

(May 29th, 2011)

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!

We had a great couple of onsite visits with two of our long-term clients in Grand Rapids and Houston – good combination of training and consulting in both places. If you're ever in Grand Rapids you have to check out the Founders Brewing Company – fabulous beer! We also took in the Naval Museum in Muskegon, MI which has a WWII submarine that saw active service and sank 14 enemy ships. My Dad in Scotland was very interested when I called him from the sub to tell him where we were – he served a long time in the Royal Navy as a submariner.

At the end of this week we're heading off to Europe for 3 weeks – starting with a short conference in Germany, a week of touring around Europe visiting castles and cathedrals, and then an Immersion event in London – can't wait!

The latest book I finished is Elaine Sciolino's *Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran*. It's a comprehensive account of Iran from 1979 through the turn of the millennium and looks at its society, government, religion, people and their life. Sciolino was a New York Times reporter stationed in the country during that time and presents a very insightful account of the country. Well worth reading to learn about this important player on the world stage.

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

Paul's Ponderings

My ~~rant~~ editorial this time isn't a technical one but more of a career/development one. I'll throw these into the mix every so often as I know people find them useful.

After visiting the first client on our recent trip I was inspired to write a blog post about communication and why I think it's a very much neglected skill these days. See [here](#) for the post. I wasn't inspired by any deficiencies at that client, but instead from thinking about all the communication I'd had with people during the course of the week (at the client and over email) and how I'd had to adapt my language, tone, technical level, and content based on the audience. The blog post specifically deals with being a consultant and how effective communication is of such paramount importance there. Then as we were flying home yesterday I was thinking about the topic for this newsletter and decided to expound a little further on the topic of communication.

If you think about it, effective communication is the single most important skill for a human being to master. We process information constantly and we interact with other people by communicating.

The manner in which we communicate says a lot about who we are, and strongly influences how people react to us. Some examples of communication styles that I see when people present, answer questions, ask questions and talk to each other that give people a very negative impression:

- Arrogance
- Combativeness
- Disdainfulness
- Bluster
- Scornfulness

I've witnessed these (and worse) in meetings many times—especially in things like code/design reviews where people take constructive criticism personally and bristle against it.

With the ubiquitous nature of online communications, it's hard to escape examples of poor communications. When sending an email it's imperative that you read over what you've written and think how someone reading it will interpret your words, phrasing, and any between-the-lines feeling you had when you wrote it. Email is so easy to misinterpret, especially if you're not used to someone's email style and usual phraseology.

And don't get me started about online forums and newsgroups. It seems that people think they can hide behind an online username and spout abuse at people for being ignorant. People forget that *everyone* starts with zero SQL Server knowledge, and that ignorance does NOT equal stupidity.

The very worst thing I've noticed is the seeming increase in the lack of grace when people communicate—when did it become acceptable to not say 'please' or 'thank you'? There's no excuse for a lack of civility and it drives me nuts when I see it.

In today's society where so much of our communication is not face-to-face, we need to be extra careful to communicate effectively. And when we ARE communicating face-to-face we have to remember that we're not in forums or twitter and adjust accordingly.

Call to action this time: stop and think about how you're communicating with people around you and whether making a small change in your attitude, tone, or language would make people more likely to acquiesce to your requests and be more cooperative.

I'm really interested to know your views on communication—feel free to [drop me a line](#), confidentially as always.

Video Demo

While we were on site at our client in Houston, they asked us about an indexing operation they were performing through Management Studio and why it was taking so long. Kimberly investigated and found that SSMS was doing the operation in a *horrible* way. There are many reasons not to blindly trust tools to do the right thing or give correct advice, and in the demo video for this newsletter (17 mins) Kimberly shows you some of the pitfalls of trusting SSMS. You'll be amazed!

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. There is no demo code this time.

SQLskills Offerings

Our four Immersion Events in Bellevue, Washington in August are filling up and a few hardy souls are even taking all four classes in a row – wow! See [here](#) for more details.

We have a new combined SQL Server and failover clustering health check available – give us 8 hours and we'll show you what's going wrong with your system, without needing access to your system. We're fast, efficient, and provide serious ROI on your consulting investment. [Let me know](#) if you're interested – special rates for Insiders.

Summary

I hope you've enjoyed this issue - I 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