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 Europe where we're on vacation during July. I wrote this newsletter before we left and set it up for automatic sending. Look out for some cool photo posts on my blog during August!

We've now got two courses online with Pluralsight. The latest one is called *SQL Server: Performance Tuning Using Wait Statistics* and it was released at the start of July. It has more than 4 hours of content about SQL Server's scheduling model, waits, latches, spinlocks, and a huge section on common waits, what they mean, and how to investigate and mitigate further. Our first course released was a four-hour version of my SQL Server Myths and Misconceptions sessions, covering more than 80 myths and a bunch of demos. You can check out my courses here.

The most recent book I've read is Jack Whyte's *The Skystone*. This is the start of an 8-book series covering the time from the end of the Roman occupation of Britain to the time of the mythical King Arthur. It follows the lives of several of the ruling families bred out of Roman stock and how they fight and form alliances with the various other invaders of the time. I first read this series back in 1999 and was drawn to it again recently. 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.

Joe's Ponderings

(In another departure from our usual style, this newsletter's editorial is written by Joe Sack.)

A few months ago I read the Steve Jobs authorized biography by Walter Isaacson. One of the repeated themes that Walter called out was Jobs' belief that Apple products should *impute* a perception of quality based on its packaging. For example, every aspect of an iPhone's packaging should reflect the product held within. Everything from buying the product in the Apple retail store to opening the box should give a feeling of momentousness to the consumer.

While I think this philosophy has served Apple well, I don't believe it is a universal requirement for every product and service. After all, Apple already had a very deliberate and meticulously designed product. If they had messed up the packaging, it wouldn't have directly harmed the functionality of the product held within.

So what does this have to do with SQL Server? I've been thinking lately about form over substance when it comes to the recent news from Microsoft regarding the next line of certification programs. For example, the MCSE certification which previously stood for *Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer* has been reinvented as the *Microsoft Certified Solutions Expert* certification. One might view this takeover and repurposing of an older industry-recognized certification as a bit jaded and I would certainly agree with that.

I've also heard discontent from some in the SQL Microsoft Certified Master (MCM) community about the rebranding of MCM to the new "reinvented for the cloud" *Microsoft Certified Solutions Master* (MCSM) program.

Again, one could see this as primarily a marketing decision and not one that reflects a legitimate need. After all, the MCM brand has just recently been getting traction in the community. I'm one of those people who definitely do not like the rebranding decision.

While I'm not fond of the MCM to MCSM name changes, I'm also not very concerned with it. Yes, I loved the MCM acronym. It was easy to remember and very direct. Adding "Solutions" to the name blurs the intent and diminishes the bit of market recognition that has been built up over the last few years.

With all this said, what I really care about is the substance of the various certification programs.

I want these certifications to actually *mean* something. The bar should be high and the content ever-changing in order to combat the industry-wide certification cheating issues and reduce the number of "paper certified" individuals.

As of today I'm not aware of any "paper cert" MCMs and it would be great to continue this trend and also expand that level of quality to the other associate and expert level programs.

 A certification's name, while not unimportant, is not nearly as critical as the overall quality and substance of the certification itself. Microsoft can worry about the packaging after they've gotten the product to where it needs to be. There's reason to hope that this will happen incrementally over time. For example, I particularly agree with the three year recertification strategy and the accentuation of the master level as a first-class citizen.

Call to action: For those who are unhappy with the rebranding of various certifications, share your feedback with Microsoft. After you've done that, start focusing on what *can* be done to keep improving the quality and substance of the programs themselves.

I'm curious to hear your thoughts about the various certification track changes, so please feel free to drop me a line, treated confidentially of course.

Video Demo

In this second video in the series on SQL Server 2012 Distributed Replay, Jonathan shows how to prepare for a replay operation by capturing the replay trace data, creating a backup of the source database, restoring the backup as a target database for the replay operation, configuring permissions for the replay, and filtering the trace data to exclude the events prior to the backup completing from the replay. This setup will then be used in the final video to perform the replay operation using SQL Server 2012 Distributed Replay. Cool stuff! The video is just under 11 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

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 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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