

(April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012)

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 from Redmond, WA, where we're just home from Las Vegas and the Spring 2012 SQL Connections conference. It was an excellent week with lots of new attendees coming to the show, and of course lots of our SQL community friends there to catch up with. Instead of flying back to Seattle we drove across the Mojave Desert to San Diego (for a friend's birthday party) and took a bunch of photos – blog post to come!

My exciting news is that on Monday I took the Oath of Allegiance and became a naturalized citizen of the United States! You can read a little about my journey [here](#). That's why this newsletter is a day late – I took yesterday off.

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 books I've read are Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy. Based on our kids' suggestions, Kimberly and I devoured them all in the space of a few days before the movie came out last weekend. The books were surprisingly good! They deal with a post-apocalyptic society, called Panem, in what was the USA that holds barbaric gladiatorial games every year involving children from the non-central districts of Panem. Hard to say any more without giving away the plot, but we both strongly recommending reading them!

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

While we were at SQL Connections last week we taught a pre-con workshop on the fundamentals of a health SQL Server database. It goes into good practices about database configuration and maintenance, and it's aimed at the wide variety of IT professionals who may end up supporting a SQL Server instance (i.e. not just true SQL Server DBAs).

We've been teaching a workshop like this for at least 5 years, and as Kimberly was teaching one of her sections, I started thinking about how often I make changes to the slides to make sure they're reflecting the most up-to-date operational practices. It's really surprising how frequently some facet of operational practices has to change, or is it?

If you think about all of the factors that need to be considered when deciding just what your operational practices should be then there's a huge number of things, including:

- Server hardware (e.g. CPU configuration, memory configuration)
- I/O subsystem hardware (e.g. the rise of SSDs)
- Windows technology (e.g. much faster SMB shares now)
- SQL Server technology (e.g. Availability Groups in SQL Server 2012)
- SQL Server licensing (e.g. the 2012 changes)
- Application requirements
- Performance requirements
- Security requirements
- Data volumes
- Connection volumes
- Business RTO and RPO requirements
- Globalization

The list is practically endless. There's no one-size-fits-all answer to how to configure and control your SQL Server, which is why there are so many different configurations out there, and why we have such fun teaching and consulting – we're always learning new configurations and tweaks to best practices.

One thing that I do find quite common though is that many companies don't re-evaluate their operational practices to take account of the many changes that occur over time (from the list above). This can lead to them falling behind the curve with respect to best practices for the healthiest systems.

For instance, it's especially important to regularly re-evaluate HA/DR strategy to make sure that the DR provisions will still result in a successful recovery within the proscribed RTO and RPO limits. What if your databases are larger so restoring them now takes longer than your RTO limit?

With all the possible changes that could occur in your environment, when was the last time \*you\* re-evaluated any of your strategies and practices?

**Call to action:** Take some time to reflect on how the factors governing how you provision, manage, and maintain your SQL Server instances and databases may have changed over the last few years and decide whether those changes merit some rethinking about your operational practices. It may be time for some changes.

I'm really interested to know your thoughts on changing operational practices—feel free to [drop me a line](#), confidentially as always.

### **Video Demo**

As we've been at SQL Connections all last week we didn't record a video for this newsletter. Instead, I'd like to point you at a video on Snapshot Isolation and isolation levels in general that

Kimberly recorded for the free MCM training series. Snapshot isolation came up repeatedly this week as a mechanism to alleviate blocking and deadlocking issues.

Check out the video on Microsoft's site [here](#). I had problems with the embedded video player – if you do, there are links to download the video in multiple formats. The video is about 48 minutes long.

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

[Paul@SQLskills.com](mailto:Paul@SQLskills.com) and [Kimberly@SQLskills.com](mailto:Kimberly@SQLskills.com)