



2009
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Manage Your DBA Career: Don't Let It Manage You

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My Assumptions About You

- You may currently be a DBA (production or developer), and you want learn how to take charge of your career, or:
- You may be considering a career as a DBA, and you want to find out more about what it takes to succeed as a DBA.



Don't Let Life Pass You By

- It has been my experience that many people tend to **'fall into'** their career instead of making a conscious decision as to what their career should be.
- Because of this, **many people wander about in their career**, not particular satisfied with how their career (or their life) is going.
- Instead of letting your career manage you, **I strongly urge all DBAs to manage their own career by consciously taking control of it.**
- By doing so, not only can you have a financially rewarding career, but a **career that gets you excited** about life and your contribution to it.













Fumbling Through College

- Started college majoring in journalism.
- Ended up with these degrees:
 - B.A. in Economics
 - B.A. in Business Administration
 - M.B.A.
- Seriously considered these career options:
 - Lawyer
 - Foreign Diplomat
 - Industrial Psychologist
 - College Professor
- So here's what I actually did (next slide).



Here's What Happens if You Wander

- Computer Salesperson/Trainer (1982) 
- Freelance Technical Writer/Book Author 
- Computer Consultant (Mostly Software Support) 
- Start Newsletter Publishing Company 
- Start Commercial Photography Studio
- Marketing Director of Manufacturing Firm 
- Marketing Director of Software Firm 
- Marketing Director of Financial Investment Firm
- Public Relations Director of Non-Profit
- Network Engineer (1995)
- Computer Trainer (1996) 
- Full-time DBA (1999) 
- Website Owner (2000-2006, while still full-time DBA) 
- SQL Server Writer/Speaker/Trainer (2010) 

← First Exposure to Databases

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← Finally Took Control Over Career

← Selected DBA as Career

I have left out some smaller activities, such as some part-time training and writing during evenings and weekends.



The Path I Took

- Realized I wasn't happy with my career (took 13 years to find this out).
- Reviewed job history, and formally rated what I liked and disliked about past jobs.
- Considered other career options, and rated them.
- *Determined that a computer technology career was my best course.*
- *Made a formal plan, and began to execute it, step-by-step.*
- *Through formal training, and self-teaching, got certified.*
- *Certification got me a network engineer job, where I got experience.*
- Moved to training (MCT), got more training and certifications. 3-years of study.
- Decided to focus on a specialty, and selected SQL Server DBA.
- Got first DBA job, and first practical experience, based on my past experience and certifications.
- Moved to a senior DBA job, based on my experience and certifications. Spent many years as a full-time DBA.
- Got involved in the SQL Server community. Developed a reputation.
- Today, I write and speak about SQL Server.



To Summarize

- I realized I wasn't happy with my career.
- I consciously choose a new career path.
- I took specific action to attain my goal.



Your Path May Be Very Different

- There is no “right” career path.
- Your training, experience, interests, motivations, are all different from mine.
- Pick a path and stick with it as long as it works for you. (DBA or otherwise).
- If the path you decide to follow is not satisfying to you, then pick another path, and go down it.
- The “secret” is not to let your career manage you, but for you to **consciously manage your own career.**



So How Do You Manage Your Own Career?

1. Evaluate What You Want Out of a Career
2. Decide if You Really Want to be a DBA
3. Decide If You Want to be an Average or Exceptional DBA
4. Manage Your Career Path Toward Success
5. Setting Goals and Taking Action



Evaluate What You Want Out of a Career #1

- **Start by taking an inventory of what you want out of a career. Ask yourself these questions:**
- Is a high salary (and benefits) important?
- Are you a risk taker?
- Is job security important?
- Do you prefer a routine, or a dynamic job?
- Do you want to lead people, or work for others?
- Do you want to be your own boss?
- Do you want to travel, or stay put?



Evaluate What You Want Out of a Career #2

- Do you want to work for a small or a large company?
- Do you want to live in the city, suburbs, or country?
- Do you want to stay with the same company for a long time, or jump around for the best opportunities?
- Do you want to become part of a large community (SQL Server), or do you prefer your privacy?
- Are you self-motivated, or do you need a push?
- Is your job your passion, or just a means to an end?



How to Evaluate What You Want Out of a Career

- Come up with additional questions that fit your circumstances.
- Write down the questions, with your answers.
- Answer the questions as honestly as possible.
- Weigh the pros and cons of your answers, as not every answer you have is clear cut.
- Some answers may be mutually exclusive? How will you deal with that?
- Realize that you will never find the perfect answer to all these questions.



Decide if You Really Want to be a DBA

- Does Being a DBA Meet Your Career Goals?
- Do You Find DBA Tasks Interesting?
- Do You Have the Characteristics of a DBA?
- Have You Selected a DBA Specialty?



Does Being a DBA Meet Your Career Goals?

- As we have already discussed, the first step in taking control of your own career is to identify what is important to you.
- Once you have identified those career goals that are important to you, you must decide if being a DBA meets those career goals.
- There is no “right” answer to this question, as everyone is different.
- The “secret” is to **consciously make a choice.**



Do You Find DBA Tasks Interesting?

- DBAs perform many different tasks, and the list is too long to show here.
- If you are a DBA now, you know what these tasks are.
- If you are not a DBA, you can find a comprehensive list of these in my free book on *How to Become an Exceptional DBA*.
- If you need to, *write down every task, and rate it on a scale of 1 to 5, from very interesting to boring. Tally the results* and really see if you enjoy performing the tasks of being a DBA.



Do You Have the Characteristics of a DBA?

- Being a DBA involves some common characteristics. Do you have most of them? Tally your results to see how many you have?

Embraces Change	Communicates Effectively
Enjoys Learning	Listens Well
Accepts Responsibility	Realistic
Maintains Professionalism	Flexible
Trustworthy	Patient
Dependable	Persistent
Hard-Working	Enthusiastic
Manages Time Well	Mature

This is not a comprehensive list.



Have You Selected a DBA Specialty?

- You can't know it all. Have you picked a specialty area that you want to focus on that meets your interests? Some include:
 - DBA System Administrator
 - DBA Developer
 - DBA Database Designer
 - DBA Business Intelligence Specialist
 - Among many others
- If you haven't picked a specialty, **I suggest you consciously do so**, as it will be easier to focus your learning and experience.



Decide If You Want to be an Average or Exceptional DBA

- If you decide that being a DBA is what you want to do, then you have to ask yourself:
 - Do you want to be an average DBA, with an average career?
 - Do you want to be an exceptional DBA, with an exceptional career?
- Either choice is a valid choice.
- I encourage you to **make a conscious choice as to which type you want to be.**
- If you decide you want to be an exceptional DBA, then I suggest you *begin making choices now* that will lead you in this direction.



To Recap

- Decide what you want from your career.
 - Decide if being a DBA meets your career goals.
 - Decide what DBA specialty you want to focus on.
 - Decide if you want to be an average, or an exceptional DBA.
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- If you have decided that you want to be an exceptional DBA, now what?



Manage Your Career Path Toward Success

- Developing the Appropriate Skill Sets
- Managing Your Internal Brand
- Managing Your Online Brand
- Getting Involved with the SQL Server Community



Developing the Appropriate Skill Sets

- Part of being a DBA includes constant and non-stop learning.
- Skills you need include:
 - Technical Skills: SQL Server, Development, Operating System
 - Business
 - Soft Skills: People, Leadership, Teamwork, Communications
- Take the time to **plan out how you intend to maintain, and increase, your DBA skills.**
- If you have difficulty sitting down and teaching yourself technical skills, consider certification as a way to motivate you to study.



Managing Your Internal Brand

- The impression you create on other people within your organization will significantly affect how well you will succeed as a DBA, and in your career.
- **Consciously manage your internal brand** in such a way as to present yourself in the best possible light.
- This does not mean faking characteristics in order to manipulate people.
- It means working hard, being honest and being realistic about what you can and can't achieve, and generally adopting habits and attitudes that will help you work well with other people.
- **The more you help others, the more they will help you.**



Managing Your Online Brand

- If you decide to have an online presence, it is very important that you conduct yourself in a professional manor.
- Keep in mind that once something is on the Internet, it is hard to get it removed.
- Many employers research job candidates online before hiring them, and you want to portray yourself in a positive light.
- I suggest you **consciously manage your online presence**, and to separate your professional and personal online activity.



Get Involved with the SQL Server Community

- There are many benefits of getting involved with the SQL Server community:
 - Helps increase your depth of SQL Server knowledge.
 - Develop existing and new skills:
 - Writing
 - Speaking
 - Leadership
 - Non-SQL Server Technical Skills
 - Network, and make new friends and contacts.
 - It's fun, and satisfying, helping others.



Setting Goals and Taking Action

- One way to manage your career is to:
 - Establish long-term career goals.
 - Break the long-term goals into short-term goals that are specific, realistic, and attainable.
 - Tackle one or two short-term goals at a time, and continue tackling them until you have accomplished them all.
 - Keep in mind that your goals may change over time. That is not a problem. If they change, readjust as necessary, and continue with your plan, whatever it happens to be.
 - The goal is *to remain in charge of your career*, no matter how your environment changes, or how your needs and desires change over time. *Continue to make conscious decisions.*



Takes Aways From This Session

- Everything I have talked about during this session is worthless unless you take action. Here's what I suggest you do:
 - Evaluate what you want from your career.
 - Decide if being a DBA will meet your career goals.
 - Decide if you want to be an average or exceptional DBA.
 - Create a both long-term and short-terms plans to get to where you want to be.
 - **Get started on these goals, *today*, and *persist* until you have attained them.** This is not always easy, but it is within your ability.
 - ***You need to look out for your career***, because nobody else is going to do it for you.



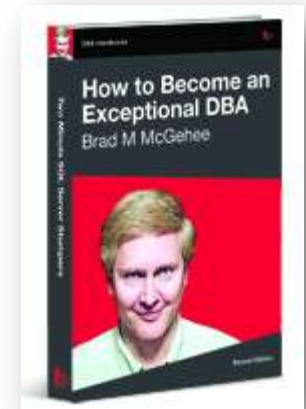
Q&A

- Please ask your questions clearly and loudly.
- If you don't get your questions answered now, see me after the session, or e-mail me.



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