SunPlus

Q&A Executive Training

Throwing Output

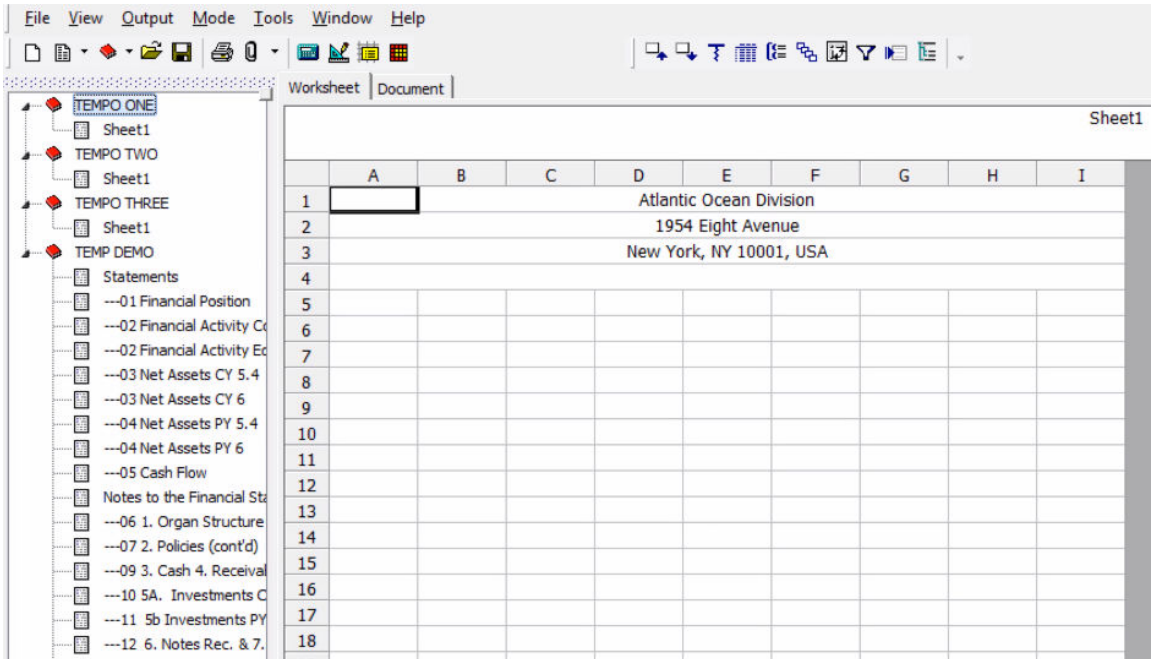
I think you will find this to be a very interesting lesson.

1. I am going to show you a Q&A functionality that you may consider useful.

2. I am going to tell you not to use it, or if you must use it, not to use it very often.

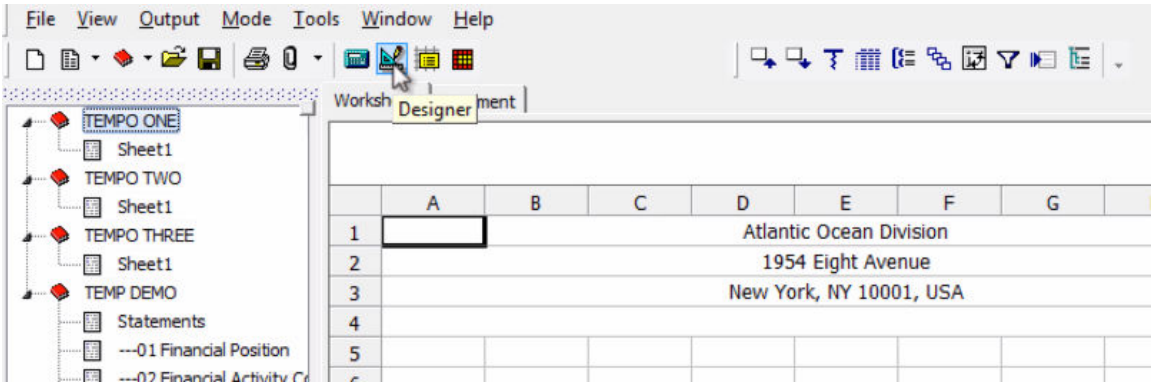
Now you are wondering why.

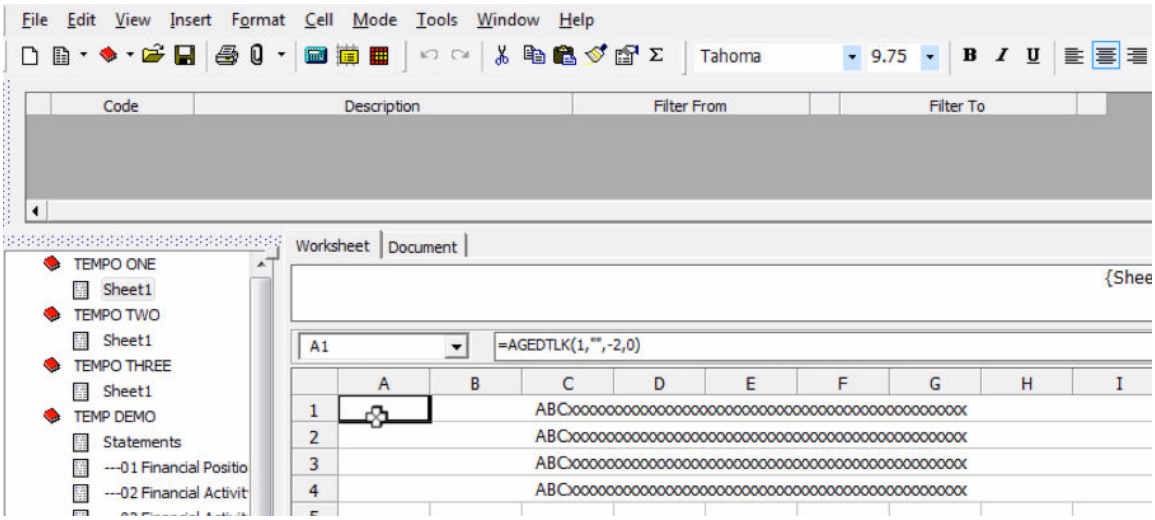
This functionality, which I consider to be a fundamentally bad practice, might be the only way you can solve certain situations. Because I am aware there may be times when it comes in handy, I am showing it to you; but I want to be sure you get the message that this is a tricky functionality that can easily mess a lot of things up. I'll explain why later.



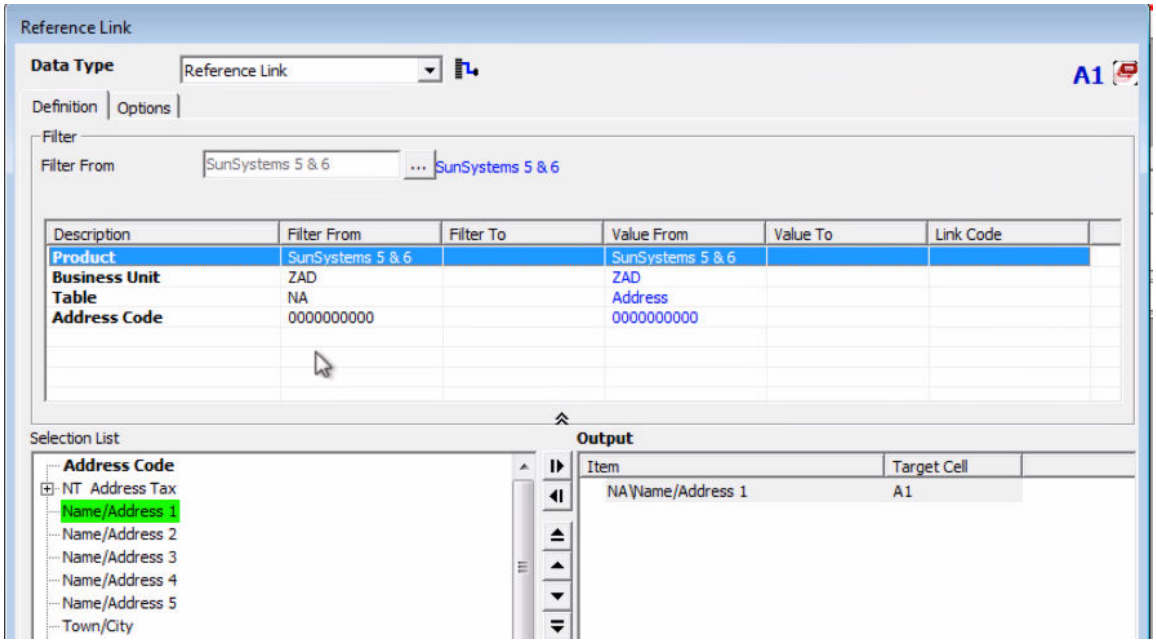
I built the report shown in the screenshot above in preparation for this lesson. It may look as though there is a lot of extra stuff in it, but all of this is relevant to our lesson.

Let's look at the query that pulled in the name of the organization and the organization's address. This is a query that has been correctly set up. We'll go to the Design View.



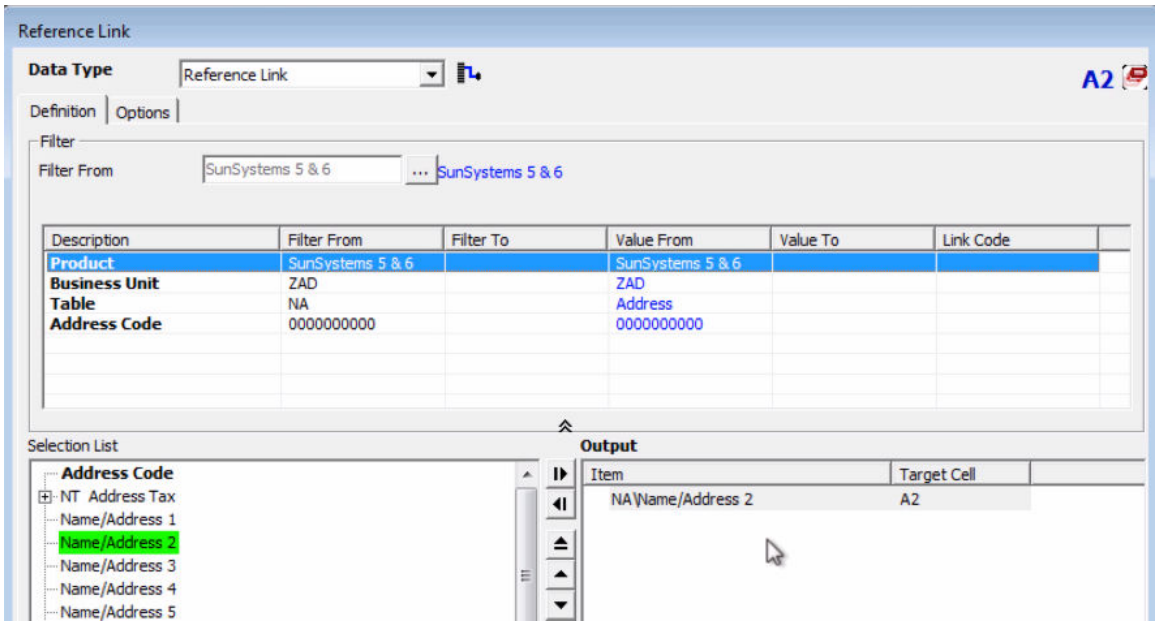


The query for row 1 is built in cell A1, so we will double click on that cell.

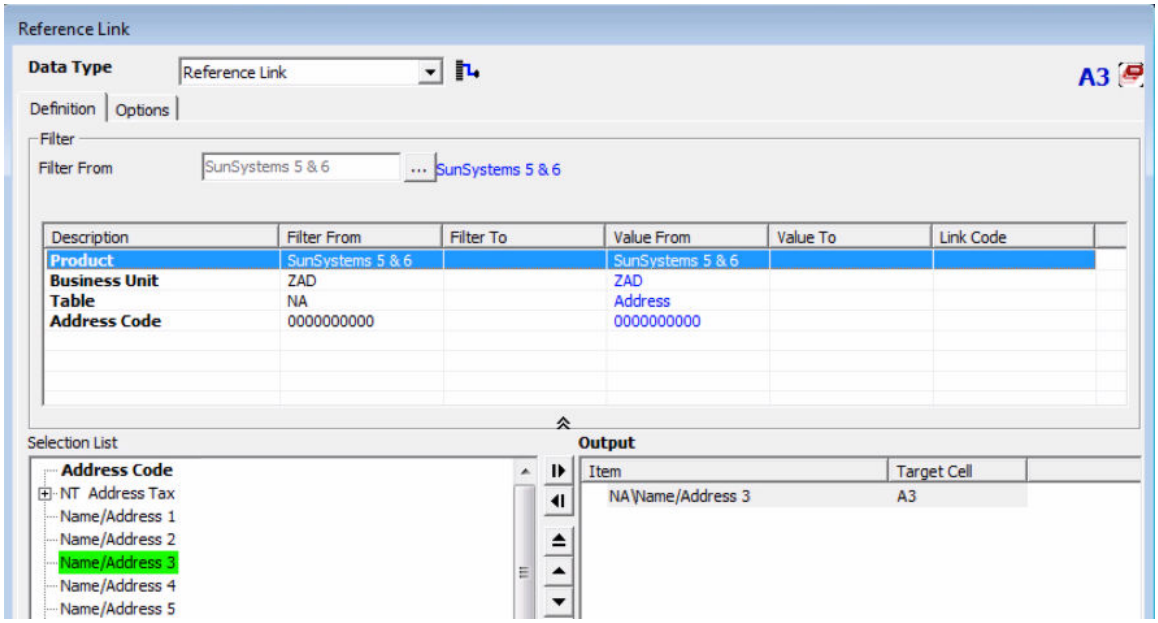


The query is pulling in Address Line 1 for the 0000000000 Account Code.

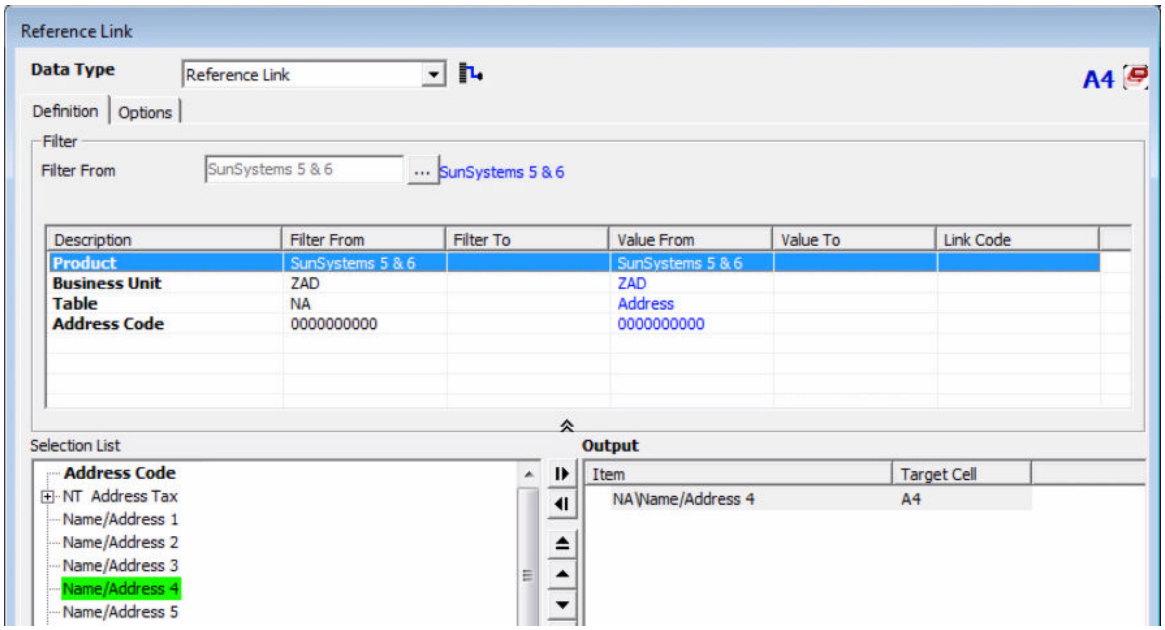
The query for row 2 is built in cell A2. Let's look at it.



The query for Address Line 3 is built in cell A3.



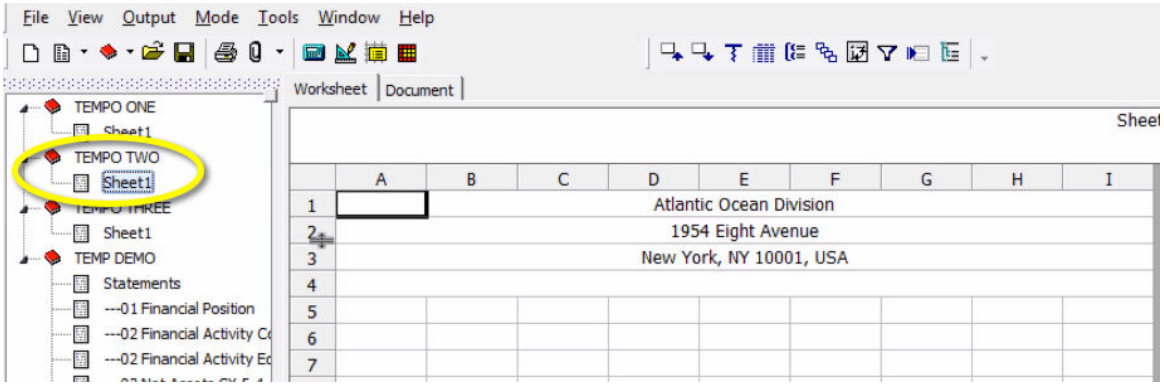
The query for Address Line 4 is built in cell A4.



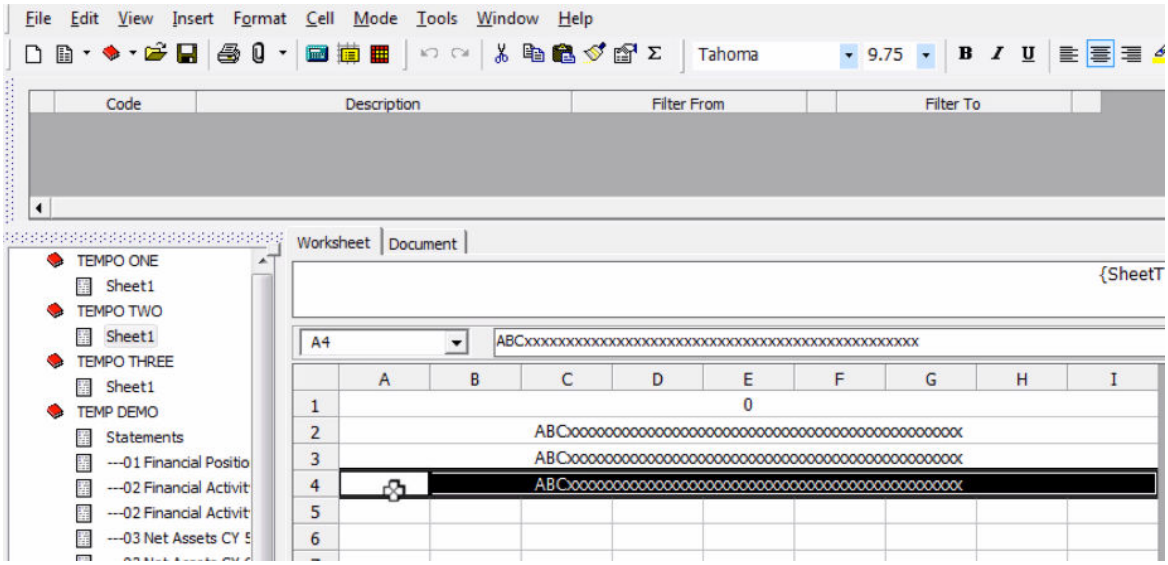
At first glance you might think creating individual queries for each line is just a lot more work. It is, however, the preferable way to construct a query.

Potentially Dangerous Query Design

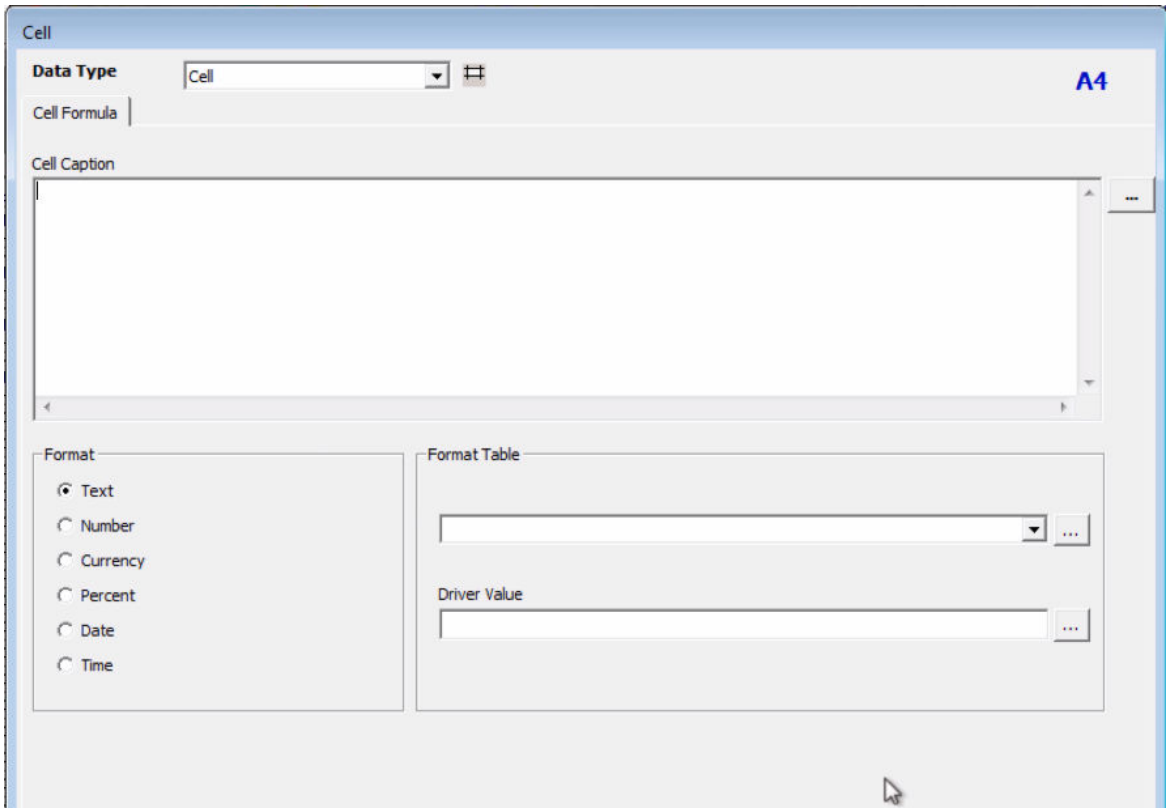
Look at this report:



This is a nice-looking report. In fact, it looks exactly like the first report. Now let's go to the Design View and open the query.

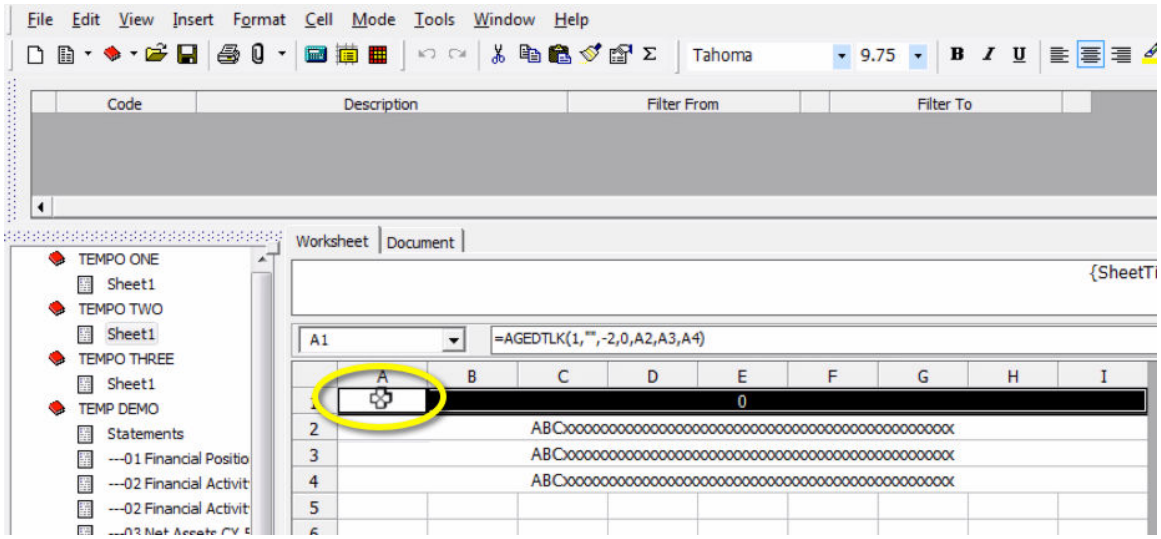


Let's double click in cell A4, where we would expect to find the query for the line.



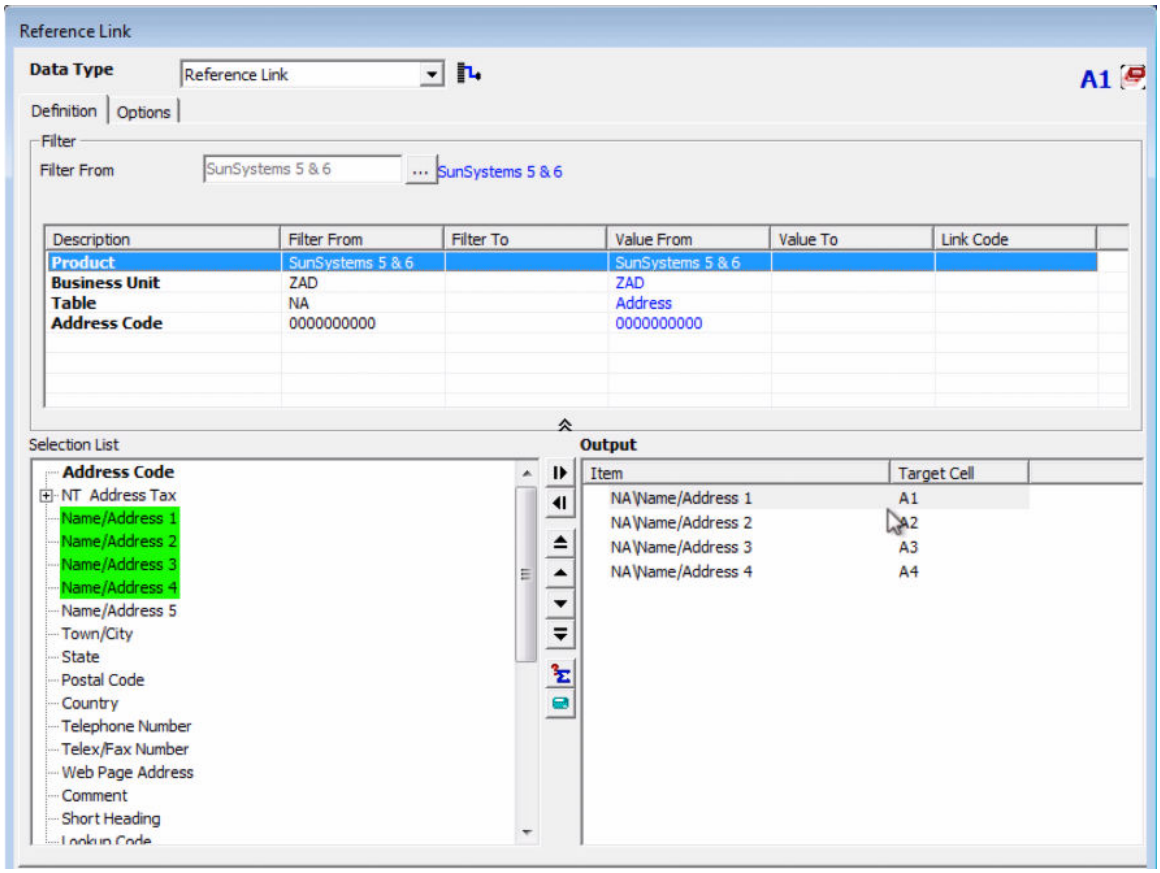
When we open the query, we find … nothing! There is no query with a traceable connection to the line we want to fix. That is because when I set up this sample report, I built a single query for the Address information in cell A1.

Let's go there to see what that query looks like.



This single query has been designed to produce all the values for the Organization's Name and Address. That means one query pulls out the necessary data and "throws" it into the different rows. I call this "Throwing

Values" because the values are not going into the cell where the query is located, they are going into cells located somewhere else in the worksheet. The query itself is shown below:



This query looks at all the same filters. But notice the setup in the Output pane. The values in the Target Cell column show us that I am saying:

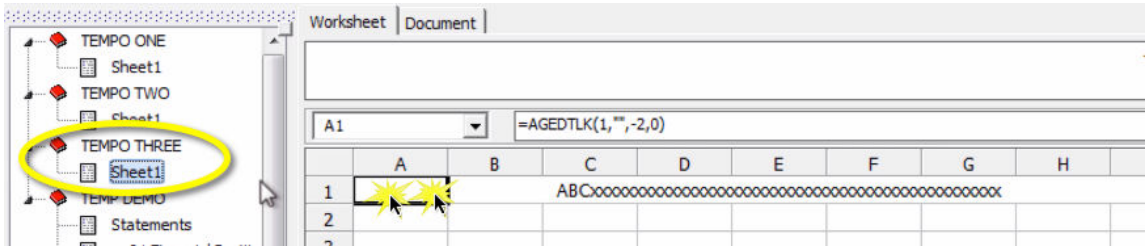
- Address Line 1 will be pulled into cell A1
- Address Line 2 will be pulled into cell A2
- Address Line 3 will be pulled into cell A3
- Address Line 4 will be pulled into cell A4.

The query is located in call A1, but various values will be thrown into other cells.

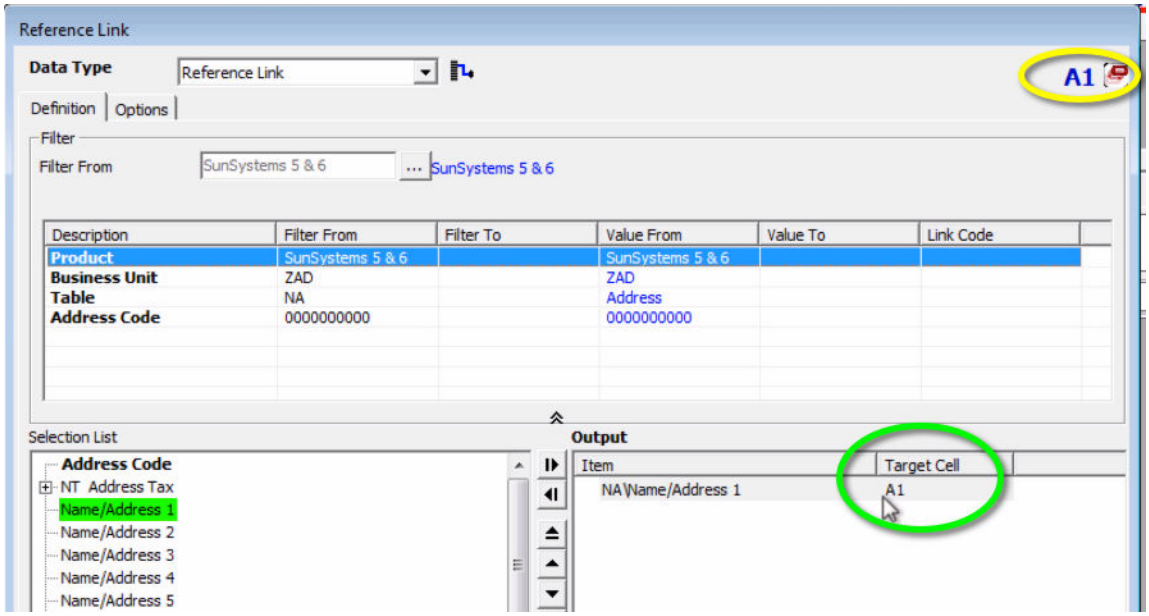
Setting up a Query to Throw Values

Let's see how we would set up this tricky query.

I'm going to open Sheet1 of my third workbook and click on cell A1.

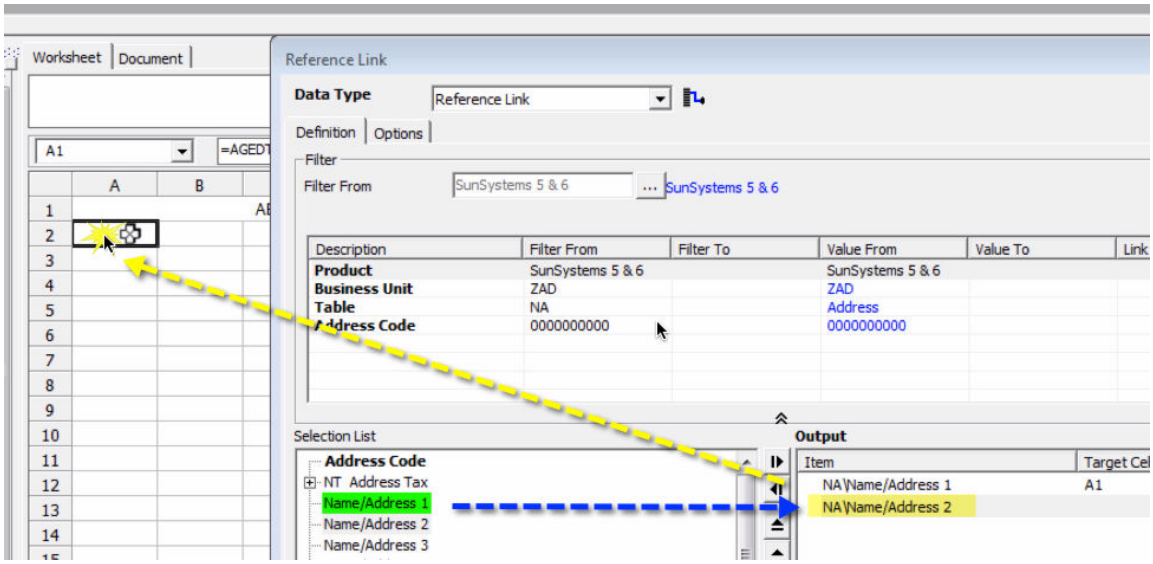


In this query, which is built in cell A1 (see the value at the upper right in the screenshot below), will pull the Address Line 1 value into Target Cell A1.

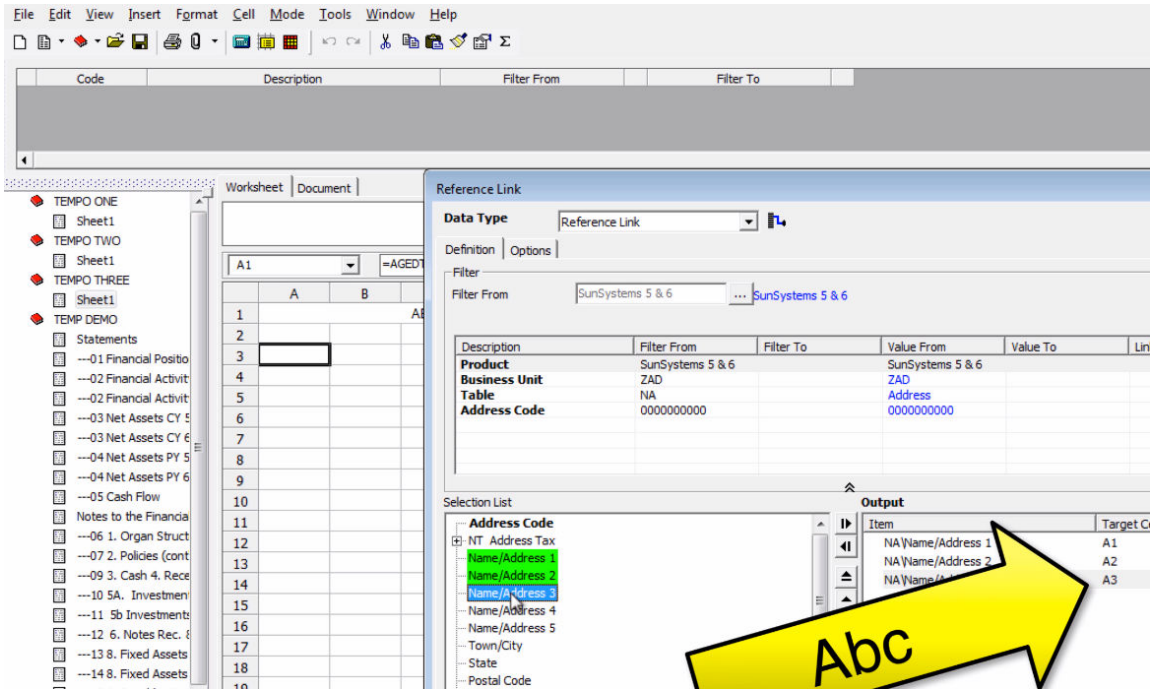


Now I will move Name/Address 2 from the Selection List over to the Output pane. Of course, you are familiar with that process. But now we need to assign a cell where the value will be pulled in.

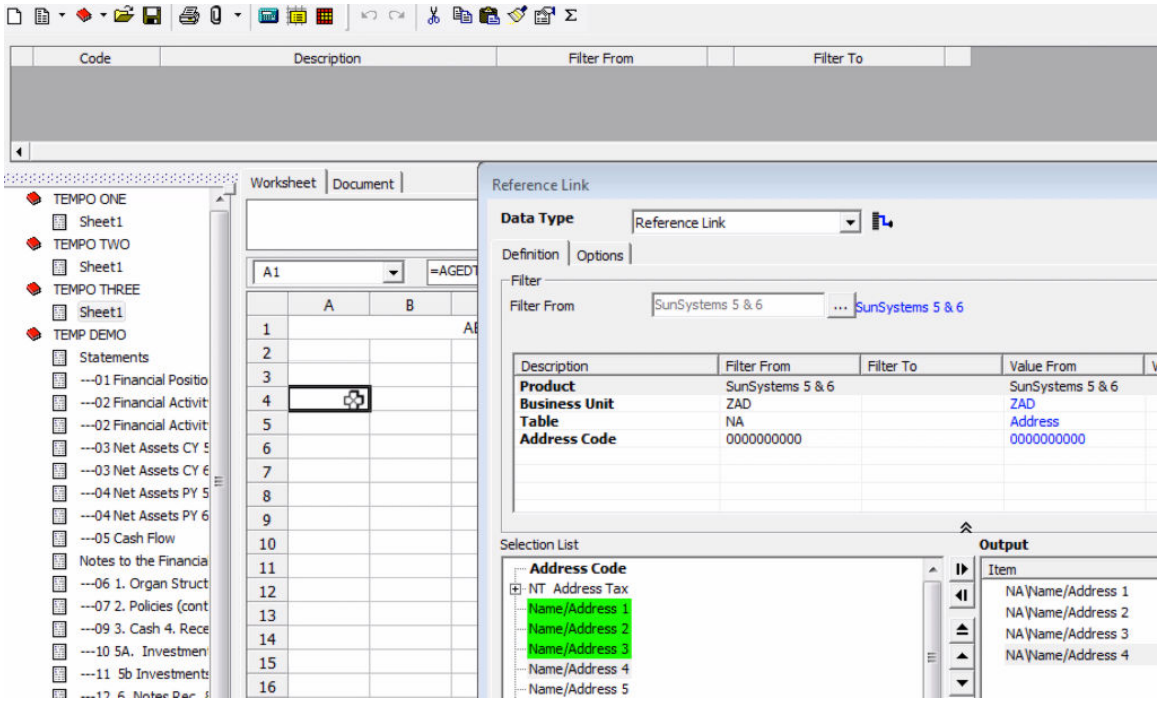
We will highlight the NA/Name/Address 2 value in the Output pane and then click in the cell where we want the value to be displayed. We click in cell A2.



Then I pull Address Line 3 into Output, highlight NA/Name/Address 3 and click in cell A3.

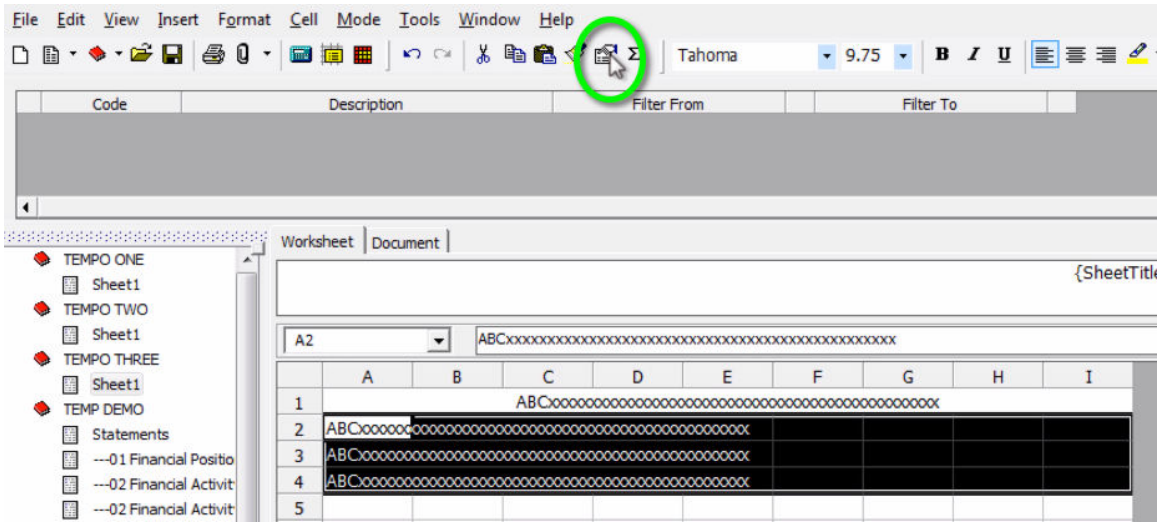


Then I'll move Name/Address 4 to Output, highlighted NA/Name/Address 4, and click in cell A4.

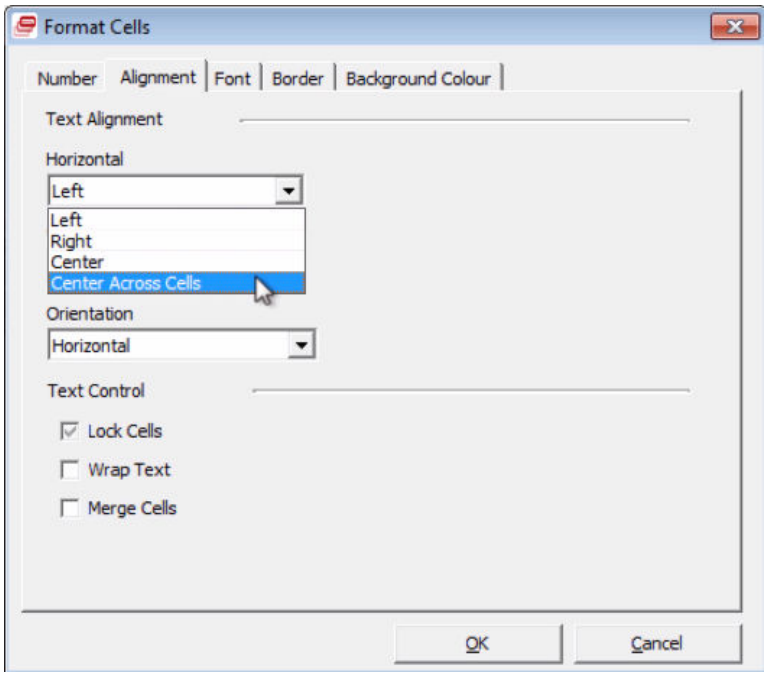


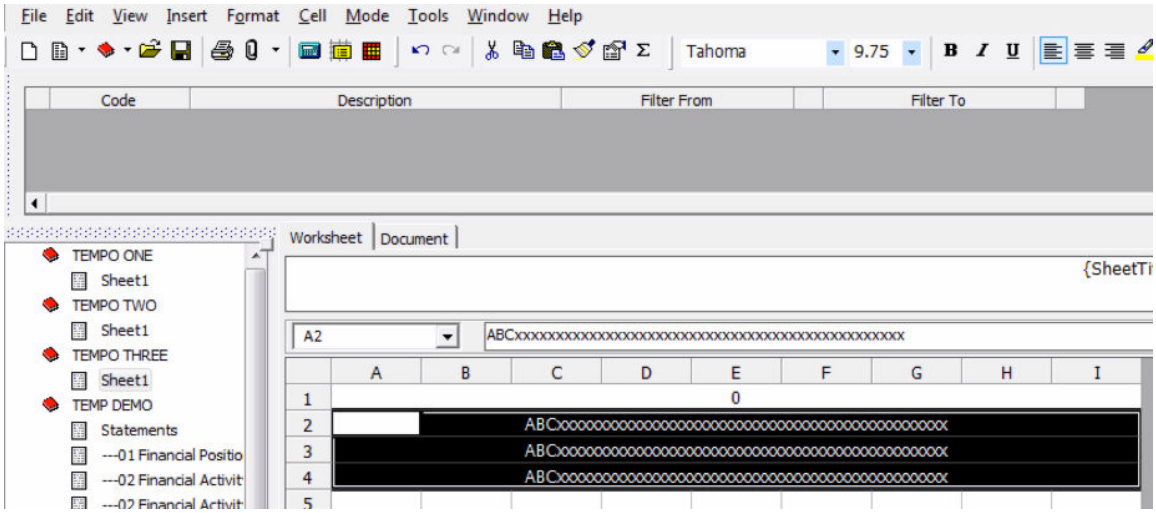
I have written one query and set it up so that values will be thrown into four different target cells.

Now that my query has been set up, I will center the values on the page so the results will look nice. I highlight rows 2 through 4 and click the Format icon on the toolbar.

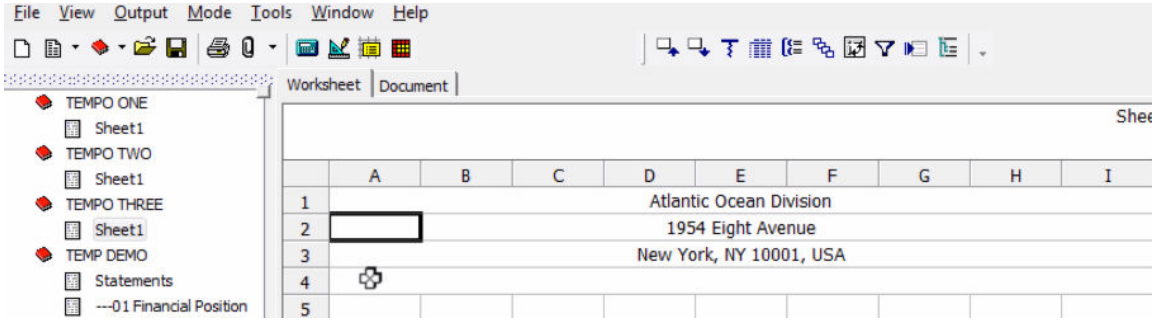


The Format Cells interface will be displayed. I will go to the Alignment tab and select the Center Across Cells Horizontal Text Alignment value.





When we extract this, our single query will pull out all these values and throw them into the cells we assigned: A1, A2, A3, A4.



The Problem

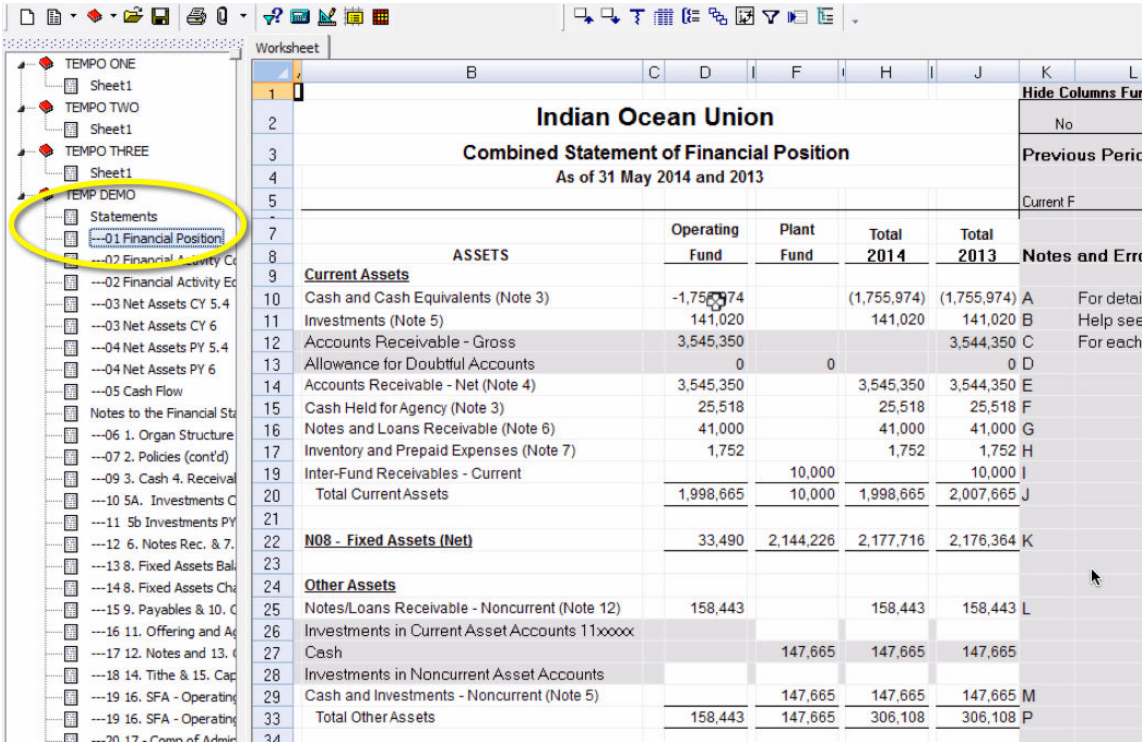
That looks pretty cool!

You may be wondering why I consider this to be such a bad practice.

I concede that it is a nice little trick, and it looks really slick. The problem is that this nice little trick can make things very confusing for you.

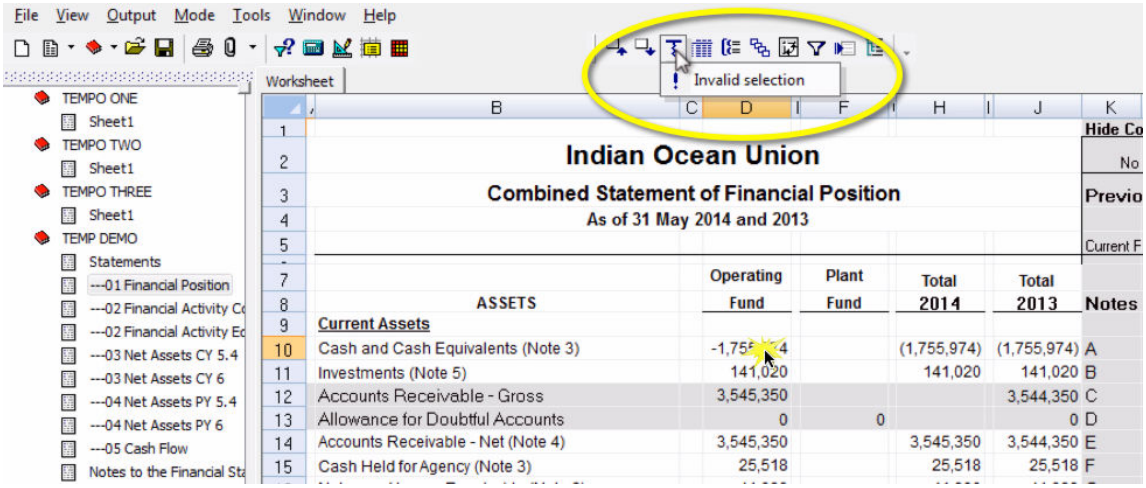
A basic principle we use in the SunPlus world is that every Q&A sheet should be build as though it were going to be used by organizations located all over the world. Everything we do should be done so that it could benefit the entire SunPlus network.

With this in mind, let's go to the Financial Position worksheet in the TEMP DEMO workbook. I need a complicated report to most effectively demonstrate the problem of throwing values.

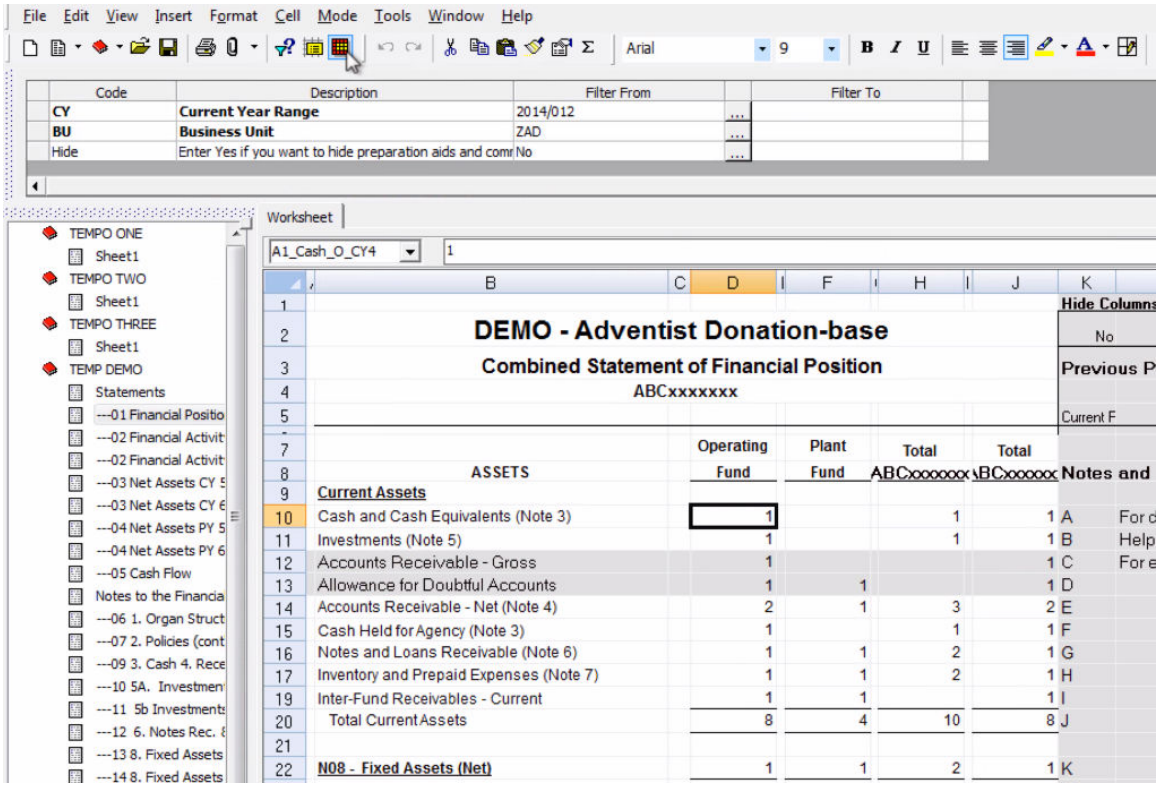


As I look at this statement, I notice right away that there is a problem with the value in cell D10. My Cash and Cash Equivalents figure is a huge negative.

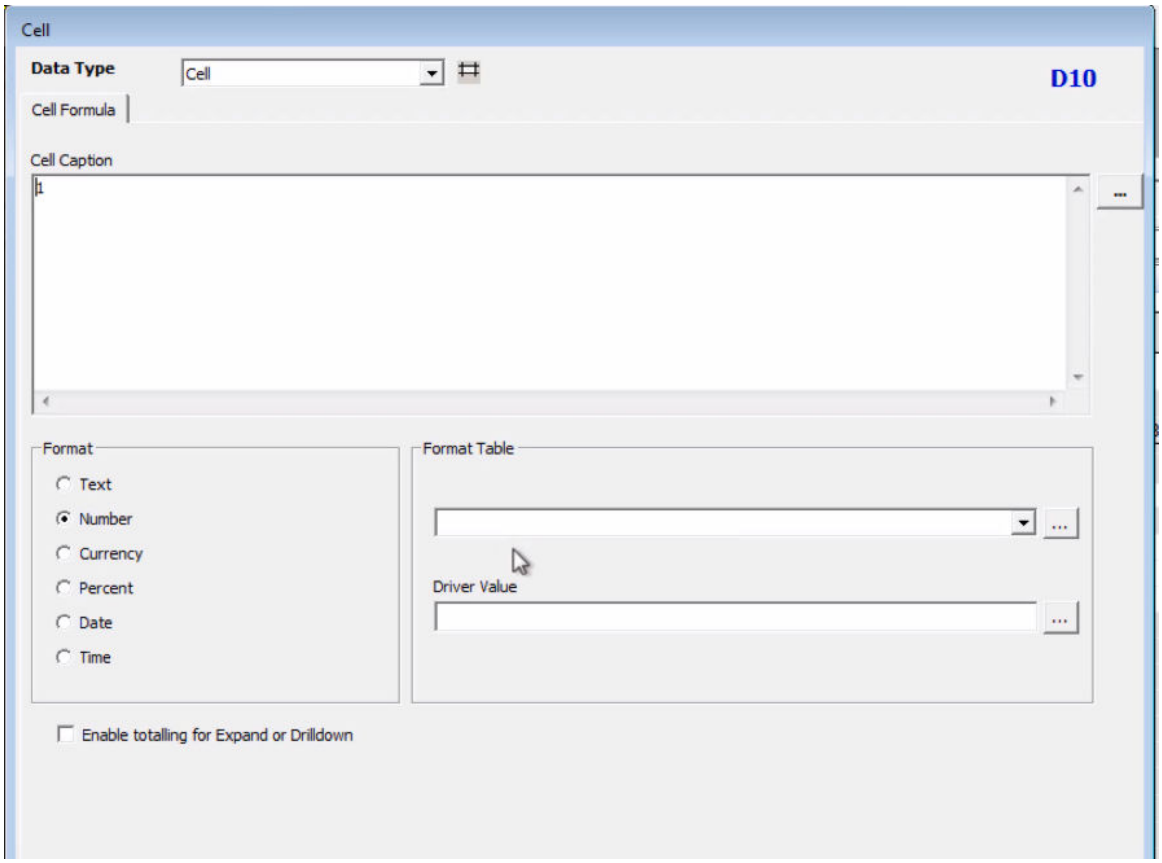
My first action is to drilldown on that figure to see the components that have produced it. I highlight cell D10 and click on the Drilldown icon on the toolbar.



I learn that I cannot drilldown on this cell. My next option is to go to the query to investigate whether there is a setup problem. I'll go back to Design View. Then I will double-click in cell D10 to open the query.



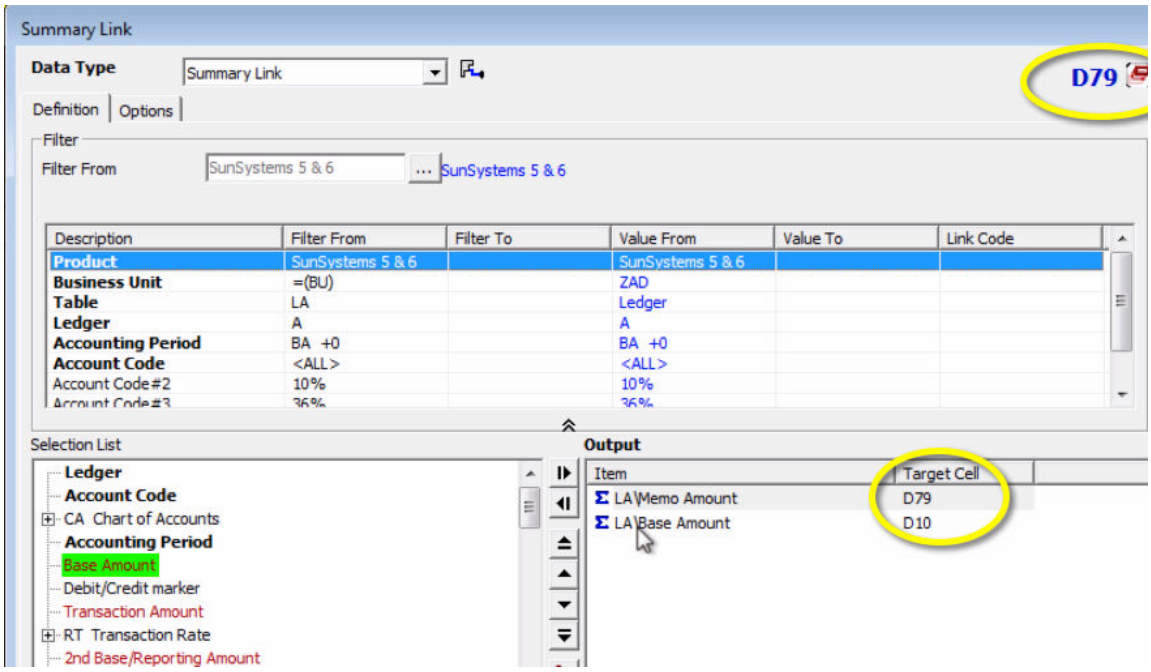
When the query interface pops up, behold it has no values in it! No query has been set up in cell D10.



I've got nothing. I cannot easily check the values pulled into cell D10, because I have no idea where the query that threw the value into cell D10 is located. If I tried to find the query, I might have to click in over 1,000 different cells before I stumbled upon it. It is impossible for me to work backwards from this value.

Do you see the complication caused by throwing values? There is no trail.

Now, because I set up the query in the first place, I know where I placed it in the worksheet so I can go there. The query in this worksheet is in cell D79.



As you can see in the screenshot above, this is the query that is throwing the value into cell D10.

The inability to investigate the components of a value is why I strongly discourage the use of the system's value throwing functionality. I have had to use this on a few occasions, but every time I have done so, I have regretted it.

This functionality, while it may look enticing, can create lots of confusion for anyone who must use a worksheet after you (if you were the sheet's creator) are transferred somewhere else. You should only use this functionality if you are in a pinch.