Feedback from Brad Werner on GK 6544/M55039

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Here is a brief summary. Yes, it will be pretty straightforward for you or anyone else who is good with PowerShell. It is indeed a CWL title. Once you get past the two-dozen-slide Module 1, the slide decks get rather \*thin\*. Modules 1-15 slide counts: 24, 10, 8, 8, 14, 7, 9, 8, 17, 6, 8, 11, 9, 8, 2. Why do I mention the slide counts? This is certainly not a Benchmark Learning course, but in my opinion it is far better than that. That’s not saying much. The slide content is better, but there is wheat and there is chaff. Witness: Module 7 “Script Debugging”. Right now you are thinking that must be a heavy topic in this course. True, it is however it is up to you. Those nine slides include 5 slides of title, lesson title, Lab A, Lab B, and conclusion. Thus there are really four content slides. (You can subtract at least four from each slide deck count (or more if there are Lab B and C and more than one lesson. Yes, that’s two slides in Module 10.) Let’s look at the estimated times for module 7: 45 minutes for the 4 slide lesson, 15 minutes for Lab A, and 45 minutes for Lab B. Now I know that you can talk about script debugging for 45 minutes (or a day or two), but you need to be aware that the course materials are rather thin. And I’m not just talking about the slides.

The materials are essentially ninety-five percent a reprinting of the Jones and Hicks book that is referenced at the beginning, and five percent “In this course…” statements that are sprinkled here and there. From a business perspective, those guys are very wise. A more foolish courseware author, such as myself, would have completely rewritten everything from scratch, and not entirely because I would have sold the rights away to the book first so it would be the only way. It’s ingenious, but the students seemed quite happy. (I have yet to see the reviews, but they certainly were all very happy directly to me, one possibly overwhelmed by being behind in the labs, but he kept insisting that he wanted to take the time to figure them out whenever I offered assistance.) That said, there are many great examples that are included in the book, sorry I meant to say course handbook, and the free download from their web site which is luckily also included in the Client VM in the lab pod. The download link in the book is wrong. It should be http://www.concentratedtech.com/downloads/, thus the ISO is at http://www.concentratedtech.com/downloads/55039.iso and the 55039\_slides.zip is right next to it (as is a psdiagnostics.zip for what its worth). Thus, a resourceful instructor or student can make immense use of these files by loading them into the ISE and using them for demonstrations and discussion. Or a resourceful instructor could choose to mostly write their own ad hoc scripts on the fly because it keeps the students more awake. :) Yeah, you know what I’m talking about. Either way, doing plentiful, frequent demonstration-discussion is absolutely essential to getting through this course.

Many students did use the StartingPoint files for starting labs from a clean, stable, and well-known state. There were several instances where things got a little strange, but almost all of them could be equated to having set a breakpoint that got stuck, or setting ErrorActionPreference to SilentlyContinue or some such insanity. True, there were a few anomalies that involved more troubleshooting and debugging than the Error Handling and Debugging modules had covered. The students actually seemed to like that because it honestly made things feel a bit more real-world. Reality keeps life interesting. If it goes perfectly and by the book, they’ll be asleep by noon. “Always throw something odd and unaccountable their way”… no wait, that was a quote Karl Koehler had used from the Art of War. Nevertheless, I think you will immensely enjoy this course. If you or I had written it, it would indeed be a very different animal. However, the important thing is that someone has written it, and again I am glad that the ConcentratedTech folks took the time to produce it. A great many students have been hungry for this sort of thing for a very long time.