



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

# How to Become an Exceptional DBA\*



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# My Assumptions About You

- You may not be a DBA, but you want to find out more about what it takes to become an exceptional DBA.
- You are currently a DBA, and you want to pick up some new ideas on what you can do to become an even more exceptional DBA.

# Our Focus Today

- What is an Exceptional DBA
- Why Bother Becoming an Exceptional DBA
- Characteristics of the Exceptional 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) does not refer to a perfect DBA, but a DBA who **stands out from the crowd**.
- **Think in terms of a hiring manager**. If a hiring manager has to sort through 100 resumes, you want your resume to be one of the ones picked for an interview.

# 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?
  - Better pay
    - DBAs earn from US \$64,444 to \$107,191 per year on average
    - Developers earn from US \$50,543 to \$79,136 per year on average
    - Network administrators earn from US \$47,970 to \$81,241 per year on average
      - Data from [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) as of February 2010. Assumes moderately experienced to very experienced personnel, for all U.S. locations and company sizes, skill levels, specialty areas, and more.
  - Better job opportunities
    - According to the [BLS](#), DBA jobs will “grow much faster than average,” as compared to all other types of jobs (the BLS’s highest rating).
  - The challenge of the work
    - We will be talking about this throughout this session.

# Characteristics of Exceptional DBAs #1

- Enjoys Technology (If not, why are you here?)
- Enjoys Challenges (Look at them as opportunities.)
- Enjoys Problem Solving (You are going to see a lot.)
- Good with Details (It's all about the details.)
- Embraces Change (Change is the norm.)
- Enjoys Learning (Keeping up with technology.)
- Accepts Responsibility (Take your job seriously.)
- Maintains Professionalism (Get along with co-workers.)
- Trustworthy (You are entrusted with valuable data.)

# Characteristics of Exceptional DBAs #2

- Dependable (A lot rests on your shoulders.)
- Can Work Well Independently or in a Team (Variety.)
- Manages Time Well (Never enough time.)
- Can Communicate Effectively (Both orally and written.)
- Listen's Well (Ask questions.)
- Realistic (Complaining doesn't help)
- Flexible (Be able to adapt, often quickly.)
- Patient (With people, hardware, and software.)
- Enthusiastic (Ready for any challenge.)
- Self Confident (Comes with time.)

# Honing Your Skill Set

- Boosting Your Formal Education
- Sharpening Your SQL Server 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

- A 4-year university degree is **not critical** to becoming an exceptional DBA, but it can help to differentiate you from the crowd.
- If you don't have a 4-year university degree, **consider** getting one, as often a degree is the minimum requirement for many employers.
- Your degree doesn't need to be in **IT or CS**.
- **Consider** getting a Masters Degree in your area of interest, such as IT Management, Database Administration, MBA, etc., especially if you want to move into a management role.

# Gaining/Maintaining SQL Server Technical Skills

- There are many ways to boost your SQL Server-specific technical skills.
  - Seminars and workshops (1-5 day events)
  - Conferences (1-5 day events)
  - Local Code Camps, TechFests, SQL Saturdays (free)
  - 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, ongoing self-study plan**, and stick to it, in order bolster your SQL Server technical skills.

# Mastering Related Technical Skills

- As a DBA (or developer), there are many related technical skills you 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 (SSAS) Specialist
  - DBA Integration Services (SSIS) Specialist
  - DBA Reporting Services (SSRS) 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:
  - Helps to distinguish you from other DBAs
  - Helps when you lack practical experience
  - Helps to focus your self-training efforts
  - Broadens your knowledge
  - 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 as a Microsoft MVP

# How to Participate in the SQL Server Community

- Participate in forums and news groups
- Write and share scripts (SQL Server websites, Codeplex.com)
- Join and participate in a local and national user's groups
- Start a local user's group (if there aren't any locally)
- 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
- Create a training video
- Create a SQL Server-related website

# How to Manage Your Internal Brand

## (Your Co-Worker's Perception of You)

- Understand business goals, focus on how to help achieve them
- Be a leader, take the initiative
- Volunteer for hard or undesirable (but necessary) tasks
- Have a “get it done” attitude
- Accept responsibility for your actions
- Don't abuse your power
- Avoid office politics
- Be careful with your e-mail
- Actively participate and contribute to meetings
- Keep your manager, and stakeholders, informed of what you are doing
- Help others be successful

# How to Manage Your Online Brand

## (Your Audience's Perception of You)

- 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:
    - Separate your professional and personal online presence
    - Avoid "cute" online names, use your real name (your name is your brand)
    - Always be polite and considerate
    - Don't use inappropriate language
    - Don't become involved in flame wars or other controversies
    - Don't be a complainer
    - Don't publish embarrassing photos/videos of yourself
  - 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. Always ask yourself this.**

# 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](http://www.linkedin.com) (Join a DBA-related group)
  - [www.plaxo.com](http://www.plaxo.com)
  - [www.sqlpass.org](http://www.sqlpass.org) PASSPort Profile
  - [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)
  - [www.facebook.com](http://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.

# Create an 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](http://www.sqlservercentral.com/Books)

## Check these out:

- [www.SQLServerCentral.com](http://www.SQLServerCentral.com)
- [www.Simple-Talk.com](http://www.Simple-Talk.com)

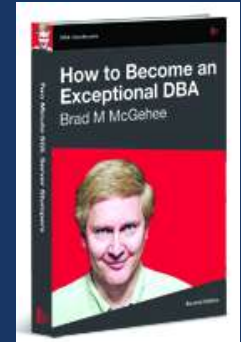
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