If you know someone who you think would benefit from being an Insider, feel free to forward this PDF to them so they can sign up here.

Quick Tips for our Insider friends!

Hey Insiders!

This bi-weekly Quick Tips is coming to you from Redmond where we're recovering from jet-lag, sorting through the thousands of underwater photos from our diving in Indonesia (blog posts coming up!), and preparing new material for our 2012 classes. On the day we flew home we went to the first *National Geographic Live!* lecture in Seattle – featuring underwater photographer Brian Skerry. A lot of what he said about depleted fish stocks, endangered sharks and turtles, and declining reef health resonated with Kimberly and I – especially after our trip to Belize last year where we were saddened by the state of some of the reefs we saw. If you're interested in reducing your impact on the oceans, consider reviewing and living by the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Guide to Sustainable Seafood here.

All our 2012 classes through August are now open for registration and the UK classes in May are filling up fast. This is our complete set of class deliveries for all 2012 with only one more likely delivery of IE1 & IE2 back-to-back later in the year (likely to be Houston). Check out the final part of the newsletter for details.

For new registrations to the Tampa classes only, if you register during February with the discount code 'insider' we'll give you a $250 hotel bill credit!

The most recent book I've read is Ahmed Rashid's *Descent Into Chaos*. It's an insightful look into the mismanagement of the situation in Afghanistan from 9/11 through 2008. Rumsfeld, Karzai, and Musharraf bear the brunt of the criticism along with various parts of the US government. It explains how some of the decisions (or lack thereof) contributed to the spread of terrorism – the exact opposite of the desired effect. I recommend this book to anyone interested in Central Asia, Afghanistan, or terrorism in general – I've also picked up Rashid's other books Taliban and Jihad.

Please let us know if you liked what you read/saw here and/or have any suggestions for future Quick Tips.

Note: you can get all the prior Insider newsletters here.

Paul's Ponderings

One of the problems I keep hearing about in the SQL community is application vendors that use SQL Server as the back-end storage and have erroneous configuration recommendations or requirements (the most common example is recommending auto-shrink or regular shrinks – see my post about that). This is bad for many reasons, including:

- Myths and misconceptions about SQL Server are perpetuated by 'authoritative' sources
- Vendor clients without a DBA may not know any better and so may incur performance problems from implementing the configuration
- The DBAs at some vendor clients may have their knowledge called into dispute by their managers because the vendor disagrees with them

The big problem comes when the vendor doesn't really understand the basis for the recommendation that they're making. It can be extremely hard to convince such a vendor that their advice is incorrect – I've even had to use the dreaded 'I wrote that code – your understanding of it *is* incorrect' argument to make people see sense.

Sometimes it can be SQL Server tools vendors who get it wrong – and I've been bitten by this myself. One of our clients contacted me saying that a tool they'd bought was complaining about some indexes I'd created on the client's system – saying they were duplicate indexes that should be removed. Understandably I was really annoyed by this as the tool was giving my client the impression that I'd done something wrong. It turns out that the tool was not considering INCLUDEd columns when flagging an index as a duplicate. I blogged about my experience here (no, I don't name the tool), and this problem has since been fixed in that tool.

Even Microsoft, as a vendor of applications that use SQL Server, gets it wrong sometimes too. I've been teaching the SQL Server part of the SharePoint MCM certification since it started (Jonathan and Kimberly have taught some of it too) and in May 2011 I was very dismayed to read the new SharePoint 2010 SQL Server maintenance whitepaper. It was full of poor advice so I rewrote it for Microsoft and they republished it. If only all vendors would accept advice and help to rationalize the information they give their clients!

Call to action: Next time you come across some guidance from a vendor that is clearly wrong or misleading, call them on it! Education is the key to getting things like this fixed. And feel free to pull me into any email threads with vendors (or colleagues) who won't listen to reason.

I'm really interested to know your thoughts on poor vendor guidance and battles you've had— feel free to drop me a line, confidentially as always.

Video Demo

Jonathan's been itching to record a bunch of videos for you that show how to use some of the plethora of free SQL Server tools that are out there. So, in this newsletter we present the first in an ongoing series by Jonathan over the next few months. This video shows how to use the Performance Analysis of Logs tool. This tool can be used to simplify configuring Performance Data collection as well as for performing analysis of performance counter log files based on the included threshold templates.

I produced the video in WMV and MOV formats so everyone can watch. You can get the videos:

- For WMV: here

- For MOV: here

I recommend downloading before watching. No demo code this time.

SQLskills Offerings

Registrations are piling in for our 2012 classes and right now we're doing or final preparations for our Tampa Immersion series (IE1-IE2-IE3). But, for some of you, we also know that that getting travel and training sorted is difficult early in the year as budgets are still being defined. To help you take advantage of last minute travel deals, we'll add one of our own – if you register for a Tampa class before the end of February then we'll take $250 off of your hotel bill! Just use the 'insider' discount code when you register.

And, we've also extended our "buy in bulk" discount where you pre-pay a block of seats now to get a 28% discount off of full price and a 16% off of the early-bird price. See here for details. You can even use these "buy in bulk" seats for classes that no longer offer the early-bird price as long as they are not "sold-out."

We are offering all of our Immersion Events in 2012 – these classes are available for registration now!

- February 27 – March 2, 2012: Internals and Performance (**IE1**) in Tampa, FL
- March 5-9, 2012: Performance Tuning (**IE2**) in Tampa, FL
- March 12-16, 2012: High Availability/Disaster Recovery (**IE3**) in Tampa, FL
- April 16-20, 2012: Internals and Performance (**IE1**) in Chicago, IL
- April 16-20, 2012: Business Intelligence (**IEBI**) in Chicago, IL
- April 23-27, 2012: Performance Tuning (**IE2**) in Chicago, IL
- April 23-27, 2012: Developers (**IEDev**) in Chicago, IL
- May 7-11, 2012: Internals and Performance (**IE1**) in London, UK
- May 7-11, 2012: Business Intelligence (**IEBI**) in London, UK
- May 14-18, 2012: Performance Tuning (**IE2**) in London, UK
- May 14-18, 2012: Developers (**IEDev**) in London, UK
- August 2012: **IE1**-**IE2**-**IE3**-**IE4**, **IEDev**, and **IEBI** in Redmond/Bellevue (WA) again!

NOTE: These are the **only** locations/classes/cities being planned from January through August 2012. We are likely to offer only one more IE1 & IE2 combination later in the year and we're currently considering Houston, Newark and Atlanta.

See here for all the details.

Summary

We hope you've enjoyed this issue - we really enjoy putting these together.

If there is anything else you're interested in, we'd love to hear from you - drop us a line.

Thanks,
Paul and Kimberly

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