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RunAs Radio is a weekly Internet Audio Talk Show for IT Professionals working with Microsoft products. The full range of IT topics is covered from a Microsoft-centric viewpoint.

Text Transcript of Show #111
(Transcription services provided by PWOP Productions)

Buck Woody on IT Careers in the Downturn!
May 27, 2009

[Music]

Brandon Wenn: From runasradio.com, you're listening to RunAs Radio, the Internet audio talk show for IT professionals with Richard Campbell and Greg Hughes. This is Brandon Wenn, announcing show #111, with guest Buck Woody, recorded Thursday, May 21, 2009. RunAs Radio is produced each week by PWOP Productions, providing professional media and podcasting services online at pwop.com. You can follow the boys on Twitter at twitter.com/runasradio.

Richard Campbell: Thank you Brandon. This is Richard Campbell. You're listening to RunAs Radio. With me as always, my co-host Greg Hughes.

Greg Hughes: Hey everybody. Richard, how are you today?

Richard Campbell: I am very, very well and I'm post-TechEd. I missed you man. We really missed you. People were asking, "Where is Greg?"

Greg Hughes: Yeah, I'm really sorry I couldn't make it this time. I felt really bad. The whole week I was wishing I could be there. I just had, as I told you before, I just had some commitments that I had to fulfill and it just happened to conflict and so hopefully next time.

Richard Campbell: Awesome. Well, that's the way it goes. We had a really great Speaker Idol, had an awesome finals. It was just a smaller show this year, pretty IT heavy actually, there were lots of IT folks there and I had a chance to talk to everybody, you know, as many as I could but it was really big, long conversations, lots of great recordings and the whole Fish Bowl, we didn't have a Fish Bowl this time, we're up in separate rooms. For every slot, for every panel, for every tick-tock, sold out before we started, they were all booked. For the first time ever, we were up to our eyeballs.

Greg Hughes: Very, very cool.

Richard Campbell: Yeah, it was amazing.

Greg Hughes: Being IT heavy, it had to be an interesting. Of course, not having been there I guess I'm asking you. There might have been probably some really interesting conversations going on. With the economy the way it is and the phase of IT continuing to expand and grow, yet the money that can be thrown out in a lot of cases is contracting.

Richard Campbell: People are really getting smart about their cash. There's a lot of conversation around Win 7.0, the keynote was all Win 7.0, you know, I think folks are pretty focused on that, and Server 2007 R2 also important stuff going on there.

Greg Hughes: Sure, sure.

Richard Campbell: And also I really feel like Microsoft is getting virtualization right. They're really getting there. This latest incarnation in using Win 7.0 has got great virtualization. We saw some great things there all around efficiency.

Greg Hughes: Very, very cool virtualization. I mean I remember jumping into virtualization when virtualization was new and it's a whole different breed now, it's a whole different ball of wax.

Richard Campbell: I started using virtualization on the test-side of things running old platforms and stuff. Remember we ended up having a dozen different machines to test all the different configurations?

Greg Hughes: Oh yeah and a gazillion different VMs floating around everywhere that nobody could give track of, let alone patch or really know what is on them.

Richard Campbell: Now I'm actually having the debate of whether I should be virtualizing my web farm and that stuns me.

Greg Hughes: Yeah. You can do a lot with web farm virtualization for sure.

Richard Campbell: Yeah. It's very interesting. Anyway, we could do a whole show on just what happened at TechEd. Let's dive into this conversation with Buck Woody. I'm going to give a quick version of his bio. I know we're all itching to get to this conversation.

Greg Hughes: Yeah, I think we started our debate early on.

Richard Campbell: Yeah, we were already at it before the recording was on. Buck has been working with information technology since 1981. He has worked for the US Air Force as an IBM reseller technical support, and for NASA as well as the US Space Command as an IT contractor. He has worked on almost IT positions from computer repair technician to system and database administrator, and from network technician to IT manager but it is the database field he always returns to. He has been a DBA and database developer on everything from Oracle system running on VAX to SQL Server and DB2 installations. Buck has a business degree and several industry certifications including the MCSE, the MC DBA, and the Brainbench DBA. He is the author of over 300 SQL Server articles and four published SQL Server books. He is a site personality for

informit.com, SQL web, and was the president of the Tampa SQL users' group for five years. He was awarded the Microsoft MVP award in 2006 for SQL Server and started to work with the SQL Server team at Microsoft a year later. He has 20 years of extensive professional and practical experience in computer networks and network design, experienced in design and management of business and technical systems, as well as marketing and training those systems to the users' community and corporate offices. Welcome, Buck.

Greg Hughes: Hey Buck.

Buck Woody: Thanks a lot and with that introduction I can't wait to see what I'm going to say.

Greg Hughes: Based on our pre-conversation, I think it's "Ready, fight!"

Richard Campbell: All things are possible. We bumped into each other at TechEd as we often do.

Buck Woody: And you still owe me a shirt because you spilled coffee on me when you bumped into me.

Richard Campbell: Well, you know, I'm prone to that, I tend to come from behind. You showed me a CodePlex project and I just want to mention because I have every intention of spending a half hour talking about this, but we got sidetracked on a pre-conversation, I wanted to do more.

Buck Woody: That's right. Yeah, the CodePlex thing I showed you was something I called the SQL CMS for Central Management System. In SQL Server 2008, there's a feature called Central Management Server, CMS, which is a little different. I actually use those features but the basic concept here is just a set of a box in a corner that will manage and monitor your other boxes. It's just sort of a central place to keep scripts, to keep track of your servers, to run queries and I'm leveraging all of the cool new stuff in 2008 so you don't have to switch your whole network to 2008. This box in the corner is 2008 but it can talk down if you will to 2005 and 2000 systems. They can read more about it and we could talk later but you can find more about it at sqlcms.codeplex.com, that's a Microsoft open source location, sort of our source forge so to speak but you could look up that project and I'll take all comments.

Richard Campbell: Thanks Buck. I think it's a cool project and if folks want to know more about this, by all means look at it. If you want, we can bring Buck back to dig into this further. Send us an email, info@runasradio.com and harass us about it because before we got started today we dove right into careers. We just started…

Buck Woody: Yeah.

Richard Campbell: It was immediately a punch fest about careers so maybe you better do your preamble again, Buck, and we'll light this thing off.

Buck Woody: Sure. Well, you know, I've heard a lot lately. I mean we all know the tech side of what we do and so on but you probably know someone who has been laid off or whatever and other people are looking for work and even in good economies you'd see people looking for a job and you probably get this question: Should I be a generalist or a specialist? And so the discussion turns into generalization versus specialization in IT. I think, like most of us, I started a long time ago. We actually didn't have computers. We just shouted ones and zeros at each other but then...

Richard Campbell: Nice.

Buck Woody: When we got those computers, you know, I built my own, I modified the UNIX operating system to work on it, I wrote my own stuff and actually one thing I wrote was an assembler and then went to C to write the rest but the point is I wrote my own software, wrote my own instructions, train people how to use it. I mean you couldn't get more generalist than that, and has time has gone on I've specialized, and I mean if you think about it, the database administration space is the specialty, however, even within the database platform there's administration, there's development, there's business intelligence and so in my mind you're seeing a lot of companies now that are asking for generalists, not specialists. You know, we've always been paid more to be specialists so there's an argument there for being a generalist but where should you start? Should you start as a generalist or should you start as a specialist?

Greg Hughes: I think in the perfect financial world, companies can hire specialists to do those point jobs, if you will, but in an economy like we're in today, and I know having managed IT departments in difficult times working in financial services about six or eight years ago, it was a pretty tough time in a software company and we downsized an IT department in half but had to maintain the same level of service and we didn't have a specialist. We had to change and there's a pretty massive culture that had to happen in that IT department to go from being very specialized in a very specific period to generalizing and covering more of the bases individually.

Buck Woody: Yeah. So here is the reaction I had to examples just like that. Back in the day when I worked at the space center, we had these guys that were IBM technicians and they did nothing, and I

know this is going to just blow your mind, but they did nothing but work on the certain kinds of printers we had. We had these printers and they were the size of like, I don't know, a Ford Fiesta and it took like a degree to change the ribbon in these things and they had literal ribbons and they would come around and service this just hundreds of IBM printers we had at the space center, you know, fairly large installation, pure IBM environment, mainframes, the whole nine, but the idea was these guys were paid very well because they just knew everything, they were kind of the copier repair guys, they just knew everything about those. When the PC revolution took place, this was back in the early 1980s, when the PC revolution took place I saw these guys not able to retool. A lot of them retired or left and went to another job because when those printers became mute, we had switch to OS/2 and have gone a lot paperless now and there were laser printers and so on, and these guys literally couldn't adapt. So I guess is there an idea that generalist is more stable but paid less and the specialist is paid more but in more danger of becoming a dinosaur.

Richard Campbell: I also wonder about the yield for the business here because the natural consequence of generalists is that you don't go for, in theory most optimal solutions.

Buck Woody: Yeah.

Richard Campbell: The generalist trying to manage those printers probably would have spent more on supplies. Wouldn't you use the ribbons as well, would it take longer to get the stuff set up, we've had a tough time getting things up and running? I'm thinking about the return on this that the consequence of generalist is that you're going to get, what, 75%, or let's use Pareto's and say 80% of the results on all of these technology where your specialist could have beat that other 10%, 15%, 20% out.

Buck Woody: I'd go even higher than that. I mean you can look no further than the database area. Most of the DBAs that I work with, I would say most unfortunately, in the SQL Server world, SQL Server is not their primary lineup business. They do everything. They're asked to do the network, they do Exchange, they do the web farm. As a consequence, their databases are just riddled with bad practices.

Greg Hughes: Yeah.

Buck Woody: Part of that is Microsoft's fault, our fault, in that we don't enforce those practices out of the box. Let's say in an Oracle system, you have to study for months just to figure out how to install and run the thing. I'm exaggerating of course but the point is there's a higher bar to get something set up. You almost have to do it right to do it, whereas in the Microsoft world, next, next, finish and you're up and running. That's a blessing and a curse. We get a lot of market space because you click next, next, finish. The problem is that if the database runs crappy and everyone says it's Microsoft when in fact the person is not following best practices to begin with because they don't have time. So the generalist, I see him everywhere but I mean you're exactly right, I mean we look back at the database and things were just not done anywhere near the best practices. I've started a series on my blog which is blogs.msdn.com/buckwoody and on there, I've got a tag, you can click call best practices where I talk about just some stuff that most DBAs consider 101 but to the generalist it isn't 101, it's just rocket science. So I think you're right, you can actually gain a lot by specializing at least a little. I mean is that an answer to that?

Richard Campbell: Or do we bring in a specialist as consultants.

Greg Hughes: Right.

Richard Campbell: We need the tuning there but the guy with the fulltime job is a generalist who just know -- you know, the best feature I think of a generalist is knowing when you need help.

Buck Woody: That's a very good point, that's a very good point.

Greg Hughes: It keeps going through my mind that IT workers want to be specialist and somewhat to be a generalist, a lot want to be specialist, they want to dive into the technology, they want to geek out on it, they want to know as much as they possibly can. The flip side of the coin is that you have IT management which is responding to yet another dimension of this which is probably the business management which quite often the IT manager is going to go to be faced with the situation where your budget is being cut in half and we have to do a lay off, for example, and certainly a lot of companies have gone through that.

Buck Woody: Right.

Greg Hughes: I know I've had to manage through that. If you can get 85% of the coverage, that's 50% of the cost, you know, that's a business decision and there's some risk management that goes into that. I think those of us in IT, and I came up through IT as a doer and a hands-on IT guy, sometimes like to think that we can define the marketplace in this way, when really quite often just defined by the bigger circumstances.

Buck Woody: Yeah. I mean you go out and look at our cars, I mean do I maintain my car as well

as some guy that's really, really good with engines does? My uncle I remember, he is a thorny character anyway, but his cars were absolutely perfect and I'd stop by to see him or talked to him about something and he came out and said, "Let me check your oil," and I'm thinking oh no, and he pulled the oil stick and he went, "Ah, here's what you're doing wrong and you're not doing this, this is basics," and to me I'm like that business owner, it's good enough, I turn the key and I get to the place and when the radio doesn't work anymore I buy a new car, I mean that's the American way, right?

Richard Campbell: Absolutely. You know, there's another element to this and certainly I'm battling this as someone in the business of cultivating new people into this industry that we don't care about cars anymore because we've always had them. We are the natives of the car world. We've always had a car.

Greg Hughes: They're a kind of commodity, yeah.

Richard Campbell: They are a commodity item and I feel that the kids that are coming out of school today feel the same way about computers. They are natives. They've never known a time that they didn't have a personal computer and we all are immigrants. We remember the time before the computer and I think it's one of the reasons we're so enthusiastic about this industry.

Buck Woody: Well, in my day we didn't have fancy computers.

[Laughter]

Richard Campbell: Oh man.

Buck Woody: There's an old bird that shipped out the message on stone and flew it over to the other computer. Yeah, I agree with that. The people are looking at computers more as a utility. So then does it become more incumbent on the software developers, like Microsoft and Oracle and Google and all the rest, to hide that and is that what's happening with Cloud? In other words, if I need a database now, should I even buy a database platform and hire a DBA and do design work? Shouldn't I just go up to Microsoft and say I need a database. I mean we have such an offering and so does Amazon and Google and a few others. Is it that the way we're going to go or are we going to go through utility computing to get rid of generalists and specialists and just go to a use-based society?

Richard Campbell: Hasn't SQL Server hid this way for a long time? Haven't we seen with SQL Server less and less need to tune and tweak and so much care and feeding happens automatically, it allocates its disk when it needs it, it process its transactional log when it needs it...

Buck Woody: Absolutely.

Richard Campbell: You write some query plans optimally like...

Buck Woody: Yeah. As a best guess you can certainly do on this kind of thing but as I mentioned at the top of the discussion, what we end up with is that works for a long time until it matters and when it matters there's a cliff that it falls off and people say, well, the product isn't performing well, ergo, it's the product and then you go all the way back to the design. If you try to create database foo and you hit enter and you press F5, your created database with all the base settings that you need to do, that's not possible in a lot of the platforms, and in the other platforms you have to say "on which drive, at which growth interval" and so on. Because you have to do it "right" on those other systems you get a better design from the outside, but with the Microsoft product you get something up and running right then, right there and you're fine because Microsoft has made the best guess about the query plan and all the drive layout and all the rest but at some point that hits the wall because of the design. So I think that what you're talking about is both a blessing and a curse. When you're a generalist, you're able -- and this is terrible to say, but you're able to do it wrong.

Greg Hughes: Well, for 80% or 90% of the use cases, you know, just creating a generic database and just starting to work, we can do that, we'll work just fine and we'll never fall off a cliff. It's that 10% where it does fall off, or the one-half of 1% where if you don't really do super design upfront then it's going to fall off the cliff right away for you.

Buck Woody: Yeah, exactly.

Greg Hughes: It's a trade off, right? If we make it easier to use in a commodity type of interface that the average user can read, skim through a chapter in a book and then just forget about it, then that's going to sell software. It's going to enable people to use it. They may not be able to use it otherwise it's going to enable to do things in business and it's going to allow, I mean it's almost super generalization in the Cloud in doing these things. We're enabling everybody to be "a generalist."

Buck Woody: There you go.

Greg Hughes: It's almost another layer to the equation.

Richard Campbell: You know, what worries me about the Cloud approach is that I feel like, and I have

no evidence of this yet, I feel like we're setting ourselves up for the big lie, the big lie being "don't worry, it'll scale. Don't worry, it will perform. "

Buck Woody: Yeah. There's always that question. You know, we're seeing the adaption rate in Cloud and not just in Microsoft but I've done numbers on Amazon and a few of the other Cloud offerings as well. Where we're seeing uptake is actually not at the big companies that need that kind of scale, at least scale up.

Greg Hughes: Right.

Buck Woody: It's in the smaller companies where there is no IT talent. There was a firm that I read about the other day in New York City that wanted to do some interesting things about music, sort of a mash up of the way they were handling music. It had to do with kind of an iTunes play but a little different, a little different flair. They looked, they parted it out and they look at getting an IT crew in there to write down the application and the storage on. So it will be like $140,000 for them to get the project up and running in about six months which is, you know, that's fair for a large IT project. They thought about it, they contacted a cloud vendor and they said, "How long will it take you to do that?" And the next week, they were up and running and were profitable within a month. Now, that's an aberration, right? Not everyone that gets some hare brain idea is going to be able to use the Cloud and make a million dollars, but the point is they no longer cared about IT. It literally went away and they're a small outfit, meaning you're just a few guys there and the storage isn't super huge and so on, so I guess I pushed back on that question and say, "Is the scale even needed? Will there be a mix? Will there be a Cloud in the building that you control, that you scale." I mean when you say Cloud, I mean that's such a loaded term anyway...

Richard Campbell: Yeah.

Buck Woody: But you control that there in your building but then this literal Cloud out in the cloud becomes something that a small business just say, "Look, I just want mail, give me some mail." "Here you go, here's your mail." "Okay, I need word processing." "Okay, here's your word processing." So then, what does the computer look like on that desktop? Is it just a web browser? Is it a network appliance? Is it a full PC? I mean those are the kinds of questions we run into there, and who maintains those? Do they just become like a phone appliance, the just call the local AT&T store and say, "Hey, bring me out a new terminal?" Is that the way that works?

Richard Campbell: Not this week, but you know this is exactly the same argument we just had about SQL Server 2.0 which is in 90% or 99% of the cases, the base configuration is sufficient.

Buck Woody: Yeah.

Richard Campbell: I mean I can even argue a further step. The attempts to tune before implementation usually impair the implementation.

Greg Hughes: Yeah, right.

Buck Woody: It can, it very much can, yup.

Richard Campbell: The same thing with Cloud Computing. It's not going to matter until it matters.

Buck Woody: That's a good point.

Greg Hughes: There's always been a need for commodity software or commodity platforms and a one size fits all approach to computing and that's going to continue to be that way but that doesn't mean that that's all there is. We don't have to just have generalist types of platform, generalist types of people. There will always be a need in certain areas for specializing and for custom platforms and for building something from scratch that works really, really well for a specific application.

Buck Woody: Yeah, I agree with that and that brings us back around to a discussion of us. So, you know, we're talking about how other people will use software, we don't use software, we make software work in our career fields. So where do we fit in, in all this and the question comes back around the generalist versus specialist, and I'm wondering now if it's not an argument of generalist versus the specialist but perhaps generalization and specialization, I mean we spend a little while as a generalist, do a deep dive on a topic that you like for maybe a year or two at the most, then you pop back up for air as a generalist for a bit and then dive down into another specialty or the same one again. Is that a better approach, and if so where do you start? So you start as a specialist or do you start as a generalist? Which is best?

Richard Campbell: I always think you need to know -- is there anybody who can really survive as an IT Pro without some core knowledge around networking and core knowledge around the network infrastructure of your company, where are the different tiers of your applications because these are just fundamental bits of knowledge. Is this not the starting point? Because if you don't know the map, who cares how good you are getting to the destinations?

Buck Woody: Yeah, I guess that's true although I know a lot of DBAs, I'm working with a guy right now who is struggling with aliases and it's a

firewall, it has to do with the SQL Server browser service that parses out where you need to go to the right instance base on a certain port and TCP/IP. Its port is being block and so when he uses an alias, it fixes. I mean you can basically think DNS, right?

Greg Hughes: Sure.

Buck Woody: But he is really confused about why that's working. I mean he's got the fix but he is hang-up on why that's working and it's because of this dearth of knowledge of networking maybe, you know, a long time ago one of the things on many of my cert tests used to be you have to compute a subnet.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Buck Woody: I don't know a lot of DBAs today that can compute a subnet.

Richard Campbell: But there's a big difference between knowing and -- you know, when you get a good IPv6, all of a sudden that stuff goes out that window anyway.

Buck Woody: Yeah, that's true.

Richard Campbell: But I think you should know how to do that. Knowing how to configure a BGP router? Different ball of wax!

Buck Woody: Absolutely and you believe that that's important in every discipline in IT.

Greg Hughes: If you have a 10, 20 person IT department for a small corporation, for example, not everybody needs to know how to do BGP but if you take the one extreme which is kind of the classic semi pass of the aggressive kind of extreme of IT which is "This is my specialty area. I know the phone system, I know router," and that kind of thing, "I'm not going to teach anybody else because I'm 'protecting my job'."

Buck Woody: Yeah, right.

Greg Hughes: You know, "I'm going to make myself valuable to the company by being so specialized and being the only person that can do this, they could never afford to let me go." We've seen that before.

Richard Campbell: That worked that well for the dinosaurs.

Buck Woody: Yeah, it did. I was just getting ready, I pushed back so hard on that because I never want, I never want -- every place I go, the first thing I do is I start sharing. I put all my scripts up, I talk to people, I give briefings, I mean I'm talking internal, I've done it everywhere from my first jobs all the way to here at Microsoft and I have never one time lost a promotion, a job, or any goodwill by sharing and I've run into people you're talking about, just tons at time, little fiefdoms.

Greg Hughes: If anything, you've probably got the job or the promotion or the move that something that you enjoyed even more because you did that kind of thing.

Buck Woody: Yeah, yeah, little knowledge fiefdoms are silly and they're insecure. The other thing is I found that when you do that, you become such a specialist and you become so insulated that the business starts losing the vision for why you're valuable and if I could tell anybody what's the best career advice for an IT person, in my mind it's learn the business.

Greg Hughes: Exactly.

Buck Woody: Learn what your business does and care about it. If you walked up to your boss and say, "Hey, I noticed in the Wall Street Journal yesterday that we lost some shares because of this particular thing. You know, I think there's a particular piece of technology that may soar us up in that area," but when that person got the it off the ground, you know, having seen it after what you've said, it probably mark your right to the manager's office and say this person has an idea, let's talk it through, and you're instantly in the different stratosphere than you were before.

Greg Hughes: Ultimately, it's not the technology that solved the problem. It's people.

Buck Woody: That's right, that's right.

Greg Hughes: People can create problems and people can solve problems.

Buck Woody: Yeah, it's not the tools.

Greg Hughes: There's just a lot of choice that goes into that.

Buck Woody: Absolutely and I found that people that are generalist, by the way is another aside, tend to be less religious about their technology.

Greg Hughes: Right.

Buck Woody: Microsoft is pretty unreligious. We don't have really this idea of don't use anybody else, just use us. Now we know we have a large market share so we can do that, but the point is that I've usually seen more Apple and Oracle bigotry towards Microsoft than the other way around. In fact, at Microsoft most people carry an iPhone or have an

iPod. I have a Mac on my desk. We're the second largest shop in the world, that's the last metric I heard. We're the second largest Mac development shop in the world behind Apple. We have more Mac developers than anybody except Apple. The point is, I found people who are more generalist and you could certainly argue that Microsoft is a generalist company since we do sort of everything, that they're less bigoted about a particular solution. It's just a tool, it's just a tool.

Greg Hughes: Well, we have a tendency in the world that they, I think, could be very bipolar about things. You know, you're either a Mac or a PC or switch.

Buck Woody: Right.

Greg Hughes: You know, which are you, choose one or the other. Hey, I'm both. I use both, I use both all the time, I use them for different things.

Buck Woody: Exactly and I was very pleased to see that when I got to Microsoft, they don't -- as a matter of fact, it was funny. When I started in the SQL Server group, I was writing SQL Server 2008, I used to ride the bus to work there in Redmond and I had an iPod that I had won at OracleWorld so I had a very big Oracle logo at the back of an iPod and I work at Microsoft SQL Server so I just thought that was kind of ironic.

Richard Campbell: All right, guys, we're coming down towards the end of this thing and I think we're all in violent agreement about career direction here that you need generalist's skills but then it is in your best interest to also have a specialist's skill. I want to throw another twist to this too. Ted Neward said this ages ago on .NET Rocks! Professional developer is someone who picks up and tries out a new language every year. Is there an IT equivalent of that?

Greg Hughes: Microsoft facilitates that, don't they? I mean isn't that part of their culture? It's that people, they're going to do one job, they'll be focused on one area for a while, but don't they sort of hand you off for this almost expectation that you will migrate on to something a little bit different?

Buck Woody: Oh yeah, absolutely. There are many teams there at Microsoft obviously but if you're in a production team like I was, you're expected to ship your product. So you're going to have at least whatever cycle, Microsoft SQL Server is on a three-year cycle right now, so if you come into the group they kind of expect you to ship that product. It's bad form to leave before then but after then there's always what we call the great shake up, everybody always disappears to the four corners of the wind. Since there's a lot of standardization as you can imagine, it's okay -- people can pick up somebody else's code and move on. It's done in a very standard way but the -- yeah, you're absolutely expected. I've had three jobs at Microsoft in the three years I've worked there.

Greg Hughes: And from a culture standpoint, I mean I think Microsoft understands the value of the type of people that they employ are the kind of people that will get -- they're really smart and very bright people, they'll get bored if they have to focus on the same thing year after year after year after year. You can get run through one big cycle and run it off.

Buck Woody: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely and that's true in a lot of companies and not just Microsoft. I mean I worked at -- well, some of the best jobs I ever had been as a generalist. You know, having to grab, you'll never knew that day what you're going to be working on. That excites some people. Other people are horrified by that. They'd really like to know, when they come in, in the morning, what crises are they going to face and I think for those people, if you're that kind of person, you kind of lean towards specialist but it can be a trap. I think that you should pop up every once in a while and make sure your specialty is still relevant in the general scheme of things. You can be so concerned about indexes and performance tuning that you don't pop up and realize something like automatic engine could take care of this for you and you see the writing on the wall or to go to Cloud and you better become somebody who knows how to point your company towards solutions rather than just technology.

Richard Campbell: Yeah, you definitely make a point there which is you're busy tuning a database that nobody is using anymore.

Buck Woody: Yeah, that's a very good point. Yeah, you don't want to end up with your career having to retire because all you knew how to fix were big, ugly printers.

Greg Hughes: Oh boy. All right, so hey, let's do something different. Are you ready? So IT generalists or IT specialists, vote. Ready, go.

Buck Woody: I go generalist.

Richard Campbell: Yeah, me too.

Greg Hughes: Yeah, I'm a little bit of both.

Buck Woody: If I am to pick, and again the reason why is I would say that generalists are stable. Same with DBA at heart and DBAs are naturally paranoid. You can always tell a DBA because when they walk into a room, they look for the exit. I go for stability over deep pay. You paid a lot more to be a

specialist. I mean if you're going to know all the internals of the SQL Server engine and you can come in and find out the bit map layout of the index on the gum and all these cool technical terms, they're going, "Wow, he's smart, he can make us go", and they'll give you money but you'll always have a job if you say, "Well, I can get that database up and running and I can set up your mail server."

Richard Campbell: Yeah and you made another point here which if I want to put my own spin on it, it's nowhere that company makes money and it's almost never you. If you actually know where the company actually makes its living from and you support that, then you're beneficial. When you're not doing work that actually helps the company make money, you're pretty much expendable.

Greg Hughes: Right. My view, in a down economy especially, is that generalists tend to be very, very valuable in place. Not a generalist in everything but you have several generalists that overlap each other so you have some good redundancy, and that the real specialists are great specialists are great consultants.

Buck Woody: Yeah, that's a good point. If you do get fired and you're a specialist, start consulting. So then are you saying, and I'm going to put words in your mouth because I don't want to say this, are you saying that if there's cockroaches of the IT world, they're going to survive the nuclear holocaust?

Greg Hughes: There's no guarantee that you're going to survive the holocaust. I guess somebody could come around and step on you...

Buck Woody: Yeah, yeah.

Greg Hughes: But if what you have is only radiation, then maybe that's it.

Buck Woody: So you heard it here first, folks. Runas Radio says you're a cockroach.

Richard Campbell: Nice, thanks for that thought…

Buck Woody: You know I'm always good for a kind word.

Greg Hughes: Oh boy.

Richard Campbell: Maybe we shouldn't talk about SQL CMS.

Buck Woody: Yeah, maybe we should. Maybe we should switch over that topic now. There are no cockroaches in that.

Greg Hughes: Well, I think this is a topic fraught with opinions and so I think the listeners, if you have any opinions, be sure to let us know. We'll be interested to hear what you think about this too.

Richard Campbell: You bet. Send us an email, info@runasradio.com. Gentlemen, I think we'll call out the show.

Greg Hughes: That was a great conversation.

Buck Woody: All right, thanks guys for letting me come on.

Greg Hughes: Thanks for being there.

Richard Campbell: And we'll talk to you next week on RunAs Radio.