

Smart Access

Solutions for Microsoft® Access® Developers

How to Tame the Crosstab Missing Column Beast (and Get a Free Lunch)

Michael J. P. Watson



Crosstab queries are a powerful means of summarizing data. But they can sometimes lead to unexpected situations. Mike Watson looks at how you can ensure that your data-driven crosstab reports can work reliably. Along the way, he also shows how Access helps you out by ignoring unwanted data.

A classical tale: Near year's end, the boss asks you to set up a report summarizing the sales statistics by quarter. He wants it by yesterday. You give it a little thought and, bingo, you think, "This is where I'll use my first crosstab query!" A bit later you've created the crosstab, designed the report (see [Figure 1](#), on page 4), tested it, and—it works perfectly! The boss likes it, the report goes into the production system, and it's distributed to all of the regional sales offices—and they love it, too! You're a hero and modestly concur with the compliments and plaudits that rain down on you. Career prospects: very positive.

Then along comes the first quarter of 2005, and suddenly you're receiving Help Desk complaints that your sales statistics report is bombing! Career prospects: cooling. What's happened? What's happened is that you've fallen afoul of the evil Crosstab Missing Column beast!

This lurking menace is due to how the crosstab logic creates the Column Heading fields. When you created the crosstab query in the last part of the year, there was at least one occurrence of your data for each quarter. The resulting crosstab query therefore had four Column Heading fields, one for

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