose of informing an audience.

The Sins of Presentation. . .

1. *Not right-justifying* a column of numbers
2. Basing column width or row height on the *length of the caption*
3. Using visual effects for any reason *other than clarifying, distinguishing, or adding meaning* to information
4. *Unclear, imprecise*, or (worst of all) *incorrect* row and column captions
5. *No title or timestamp* (date *and* time) on printed spreadsheets
6. In a package with more than one multiple-time-period report, presenting *some reports in forward and some in reverse chronological order*
7. Presenting numbers with *no context* whatsoever – no comparison to prior periods, to plan/budget, to competitors, or to anything else
8. *Omitting totals* where they would be appropriate, or *presenting totals* where they aren't appropriate
9. *Shrinking font size* in order to fit a report onto a single page, or creating a "single page" *with the help of Scotch tape*
10. Using a *pie chart*. Period.

The Sins of Behavior. . .

11. Publishing a spreadsheet with a *basic error* that should have been *easy to detect*
12. To print the finished report, requiring your audience to *do more than just click the "Print" icon*
13. "Well, I can see why you reached that conclusion, but that's because you didn't review the whole package."
14. "Oh, is *that* what you wanted? We have all that information – all you had to do was ask."
15. "Gee, no one has ever had a problem with this report before."
16. "I never intended for anyone else to use this spreadsheet."
17. "I know most of you can't read the numbers on this slide, but. . ."

And the deadliest sin of all. . .

18. **"I'm more focused on content than on presentation."**