

# PowerPivot for Excel 2010

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*PowerPivot for Excel 2010* was published just a few months ago. It covers how to use PowerPivot as an intermediate technical solution for business intelligence with Microsoft *Excel*. It caters to semi-technical users who will have the guidance of senior IT staff. PowerPivot is mostly designed for *Excel* power users and business analysts.

The authors are seasoned PowerPivot users, having worked with the product since its first beta. Both Marco Russo and Alberto Ferrari specialize in business intelligence, own a consulting firm and speak at several technology conferences a year. They have also co-written another book, *Expert Cube Development with Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Analysis Services*.

In terms of the structure of *PowerPivot for Excel 2010*, the authors suggest studying the first five chapters of the PowerPivot book is mandatory in order to become familiar with PowerPivot itself. Chapters six onward primarily deal with learning DAX and contain a lot of reference material.

Reading these later chapters is recommended, but one can start working with PowerPivot after just the first five chapters. The book includes a DVD with workbook examples, a Microsoft *Access* sample database and a searchable eBook for reference.

To quote the first page of the book, some of the better features of PowerPivot include:

The ability to organize tables for the PivotTable tool in a relational way, freeing the analyst from the need to import data as *Excel* worksheets before analyzing the data.

The availability of a fast, space-saving columnar database that can handle huge amounts of data without the limitations of *Excel* worksheets.

DAX, a powerful programming language that defines complex expressions on top of the relational database. DAX allows you to define surprisingly rich expressions, compared to those that are standard in *Excel*.

The ability to integrate different sources and almost any kind of data, such as information from databases, *Excel* worksheets, and sources available on the Internet.

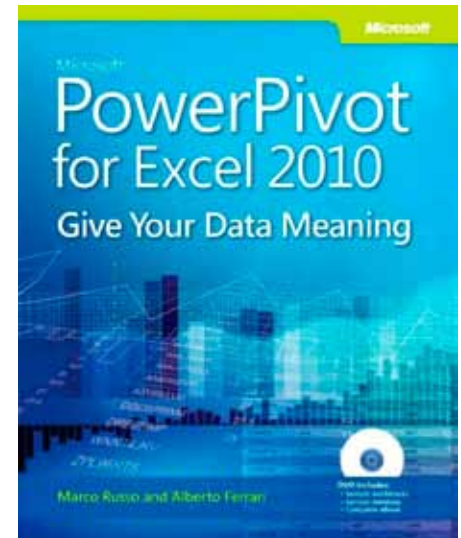
Amazingly fast in-memory processing of complex queries over the whole database.

As I stated earlier, the first five chapters are a good introduction to using PowerPivot. In Chapter one, "First Steps with PowerPivot," the authors start us working with *Excel* PivotTables and move on to working with PivotTables in PowerPivot.

In Chapter two, we are taught how to produce reports using the PivotTable – this includes adding tables, working with dates, refreshing data and using slicers. The next chapter is an Introduction to DAX, Data Analysis Expressions, or the PowerPivot programming language. Chapter four is a brief introduction on data modeling – not really aimed at the database designer, more for someone with little experience in the subject who needs to create reports and tables.

To end the introduction, chapter five is on loading data and models – understanding data sources, loading from a database or data sources, opening existing connections and using linked tables.

The remaining chapters can be read individually, in any order and also used for reference. Chapter six is about the Evaluation Context and CALCULATE functions of DAX. Date



Calculations in DAX are covered in chapter seven. Mastering PivoTables (both for *Excel* and PowerPivot) is an advanced topic heavily discussed in chapter eight.

Chapter nine covers PowerPivot DAX Patterns – common DAX calculations that can be applied to your own models. PowerPivot Data Model Patterns are covered as an advanced topic in chapter ten. Finally, in chapter eleven, Publishing to SharePoint is covered and an explanation of how to integrate SharePoint and PowerPivot is included.

I would recommend this book to those who have to handle business analysis but are not looking for an extensive business intelligence solution. A corporation or organization not wanting to have a separate business intelligence department would find PowerPivot and this book useful in training another employee to handle these tasks as well.

On the other hand, I did not find this book easy reading, although I am not sure that the subject matter could be covered any more lightly. Actually following the exercises in this book in front of a computer is needed to develop skills in PowerPivot.

Overall I would recommend this book only to those who will be using a lot of data and to those that need an overview of PowerPivot and the DAX programming language to create Business Intelligence reports.

**About:** *PowerPivot for Excel 2010*

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