

(June 11th, 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 to you from Reading, England where we're back again after a short stay in our "vacation house" back in Redmond. We're teaching our IE1 and IE2 classes for Microsoft staff over here and having a blast. Over the weekend we all visited Windsor Castle, Stonehenge, and Longleat House – tons of cool history!

The big news this week is that we've released our first online training course! We're partnering with [Pluralsight](#) to provide access to our vast, collective knowledge of SQL Server. We figured this is the perfect way to allow all those people who are not able to attend our in-person Immersion Events in the US and UK to still learn from us. Even people who attend our Immersion Events will find these courses valuable for refreshing content, areas not covered by our Immersion Events, and going into more depth on individual areas of interest.

As for what we're recording, we're not recording 'Immersion Event' 40-hour courses. Instead we're recording a plethora of 2-8 hour courses covering everything from basic T-SQL to hardware selection to enterprise architecture, and more! We chose Pluralsight as they're the best in the business for online content delivery and they have subscription packages to suit everyone from individuals to enterprises.

The first course released is a four-hour version of my SQL Server Myths and Misconceptions sessions, covering more than 80 myths and a bunch of demos. All five of us are working on more courses right now.

You can check out my course [here](#).

The most recent book I've read is Annie Jacobsen's *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America's Top Secret Military Base*. I've always been fascinated with Area 51, especially since starting to attend the SQL Connections conferences in Las Vegas and seeing the unmarked EG&G Boeing 737s flying workers out to the base every day. The book is excellent and makes great use of declassified information Jacobsen obtained from Freedom of Information Act requests. Particularly interesting is the story of the U2 spy plane development and the extensive nuclear testing done in the surrounding Nevada Test Range. Great stuff and strongly 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

Well, my week was interesting. I somehow managed to pick up a virus on Monday night here in the UK. And not just a regular Windows-Defender-can-kill-it virus either. This one was an extremely sophisticated root-kit that almost hosed my machine; I had Sireref.AK and a couple of its variants.

A root-kit is a virus that hacks the Master Boot Record of the disk, hooks into the Windows boot code, monitors things from kernel-level, and is basically an extreme P.I.T.A. to get rid of. It also destroyed my Windows Firewall, Windows Defender, the WMI registry, and was merrily off downloading more Trojans and viruses whenever I connected to the internet.

Normally this wouldn't phase me much, but as we're over here teaching for a couple of weeks, I didn't have an easy way to set up an external boot environment, and limited access to installation media and SQL/Office/VS ISOs, so I was dreading having to spend a bunch of time reinstalling Windows and then restoring an image backup. We do have a spare machine. In fact we have 3 laptops between us and of course I have a current backup. I wasn't worried about losing anything (which is always a relief) but I was annoyed at the time I was losing and my limited troubleshooting environment.

I tried various programs to get rid of it myself (Gmer, MalwareBytes, Microsoft Security Essentials), but it wouldn't go away. Then I turned to the pros over on www.beepingcomputer.com who run forums where virus removal experts donate their time for free to help people out (much like we all do on the various SQL Server forums and #sqlhelp).

They helped me with various steps to eradicate parts of it until it came to working on the MBR fix. We fixed up the MBR and I rebooted, only to find it in a tight loop of BSODs whenever Windows tried to start. Eventually I booted into the command prompt and proceeded to use bootrec to fix the mbr and the boot loader. Only it didn't work properly and now my laptop was well and truly hosed. I had to wait for Kimberly to come back from her day of teaching with a Windows 7 installer DVD that I could use to fix the boot loader – having an ISO image of it on an external drive didn't help as I couldn't boot to attach it.

When she did return, it took 5 minutes to fix up the laptop, and after the MBR was fixed, the virus was under control and I could remove it all. Clean laptop.

I wanted to tell you this story for a few reasons:

- As an example of a disaster where I *almost* had the run-book work for me, but I was missing a critical component – the Windows 7 install DVD (which we've agreed will be a part of our regular "pack list" whenever our laptops leave the house).
- As a general interest – everyone likes to read about someone else's computer mishaps ☺
- To let you know that there are some *really* nasty viruses out there that can take out even the most well-protected system.
- Possibly to incent some of you to consider backing up your laptop today...

Remember Slammer in 2003? I don't know of any SQL Server-specific viruses out there right now, but there are plenty of nasty ones out there that are a real pain to get rid of. You need to be really careful about your systems that are critical to the business, especially those that face out to the Internet.

Call to Action: The next time you're evaluating your disaster recovery strategy, consider a virus infection. How long will it take to reinstall a machine from scratch? How often do you run virus checking on your critical servers? What about your own laptop? Do you have disk-image backups that you can use to avoid days of time reinstalling software? There's never a better time than now to get prepared.

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

Video Demo

In this week's demo video, Joe Sack introduces us to one of SQL Server 2012's more unsung new features, Semantic Search. He demonstrates how to get up and running with Semantic Search, import a document and then use full-text indexing and Semantic Search to extract significant key terms from a SQL Server whitepaper. Cool stuff! The video is just over six 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](#)

You can get the demo code [here](#). Enjoy!

SQLskills Offerings

Here are our remaining classes for 2012:

- August 6-10, 2012: Internals and Performance (**IE1**) in Bellevue, WA – USA
- August 13-17, 2012: Performance Tuning (**IE2**) in Bellevue, WA – USA
- August 13-17, 2012: Immersion Event for Developers (**IEDev**) in Bellevue, WA – USA
- August 20-24, 2012: High Availability & Disaster Recovery (**IE3**) in Bellevue, WA – USA
- August 20-24, 2012: Immersion Event for Business Intelligence (**IEBI**) in Bellevue, WA – USA
- August 27-31, 2012: Development Support (**IE4**) in Bellevue, WA – USA

We hope to see you in Bellevue later this year; otherwise we'll plan to see you in 2013! We're planning to release our 2013 calendar in August/September.

As a note for those of you who really want us to come to *your* city... we'd LOVE to. However, we just can't be everywhere (we wish we could! ☺). Having said that though, these events are

truly *immersion* events and if there isn't one in your city, it might be a good thing to consider the travel and time away. 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.

To make it easier on you, 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/San Francisco/Charlotte). Our Bellevue/Seattle courses are 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 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 in 2013. We hope to see you soon!

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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