

Bob Carroll Con't

Pets: Tobi the dog (Tobi is short for Etobicoke.); Timmy the hamster (Timmy is just short.).

Family: Wife, Charlotte; son, John, 12; and daughter, Emily, 10.

Sports/Hobbies: Bicycling and swimming. (My kids play LOTS of hockey and soccer and....)

Your ideal weekend would be: SUMMER: watching the kids play soccer. WINTER: watching the kids play hockey. (Can there be any other answers?)

Favourite Foods: Barbeque (with barbequed Fritos for dessert).

If I could be anything at all (besides a SAS programmer), I would be teaching database marketing.

When I'm not programming in SAS, I like to play the guitar and read popular fiction.

One thing every SAS programmer should know:

The SAS/STAT training courses are a great way to get ready to move back into academia. Make liberal use of semicolons. Read your log.

Thoughts from a veteran SAS manager:

1. "Data warehouses allow you to answer questions that were previously unanswerable."

This creates an interesting challenge: How do you know the answers are right? There is no substitute for an experienced management layer with an affinity for, and familiarity with, the metrics of the businesses that the warehouse purports to describe. I was lucky enough to work with an experienced group of SAS users. I often paired them with experienced business people to ensure high-quality answers.

2. "The right question is as important as the right answer."

We spent a fair bit of time ensuring that the questions were correctly specified and well-understood (including limitations of available data and the conditions under which the answer would be valid). An hour or two spent clarifying the question (usually with fairly senior business users) could save weeks in analysis and re-work.

3. "Complexity is the enemy."

We relied extensively on SAS tools but rarely bought new tools or suites (from anyone). Using a small number of tools keeps costs down two ways: It reduces the pure cost of ownership and reduces training costs. It also results in a pool of people skilled in a common tool, greatly increasing management flexibility.

4. "Data quality is fundamental."

We invested heavily in data quality and completeness. A warehouse with answers you don't trust can be worse than no warehouse at all!