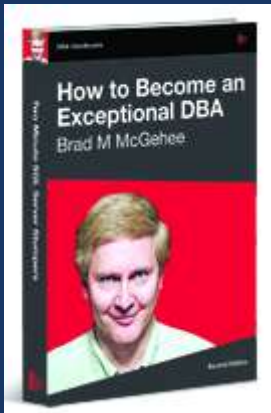




*The World's Largest Community
of SQL Server Professionals*

How to Become an Exceptional DBA*



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My Assumptions About You

- You are a production DBA, or a database-related developer, and you want to invigorate and enhance your career.

Our Focus Today

- What is an Exceptional DBA
- Why Bother Becoming an Exceptional DBA
- Characteristics of the Successful DBA
- Honing Your Skill Set
- Specializing as a DBA: You Can't Do It All
- Is Professional Certification Really Necessary
- Participate in the SQL Server Community
- How to Manage Your Internal Brand
- How to Manage Your Online Brand
- Manage Your Career, Don't Let it Manage You

What is an Exceptional DBA?

- An exceptional DBA (or developer) is not perfect, but stands out from the crowd.
- In other words, better than average.

Why Be Exceptional?

- In the recent past, SQL Server DBAs and developers have been in such demand that **getting a job was relatively easy**, even if you didn't stand out from the crowd.
- The **demand for DBAs and T-SQL developers is still higher than "typical IT jobs,"** but with the current economic downturn, it is becoming more important to distinguish yourself.
- If you want to reduce the risk of being laid off, or if you are **laid off and want to find a new job** as quickly as possible, or even if you are looking for your first DBA job, it is **important that you differentiate yourself** from the average DBA and developer, and become an exceptional DBA or developer.

DBAs in the Marketplace

- Why should anyone want to become a DBA?
 - DBAs earn from US \$63,310 to \$106,658 per year on average
 - Developers earn from US \$58,592 to \$85,621 per year on average
 - Network administrators earn from US \$47,393 to \$77,781 per year on average
 - Data from www.salary.com as of September 2009. Assumes moderately experienced to very experienced personnel, for all U.S. locations and company sizes, skill levels, specialty areas, and more.
 - According to the BLS, DBA jobs will “grow much faster than average,” as compared to all other types of jobs (the BLS highest rating)
 - As reported in eWeek on November 10, 2008, the second most difficult position for organizations to fill are DBAs. (The first most difficult position to fill is Enterprise Architect.)

What Kind of DBA are You?

- Accidental DBA (you are a DBA, but it may not be your real career choice)
- Intentional DBA (being a DBA is your career choice)

Characteristics of Exceptional DBAs #1

- Enjoys Technology
- Enjoys Challenges (Opportunities)
- Enjoys Problem Solving
- Good with Details
- Embraces Change
- Enjoys Learning
- Accepts Responsibility
- Maintains Professionalism
- Trustworthy

Characteristics of Exceptional DBAs #2

- Dependable
- Can Work Well Independently or in a Team
- Manages Time Well
- Can Communicate Effectively, Both Orally and Written
- Listen's Well (Ask Questions)
- Realistic (Complaining Doesn't Help)
- Flexible
- Patient
- Enthusiastic
- Self Confident (Comes With Time)

Honing Your Skill Set

- Boosting Your Formal Education
- Sharpening Your Technical Skills (Depth)
- Mastering Related Technical Skills (Breadth)
- Getting More Experience
- Mastering DBA Soft Skills

Guess what? All of these require a lot of hard work!

Boosting Your Formal Education

- If you don't have a 4-year university degree, **consider** getting one.
- **Consider** getting a Masters Degree in your area of interest, such as IT Management, Database Administration, MBA, etc.
- If your organization provides it, take advantage of any **tuition reimbursement** programs available to increase and/or keep up with your field.
- Even if your company doesn't help out, take advantage of any government **tax credits**.

Gaining/Maintaining SQL Server Technical Skills

- There are many informal, and often free, ways to boost your technical skills. Do as many as you can.
 - Seminars and workshops (1-5 day events)
 - Conferences (1-5 day events)
 - Local Code Camps, TechFests, SQL Saturdays
 - Online training (free and paid)
 - Attending user groups
 - Magazines and other publications
 - Websites, newsletters, blogs, forums, RSS feeds
 - Self-study by reading books and practicing on your own
- Create your own self-study plan, and stick to it.

Mastering Related Technical Skills

- As a DBA (or developer), there are many related technical skills we need to master, and keep up with, including:
 - Operating system
 - Hardware (SANs, etc.)
 - Clustering
 - Virtualization
 - Development technologies
 - Tools and utilities

Getting More Experience

- **Practical experience** as a DBA is the key to not only becoming an exceptional DBA, but also to finding DBA jobs.
- Take every advantage you can to **learn new skills on the job**.
- **Volunteer to take on new projects** as a way to force yourself to learn new skills and get additional experience.

Mastering DBA Soft Skills

- Mastering soft skills is just as important as learning technical skills. Key skills include:
 - People skills
 - Teamwork skills
 - Project management
 - Leadership skills
 - Time management
 - Writing skills
 - Speaking skills
 - Knowledge of legal responsibilities
- How do you gain these skills?
 - Just like you gain new technical skills, plus lots of practice
 - Consider community volunteering to practice the above skills

Specializing as a DBA: You Can't Do It All

- Choose one or more of the following specialty areas:
 - DBA Administrator
 - DBA Developer
 - DBA High Availability/Disaster Recovery Specialist
 - DBA Database Designer/Architect
 - DBA Business Intelligence Specialist (Hot growth area)
 - DBA SSIS Specialist
 - DBA Reporting Services Specialist
 - DBA Trainer
 - DBA Consultant
 - Among others

Is Professional Certification Really Necessary?

- While you don't have to have professional certification to be an exceptional DBA, it does provide these benefits:
 - Distinguishes you from other DBAs
 - Helps to focus your training efforts
 - Broadens your knowledge
 - Helps when you lack practical experience
 - Some organizations require DBAs to be certified
 - Needed to become a Microsoft Certified Trainer

Volunteer and Participate in the SQL Server Community

- There are many benefits to participating and contributing to the SQL Server community. They include:
 - Increase your depth and breadth of knowledge
 - Develop your soft skills
 - Make new contacts (great if you are looking for work)
 - Help's build your resume of professional experience
 - It's often fun to help and share with others
 - Critical, if you ever want to be considered for a Microsoft MVP

How to Participate in the SQL Server Community

- Participate in forums and news groups
- Write and share scripts (websites, Codeplex)
- Join and participate in a local and national user's groups
- Participate in a free community event (SQL Saturday)
- Speak at SQL Server events, both local and national
- Write articles (web or magazine) or books
- Write and maintain a blog (existing sites, create own)
- Create a training video (PASS Tips, other websites)
- Create a SQL Server-related website
- Start a local user's group (if there aren't any locally)

How to Manage Your Internal Brand

- Understand business goals, focus on achieving them
- Be a leader, take the initiative
- Volunteer for hard or undesirable (but necessary) tasks
- Have a “get it done” attitude
- Don’t spread blame
- Accept responsibility
- Don’t abuse your power
- Avoid office politics
- Be careful with your e-mail
- Actively participate and contribute to meetings
- Be internationally/culturally sensitive
- Help others be successful

How to Manage Your Online Brand

- Whether you like it or not, what you do online can *directly affect your current job, or future jobs.*
 - Don't post anything on the Internet that can be construed to be negative. Examples include:
 - Avoid "cute" screen names, use your real name (your name is your brand)
 - Don't use inappropriate language
 - Don't become involved in flame wars
 - Always be polite and considerate
 - Avoid controversial topics
 - Don't publish embarrassing photos/videos of yourself
 - Separate professional and personal online presence
 - Online conduct and content should always be:
 - Professional
 - Be used to represent yourself in a favorable light
 - Should demonstrate that you are the kind of person that someone would want on their payroll and represent their organization

Social Networking

- If you are not on-line, you don't exist.
- Use a consistent user name to make it easier for people to find you. Ideally, use your real name.
- Consider using the following on-line social networking sites:
 - www.linkedin.com (Join a DBA-related group)
 - www.plaxo.com
 - www.sqlpass.org PASSPort Profile
 - www.twitter.com
 - www.facebook.com

Manage Your Career: Don't Let It Manage You

- Take control of your career, don't let it just happen to you.
- Decide what you want from your career, and take actions to make it happen.
- Set realistic, short-term goals in order to reach major milestones in your career plan.
- If you don't follow through with your goals, then nobody else will do it for you.
- You need to be self-motivated and ready to take action.
- Realize that career plans and goals can change; so regularly reevaluate and revise your career path.

Your Action Plan

- Take some time and decide if you just want to be an average DBA, or an Exceptional DBA.
- Neither choice is right or wrong, it is simply a choice you make.
- If you decide you want to be an Exceptional DBA, then start taking action today.

Find Out More

Free E-Books:

- www.sqlservercentral.com/Books

Check these out:

- www.SQLServerCentral.com
- www.Simple-Talk.com

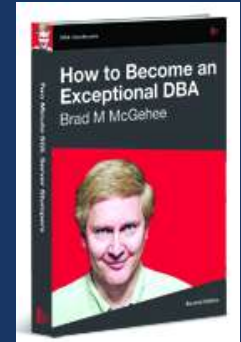
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