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Your alternative to Excel may be Excel-like



Users around the world love their spreadsheets, so why not stick with the interface and leverage power in the background?

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Pushing users away from Excel may be an uphill battle.

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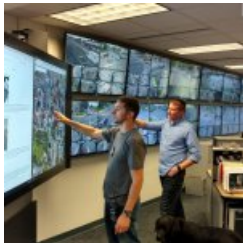
The market is full of applications which are designed to move users' activities away from using Excel to

process and manage data – yet with Excel users numbering around a billion a year, it seems many end-users aren't willing to turn their backs on the trusted stalwart.

Spreadsheets are as old as modern computing itself, and along with a word processor and a basic database, was one of the first apps which every computer user would turn to on firing up their new-fangled Apple II or IBM PC.

Over the years since, Excel's abilities have increased in complexity and breadth, to a point where whole applications can be crafted in a spreadsheet.

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Most users, of course, never attempt to create anything so complex as a standalone app, but many are conversant with macros, pivot tables and complex formulae-creation across multiple workbooks and files.

Little wonder then that many are loathe to ditch their invested efforts in favor of the latest darling, one which has been installed over their heads by an IT department or boardroom enthusiastic for change.

There is a new slew of startups which has appeared on the market hoping to capitalize on this tendency to stick with the sheets. **T-HQ** (<http://techhq.com>)

Hanhaa (<https://www.hanhaa.com/>) recently launched a service which lets users of their IoT (internet of things) sensors pull data into Excel cells, and even interact with devices in the same way. As IoT becomes more widespread, it's only expected that its users won't necessarily be technically-minded – and even mortals can use Excel, after all!

In September 2017, Microsoft themselves announced a developer preview of “streaming functions” for Excel on Office 365, which enable data such as web feeds to flow directly into sheets via custom functions.



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The emergence of Office in its various online guises over the years (Office 365 the latest) has led to one of the Excel's primary historical

disadvantages to being bypassed – that is, the inability for multiple users to access and edit data simultaneously. **T-HQ** (<http://techhq.com>)

As soon as this type of collaboration was available, Microsoft essentially put the last nail into the Access coffin – its **deprecation** (<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Discontinued-features-and-modified-functionality-in-Access-2013-BC006FC3-5B48-499E-8C7D-9A2DFEF68E2F>) away from app-building database coinciding neatly with the company's push to the cloud in general.

In many workplaces, there is still a distinct need for Excel's replacement, especially when functionality needed extends beyond the limits of either the basic user or those willing to learn VB and macro scripting.

Products like 4D, **FileMaker** (<http://www.filemaker.com/>), and SQLite (plus a simple GUI-builder) are ready to jump into the fold.

A German startup, **dashdash** (<https://www.dashdash.com/>) is the latest startup to create Excel extensions well outside the skillsets of most organizations.

The dashdash platform looks and acts just like a spreadsheet, but its "macros" actually connect to the cloud to utilize the computing power of a web app.

This means users can build powerful apps "in Excel" which not only are more potent than vanilla Excel's capabilities but retain the look and feel familiar to (literally) a billion people across the globe.

Whatever Excel's pros, cons and particular
amusing foibles

T_HQ (<http://techhq.com>)

([https://support.office.com/en-](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Fixes-or-workarounds-for-recent-issues-in-Excel-for-Windows-49d932ce-0240-49cf-94df-1587d9d97093)

[us/article/Fixes-or-workarounds-for-recent-issues-in-Excel-for-Windows-49d932ce-0240-49cf-94df-1587d9d97093](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Fixes-or-workarounds-for-recent-issues-in-Excel-for-Windows-49d932ce-0240-49cf-94df-1587d9d97093)), the app is certainly here to stay, at least for now.

Although there might be better apps available that do the same thing and so much more, Excel's historical position means that it cannot be ignored, and therefore probably needs to be embraced as part of any digitization plans.

For those wishing for "something more," the alternatives are out there, but the difficulty will be persuading users out of their comfort zone.

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