

(March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

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## Quick Tips for our Insider friends!

Hey Insiders!

This bi-weekly Quick Tips is coming from Redmond, WA, where we're just home from our first three Immersion Events of the year in Tampa, FL (see Brad Hoff's [blog post](#) for a wrap-up of week 3). Next weekend we're off to Las Vegas for the Spring 2012 SQL Connections conference – always a fun time!

We've extended our early-bird dates for the London classes to mid-April due to popular demand from people finding that approval from management is taking a long time – we understand! We've also finalized our complete 2012 class schedule – see the final section for details.

The most recent book I've read is Niall Ferguson's *The Ascent of Money*. This is a fascinating book which explains the major parts of world finance – stocks, bonds, banks, housing, and insurance. It goes into their history and describes some of the biggest scandals and problems that have happened over time in each area. It's written in a very accessible way, without a bunch of impenetrable financial jargon, and I found it really interesting. Recommended!

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**

Last week we taught our IE3: High Availability and Disaster Recovery class, and I always kick off the week with a few hours of non-technical discussion on strategy creation and considerations.

One of the areas I cover is the plethora of people concerns around disaster recovery planning, such as whether your disaster recovery plan covers disasters where people may not be available to help out.

We had a discussion about data center accessibility problems after a disaster (e.g. the Christchurch, New Zealand earthquake in 2011) where the building is deemed too dangerous to enter but your precious data is in there, and \*only\* in there. How can you get it out? Basically, you can't unless you know someone who can get into the building legitimately.

One of the students in the class had a brilliant suggestion. They had a situation where their data center was inaccessible because of a chemical spill from a rail accident and communications

to/from the data center were out. The local hazmat crews would not let anyone into the data center without proper clearance. Luckily one member of the IT department was a volunteer firefighter and was able to enter the building to access the necessary data to allow business continuity from another building.

The student's company had identified employees that had non-SQL Server skills that could be useful in the event of a disaster – including volunteer firefighters, EMTs, and even Federal Emergency Management volunteer personnel.

That's a pretty smart move! You never know what could be useful – apart from emergency personnel, some people may have IT skills outside of SQL Server that could be useful if a non-DBA team member is required but none are available, for instance.

In a disaster situation, making (safe and legal) use of whatever resources you have available might mean the difference between the business continuing and the business going under.

**Call to action:** Ask around your DBA team (and maybe wider) to see if anyone has any non-SQL skills they'd be willing to use if a disaster occurs.

I'm really interested to know your thoughts on making use of team member's non-SQL skills—feel free to [drop me a line](#), confidentially as always.

## **Video Demo**

Continuing the series of videos about free tools for the SQL Server DBA, Jonathan shows how to make use of a free tool from SQL Sentry named Plan Explorer to simplify the analysis of execution plans generated by SQL Server.

Plan Explorer takes plan analysis to an entirely new level by making it easy to snap to the most expensive operator inside of an execution plan, change the default display to show cumulative costs instead of per node costs, and by providing highlighting of key plan operators like Key Lookups and Index Scan operations. In addition you can easily view the JOIN hierarchy of tables for a plan to see the interrelationships that exist between the objects required during a queries execution.

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. Click on the link to start Windows Media Player, and then click the icon in the top-right corner to switch to the library mode. Then in the bottom left, right-click the buffering icon and select File then 'Save As...' You'll need to figure it out for different media players.

Enjoy!

## SQLskills Offerings

We've extended our early-bird dates for the London classes to mid-April due to popular demand from people finding that approval from management is taking a long time – we understand!

We've also extended our “buy in bulk” discount where you pre-pay a block of seats now to get a 28% discount off of full price and a 16% off of the early-bird price. See [here](#) for details. You can even use these “buy in bulk” seats for classes that no longer offer the early-bird price as long as they are not “sold-out.”

Finally, we have decided that the following schedule of Immersion Events in 2012 is final for this year! It was a tough decision, as we truly enjoy delivering these and meeting so many great SQL folks, but our schedule is just too full. With the holidays, Fall conferences such as SQL Connections and SQL PASS, and other engagements and projects on our schedule, we just can't add more business travel to our 2012 calendar.

- 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 14-18, 2012: Performance Tuning (**IE2**) in London, UK
- August 2012: **IE1-IE2-IE3-IE4, IEDev**, and **IEBI** in Redmond/Bellevue (WA) again!

We hope to see you in Chicago, London or Bellevue this year; otherwise we'll plan to see you in 2013! As a note for 2013, we are cutting back on the number of deliveries and the number of cities.

These events are extremely difficult to organize and they're tremendously taxing on the team with long days and evening events. We generally co-locate these events to reduce your travel and expenses if you're taking classes back-to-back but it's hard to do these repeatedly and keep us/them fresh and exciting. They are truly *immersion* events and if there isn't one in your city, it might be a good thing to travel. Being in a hotel for the event allows you to participate in evening events, network with your colleagues and focus on the class without the usual requirements of being in your hometown.

Also, we work hard to book with hotels where the nightly sleeping costs are reasonable, where you won't need a rental car and in hub cities where flights are cheaper (i.e. Chicago/London). Seattle is a bit of a departure from this as it's not a major hub city but we balance that with the fact that it's during the summer and many of our past attendees have combined their visit out here with summer family travel. August in the Pacific Northwest is absolutely stunning and we can give you all sorts of recommendations for sight-seeing if you're interested!

So, that's it for now. Our 2012 schedule is final and we're really looking forward to some great Immersion Events this year as well as planning for 2013. We hope to see you somewhere!

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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