

7 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MICROSOFT OFFICE 2007

SCENARIO

Professor Johnson teaches general chemistry at a local university. This semester he is teaching a large entry-level class with several different teaching assistants who will each have their own lab session apart from the main lecture. Each TA will be submitting the professor their own set of grades for students but will be responsible to follow a strict lesson plan outlined by the professor.

The thought of creating four copies of his overheads to give out to the TA's is mortifying so he has decided to use Microsoft Word to create all his tests, assignment documents and he will use Power Point to create a group of lesson plans for the TA's so that he can ensure they follow the lesson plans. Following this same track, he decides that using Excel to keep track of grades for each student would make his life easier.

It has been a while since he has used Microsoft Office applications and decides to update to the newest version of Office 2007. The advances in the new Microsoft Word captivated him: from the ribbon at the top of the screen to the ease of inserting custom equations using the equation editor. He created all the presentations he needed and included animations and slide transitions that he could never figure out before, but now he could preview how each change would look without actually applying it. Using Excel has taught him that he could use his grade information and easily create charts and graphs to show his progress based on students grades and see just how effective each teaching assistant was by their own student grades.

At the end of the semester, Professor Johnson was grateful he decided to upgrade to Office 2007. It made his life much easier and less stressful and he has vowed to use these tools as often as possible in the future.

WHAT IS IT?

The 2007 package is the most recent upgrade to Microsoft's Office System of personal productivity tools. The current standard suite consists of the four basic applications: Office Word, Office Power Point, Office Outlook, and Office Excel. The top of the line Office Ultimate suite offers up to 10 different applications. This system has a new interface for the major applications and the traditional menu has been removed and replaced with a "ribbon" of easy access toolbars that contain helpful icon clusters and visual representation of many tasks which create an environment where getting desired results is much easier than in previous versions. The addition of the Office button is also a help- this button includes the items that were stored in the file dropdown menu in other versions such as save, print, open, new, and a list of recently opened documents. The Office button also has a few new menu items such as prepare, send, and publish that are helpful for sharing documents online safely. The main goal of the whole Office system is to decrease the amount of time the user spends figuring out how to accomplish a task and increase the time they have to create or manage.

WHO IS USING IT?

Teachers can use this versatile software system to reach students in several different ways. Using Office Word to type up all assignments and then uploading them to WebCT creates reusable assignments that are easier to manage than folders and large stacks of paper. With the ease of the new 2007 version creating all the necessary documents is an easy charge for almost any user regardless of experience. The same goes for Office Power Point slide shows. Creating a lesson on Power Point using the slide layout themes and the ease of custom animation will help captivate students and create an atmosphere where the student is more actively involved in the presentation. Teachers can also

use Excel for student projects, and keeping track of grades.

and combines them into a package. The newest 2007 version takes aim to help the user accomplish tasks with ease and in a timely fashion.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

These changes made in Office 2007 are important because they enable teachers to accomplish more in less time. The largest difference is the visual interface since the menu has completely changed from previous versions. In designing the ribbon, Microsoft recorded what features people used the most, and clustered them together. Microsoft has created a stronger spellchecker that is global; which means that if a spellchecker option is changed when working in Word that change will be applied to the spellchecker in all other Office programs. Another significant change is the ability to compare two different documents in one window and make changes to both. Another change from the older version is the ability to convert a document to Portable Document Format (PDF), Extensible Markup Language (XML), or XML Paper Specification (XPS). These new formats allow the user to share and upload documents to the web without losing the format or font style.

WHAT ARE THE DOWNSIDES?

The new Office 2007 has a very different layout than other versions which means that getting acquainted with the new layout and the ribbon could take some time. Even though the new layout provides more user-friendly interaction it is a large change from the original drop down menu style and could take users some time to get familiarized with the new layout and navigate with ease.

In addition, some of the oldest computers on campus may not be able to run this version. In addition, many instructors will need to update any materials they have that shows the old toolbars.

HOW DOES IT WORK

Microsoft Office combines the programs needed to help manage the aspects of a person's life

WHERE IS IT GOING?

Microsoft wants to entice users of every skill level to purchase its software and have designed these new versions of Office to accomplish that. In future versions it is feasible to assume that the layout will be similar since the current changes will cue users to re-learn a layout, but several upgrades are most likely going to be made to integrate the different Office programs, which translates into easier use of for teachers. Microsoft would do well to enable publishing to education websites such as WebCT also. This version shows how integrating faculty to use this technology could be easily done.

Ferris technicians are currently testing the new product, and will be working with their customers to develop a roll out plan. Currently, it looks like the College of Business and FLITE will be trying it out this summer.

Please see our comparison chart for the differences between Office 2003 and Office 2007.f

WHAT IMPLICATIONS ARE THERE FOR TEACHING?

In summation, this new Office package will enable teachers to create teaching aids that effectively reach their students in less time. The whole focus is to entice customers with ease of use. Although the new layout might take some getting used to the result is that many more users will be able to create professional looking documents with ease in less time than before and be able to share documents easier and safer than in previous versions of Microsoft Office.

Please watch for campus wide announcements about the rollout of the product.