

THE ART 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.

1. Design your reports to fit on *one page*.
2. *Right-justify* your numbers.
3. Present numbers with a level of *precision* appropriate for the report and the audience.
4. Use *white space* to help your audience organize and understand your information.
5. Use *text effects* (**boldface**, *italics*, **color**, etc.), and other visual effects (cell borders, boxes, lines, shapes, cell comments, etc.) to highlight significant numbers and create distinctions between different types of information. But *don't overuse* them!
6. *Words are important*. Use them precisely, succinctly, comprehensibly, and in a way that enables your numbers to shine through.
7. *Organize the rows and columns* of your reports in a way that helps your audience intuitively grasp your information and is appropriate for their natural reading flow.
8. *Respect your audience's time*. Make it easy for them to see what the report is about and when it was prepared, to find what they need quickly, and to print the pages.
9. Respect the *space limitations* of a *PowerPoint slide*. Preview the slides in the venue.
10. *Be consistent*. A standard look-and-feel for your quantation enables you to get your work done faster, makes it easier for your audience to read and understand your information, *and enhances your personal brand*.
11. It is more blessed to be a *fast user of Excel* than a power user.
12. Design your reports as if you were preparing *for a board of directors meeting*, even if you're not. You will develop good habits that will become second nature.
13. You will always face trade-offs when trying to make your reports *complete, accurate, and useful* to your audience. You cannot achieve all three, so make the trade-offs intelligently, based on your audience's needs and capabilities.
14. Use *graphs* instead of tables to *highlight trends and other patterns*. But don't overuse graphs – they are *not* a substitute for the numbers themselves, to be used merely because of personal preferences or alleged differences in cognitive style.
15. Use *key indicators* to add meaning and context to your raw numbers.
16. When giving an *oral presentation* that includes quantation, *be familiar with the numbers* and their origin. Don't act like you've never seen the numbers before.
17. *Solicit feedback aggressively*. The audience's silence is *not* golden.
18. Be known as someone who *understands your business and your subject matter* as well as the people for whom you are generating the information.