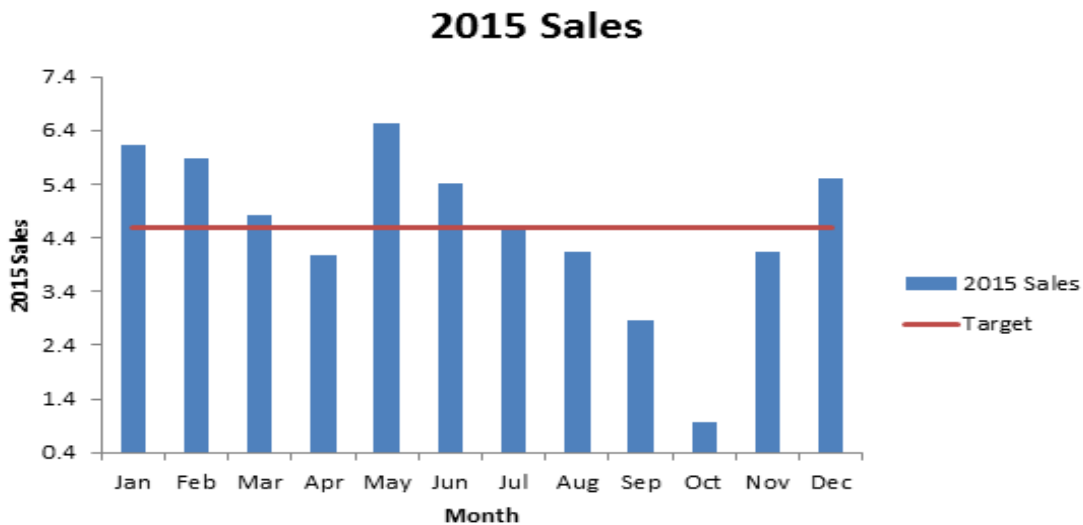


Biggest Mistakes Everyone Makes Using Excel Charts

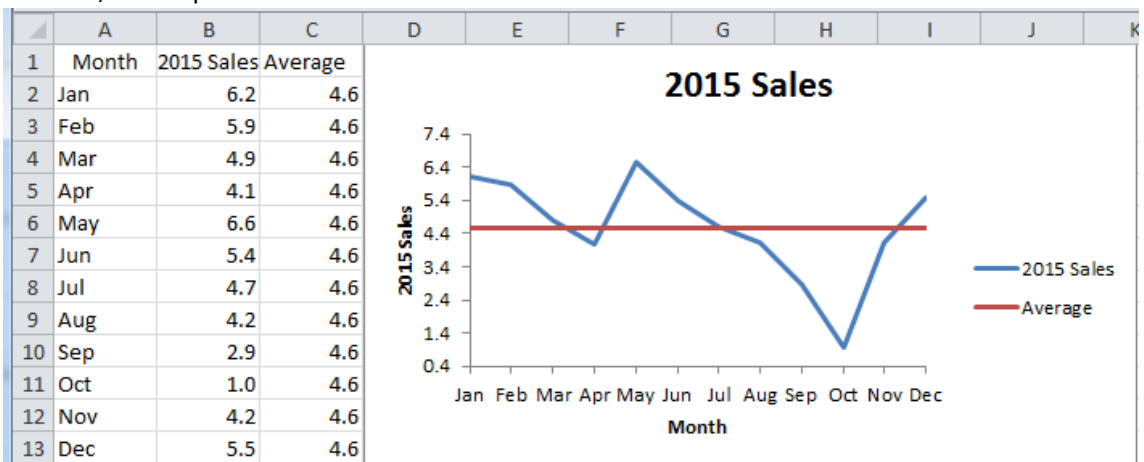
by Jay Arthur

The right chart can turn your spreadsheet into instantly understandable and actionable insights. Unfortunately most people use the wrong or underpowered charts to tell their story.

1. **Not Using Charts to Show Your Data.** People seem to fear using charts for some reason. Maybe they're afraid someone will challenge their chart or just the frustration involved in trying to learn how to use charts. So instead, they try to make their spreadsheet "pretty" so that people will read it. This never works. Learn how to use Excel charts or add a tool like the [QI Macros](#) to create charts for you.
2. **Using the Wrong Chart.** Many people use column charts or line-column charts for *time-series* data. <https://youtu.be/zQqQotgRYy4>

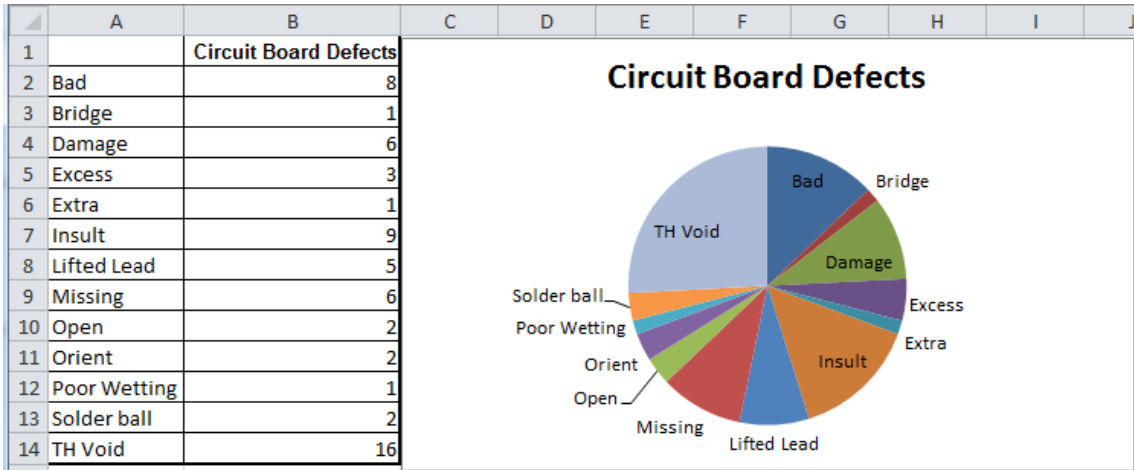


Use line, run or performance charts for time-series data.

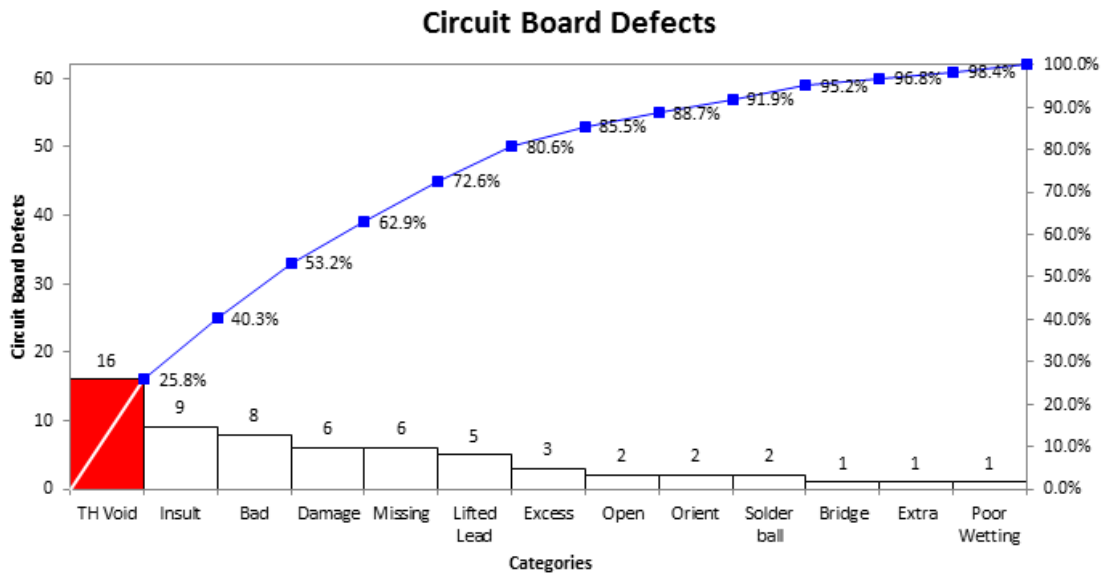


3. Using Pie Charts instead of Column or Pareto Charts.

Many people use Pie charts for category data, but rarely sort the data or size them properly.

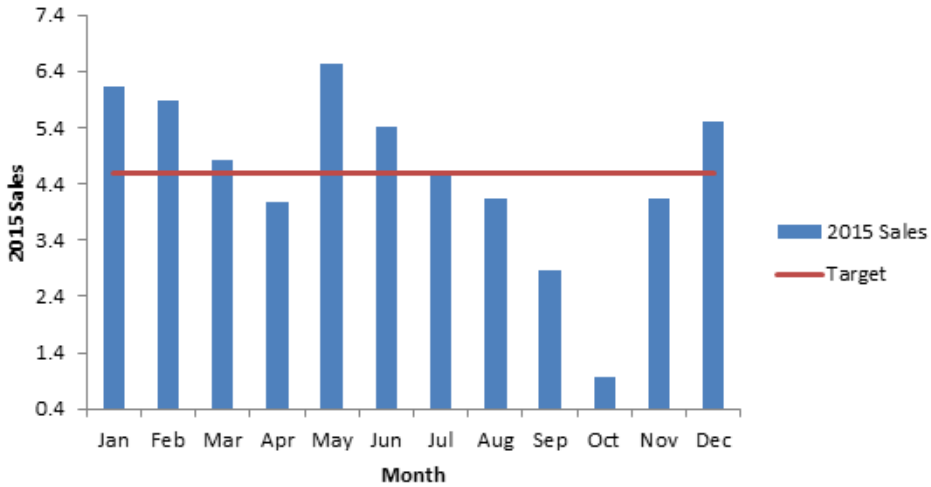


Use column or Pareto charts for category data. Sorted data focuses the analysis. Create Pareto charts with the [QI Macros](#).

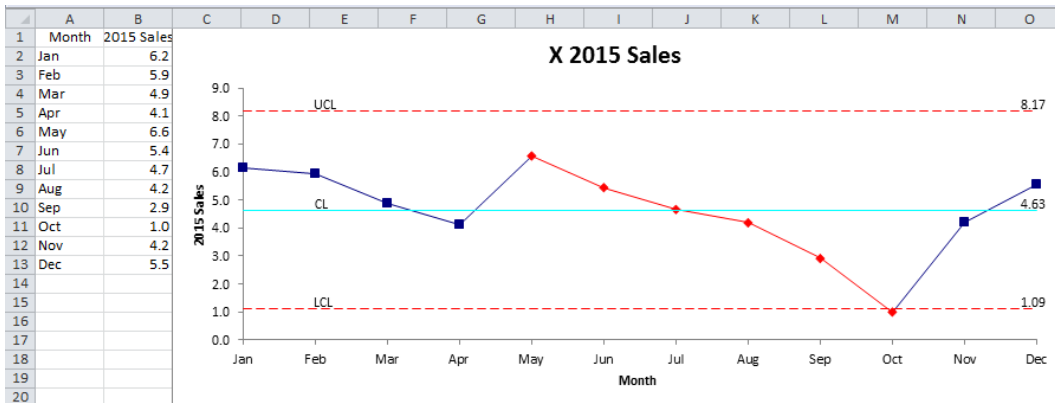


4. **Snapshots vs Movies. Misinterpreting values compared to targets.** People often show data in relationship to a target line. They celebrate when sales are above the target line and seek culprits when sales are below the line. This monthly snapshot approach to management isn't useful. This is *normal* variation. <https://youtu.be/AzV2m71ubcg>

2015 Sales

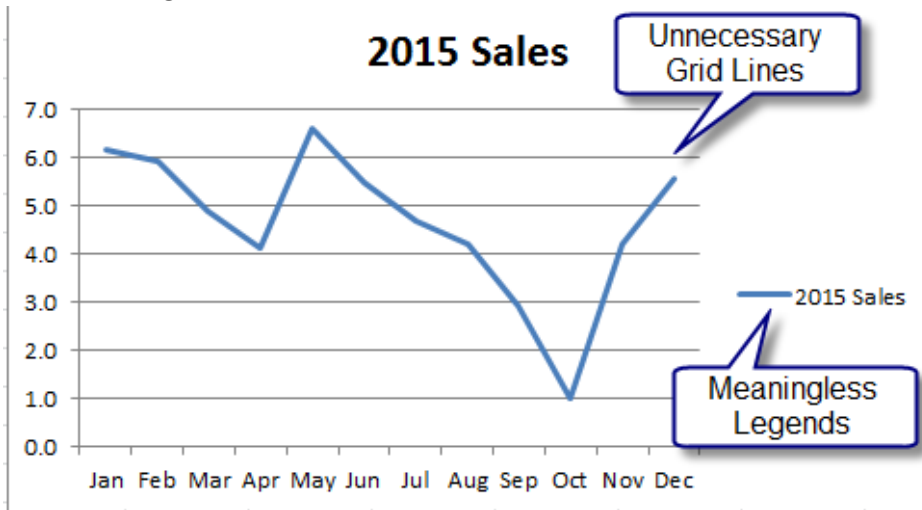


A performance chart would have identified a statistically significant *trend* in the data. It's easy to create Performance charts with the [QI Macros](#).

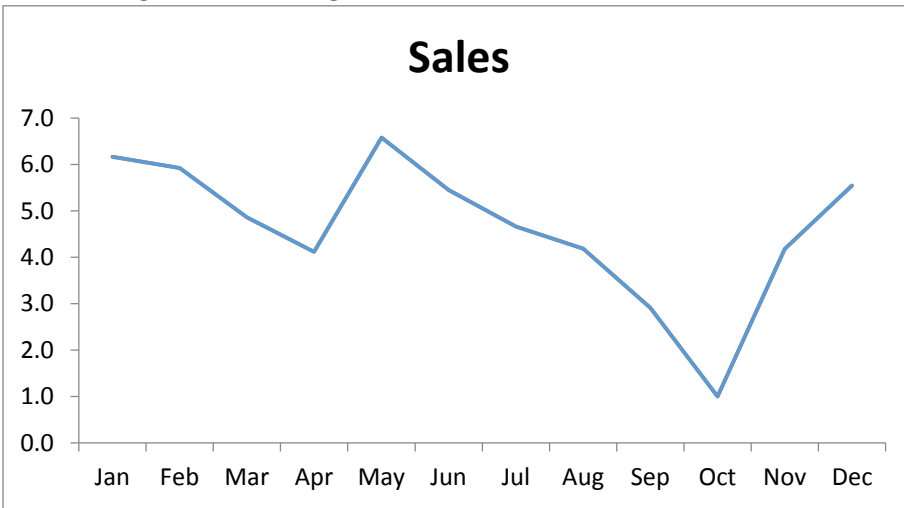


There's no action required until there's statistically unlikely condition like six points in a row descending. Then it's time to analyze what's going wrong and fix it. The [QI Macros](#) will identify these conditions for you by turning the line and markers red.

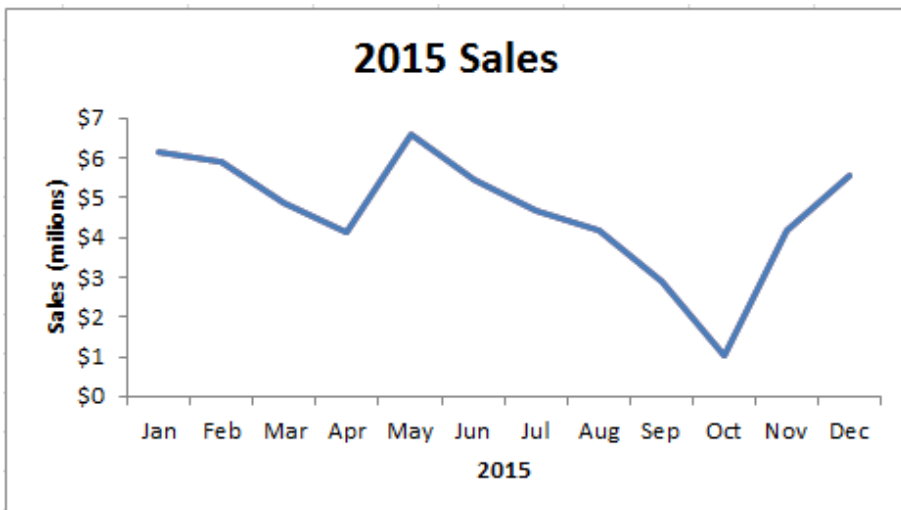
5. **Chartjunk** – Remove unnecessary gridlines, legends, backgrounds or anything that confuses the understanding of the chart.



6. **Not labeling and formatting charts and axes.** Which chart is clearer and easier to read?

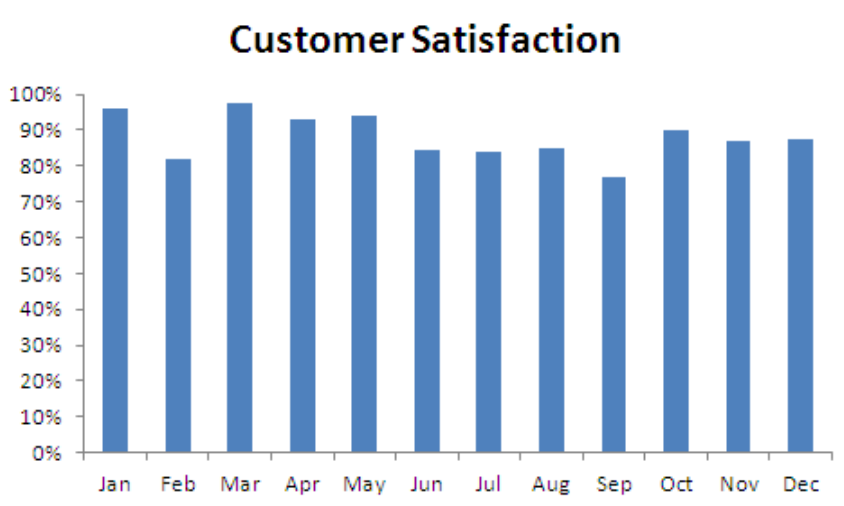


vs

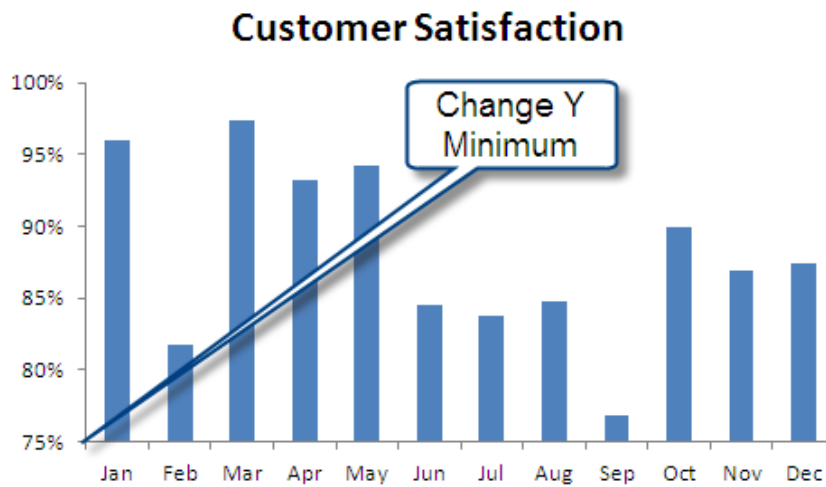


7. Wrong scale

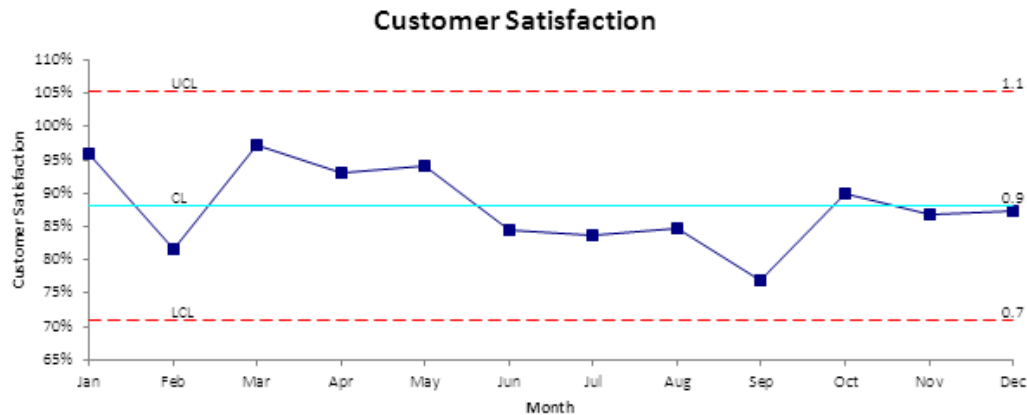
Using Excel's default scale can be misleading. This chart doesn't look bad, does it?



Change the minimum and we can see the variation. <https://youtu.be/EzvJlskrCF4>

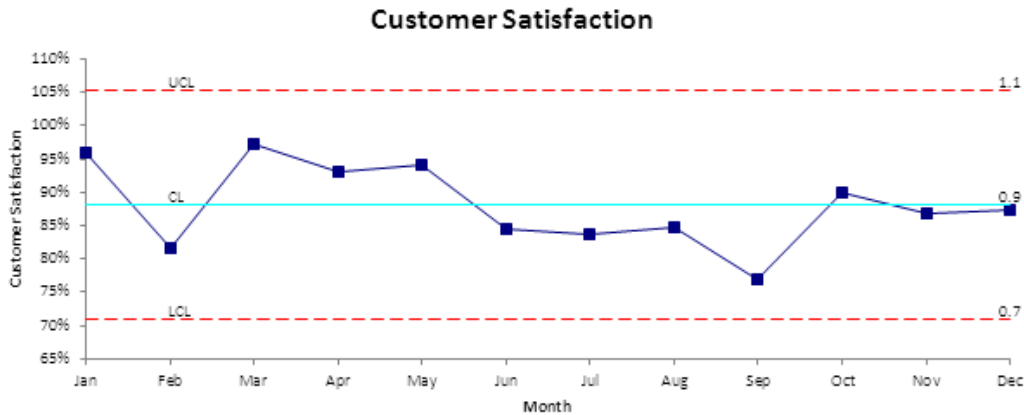
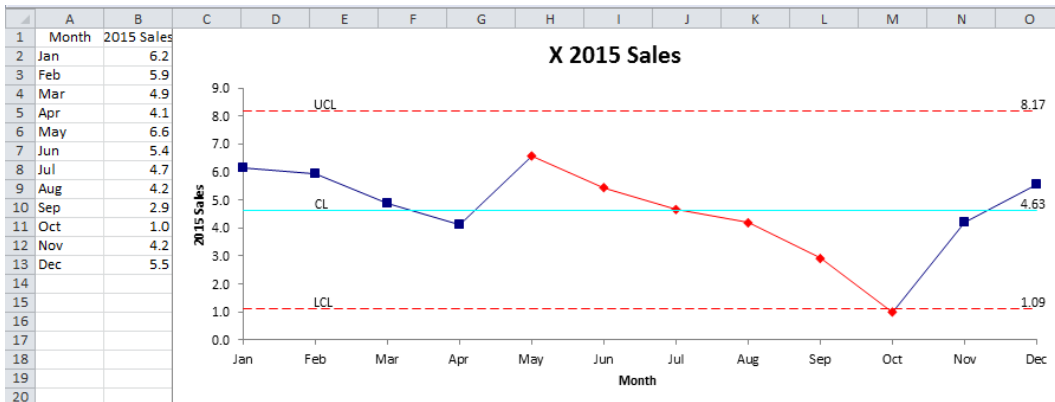


Use a performance chart instead. Customer satisfaction is stable at 90%.



8. **Using primitive, underpowered charts.** People everywhere use unreadable spreadsheets or simple line-column charts to manage million-to-billion dollar businesses around the globe. These charts don't have enough actionable intelligence and they can cause lots of unnecessary fire drills to find out why a number is high or low this month, when statistically, the process is running smoothly. Line-column charts also fail to detect when something actually has changed in the process.

To effectively manage any business, leaders and managers need dashboards of performance charts that can tell when a key process indicator (KPI) is purring along smoothly or veering wildly out of control. And they are easy to create with the [QI Macros](https://youtu.be/vVnKkAHUvp0). <https://youtu.be/vVnKkAHUvp0>



Download a FREE 30-day trial of the QI Macros for Excel from www.qimacros.com.