Introduction

Have you been considering a career change and thinking about becoming a SQL Server DBA (database administrator)? Perhaps you've been given the responsibility of looking after a SQL Server and you aren't quite sure what this really means or where you should start? Maybe you're just interested in finding out what on earth DBAs do all day long! Many books will teach you the SQL Server DBA functions but being a DBA is more than just simply understanding the tools of SQL Server. It's also about applying solid processes and utilizing those tools for the overall benefit of your business or client.

There are two types of DBAs: the reactive DBA and the proactive DBA. Reactive DBAs understand how to use SQL Server but lack the process skills needed to manage SQL Server in an effective way. Reactive DBAs spend much of their time "fighting fires," that is, fixing problems as they occur, such as adding more disk space when it runs out, trying to improve performance when users complain of poor response times, and implementing security once someone has stolen your customer list. Sure, reactive DBAs fix problems when things get broken, but they do this at a cost to your business–costs measured in idle time as employees sit waiting for the system to become available; costs calculated in missed revenue opportunities. Reactive DBAs are unfortunately common and are often viewed as a necessary evil by many businesses.

The proactive DBA on the other hand takes what they know about SQL Server and applies tested processes to forewarn clients of potential issues so that future problems are avoided before they become an issue. They test contingency plans for those rare occasions when unexpected problems do occur and they plan resource requirements so spare capacity is always available before it's required. They automate the day-to-day maintenance of SQL Server and work to continuously improve their processes in order to ensure that the business they are working gets high, reliable performance from its SQL Server databases. Proactive DBAs are respected and often seen as a valuable asset to their business.

As a DBA and a consultant I have had the pleasure of working with hundreds of DBAs in all types of businesses. I have been lucky to see the outstanding results good practices can make, and the utter shambles bad practices can lead to. Throughout this book I have shared many good practices so you can easily learn as much as possible. This book is about teaching you to be a SQL Server DBA. But most importantly, it teaches you how to be a proactive SQL Server DBA.