



BBBT Podcast Transcript



About the BBT

The Boulder Business Intelligence Brain Trust, or BBT, was founded in 2006 by Claudia Imhoff. Its mission is to leverage business intelligence for industry vendors, for its members, who are independent analysts and experts, and for its subscribers, who are practitioners. To accomplish this mission, the BBT provides a variety of services, centered around vendor presentations.

For more, see: www.bbbt.us.

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Claudia Imhoff: Hello, and welcome to this edition of the Boulder BI Brain Trust, or the BBBT. We're a gathering of international consultants, analysts, and experts in business intelligence, who meet with interesting and innovative BI companies here in beautiful Boulder, Colorado. We not only get briefed on the latest news and releases, but we share our ideas with the vendor on where the BI industry is going, and help them with their technological directions and marketing messages. I'm Claudia Imhoff and the BBBT podcasts are produced by my company, Intelligent Solutions.

I am pleased to introduce my guests today. They are Paul Ross and Bob Laurent. Paul is the Vice President for Product and Industry Marketing, and Bob is the Director of Industry Marketing for Alteryx. Welcome to you both.

Paul Ross: Thank you Claudia.

CI: Paul, let me start with you. You started off this session this morning saying that Alteryx does two things, data blending and advanced analytics. You have this really strong laser focus, almost, on the line of business analysts and the business decision makers. Why did you do that?

PR: Claudia, I think it's really interesting when you look at it. There's obviously a lot of different business intelligence and analytical capabilities out there, but when we look at the line of business analyst, the financial analyst, the sales analyst, we feel that they've been very underserved until now.

They've been asked to address very complex business questions involving lots of data from lots of different sources, but they really aren't helped in that. The tools that they've had available to them are very cumbersome, or they've had to rely upon other people. It's been a slow laborious process for them to get the data they need and then do the analytics.

We've seen it as an opportunity to serve that analyst very effectively in doing their job, doing the workflow that they need to blend the data set that they are looking for, and then do the advanced analytics, address those complex business questions, in a way that it just hasn't been done before and really isn't served by the traditional model.



We've a great focus on there and, obviously, we're also focused on who they serve. The VP of marketing, the VP of customer insight, those are the two audiences that we're really focusing on.

CI: Ultimately, it's the information producers on the business side and, then, it's the information consumers in the terms of the decision makers and so forth.

PR: It's an interesting way of doing that. I think that's been a traditional way that people have looked at it. We see these analysts as change agents within organizations as well. It's not just that they're producing reports.

CI: Right. They are analysts.

PR: They are. They're really making a difference to those big questions, and they definitely want to be empowered in that. That's what we're all about.

CI: Bob, let me bring you into the conversation. How do you support these business analysts?

Bob Laurent: When we think about it, just continuing what Paul was saying, we really think of the way we serve the data analyst, the business analyst, in basically three specific ways. We start with data blending, we're able to allow them to bring together all of the different data sources that they have, that they're trying to get insight from. Unstructured or structured data, it could be traditional data sources, new data sources like social media, like some of the user device generated data. All the different data sources they're trying to get access to. We allow them to easily blend that data together, without having to involve an IT organization to accomplish that.

The next step is, we allow them to do some of the advanced analytics, things like spatial analytics, predictive analytics, things of those types of processes. We allow them to do those things in the same workflow so they can follow their data, from the point where it comes into the product, all the way through, all the analytic processes and, then, output in a variety of different formats. It could be written back to a data warehouse. It could be output in a Tableau data file format so that a Tableau user can then do their own data discovery on the data, or it could be output in a variety of different reports, charts, graphs, things like that.



CI: Let me get a definition from you, because I'm not sure everybody understands what data blending is. If you don't mind just a quick thumbnail, what do you mean by data blending?

BL: Data blending is the process by which you take a lot of disparate data sources. In some cases, it could be very technical data coming from cell phones, for example, or set top boxes, and blending that together with some of the more traditional data sources, like demographics, segmentation data, things like that. Being able to take what was very disparate data sources, and then create an analytic data set that's ready for predictive analytics or spatial analytics.

PR: I think it's a really good way that Bob described that. The thing I would add to that is it's also focused on the analyst user. Traditionally, integrating data would be done by a specialist using an ETL tool of some sort, it's an Extraction Transformation Loading tool, something like Informatica.

The analyst is someone who wants to get together the specific analytical data set that's necessary for the analytics that they're doing. That's why we talk about data blending rather than just ETL. It's about adding value, doing transformations on that data, as an analyst, not having to use some kind of specialist as the ETL tool for it. That would be the additional thought I would have on that definitional part of it.

CI: It can be persistent, certainly, but it's almost as if it could be temporary. I just want to bring this data together, take a look at it, do some analysis on, and move on. Even I will admit, it takes way too long to put that kind of one off capability into a data warehouse type of environment. At least that's the way I would interpret it.

PR: I definitely see that there are times when it's going to be like that, the kind of ad hoc...

CI: Not always.

PR: I need to understand what's happening here. Tell me why we're losing sales and what's the drivers for that or attributes to driving that. That could be a good one off question that is being addressed. I think you're absolutely right to compare that against the classic kind of building a data warehouse



of data mart ETL tools. We're not about that. We're not about providing the systems of record to be filled out at completion.

But what we are able to allow that to be instantiated over time. It doesn't have to go away very quickly. Yeah, I agree with you, the one use question is, certainly, that ad hoc question that needs to be addressed now, versus having it built into a BI dashboard or something.

CI: All right, Bob, back to you. You gave us a whole bunch of really interesting case studies. Why don't we talk about one of them for the audience?

BL: Sure, one of the ones that I think is really interesting is the Time Warner Cable Media use case. They're a good example of a company that wants to get a much better handle on what their subscribers are watching, so that they can influence things like ad pricing, and influence things like what offerings they're going to make from a pay per view event.

The traditional way you would look at viewership, might be through a subscription to a polling service that would only look at a very small subset of your subscriber base. What they decided to do, a number of years ago, is pull in data from their set top boxes.

Here's a very good example of a very technical data source, that's then combined with some of the more traditional data sources, like demographics and segmentation data, to then make some decisions on what ads they would place for some of their pay per view content. Maybe looking at some of the subscribers for that in the past, and who's purchased pay per view events, to then decide, "These are the shows, these are the times within those shows that we should be placing ads for pay per view." Then look at the correlation between who actually viewed the commercial, and then who subscribed and watched the pay per view event.

CI: Yeah.

BL: The other piece that's interesting is, it also influences and helps them with their local advertising. An advertiser can come to them, say a car dealership, they may not be familiar with who's in a 20 minute drive time within their dealership. In the past, they would have to spend two weeks



going off and trying to put together a customized media proposal for the dealership.

Now, within a single meeting, they can not only give a very accurate depiction of the demographics that surround the dealership, but then what those people are watching, and give them a proposal, on the fly, of what shows they should be advertising in.

CI: Excellent. All right, Paul, back to you. You spent a fair amount of time talking about the partnerships that you have, and you have quite a remarkable partnership community, no doubt about it, but two stood out. One is Tableau. The other one is Revolution Analytics. Tell me about these and what these partnerships mean to your customers.

PR: These are great examples of customer driven partnerships. What we've heard, in a lot of cases, was that there were a lot of people who were using Tableau, in the same environments that they were using Alteryx. What they wanted to do is take advantage of the Alteryx's advanced data blending capabilities, to build the data set that they were delivering into Tableau, because they were spending too much time doing that very manually.

Then, the other part of it was to add some of the advanced analytics, like customer segmentation modeling, into the Tableau data set that they were then visualizing and using in that fantastic environment that they have for data discovery.

This a very strong customer driven environment, and we see Alteryx customers adopting Tableau, and Tableau customers adopting Alteryx, because, again there's often that same business analyst in sales, in marketing, in finance, who are using the two products, and they're just looking to have that complete capability that's there.

Another thing, we can output to lots of different formats, reports, analytical applications. Tableau has certainly been a popular one that we've integrated directly in the products, where we can actually output to the Tableau file format.

You also mentioned Revolution Analytics. That's a reflection of our commitment to the R language, as part of our base predictive capabilities.



We've taken R, and we've built drag and drop tools on top of that, for the 30+ most common advanced analytics or predictive analytics use cases. What Revolution allows us to do is, actually, to scale that usage to Enterprise scale, millions upon millions of rows of data that Revolution can help us scale the R predictive analytics. Another really important one for those customers, who are doing very large scale customer predictive segmentation modeling, those types of advanced analytics, the Revolution partnership really helps with that.

CI: Your company is, also, incredibly transparent. I'm actually a little bit surprised, but you actually post your pricing scheme on your website.

PR: It's interesting you bring up the transparency of the company, because we have incredible relationships with our customers. We have an amazing net promoter score. We have relationships with customers that go back many many years, in some cases. The reason for that is that transparency and that engagement that we have with them.

When it comes to pricing, we don't want to make these things opaque. We don't want to make it so that the customer has to work out and drill with a sales person about what's going on. We just want it there, front and center, so they can remove the friction from their thinking. That's what it's all really about, is having that relationship of our clients, which is open and honest. It's really paid off for us and for our clients.

CI: It's refreshing. We've got about a few minutes left, and I think we have two important questions coming up.

We talked a lot about the rise of the new analytics stack. In fact, that was a pretty hefty little discussion. We all agree, it's a very disruptive time, right now, for the traditional stacks, if you will the traditional vendors. It's a disruptive time for customers, trying to understand, "How do these new technologies fit in? Does it replace my warehouse? Is it something that augments it?" How do you handle these conversations? What do you say to your customers?

PR: The word disruptive is very interesting, because I think that there is some pain there, that we see in clients, as they try and work out how to navigate all these new aspects, to what's been brought into their environments. But



where, for me, it's important is, we want to be able to bridge those two worlds.

We talked a lot about being able to access data from those more traditional data sources, alongside some of these new ones. We see clients who are... Bob gave that great example earlier, of bringing together set top box analytics, very new machine driven data that's being stored in new ways, like Cadup, et cetera. We want to be able to bring that together with the rest of the data an analyst needs to make their decisions.

We don't even really think about it as a gap. We think about the best ways to bring those things together and allow people to do it. Where we want to disrupt is, we want to disrupt the legacy thinking in analytics, where it requires multiple tools, multiple stacks, in terms of scripting, from the traditional advanced analytics vendors, that we think just can't deal with this new world in the way that we can.

CI: Bob, the last question goes to you. What does the future hold for Alteryx?

BL: We have a new release that's coming out in April. It's going to have a lot of new components. As Paul mentioned earlier, the partnership with Revolution is going to be a key part of release 9. We're, also, going to have a number of new features that we're going to be excited to bring to our customers, in April.

CI: Excellent, it sounds like a pretty exciting version. Unfortunately, we're out of time, so that's it for this edition of the BBBT Podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been fun. It's been a great pleasure, speaking with Paul Ross and Bob Laurent, of Alteryx. Thanks to both of you for speaking with me.

BL: Thank you very much.

PR: Thanks, Claudia.

CI: I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. You'll find more podcasts from other vendors at our web site. That's www.bbbt.us. If you want to learn more about today's session, please search for our hash tag on Twitter. That's #BBBT. And please join me again for another interview. Good bye and good business!