



Celebrating SQL Server 2008 R2

# 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 to 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. "The accidental DBA".
- 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 (current or wannabes) 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.

# 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 Large Non-Profit
- Network Engineer
- Computer Trainer 
- Full-time DBA 
- 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

# The Path I Took

- Realized **I wasn't happy** with my career (took 13 years to find this out).
- **Reviewed job history**, and 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 more **experience**.
- Moved into training, 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** at large organization, 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 Recap

- I realized I wasn't happy with the way my career was going.
- I consciously choose a new career path (after much time and thought).
- I took specific action to attain my goals.

# 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**, don't be afraid to change it, and follow this new path.
- 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 Your Career
2. Decide if You Really Want to be a DBA
3. Decide If You Want to be an Average or Exceptional DBA
4. Consciously Manage Your Career Path Toward Success
5. Set Goals and Take Action to Accomplish the Above

# 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

- Besides the previous questions, come up with additional questions that **fit your circumstances**.
- **Write down the questions**, with your answers.
- Answer the questions as **honestly** as possible.
- **Get feedback** from any significant others.
- Weigh the pros and cons of your answers, as **not every answer 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. Life is a compromise.

# Decide if You Really Want to be a DBA

- Once you have identified those career goals that are important to you, **you must decide if being a DBA meets those career goals.**
  - Do you find DBA tasks interesting?
  - Do you have the characteristics of a DBA?
  - Do you want to spend the rest of your career as a DBA?
  - Do you have a passion for being a DBA?
- There is no “right” answer to this question, as everyone is different.
- The “secret” is to **consciously make a choice.**

# Decide If You Want to be an Average or an 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 if you want to be an average, or an exceptional DBA.
  
- So if you have decided that you want to be an Exceptional DBA, now what?

# Manage Your Career Path Toward Success

- If you decide you want to be a DBA, and to also excel as an Exceptional DBA, then you need to **create a plan** that includes the following:
  - Develop the Appropriate Skill Sets
  - Manage Your Internal Brand
  - Manage Your Online Brand
  - Get Involved with the SQL Server Community

# Developing the Appropriate Skill Set

- Part of being a DBA includes **constant and non-stop learning**.
- Skills you need include:
  - **Technical Skills:** SQL Server, Development, Operating System
  - **Business:** Understand how your organization works
  - **Soft Skills:** People, Leadership, Teamwork, Communications
- Take the time to **plan out how you intend to maintain, and increase, your DBA skills**.
- **Write you plan on paper**, post it somewhere you see it everyday, and begin to tick off your accomplishments as you achieve them.

# 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**, and I think this is important for Exceptional DBAs, it is very important that you conduct yourself in a professional manner.
- 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.
- Like the other aspects of your career, **make conscious decisions** about how you want to participate.

# To Recap

- **Consciously create a plan**, and write it down, on how you intend to attain the following goals:
  - Developing the Appropriate Skill Sets
  - Managing Your Internal Brand
  - Managing Your Online Brand
  - Getting Involved with the SQL Server Community

# Takes Aways From This Session

- Everything I have talked about during this session is **worthless unless you take action**. To review, 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.
  - If you decide you want to be an Exceptional DBA, create both long-term and short-term 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.

# Great Advice from DBA Merrill Aldrich

“I originally went to school and began work as an architect, and one of the most important ideas I took from that experience is that most architects treat their careers as a personal life’s work, in the same way, I’d imagine, that a doctor might. An architect or a doctor does spend his/her life working, but at the same time refining a personal body of skills and knowledge. That set of skills and knowledge has its own life as the person’s practice, independent of any specific job. It travels with the person. You can get fired from your job, but not lose your practice.”

“This is the difference between “having a practice” and “doing a job.” A practice is part of your identity; your skills are something you refine because you want to get better, not because the boss said you have to go to training. A practice is something you can be passionate about. If you do this right, the passion makes you better, and makes you happier. People notice, and it’ll advance the more mundane parts of your life, like jobs, titles, earnings, and so on.”

# Find Out More

- Free E-Books:
  - [www.sqlservercentral.com/Books](http://www.sqlservercentral.com/Books)
- Check these out:
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