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## zData Perspectives

### More DBA Proverbs

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My earlier short collection of DBA proverbs [DBA Proverbs (Dec 2008 / Jan 2009)] has been one of my more popular zData Perspectives columns. With that in mind, I decided it was time to collect together some additional quotes, sayings, and proverbs that apply to database administration and share them with you today.

One of my favorites comes from the famous behavioral psychologist, B.F. Skinner, who said: "It isn't that they can't see the solution; it is that they can't see the problem." How many times have you had to deal with people rushing off to find a solution before they even

the Cheshire Cat. Recall the passage where Alice comes to a fork in the road and meets up with the Cheshire Cat for the first time. She asks him, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" And the cat responds, "That depends a good deal on where you want to go." Alice, in typical end-user fashion, replies "It doesn't much matter where." Causing the cat to utter words that we should all take to heart - - "Then it doesn't matter which way you go!"

Of course, you could follow Yogi Berra's advice, instead. He said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." But, then where would that leave you? Unfortunately, that seems about as intelligent as some IT strategic planning sessions I've sat in on. The bottom line is that planning and understanding are both

people rushing on to find a solution before they even understand the problem? Happens all the time in IT.

If you cannot see the problem then you'll never formulate a workable solution to that problem. This one applies to vendors, too. How many times has some salesman tried to sell you a "solution" when all he really has to sell is his product. You cannot sell a solution if you don't know what the problem is, folks!

Disagree with that? Then I'd offer you another couple of quotes, the first one comes from French author Pierre-Augustin Caron De Beaumarchais, who said: "It is not necessary to understand things in order to argue about them." I see evidence of the truth of this one every day.

And then there is Thomas Edison who said "There is no expedient to which a man will not go to avoid the labor of thinking."

Both of these quotes speak of our inherent laziness. Quite often we start to argue before knowing what it is we are arguing about. Or we get so caught up in our own position that we don't stop to listen and hear what others are saying. I admire people who change their minds when they are confronted with different facts or a changing ideology. If you believe the same things today that you did when you were in college then you aren't likely to be very bright.

The Lewis Carroll Alice in Wonderland books offer sage advice for our particular industry. For example, we can all learn from

the following: "The secret is that planning and understanding are both required and go hand in hand with one another. Those of us who practice the discipline of data management and administration understand the rigor of planning; but we also understand the benefits that can accrue.

If you have no plan for where you want to go, then at best you will just be going around in circles; at worst, you'll be going backward. Planning and keeping abreast of the latest technology is imperative in the rapidly changing world of information technology (IT). As Alice might put it, IT just keeps getting "curiouser and curiouser."

Perhaps one of the most applicable quotes for software vendors comes from American psychologist Abraham Maslov, the man who invented the hierarchy of needs that we all learned in school. Maslov said: "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail." To that, I would add this one from historian Thomas Fuller: "A bad workman never gets a good tool."

Matching tools to problems can create solutions, but this can only happen if you have the right tools. And finally, one of the world's brightest sages was W.C. Fields who said: "The world is made up of only three things: oxygen, nitrogen, and baloney!"

Remember that one the next time you are knee deep in a data modeling session and you might be able to reduce the number of data elements you're dealing with.

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