

(July 24th, 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 finally getting a bit of summer sun and starting to play with Denali CTP-3 – lots of cool stuff in there!

Summer is always a time when we limit teaching, have relatives in town and use the time to catch-up a little with remembering our vacation home. For the past two weeks my parents have been visiting from Scotland so we've been out and about a bit and at the same time preparing for our classes in August and also handling ongoing client work we have. Finally, just yesterday we even had summer weather! ☺

I'm very pleased to announce that Jonathan Kehayias has been accepted by Microsoft as an instructor of the SQL Server portion of the Microsoft Certified Master – SharePoint certification. This is a huge achievement for Jonathan – making the leap from being an MCM to being an MCM Instructor, and it makes SQLskills the only company where all the employees are Microsoft-sanctioned MCM Instructors. We're very proud!

The most recent book I've read is Steven Galloway's *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. This is a particularly haunting novel about Sarajevo when it was besieged by the Serbian army and terrorized with artillery and sniper fire from the surrounding hills. The book centers on the (true) story of a cellist who plays for 22 days in the same spot to honor 22 people killed by an exploding shell while waiting to buy bread. Imagine having to cross street junctions with random snipers killing people as they do so? Wow. It's a relatively short book but it packs a powerful punch and I strongly recommend it.

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

Paul's Ponderings

Several times over the last week I was contacted by desperate people looking for a magic bullet to allow them to recover a badly-corrupt database without suffering data loss. And of course they don't have backups either. In this situation the answer isn't our trademark "it depends", the answer is simply "game over". At this point the options are to run repair and salvage what's left, try to export out as much data as possible, or chance one of the third-party tools that purport to be able to extract valid data from a corrupt database.

I'm constantly amazed that people get themselves into this mess, and to be honest, it's actually companies that are getting themselves into this mess, not individuals. And I don't mean the mess

of having a corrupt database – that can happen randomly to anyone – I mean the mess of having a corrupt database with absolutely no backups (not just slightly out-of-date but NO BACKUPS).

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that no matter how inexperienced the person is who is responsible for SQL Server at a company; it is simply inexcusable and irresponsible for a company to NOT have a backup of their critical data.

What's a *little* more excusable is not testing the backups, but only a little more so. As an inexperienced DBA, one wouldn't expect the database to become corrupted occasionally, and one wouldn't expect the backups to become corrupted occasionally either.

What is grossly inexcusable is when *experienced* DBAs don't test their backups or run database consistency checks – and so have no idea whether a restore will result in a corruption-free database, or whether the restore sequence will even work. But unfortunately this seems to be very common.

Call to action this time: be honest with yourself – if you're not regularly (i.e. at least once a month) testing that your backups can be used for a trouble-free restore then you're being unprofessional as a DBA and your company is at risk of losing data, and you're at risk of losing your job if a disaster occurs and your recovery "*plan*" doesn't work. Harsh words, but there's no excuse – even the "we don't have disk space or time" isn't acceptable IMHO. This is where you need to get management involved and you need to make your case. Cover your data. Cover yourself.

You can read more about how few people test their backups in a post I wrote back in 2009: [Importance of validating backups](#).

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

Video Demo

Earlier this week I posted on our SQL Server Magazine blog about a secondary log file that cannot be dropped after a shrink operation. I thought it would make a good demo for you so I recorded a short 6 minute video to show the problem and how to work around it.

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 FOUR new Immersion Events this year – Performance Tuning (IE2) plus a new Developer Immersion in Chicago, October 24-28, and Internals and Performance (IE1) plus a new BI Immersion in Atlanta, December 5-9. 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 *our* 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