

(August 21st, 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 again coming to you from Redmond where we've just finished week 3 of the SQLskills SQL Server Summer Camp. ☺ We're going to make it an annual affair – where we run all four of our 'classic' Immersion Events back-to-back in Bellevue, WA in August.

I have to say it's really tiring teaching three weeks straight but really enjoyable and rewarding at the same time – I love seeing people grasp complex concepts that are new to them or haven't been adequately explained before. We dispensed with a traditional whiteboard for these classes and are using a tablet PC instead. This means that all attendees get annotated whiteboard 'slides' at the end of class and don't have to frantically scribble down whiteboard drawings during class.

The most recent book I've read is Wilfred Thesiger's *Arabian Sands*. The book recounts Thesiger's travels with the Bedu tribesmen through the sands of southern Arabia in the 1940s. Thesiger really gets to know the Bedu and shows how hard their lives were, along with the complexity of relationships and feuds between the various tribes. That world is lost to us now after the oil boom - Dubai used to be town of 2000 people... Strongly recommended for anyone who enjoys travelogues.

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

Paul's Ponderings

Firstly, there are a couple of blog posts this week that I'd like to draw your attention to:

- [Do yourself a favor... Trust No One](#)
 - Back in May I discussed trustworthy information in this newsletter, and I expanded on the theme last week on my blog.
- [Photos: Illinois Railway Museum](#)
 - In the mid-May newsletter I mentioned that we'd gone out to the Illinois Railway Museum and last week I finally got around to posting some photos.

Now to this week's topic: business continuity after a catastrophic data center loss.

In the [last newsletter](#) I talked about responses to discovering database corruption. That's a situation that occurs very frequently around the world and usually doesn't lead to a company going out of business.

Something that doesn't happen very often is an entire data center being destroyed through fire, flood, earthquake, or even a terrorist act. But it does happen.

What if it happened to you?

Many companies I've discussed this with (who only have a single data center) do not have a business continuity plan if the data center is destroyed or completely knocked out of action (i.e. unusable for many days or weeks). Most often this is because such an occurrence is deemed to be so improbable that it's not considered as a possible problem in the DR handbook/plan/run-book.

I think that's highly irresponsible though – to the company, its clients, its employees, and its investors. Complete loss of the only available data center can very quickly lead to the company going out of business when clients switch to other service providers if service is not restored very quickly (i.e. within days).

This means you've got no more than a few days to:

- Find another data center with the capacity you need
- Rent or buy new servers and storage
- Possibly bare-metal install Windows and SQL Server, plus whatever else is required for your applications
- Install your application infrastructure
- Restore all your data
- Test everything works
- Get your clients connected to the new servers

That's a lot to do in a very short space of time. Are your technical people capable of bare-metal install from scratch to clients running in less than a couple of days? Does the company have enough ready-cash/credit to buy/rent new servers and storage? Do you have installation media available? Do your backups work?

Now consider doing all of that in the face of a major natural or human-caused disaster where some of your staff are not available, or the cell-phone network is down, or there's no power nearby. What if none of the executives with budget-authorization powers are available? That hugely magnifies the complexity of recovering successfully.

Call to action: consider just how much of a disaster you think your company would be able to cope with. If there isn't a contingency plan that deals with data center loss, now is the time to do something about it, before it costs your company its business, and costs you your job.

I'm really interested to know whether you think your company would survive a catastrophic data-center loss—feel free to [drop me a line](#), confidentially as always.

Video Demo

One of the problems we continually see when working on client systems is error log files that are hundreds of MB or a few GB in size. Logs this large are very hard to work with, especially over some kind of remote connection. In this short video I want to show you how to change the number of error log files and force them to regenerate every day so that individual log files are more usable. The video is about three minutes long.

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's no demo code this time.

SQLskills Offerings

We've enhanced our server audits with the ability to analyze your failover clusters and virtualization configurations. As an Insider and a new client we'll give you the first 6 hours of a server audit for \$1300, which is a 33% discount over regular rates. You'll be amazed at the problems we can find in such a short time using our SQLDiag-based audit mechanism instead of signing you up for a multi-day investigative consulting engagement as others try to do.

[Let me know](#) if you're interested. You won't find better ROI for your consulting budget.

We've 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. **If you're planning to attend our IE2 offering in Chicago in October – it's more than two-thirds full already.**

See [here](#) for all the details.

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