



*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 your manager**. If it is time to pass out bonuses, or give raises, you want your manager to know of your contribution to the organization.
- **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 those 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 has become more important than ever 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.

DBAs in the Marketplace

- Additional reasons to be an exceptional DBA:
 - Better pay
 - DBAs earn from US \$64,599 to \$107,447 per year on average
 - Developers earn from US \$50,664 to \$79,331 per year on average
 - Network administrators earn from US \$48,090 to \$81,441 per year on average
 - Data from www.salary.com as of April 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 & whining 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 Microsoft 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 (Join a DBA-related group)
 - www.sqlpass.org PASSPort Profile
 - www.twitter.com
 - www.facebook.com
 - www.plaxo.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

Check these out:

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

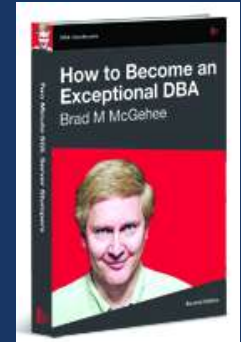
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