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 celebrating the holidays with the kids and we're catching up on some hobby stuff (Paul with Nixie-tube clocks – see the last one he built here – and Kimberly with photo editing and scanning). Everyone at SQLskills is on vacation this week – aside from any emergencies that might flare up at any of our remote DBA installations – so we hope you're taking some time to enjoy your friends and family as well. Most importantly, we hope your pagers and cell-phones will be silent this week (and then so will ours ☺)!

This is the last Insider email this year – number 22 since we started putting these together in March – and we really enjoy writing them! Most importantly, we love your responses and feedback! And, we'd like to thank you all for being part of our Insider community and we send our best wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2012!

And, if you're eagerly waiting for Immersion Event class details, be sure to review the final section of the newsletter as our **2012 UK classes are open for registration**!

The most recent book I've read is Dan Simmons' *The Rise of Endymion*. Unless you're a sci-fi fan, you can skip ahead now ☺. This book is the culmination of an excellent quadrilogy that many describe as being among the best space operas ever written. It's got space battles, faster-than-light and time travel, rogue AIs, and a large cast of well portrayed characters. If you're a fan of the genre and you've never tried this series, I strongly recommend it. Start with *Hyperion* – you won't regret it.

Finally, if you're interested, you can find some photos from our recent dive trip to Belize here.

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

Continuing on my theme from last time where I talked about using automation to lessen your workload (or overload); in this short newsletter I want to touch on work-life balance.

This is a much-used phrase, often touted by companies wanting to figure out ways to extract more work from employees while making them think they're being treated really well.

When I worked at Microsoft, I had a really poor work-life balance – very easy to do when one gets sucked into writing cool code, managing great teams, and being an integral part of a giant release like SQL Server 2005. One of the reasons I left Microsoft (who I loved working for) was to be able to get more flexibility in my working hours and time away from work. Now I like to think I have a really good work-life balance, but in reality I (and Kimberly) work a lot, as running a company is more than a full-time job.

I'm still much better off than I used to be though, because I can pick and choose when and where I work – and I make a conscious choice on whether to work hard or not because that directly translates into how well SQLskills does (along with the giant contributions that Kimberly, Jon, and Joe make).

My point in telling you this is that now I'm very aware of how much time I spend working and how much time I spend doing my hobbies, messing around with our kids, and taking vacations. I *try* to work-to-live, not live-to-work. It's very hard to do and I know that both Kimberly and I work well over 40 hours per week but we still strive to pick when we do certain things and how we'll fit them in appropriately when we have so many things to schedule.

Call to action: Take a minute to take stock of your work-life balance and whether you're living-to-work. If so, try to change things so you're working-to-live – you'll be amazed at how much happier you'll be. For some of you that may not be that easy – but I bet there are some things you can do to lessen your workload and conscious choices you can make to spend less time on work and more doing the things you love; sometimes a drastic change is necessary to make life better for yourself and your family.

I'm really interested to know your thoughts on work-life balance—feel free to drop me a line, confidentially as always.

Video Demo

As it's vacation time I didn't record a video. However, last week I presented a LiveMeeting session for the SQL PASS Virtual Chapter on Professional Development on Communication Skills. They recorded the session and have made it available for download and online viewing. It's about 70 minutes long and has a bunch of my tips and tricks from managing, training, and working with people over the last 15 years. All of this can help you communicate more clearly the things that you want and need to help create better balance, improve presentations or just generally interact with other peers, professionals and colleagues!

You can access the recording 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 "buy in bulk" and pre-pay a block of 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.

As for our 2012 UK classes – they are open for registration! The dates of the classes are:

- Week of May 7: IE1 and IEBI
- Week of May 14: IE2 and IEDev

Here's the pricing:

- Full price: US$3,995 USD plus VAT (estimated at 2,550 GBP + VAT)
- Early-bird price: US$3,495 USD plus VAT (estimated at 2,231 GBP + VAT)

Our hotel rate is 129 GBP per night. We're going to hold the event at the [Marriott in Kensington (London)](#).

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
  - May 7-11, 2012: Internals and Performance (IE1) in London, UK
  - May 7-11, 2012: Business Intelligence (IEBI) in London, UK
  - May 14-18, 2012: Performance Tuning (IE2) in London, UK
  - May 14-18, 2012: Developers (IEDev) in London, UK
- Available for registration January
  - 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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