If you know someone who would benefit from being an Insider, feel free to forward this PDF to them so they can sign up here.

Note: As an Insider, you can read all prior Insider newsletters here.

Quick Tips for our Insider friends!

Happy New Year!

We spent a bunch of time over the holidays tweaking our new shop of recordings of all our classes, course bundles, and our 2021 spring class schedule. You can see all the details below. Kimberly also blogged about our new elite Blackbelt Badge that you can earn – very exciting to see people signing up for that!

TAKE NOTE that we have extended our HUGE discounts through the end of January!

And in case you missed them, as usual I published my traditional end-of-year blog posts:

- *2010s: the decade in books*
- *2020 review: the year by the numbers*

Stay safe out there!

SQLskills News

Live, ONLINE classes in 2021: our classes this year will again be live-streamed online, as it's not feasible to run in-person classes for the foreseeable future. Just like our last deliveries, we'll be running them as a series of half-day sessions so it's less onerous then the usual 9-hour days in our in-person classes.

Students loved the split training days, from the comfort of watching in sweatpants to the ability to still get some of their regular duties accomplished. We had rave reviews for the format. And, all attendees of a live class receive lifetime streaming access to the recording of the entire class – something we'd never done before this year!

Our upcoming live, online classes for spring 2021 are as follows:

- **IEAzure**: Immersion Event on Azure SQL Database, Azure VMs, and Azure Managed Instance
  - February 23-24-25 and March 2-3-4, 2021
- **IEPTO1**: Immersion Event on Performance Tuning and Optimization – Part 1

- o   March 15-16-17-18-10 and March 22-23-24-25-26, 2021
- **IEPTO2**: Immersion Event on Performance Tuning and Optimization – Part 2
  - o   April 12-13-14-15-16 and April 19-20-21-22-23, 2021
- **IEQS**: Immersion Event on Solving Common Performance Problems with Query Store
  - o   May 4-5-6, 2021
- **IEVLT**: Immersion Event on Very Large Tables: Optimizing Performance and Availability through Partitioning
  - o   May 17-18-19-20, 2021

These classes are available for registration individually or as part of a discounted bundle. You can get all the details on our training options page or just go directly to our new shop. However, before you buy, be sure to review all of the new options and discounts, we're very excited to offer our new Blackbelt Badge and Bundles**!**

NEW: Streaming recordings of all classes!

We've built a new system that allows you to buy streaming access to all our 2019 and 2020 class recordings. All classes are available for a complete year of access and a few heavily discounted courses for 90 days of access, plus you can purchase them individually or as part of a discounted bundle. You can get all the details in our training options page or just go directly to our new shop**,** and there are **huge discounts running through the end of January!**

Kandio job candidate assessments: we've teamed up with Kandio to produce technical assessments to help companies screen candidates for job recruitment. If you want to make sure someone really knows what they say they know, check out the assessments here.

Book Review

From the 2010 archives, I present Arturo Perez-Reverte's *The Club Dumas*. This book is the basis for one of my favorite movies – The Ninth Gate – although the movie places emphasis on a different part of the plot. It's an excellent book centered on ancient books, and as you know, any book about books is an instant hit with me. It follows a book 'mercenary' investigating differences between the 3 final copies of a 1667 book about raising the devil. Highly recommended! (and the movie too!)

The Curious Case of…

This section of the newsletter explains recent problems we've helped with on client systems; they might be something you're experiencing too.

I was going to write a new Curious Case blog post today (January 6th) but any hope of writing something useful and coherent went out the window as I sat watching the unimaginable storming of the US Capitol Building this afternoon by rioters.

So here's one of my favorites from 2019…

What do you think… does SQL Server use a separate read/write thread per LUN/file? Read about the answer in my blog post here…

Ponderings…

(This editorial is adapted from my traditional first-newsletter-of-the-year editorial that I've been doing since 2014.)

At the start of every New Year it's always tempting to come up with a series of resolutions about things you're going to start doing, and it's tempting for me to write an editorial about planning to do new things. It's really easy to come up with ideas for cool things to *start* doing, which is why it's the easy route to take at the start of a new year.

But before you go too crazy with new ideas, consider a post mortem of your goals and plans from 2020. 2020 was a crazy year, with most of us having to make big changes in how and where we worked. Look back at the year and see what didn't go well, and then figure out how to improve on those things. In my opinion, that's going to have a more positive effect on your life than continuing to do poorly on those things, and also try to add new things as well. (From 2014 to 2016, Kimberly commented *"the SQL development team could learn from this too…",* but with SQL Server 2016 and later versions, they really have been going back and fixing a bunch of things that were broken or outdated.)

During 2015, one of the things I had reinforced through the year while I mentored folks in the SQL community is that *everyone* has something with which they need help or advice, and I continue to swap emails with a few mentees when they ask for advice (in the years since 2015). I'm doing the same thing with my 2020 mentees. I strongly advise you to get a mentor outside your management chain (and preferably outside your company) – someone to whom you can bounce questions and one that has no vested interest – other than just helping you out.

And I'm not just talking about things in your work life; I'm also talking about things in your personal life. Here are some examples of things to think about and consider improving upon for 2021:

- Your work/life balance
- The support your immediate manager gave you
- Your interactions with some of your colleagues
- Your interest in some aspects of your job
- Your career/skills development
- Resistance to change

- Keeping on top of performance fires
- Keeping track of goals and to-do lists
- Saying 'no' when you're already overloaded
- Accepting a poor status quo at work instead of looking for a better job
- Finding time for disaster recovery planning/testing
- Finding time for all the little things that it's easy to procrastinate about
- Finding time for your hobbies
- Finding time and motivation to become/stay healthy
- Keeping in touch with old friends and distant family
- Finding time to reads some books or learn something new that's non-work
- Your work/life balance (again, because it's *so* important)

All of these can cause significant amounts of stress, so fixing them should be the first priority. Only once you have these items fixed, should you embark upon new and additional goals!

Call to action: Before you set cool, new goals for 2021 (whether at work or at home), do a post-mortem and work to fix the stuff from 2020 that was broken or didn't go so well. Not only will it feel good but it'll also reduce stress. And try to get a mentor!

#TBT

(Turn Back Time…) Blog posts we've published since the previous newsletter plus some older resources we've referred to recently that you may find useful.

The theme for the TBT this time is on-disk structures:

- Kimberly's Pluralsight course: *SQL Server: Why Physical Database Design Matters*
- Kimberly's Pluralsight course: *SQL Server: Indexing for Performance* (which goes into lots of detail on index structures)
- Paul's blog posts on the basics:
    o *Inside the Storage Engine: Anatomy of a record*
    o *Inside the Storage Engine: Anatomy of a page*
    o *Inside the Storage Engine: Anatomy of an extent*
    o *Inside the Storage Engine: IAM pages, IAM chains, and allocation units*
    o *Inside The Storage Engine: GAM, SGAM, PFS and other allocation maps*
- Paul's blog post categories:
    o *Inside the Storage Engine*
    o *On-disk Structures*

I hope you find these useful and interesting!

Video Demo

In this week's video Erin shows how to use Extended Events to look at wait information for a specific session, which can be particularly useful when trying to narrow down why a query is performing poorly, or when you want to understand all waits that a session encounters.

The video is about 8.5 minutes long and you can get it in WMV format here.

The demo code is here.

Enjoy!

Upcoming SQLskills Events

Our 2021 classes will be entirely online in the Spring and they're open for registration!

With our new streaming system, you can now choose to attend a live, online event or purchase a recording to watch at your leisure, either individually or as part of a bundle. And all attendees of live events get lifetime access to the class recordings too!

To help your boss understand the importance of focused, technical training, we've also added a few items to help you justify spending your training dollars with us:

- Letter to your boss explaining why SQLskills training is worthwhile
- Community blog posts about our classes
- Immersion Event FAQ

LIVE, Online Immersion Events:

Spring 2021

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You can get all the details on our [training options page](#) or just go directly to our [new shop](#), and there are **huge discounts running through the end of the year!**

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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