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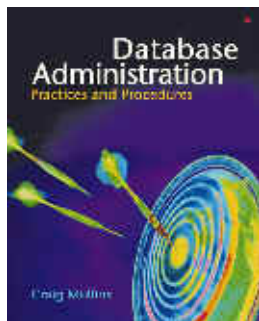
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## The DBA Corner

*by Craig S. Mullins*



### **Why Outsourcing the DBA is Not an Option**

When a company can pay pennies on the dollar for skilled resources, foreign outsourcing may seem to make sense. But in actuality, this attitude may favor bottom-line costs, instead of the long-term best interests of the stockholders. Yes, foreign outsourcing can shave some immediate costs and with high-speed wires interconnecting the globe, it is possible for IT workers to be located anywhere. But what is outsourcing's long-term cost? Outsourced DBAs halfway across the world cannot easily solve problems, lend guidance, or participate on a team development project. Programmers typically rely on DBAs to be resident database experts and look to them to help resolve issues quickly. This is problematic at best when the DBA does not work in the same location and speaks a different native language. Also, the outsourcer may not treat governmental regulations with the importance as workers in the country where the regulations originate. Outsourcing can cause your company to be out of compliance with government regulations, resulting in fines or incarceration. And what happens if a disgruntled outsourced DBA destroys your databases before quitting?

Of course, some tasks of a DBA can be outsourced. The best candidate is database performance management. With advanced monitoring and tuning tools, database performance metrics can be viewed remotely. Automated scripts and procedures can take corrective actions when pre-specified thresholds are met. A wise IT chief will ensure that the DBAs on-site understand the performance management characteristics to backup and verify work done off-site.

Other DBA tasks like applying maintenance and fix packs, database change management, and implementing database backup and recovery also may be able to be outsourced to certain degrees without negatively impacting your corporate data. But the job cannot be turned over wholesale to an outsourcer if you want peace of mind. Policies need to be put in place regarding how and when to apply maintenance.

Using an outsourcer to create backups is helpful. But you should enforce standards to ensure that the backups are made at the right time of day to be useful for recovery -- and that the backups are tested to be sure they are usable. And you might want to assign responsibility for recovery to on-site DBAs instead of the outsourcer because recovery implies an outage -- and outages mean lost productivity and lost revenue. Full-time employees' proximity to the actual systems and hardware can make it easier to ensure a quick and successful recovery.

If your DBAs are responsible for data modeling and database design, you may want to keep these tasks in-house, too. Many companies assign DBAs to perform both logical and physical design. The logical design should not be outsourced. The definition and blueprint for your corporate data should not be given to an outsourcer to manage.

Database administration is not an easy job to learn. You can't buy experience for pennies on the dollar. Trying to do so puts your valuable corporate data at risk.

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