

(February 25th, 2025)

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 Belated New Year!

Well, the best-laid plans of mice and men (from a poem by Robert Burns)... I was planning my usual New Year newsletter for early January, but then I came down with Norovirus, which lasted a week or so. Just as I was recovering from that, I caught flu, which knocked me out for a couple more weeks. All while Kimberly was away through January, so I had to keep myself and seven cats alive while at death's door (ok... exaggeration lol, but it felt like it!)

So my 2025 did not get off to a good start! Then things got busy on multiple fronts and here we are nearly at the end of February!

Some good news – Jonathan's almost finished with the revamped IECAG, and Kimberly is starting on here IESP on Stored Procedure Performance. A message from her to you all is below.

As I said in December, 2025 is going to bring you new SQLskills recorded courses and I'm planning to update/revamp and re-release a large number of my blog posts to make sure they're up-to-date and completely relevant. Also look out for expanded coverage in my popular [waits library](#). It's exciting!

PS If some of you haven't been able to purchase our classes because of our credit card system, know that now we're perfectly happy to do a quote/PO/invoice process for your company!

Message from Kimberly

So, I'm so long overdue on my IESP course that I want to give you an explanation. I thought that 2024 would be an amazing year – my first after "retiring." The first half was busy with usual stuff, continuing to plan our land strategy, as well as getting ready for a long-awaited trip to Africa. It didn't seem like all that much and I had hoped I'd get my course recorded before the trip but that just didn't happen. I was determined that I'd get it sorted out when I returned. My trip went amazingly well; Africa is absolutely magical in so many ways.

However, a wellness check on my Mother – the morning after I returned – found she had passed a couple of days prior. It was sudden, it was unexpected, and it shook me to the core. I ended up

traveling back / forth between Seattle and Chicago (she lived about 3 hours outside of Chicago). The remainder of 2024 was a blur of organizational stuff, securing her house (as well as starting a few updates to do to get it ready for sale), and – in all honesty – frustration, anger, and grief.

I didn't get much work done in the second half of 2024. I also learned of another passing – Ward Christensen – a friend from my IBM days and an incredible person and mentor. At the end of November, with Thanksgiving and the Christmas holidays coming, I decided I needed to get out of this haze, and I'd get things sorted. I had another long-planned trip in January. So, I'd take January to clear my head, do a bit of diving, and see family in Florida. I did all of this.

Thankfully I was able to see my family as my aunt passed only 10 days after I left. And, even with all of this, I'm leaving out a few other things. It really seems like a mountain of sadness came all at once. However sad, I know it's all just part of life – and I know many of you have probably experienced profound losses – even recently.

I'm working through it but my IESP course fell through the cracks. For this, I truly apologize. Please know that I'm planning to get back to this shortly and I hope to have this recorded and released soon. I know we all have sh*t going on in our lives and I hope that – above all – you're healthy and happy. Enjoy every moment with your loved ones as tomorrow is never promised.

Thanks

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Book Review

As promised in the previous newsletter, I compiled by 2024: The Year in Books blog post at the end of last year. Check it out [here](#)!

Here are a couple of reviews of wonderful books I read so far this year...

Firstly, [*The Covenant of Water*](#) by Abraham Verghese. The previous Verghese book I read ([*Cutting for Stone*](#)) was almost my top book of 2013 but was edged out by [*The Hydrogen Sonata*](#) (by Iain M. Banks - my favorite sci-fi author who tragically died of cancer that year - RIP). I really enjoyed this book but it didn't quite grip me like his previous one, so it took me a few months on-and-off to listen to it. It *is* a brilliant book though, with a finely-woven set of threads and an excellent twist/revelation at the end. Highly recommended! From Amazon: "Spanning the years 1900 to 1977, *The Covenant of Water* is set in Kerala, on South India's Malabar Coast, and follows three generations of a family that suffers a peculiar affliction: in every generation, at least one person dies by drowning—and in Kerala, water is everywhere. At the turn of the century, a twelve-year-old girl from Kerala's long-existing Christian community, grieving the death of her father, is sent by boat to her wedding, where she will meet her forty-year-old husband for the first time. From this unforgettable new beginning, the young girl—and future matriarch, known as Big Ammachi—will witness unthinkable changes over the span of her extraordinary life, full of joy and triumph as well as hardship and loss, her faith and love the only constants. A shimmering evocation of a bygone India and of the passage of time itself, *The Covenant of Water* is a hymn to progress in medicine and to human understanding, and a humbling testament to the difficulties undergone by past generations for the sake of those alive today. It is one of the most masterful literary novels published in recent years."

Secondly, [*What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds*](#) by Jennifer Ackerman. Kimberly and I both adore owls (we have great-horned owls in our trees in Redmond and those barred owls at Camp Savage) and this book was extremely interesting. From Amazon: "In *What an Owl Knows*, Jennifer Ackerman joins scientists in the field and explores how researchers are using modern technology and tools to learn how owls communicate, hunt, court, mate, raise their young, and move about from season to season. Ackerman brings this research alive with her own personal field observations; the result is an awe-inspiring exploration of owls across the globe and through human history, and a spellbinding account of the world's most enigmatic group of birds." Highly recommended!

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 2024. 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 did the same thing with my 2020 mentees (who I mentored through 2021 too), plus with some of my 2023 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 2025:

- 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 read 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 2025 (whether at work or at home), do a post-mortem and work to fix the stuff from 2024 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!

The Curious Case of...

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

Back next time...

#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.

Back next time...

Video Demo

Back next time...

Upcoming SQLskills Events

Given how little changed with SQL Server 2022, we decided to record a series of updates relevant to our class material during 2023 and 2024 rather than running full classes. These were done as part of our Blackbelt Base Camp series and are available in our shop, and are free with a Blackbelt bundle. We have no plans for live, public classes in 2025.

With our streaming system, you can 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

I hope you've enjoyed this issue – I really enjoy putting these together. If there's anything else you're interested in, I'd love to hear from you - [drop me a line](#).

Thanks,
Paul

Paul@SQLskills.com