(November 15th, 2023)

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!

This newsletter comes to you from the PASS Data Summit in Seattle, where I'm on stage with Kimberly for her last ever conference precon (see here for her retirement blog post), making her cups of tea, looking things up online, and chiming in occasionally.

The big news is our upcoming…

Black Friday Blackbelt Super-Sale!

It's the time of year again where companies do crazy sales on the day after Thanksgiving in the US, and we're doing the same!

For a few days, starting around 4pm PST on Thursday, November 23rd, we'll be offering our lowest prices ever for our signature Blackbelt bundle with more than 158 hours of top-quality training:

- **One-year access to the Blackbelt bundle: US$995**
- ***Lifetime* access to the Blackbelt bundle: US$1,999**

If you've already purchased the Blackbelt bundle once, purchase the one-year access and we'll convert your existing access into lifetime, by removing all the expiration dates.

Any questions, please let us know!

Blackbelt Base Camp

We know that finding time for training is difficult in and of itself. Add "recorded courses" and some people just can't stay motivated. Or, their offices don't give them time. Or, you think, you'll have lingering questions that will go unanswered. Or, there's just no schedule or forcing factor to keep you going (ok, the badges are cool but you still have to be motivated to finish the courses). And, it's not just about *finishing* the courses; it's about LEARNING.

So, we've come up with a plan to help you! We're calling it Blackbelt Base Camp – Class of 2024. Starting in October 2023 and running through May 2024, we will have required course

materials each week to review. Each week will represent roughly 1 full day of training. We recommend that you set aside 2 hours per day (same time every day or you pick!). But, we want you to BLOCK IT ON YOUR CALENDAR. We want you to get sign-off from your manager. We want you to be able to LEARN – effectively. If you're constantly being interrupted, you won't retain the content. However, if you can focus – for just 2 hours a day – you can truly absorb the content and help make it stick! Furthermore, at the end of each course, we will have an open Q&A with at least 2 SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) on hand to cover any of your remaining questions!

The full schedule is here.

We look forward to helping you get to Base Camp, get your Blackbelt, and improve your SQL skills!

Book Review

One of the latest books I've 'read' is Charles Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*. I say 'read' because at Camp Savage over the summer I listened to a lot of classic books while driving and doing mindless jobs like wood stacking. It's set during the Gordon Riots in London in 1780, an event I didn't know about until I read the book. From Amazon: "Charles Dickens's Barnaby Rudge is a vivid portrait of London's descent into anarchy, where 'King Mob' rules the streets, and innocent lives are swept up in the chaos. Set against the backdrop of the Gordon Riots of 1780, Barnaby Rudge is a story of mystery and suspense which begins with an unsolved double murder and goes on to involve conspiracy, blackmail, abduction and retribution. Through the course of the novel fathers and sons become opposed, apprentices plot against their masters and Protestants clash with Catholics on the streets. And, as London erupts into riot, Barnaby Rudge himself struggles to escape the curse of his own past. With its dramatic descriptions of public violence and private horror, its strange secrets and ghostly doublings, Barnaby Rudge is a powerful, disturbing blend of historical realism and Gothic melodrama." Excellent book – highly recommended!

The Curious Case of…

This section of the newsletter explains recent problems we've helped with on client systems or been asked about over email or #sqlhelp; they might be something you're experiencing too.

We had an interesting situation last week where a client had memory corruption without any 832 errors in the error log. How could that happen? You can read through my explanation here…

Ponderings…

(At the PASS Data Summit this week, it's all about communicating effectively, whether it's presenting, asking a question, discussing something with other attendees, and more. This is an editorial I last ran four years ago and it seems very apt for this week's newsletter – enjoy!)

My ~~rant~~ editorial this time isn't a technical one but more of a career/development one. I'll throw these into the mix every so often as I know people find them useful.

After visiting the first client on our recent trip I was inspired to write a blog post about communication and why I think it's a very much neglected skill these days. See here for the post. I wasn't inspired by any deficiencies at that client, but instead from thinking about all the communication I'd had with people during the course of the week (at the client and over email) and how I'd had to adapt my language, tone, technical level, and content based on the audience. The blog post specifically deals with being a consultant and how effective communication is of such paramount importance there. Then as we were flying home yesterday I was thinking about the topic for this newsletter and decided to expound a little further on the topic of communication.

If you think about it, effective communication is the single most important skill for a human being to master. We process information constantly and we interact with other people by communicating.

The manner in which we communicate says a lot about who we are, and strongly influences how people react to us. Some examples of communication styles that I see when people present, answer questions, ask questions and talk to each other that give people a very negative impression:

- Arrogance
- Combativeness
- Disdainfulness
- Bluster
- Scornfulness

I've witnessed these (and worse) in meetings many times—especially in things like code/design reviews where people take constructive criticism personally and bristle against it.

With the ubiquitous nature of online communications, it's hard to escape examples of poor communications. When sending an email it's imperative that you read over what you've written and think how someone reading it will interpret your words, phrasing, and any between-the-lines feeling you had when you wrote it. Email is so easy to misinterpret, especially if you're not used to someone's email style and usual phraseology.

And don't get me started about online forums and newsgroups. It seems that people think they can hide behind an online username and spout abuse at people for being ignorant. People forget that *everyone* starts with zero SQL Server knowledge, and that ignorance does NOT equal stupidity.

The very worst thing I've noticed is the seeming increase in the lack of grace when people communicate—when did it become acceptable to not say 'please' or 'thank you'? There's no excuse for a lack of civility and it drives me nuts when I see it.

In today's society where so much of our communication is not face-to-face, we need to be extra careful to communicate effectively. And when we ARE communicating face-to-face we have to remember that we're not in forums or twitter and adjust accordingly.

Call to action: stop and think about how you're communicating with people around you and whether making a small change in your attitude, tone, or language would make people more likely to acquiesce to your requests and be more cooperative.

#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 #TBT is communication skills, tying in with my editorial, so here are some resources for you:

- My Pluralsight course on *[Communications: How to Talk, Write, Present, and Get Ahead!](#)* that has 2.5 hours covering skills for communicating, running and attending meetings, all forms of writing from emails to articles, and how to write and deliver presentations
    - 2023 version [here](#)
- And a bunch of blog posts:
    - *[Public Speaking: A Primer](#)*
    - *[Ignorance is not stupidity](#)*
    - *[It depends. It really, really does.](#)*
    - *[RTFM. No seriously, R.T.F.M. Then ask your question.](#)*
    - *[Learning to listen](#)*
    - *[How to ask questions politely and correctly](#)*
    - *[How to answer questions politely and correctly](#)*

I hope you find these useful and interesting!

Video Demo

In the final demo video of the series on Server Audits, Jon goes over filtering audits by class type and demonstrates some of the nuances associated with function classes and filtering.

The video is 5 minutes long and you can get it in MP4 format here.

The demo code is available here.

Enjoy!

Upcoming SQLskills Events

BlackBelt Base Camp – Started in October 2023

We've decided to record SQL Server 2022 updates relevant to our class material rather than running full classes, as, to be honest, not much has changed in our space and 2022 focused a lot on Azure extensions.

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

You can get all the details on our training options page or just go directly to our shop.

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 and Kimberly@SQLskills.com