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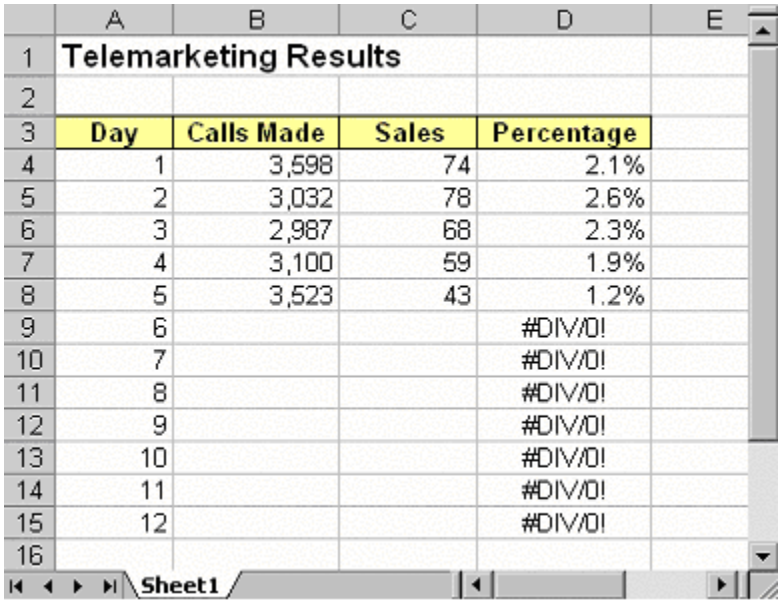
Question: If you've worked with formulas, you've probably encountered the dreaded formula error. Rather than return a numeric result, the formula cell displays a weird message such as #VALUE! or #DIV/0!.

Answer: Most of the time, this means you need to track down the source of the error and fix it. But sometimes a formula error simply means that the data used by the formula is not yet available. For example, say you run a small telemarketing company. You might have a spreadsheet set up to track your daily sales as a percentage of calls made.

Process (Excel 2007 and Excel 2003):

Here is how to do it:

1. 

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Telemarketing Results				
2					
3	Day	Calls Made	Sales	Percentage	
4	1	3,598	74	2.1%	
5	2	3,032	78	2.6%	
6	3	2,987	68	2.3%	
7	4	3,100	59	1.9%	
8	5	3,523	43	1.2%	
9	6			#DIV/0!	
10	7			#DIV/0!	
11	8			#DIV/0!	
12	9			#DIV/0!	
13	10			#DIV/0!	
14	11			#DIV/0!	
15	12			#DIV/0!	
16					

Sheet1

2. The formulas in column D do the calculations that come up with the percentages. For example, cell D4 contains the formula =C4/B4. The formula in D4 was simply copied down the column to handle the other days.

3. The formula does its job well--as long as there is data to calculate. An empty cell (such as B9) is treated as a zero, and division by zero is not allowed. As a result, Excel displays an ugly #DIV/0! error message, which makes your entire worksheet look like it was created by a novice.

4. You can avoid displaying formula errors by re-writing your formula to use an IF and an ISERROR function. For example, =IF(ISERROR(C4/B4),"", C4/B4) displays a blank if the division operation results in an error (cell B4 is empty or contains 0), yet still displays valid results.

5. Although this formula looks complex, when you break it down, it's not that daunting. In plain English: If you get an error performing the formula, then display an empty string (that is, nothing); otherwise, display the result of the formula.

6. It's actually easy to adapt this technique to any formula you might have. The original formula serves as the argument for the ISERROR function, and it repeats as the last argument of the IF function, like this: =IF(ISERROR(OriginalFormula),"",OriginalFormula)

7. If you prefer, you can replace the empty string ("") with other text of your choice--just make sure the text is enclosed in quote marks.