

ESCAPING SPREADSHEET SWAMP

Ctrl

O

27 Old Gloucester Street
London WC1N 3AX

T +44 (0)20 3474 1200
E info@ctrl-o.com
W www.ctrl-o.com

Ctrl O Ltd – Registered
in England and Wales
N. 0882 6252. Registered
address | 27 Old Gloucester
Street, London WC1N 3AX.
VAT N. 181 0063 45

escaping spreadsheet swamp

Do you use Excel – or Google Sheets? Spreadsheets are brilliant when they work, but the more data they need to store, and the more people with access to them, the trickier things get.

Finicky macros; formulae that make no sense; endless scrolling; data entered in the wrong format; and no control over who can see or change what. These are some of the common frustrations people have when it comes to shared spreadsheets. Far from frictionless data management, the spreadsheet swamp bogs-down teams with data which is high-maintenance, yet increasingly unreliable.

So, what are the specific problems and how could you avoid them in the future?

free-for-all data 'management'

Controlling who can change what is quite hard in Excel. You can control who has access to the spreadsheet as a whole, but if they can edit it, then they can edit most of it. Yes, you can lock certain cells, but that means locking them for everyone. Fine control is not possible. Anyone who can open your spreadsheet can also see all the data in it. This means you may need multiple spreadsheets for data that is exclusively for the eyes of certain management levels or departments.

an ideal data-collecting solution would:

- ▶ let you control which groups of people can edit and view each data field
- ▶ let you control which changes need to be approved before they go live
- ▶ make it possible for you to set up data views and graphs specific to different user groups.

the mushrooming spreadsheet

Spreadsheets start out a small, perfectly manageable oasis of truth. The person who set them up is there for any questions. Over time, sheets get added, formulae and macros are implemented, and the author moves on. In time the spreadsheet that contains critical data is an inhospitable, untrustworthy swamp. Seemingly with a life of its own. Without clear notes, the logic is obscure. It's hard to filter what's relevant to you now, it is so unwieldy. Ad-hoc copies start proliferating for individual's purposes.

an ideal data-collecting solution would:

- ▶ let the administrator provide a description for each field and an explanation for each formula that others can see
- ▶ let the administrator set what data a user can see depending on their requirements
- ▶ give you the option to further refine what you can see so that you are not swamped by irrelevant information.

the complicated history

You may just have three people updating your spreadsheet, or you may have 30. In either case, it's hard to see anything other than the data that was last saved into the spreadsheet. Yes, you can set up tracking on your spreadsheet, but it's not an easy thing to decipher again in Excel. Formatting changes are highlighted in the same way as data changes and it's very hard to see what's changed since you last viewed the sheet, especially if there are dozens of editors. Making sure that data is current, accurate and consistent can be very hard.

an ideal data-collecting solution would:

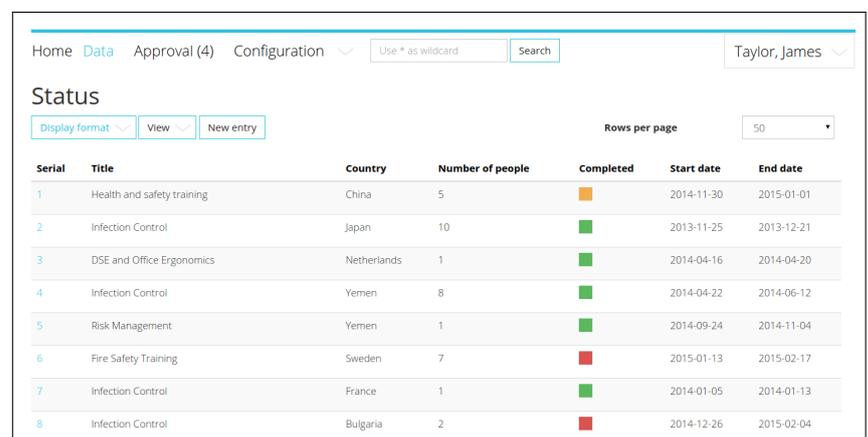
- ▶ give you a very clear and simple history of who changed each field and when
- ▶ let you control which changes need to be approved before they go live
- ▶ let users set up alerts so that they know when any data relevant to them is changed.

building the ideal data-collecting solution

Cloud software developer, Ctrl O was all too familiar with the challenges touched on above. They developed Linkspace to make it easy for teams, departments and organisations to share and update information. Linkspace is suitable for collecting and maintaining any information you may have considered using a more conventional spreadsheet for – from budgets and global project details to organisational training records and multi-site equipment maintenance records.

Lightweight and highly flexible, it is quick to deploy as a single spreadsheet, while at the same time offers a range of easy-to-use features that you would only expect to find in much larger and more complicated enterprise systems, including all the ideal features to combat mushrooming, free-for-all and version-less spreadsheets.

The secure online system gives all users 24-hour access from anywhere in the world. Linkspace is quick, economical and easy to deploy and a simple £5 per-user/per-month pricing model drops to £1 per-user/per-month in large (1,000+) deployments.

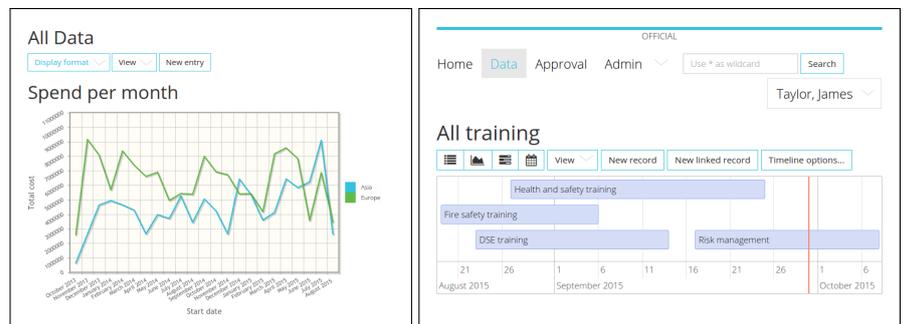


The screenshot shows the Linkspace web interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Home, Data, Approval (4), and Configuration. A search bar with the placeholder 'Use * as wildcard' and a search button is visible. The user's name 'Taylor, James' is displayed in the top right. Below the navigation, the 'Status' section contains buttons for 'Display format', 'View', and 'New entry', along with a 'Rows per page' dropdown set to 50. The main content is a table with the following data:

Serial	Title	Country	Number of people	Completed	Start date	End date
1	Health and safety training	China	5	■	2014-11-30	2015-01-01
2	Infection Control	Japan	10	■	2013-11-25	2013-12-21
3	DSE and Office Ergonomics	Netherlands	1	■	2014-04-16	2014-04-20
4	Infection Control	Yemen	8	■	2014-04-22	2014-06-12
5	Risk Management	Yemen	1	■	2014-09-24	2014-11-04
6	Fire Safety Training	Sweden	7	■	2015-01-13	2015-02-17
7	Infection Control	France	1	■	2014-01-05	2014-01-13
8	Infection Control	Bulgaria	2	■	2014-12-26	2015-02-04

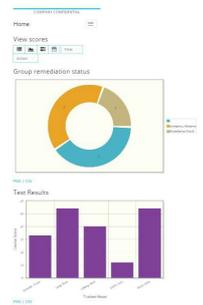
Linkspace is designed to be secure, robust and flexible. Deployed in MOD and MOJ it provides global access, real-time, to a single version of the truth that doesn't get corrupted or beaten out of shape. Currently in use with teams sizing from 20 to 5,000 (there is no ceiling), data sets from a few hundred to many millions of records with a handful to hundreds of interconnected fields; it is scalable - but configured and administered by the user-team themselves.

So, no consultant-integrator and costly, time consuming, contractual change-control. Outcomes are managed by the people who understand what they need and change is flexible, agile and evolutionary. It all fosters the progressive innovation that we need to deliver digital transformation in secure, low-risk and transparent environment. Linkspace is open source and WCAG 2.0 AA rated in recent deployments.



mobile devices Linkspace supports smartphones and tablets with a fully dynamic, responsive design, enabling users to be practically engaged with their business process from anywhere.

Linkspace is very light, using minimal bandwidth for every page displayed. The screen size and format for mobile devices is different from desktops - but individual users or groups of users can create their own views showing just the data that is necessary and comfortable in their chosen device(s).



Smartphone: latest test results

Lindsay Smith, CMO, Ctrl O



We are open. Open to talk, open source, open standards.

<http://ctrl0.com>

e : l.smith@ctrl0.com

t: 020 3474 1211

@ctrl0