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Excel 2007: Shortcuts to Create a Column Chart in Seconds

Executive Summary – How to Create a Column Chart

Charts are an easy way to present data to colleagues and clients. Instead of trying to analyze data, users can easily pick out patterns that otherwise can be tricky. Excel 2007 has replaced the Chart Wizard of Excel 2003 with easy chart options under the Insert tab. While Excel has a variety of charts to choose from, the Column chart is one of the most classic – otherwise known as the bar graph.

How to Create a Column Chart – Real World Example

For example, what if you were challenged to compare how successful products are being sold by 4 different company sales methods. In this example, you're asked to analyze how many sales of Monitors, Scanners and Keyboards you've sold from methods such as ElectroCity, Online, MicroStuff and Wholesale (Figure 1).

You've calculated the total numbers of Monitors, Scanners and Keyboards sold as well as how many sales each method has sold. Let's first create a chart to show each product sold according to each method.

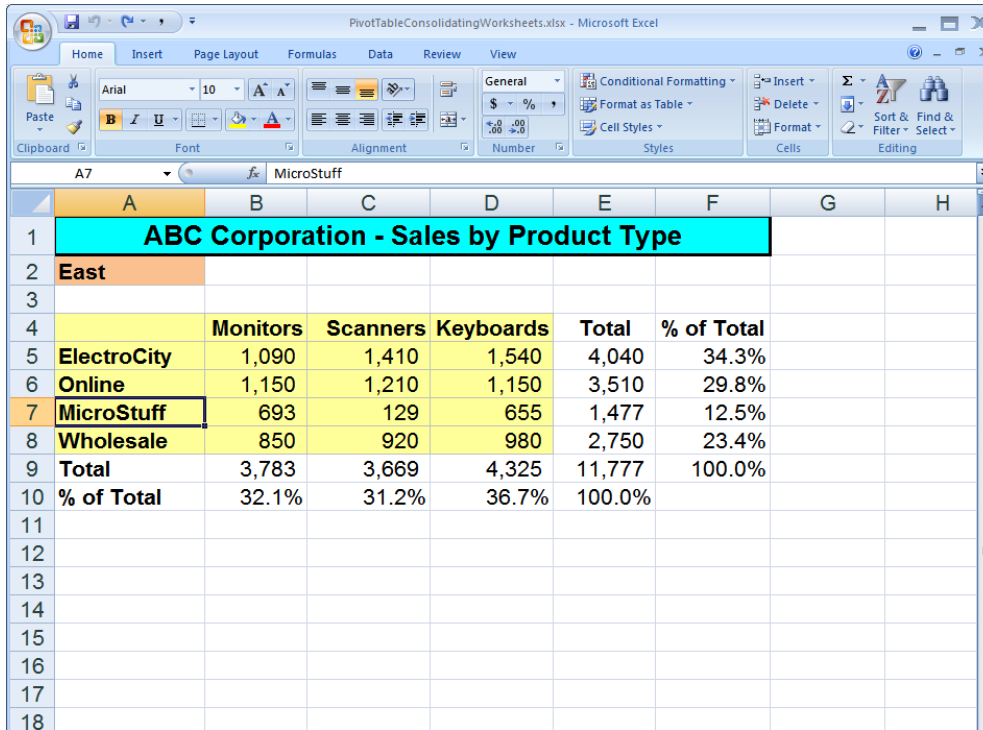


Figure 1

How to Create a Column Chart

Step 1: First, select the data you'd like to use for the chart. (Figure 2).

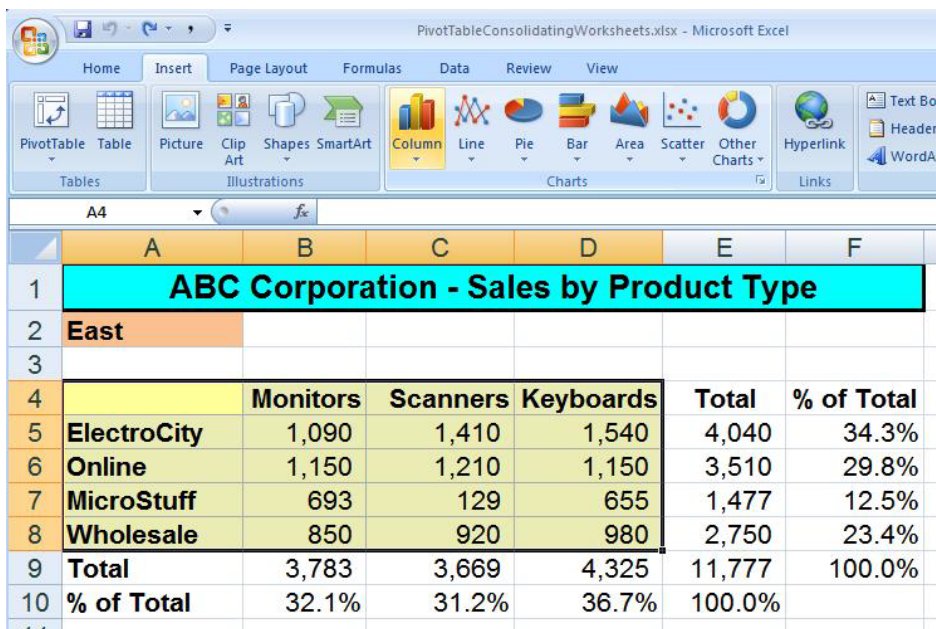


Figure 2

Step 2: Under the Insert tab, click the “Column” icon to pull up a drop down of chart varieties. For this particular example, you can keep the chart simple by choosing a bar chart, which is called a ‘2-D column chart’ in Excel. (Figure 3). A bar chart will automatically appear (Figure 4). When looking at this chart (Figure 5), the user can easily compare how many Monitors, Scanners and keyboards were sold by each method.

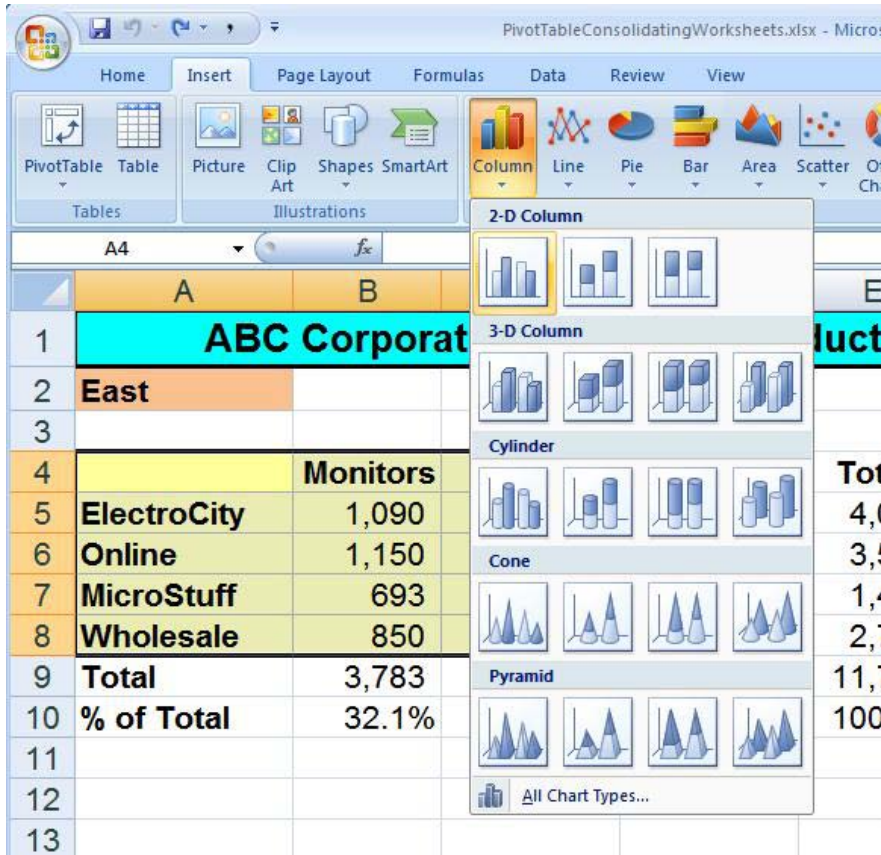


Figure 3

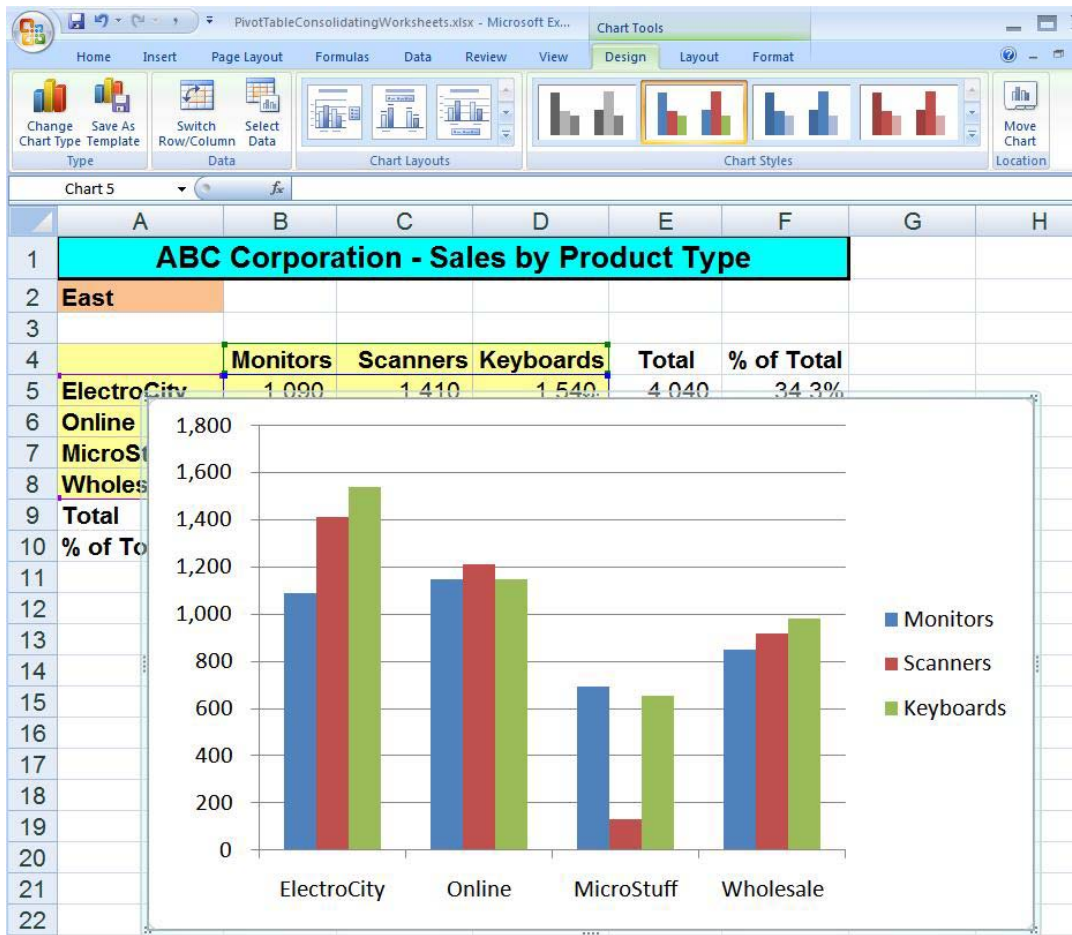


Figure 4

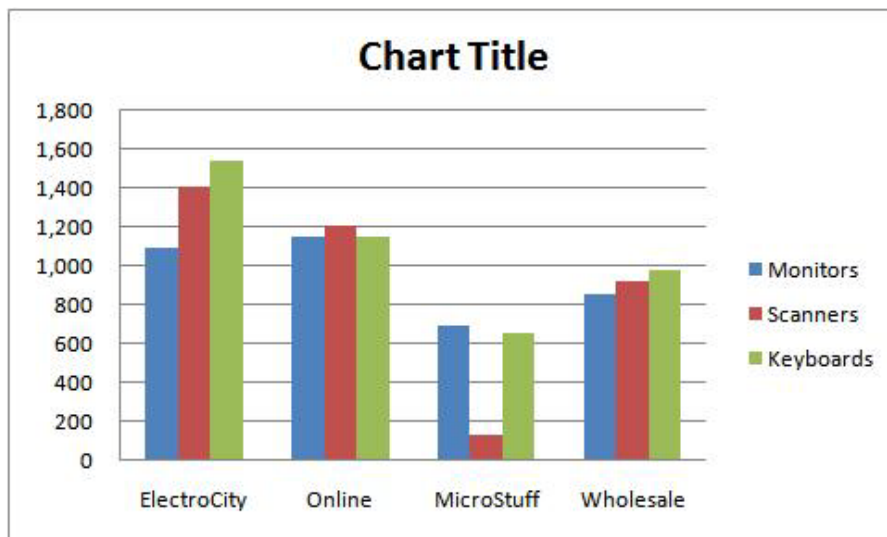


Figure 5

While you can compare the sales of each method, it's slightly difficult to see how many Monitors, Scanners and Keyboards were sold overall. There's an option on the Insert tab that can easily switch the chart's data around. Let's try this next.

Step 4: Double-click the Chart that has been automatically created in order to bring new chart options in the above toolbar (Figure 6). Click the icon that says "Switch Rows/Column" to instantly switch the chart. The new chart will compare how many Monitors, Scanners and Keyboards were sold overall (Figure 7).

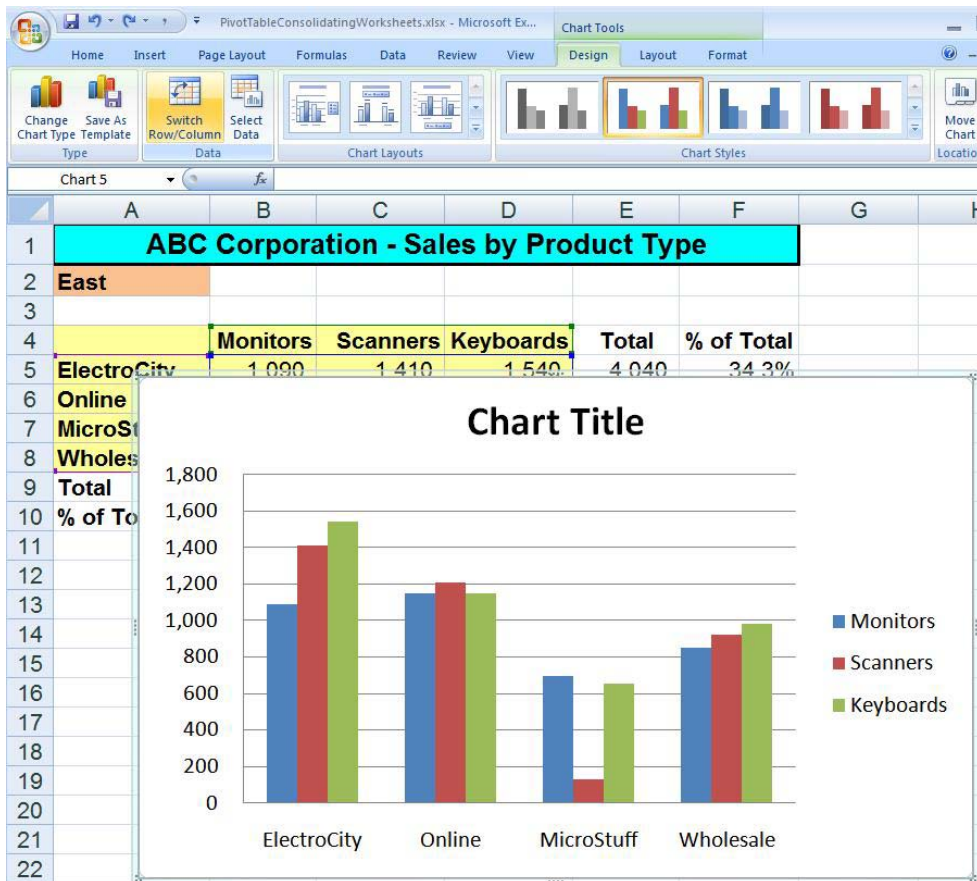


Figure 6

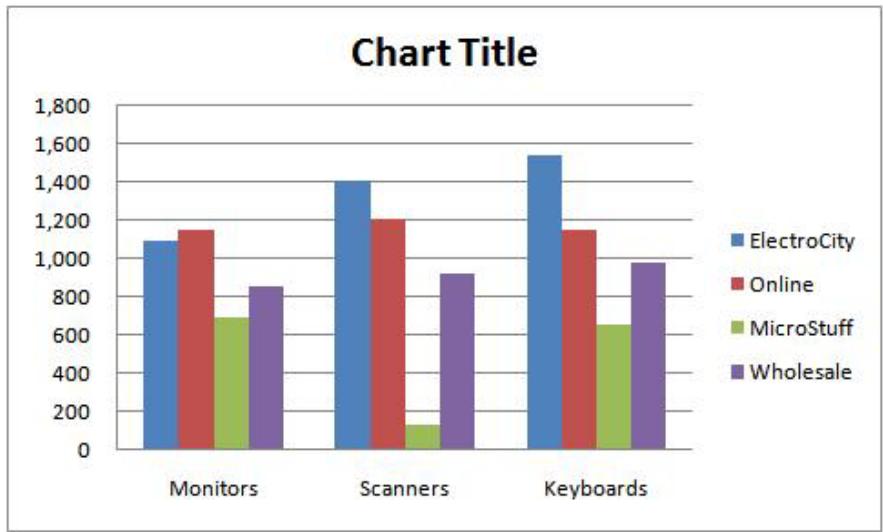


Figure 7

Conclusion:

Excel charts are an easy tool to compare and analyze data from spreadsheets. With a click of a mouse, users are able to visually display data. With multiple options, it's easy to manipulate charts to show and contrast data. Excel has many formatting options you can choose, such as adding titles, choosing styles, adding color to chart backgrounds, applying 3-d rotations, and much more.