

(December 12th, 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 for a few days after our last two Immersion Events of the year in Atlanta. We had a great time with folks in Atlanta and racked up more questions than almost any other Immersion Event. It was great fun and a nice way to end the year in training. We're heading to NYC this next weekend to see our best friends – we both love NYC at Christmas-time – then we'll have our family Christmas at home.

On Thursday this week (December 15th, 10am PST) I'm presenting for the PASS Virtual Chapter on Professional Development – talking about Communication Skills. The LiveMeeting invitation link is [here](#).

The most recent book I've read is Kevin Grange's *Beneath Blossom Rain*. This is an excellent book that recounts Kevin's experience doing the 216-mile Snowman Trek across Bhutan in 2007. Bhutan is very high on my must-visit list, along with Nepal and the former Tibet, because of its fabulous scenery and amazing culture. Instead of focusing on Gross National Product, the King focuses on Gross National Happiness of the population. Bhutan has been described as a 'living museum' because so much of the culture has been preserved from several hundred years ago. It's a very interesting book.

Check out the final part of the newsletter for details of a new “use it or lose it” discount offer of 6-class-seats-for-the-price-of-5 to help you use up your 2011 training budget (or get a jump on using your 2012 budget). This discount is available through January 31, 2012.

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

We're all over-loaded. There's a never ending list of things to do at home and at work. I thrive on having a giant to-do list but I'm weird – most people find it oppressive.

DBAs are often more over-loaded than most, especially after the economic downturn of the last few years because companies have laid-off some workers and the remaining employees have been expected to pick up the slack. Couple that with an ever-increasing need for databases, and DBAs can have some of the biggest, never-ending to-do lists.

If you find yourself in that situation as a DBA, how do you cope? Every new database adds more tasks, including:

- Index and statistics maintenance
- Backups
- Consistency checks
- Performance monitoring
- Code deployments
- Security management and auditing
- Configuration changes
- Partitioning management
- Service Pack and Cumulative Update installations

And even just keeping track of all the servers and database and who's responsible for each aspect of them.

Many of these tasks can be automated so you get more time to do more interesting things like performance investigations, learning, or evaluating features in new versions. One of the easiest areas to automate is database maintenance – the first three things in my list above. Some people write their own tools if they need specific behavior, but many people write their own tools because they don't know there's a high-quality, completely free tool that someone has already written!

One of the tools I like to recommend is the suite of maintenance automation routines written by Ola Hallengren. His maintenance suite won the *Best Free Tool* Award in the 2011 SQL Server Magazine Awards and they really are fantastic. They're used by thousands of people around the world in production and I recommend them to our clients instead of having them pay for us to write tools for them. You can get them from [Ola's website](#).

Call to action: If you're finding that you spend a lot of your time performing manual tasks over and over, search online for someone who's written some automation that can help you. There are lots of tools out there you have to pay for but also some real gems that are free – a good starting point is an article in SQL Server Magazine from 2009: [The Mega Guide to Free SQL Server Tools](#).

I'm really interested to know your thoughts on how automation has helped you—feel free to [drop me a line](#), confidentially as always.

Video Demo

At the end of October I presented a demo video by Joe Sack (our newest employee) on tracking deadlocks. Joe's recorded part two of his demo where he shows how to interpret the XML information generated when a deadlock occurs – cool stuff. The video is about 13 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. And you can get the demo code [here](#).

SQLskills Offerings

Registrations are starting to come in for our 2012 classes. We have a full schedule planned for 2012 and so we've come up with an offer to help you use your 2011 training budget before you lose it. If you want to pre-pay for seats now, you can get a 28% discount off of full price and a 16% off of the early-bird price. See [here](#) for details.

For everyone that's been asking – YES – we will be offering all four of our Immersion Events in 2012 with these classes being added throughout the remainder of the year. Here's a list of some of the classes and cities we're targeting:

- 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
- Available for registration January
 - May 2012: IE1 & IE2 in London, UK (*and, if there's interest – an IEBI and an IEDev – can you let Kimberly know if this interests you?*)
 - August 2012: IE1-IE2-IE3-IE4 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 one more IE1 & IE2 combination later in the year.

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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