

(July 10th, 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!

This bi-weekly Quick Tips is coming to you from Redmond where we're at home through the rest of the summer. Now, if only the weather would be a bit more summery I'd be happy! However, I do have a keg of Mac'n'Jacks African Amber up on the deck so I can't complain too much!

Big news: we've just opened up registrations for two new Immersion Events this year – Performance Tuning (IE2) in Chicago, October 24-28, and Internals and Performance (IE1) in Atlanta, December 5-12.

The most recent book I've read is Paul Theroux's ***Ghost Train to the Eastern Star***. I'm a huge fan of Theroux's travel books and this one has him retracing his steps from 30 years previously when he traveled across Europe and Asia by train (as recounted in his book *The Great Railway Bazaar*). It's very interesting to hear of the changes he sees in the various countries through which he travels – and I always find his stories get my wanderlust going... road-trip!!!

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

Paul's Ponderings

In another departure from my technical content, I blogged last week about a nasty trend I see online – berating people for simply not knowing about something rather than taking the time to explain nicely to them. You can read about it my post [Ignorance is not stupidity](#), which I followed up with a post discussing the pros and cons of regular reboots – see [here](#).

In this newsletter I decided to talk about upgrades, prompted by the upcoming release of SQL Server Denali.

I must admit that I'm pretty much a Luddite when it comes to most forms of technology (but I don't go as far as the group from which the word derives – see Wikipedia [here](#) – I tend to build cool techie stuff – see [here](#)). It wasn't until October 2010 that I moved off of Windows XP, to many people's amusement—including Kimberly, as there was no pressing need for me to do so. It just worked. There were no driver problems any more, all my software worked, and it was very stable.

The major reason for holding back was I used Outlook Express and couldn't find a replacement for it to use on Windows 7—and there was no way I was going back to full-blown Outlook,

which I think is just horrible. Then Kimberly decided to upgrade our laptops and I found the Thunderbird mail program and so I upgraded—and now deal with driver issues and OS bugs. Sigh.

And what about cell-phones? I swore I would never get an iPhone—until my cell-phone died finally in New York in January 2010 and I **needed** a new phone there and then. So I caved in and got one—again to the amusement of many. ☺

I find it strange that people are desperate to get their hands on the newest, latest, coolest software or gadget—and have to spend hours learning a new interface and new buttons and dealing with bugs and glitches. Maybe I'm just not hip any more...

SQL Server is interesting though, because apart from people tinkering on their own laptops, it's usually installed in a business environment. Upgrading a server product on which your business is depending has to be done with great care, and with a lot of consideration.

For instance, when a product is first released, there are bugs in it (true of **any** software product) – do you want to be the one to hit a bug that interrupts your business? Do you really need the expense and risk of moving to a new release ASAP just because it's the new release?

On the flip side, each new release has some really cool features that could really help your business and make the risk and expense of upgrading quickly worthwhile. In SQL Server 2008 it was data and backup compression that were my favorites; in Denali it's going to be the new AlwaysOn features with truly usable “read-only secondaries”.

And then there are corporate policies and budgets to think about. Even though you may want to upgrade, you may not be able to because of budgetary constraints. Or you may not want to upgrade but you **have** to because it's corporate policy.

Upgrading is a bit of a minefield IMHO as you also have to be very careful that if anything goes wrong, you have the option of going back. Admittedly, it has become easier over the years with the Upgrade Advisor tool and comprehensive whitepapers to help you plan and think of gotchas. Still, you need to do a lot of testing to make sure your workload isn't going to suffer from unexpected changes in performance and your code doesn't use any features that have been removed.

Call to action: make sure that your next upgrade is carefully planned to avoid problems. Start looking over the deprecated features lists and install the publicly available CTPs to get used to how the new version works. It doesn't mean you need to upgrade the day it's officially released but it does mean you'll be way ahead of the game once you are ready to migrate. Ultimately, it will help you to know that you're taking the upgrade step for the right reasons.

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

Video Demo

Earlier this week I was reminded of some non-intuitive behavior around the use of database snapshots and the memory they can consume even if nothing changes in the source database. I recorded a short (7 minutes) demo video for you to show you what I mean.

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. And you can get the demo code [here](#).

SQLskills Offerings

We've just opened up registrations for two new Immersion Events this year – Performance Tuning (IE2) in Chicago, October 24-28, and Internals and Performance (IE1) in Atlanta, December 5-12. For our August classes in Bellevue, WA, weeks 1 and 2 are sold-out and there are a few seats left for weeks 3 and 4. 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