

(May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026)

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!**

Time flies so fast – it seems like I blinked and May is almost gone! One thing I realized last weekend is that I'm in danger of another year of not growing any veggies (last year was a bust because of having to be in Scotland) so I bought a bunch of starts and potted them up to tend lovingly over the next few months: tomatoes, squash, peppers, eggplants, pumpkins, pickles, and herbs. I hope your garden's starting to look good!

### **SQLskills News**

We've replaced our back-end video streaming system with one that has a lot more end-user functionality, is more robust, and has features like chapters so I can provide indexes into the long Immersion Event daily recordings. The transition has already been made and should be seamless for all viewers. I'll be working through our library to add the chapter indexes over the new few months.

### **Book Review**

I've been listening to nothing but WWII and Vietnam War memoirs and battle descriptions since the last newsletter, so here are two books from the massive total of only four I read in 2020...

The first is Fred Kaplan's [\*The Wizards of Armageddon\*](#). This is an excellent book that traces the history of the development of the US nuclear weapons/war strategy from WWII up to the early 1980s, and the people (mostly civilians) who did it. This topic has always been interesting to me as my life was closely linked to all this from an early age, as we lived four miles from Faslane, the Royal Navy Polaris submarine base, and my father served on one of them for many years. Lots of fascinating details about the various strategies and the rivalries between their proponents and detractors - highly recommended!

The second is Adam Higginbotham's [\*Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster\*](#). I was almost 14 in 1986 when Chernobyl happened and remember the fears over how much radiation would reach Scotland (a bunch did, affecting farms). This book is really excellent! I've never read an involved account of what happened and this was a page turner. It's also hugely interesting as my Dad was a reactor control engineer on Royal Navy

submarines for many years, and used to teach reactor control theory in the Royal Navy school at HMS Sultan in England. From Amazon: "Drawing on hundreds of hours of interviews conducted over the course of more than ten years, as well as letters, unpublished memoirs, and documents from recently-declassified archives, Adam Higginbotham has written a harrowing and compelling narrative which brings the disaster to life through the eyes of the men and women who witnessed it firsthand. The result is a masterful nonfiction thriller, and the definitive account of an event that changed history: a story that is more complex, more human, and more terrifying than the Soviet myth." Highly recommended!

### **Ponderings...**

*(From me this time – I wrote this back in 2021 when the Suez Canal was blocked up and it's quite apt with the current situation where the Strait of Hormuz is essentially closed – enjoy!)*

Over the last few days I've followed the events in the Suez Canal very closely. If you don't know what's been happening, last week a huge (400-meter long, 60-meter wide, 220,000 tons) container ship ran aground on one side of the canal, and then its stern swung out and grounded on the other side of the canal, completely blocking it for six days.

About 450 giant container ships were in the queue to go through the canal today (Monday) when the ship was finally refloated, causing a huge problem for global supply chains as almost \$10 billion of goods has been stranded (about 12% of global trade passes through the canal each day), and at least one country, Syria, had to introduce fuel rationing. Shipping giant Maersk estimated that it would take six days to clear the backlog, but then there may be further problems as destination ports suddenly have too many ships arriving at the same time. It was definitely a major crisis that will have knock-on effects for weeks or months. (Data sourced from [this BBC article](#).)

More importantly in my mind, it exposed a serious weakness of the canal: one vessel can block it indefinitely and there aren't facilities in Egypt for coping with the problem. A specialist salvage team had to fly in from the Netherlands, and two of their super-strong salvage tugs had to steam to the canal (a total of 14 tugs were involved). Had their efforts been unsuccessful, a special crane was en route in case some of the 18,300 containers had to be removed to allow the ship to refloat – that process might have taken weeks if needed.

I'm sure that Egyptian authorities will learn from this problem and take steps to avoid it in future and be able to cope with it more quickly if it were ever to happen again. It's absolutely in their best interest to do so, as before the pandemic, 2% of Egypt's GDP came from canal revenue.

How does this relate to SQL Server?

I've seen many similar problems with clients. In one case, an overnight ETL process into a banking system hadn't finished and was blocking all access to people's bank accounts and this lasted until the afternoon. In another case, a double SAN failure in two data centers knocked out operations at a large insurance provider. And in what might seem like an innocuous problem, queries that used to take a few milliseconds suddenly jumped to hundreds, causing a trading system to grind to a halt (Erin's demo video this week shows a similar problem).

My point is that sometimes crises do crop up in SQL Server environments and nobody wants to have to call in a SQL Server salvage team (e.g., SQLskills!). Consider performing a risk analysis of your workloads, and not just in terms of HA/DR. Think about what problems could cause the business a serious issue, and think beyond just excessive duration for a query or set of queries, or blocking. Then, develop mitigation/prevention plans, which might be something as simple as increasing the amount of automated monitoring so you get as early a warning as possible of the signs of a problem happening.

Reactive is never as good as *\*proactive\**.

### **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.*

This is another oldie, but came up in a question I was sent last week – there are always new people moving to SQL Server who need to understand how things work!

I had an email last week from a person who told me they were very confused about how differential backups work in SQL Server. They had recently moved from ORACLE where they performed differential backups every day using the Oracle Recovery Manager and then was able to use them and a set of logs to recover when needed.

After starting a similar process on a SQL Server instance, they noticed that the differential backups were steadily increasing in size every day, even though the volume of inserted data each day was roughly the same.

I explained that SQL Server does not have incremental data backups like Oracle does. Using SQL Server terminology, Oracle's differential backups contain everything that's changed since the last full or differential backup (i.e. truly incremental), whereas a SQL Server differential backup is everything that's changed since the last full backup (i.e. cumulative, not incremental).

The only incremental backups that SQL Server has are log backups.

**Bottom line:** There are some pretty fundamental differences between how SQL Server does things compared to other RDBMSs, and backups are one of the most important to understand.

## **#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 myths:

- The very first Pluralsight course we (I) recorded: [SQL Server: Myths and Misconceptions](#) that has almost four hours covering a plethora of SQL Server myths.
- My blog post series from April 2010 – *A SQL Server DBA Myth A Day* – and [this blog post](#) has links to all 30. Some of the later ones had 20+ myths busted in one post, as I got a bit carried away 😊
- The same blog post series, but organized as a [handy PDF file](#).

I hope you find these useful and interesting!

## **Video Demo**

In this demo video, Jonathan introduces the first in a series of videos looking at Tempdb Space governance in Resource Governor and discovers a few interesting nuances associated with setting a hard limit for a workload group in Megabytes.

The video is about 8 minutes long and you can get it [here](#).

And the demo code is [here](#).

Enjoy!

## **SQLskills Training**

We have no plans for live, public classes in 2026, but we've already released two new courses this year! And of course, all our recorded courses from the last few years are still as relevant as ever.

To help your manager 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 manager explaining why SQLskills training is worthwhile](#)
- [Community blog posts about our classes](#)

You can get all the details in 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