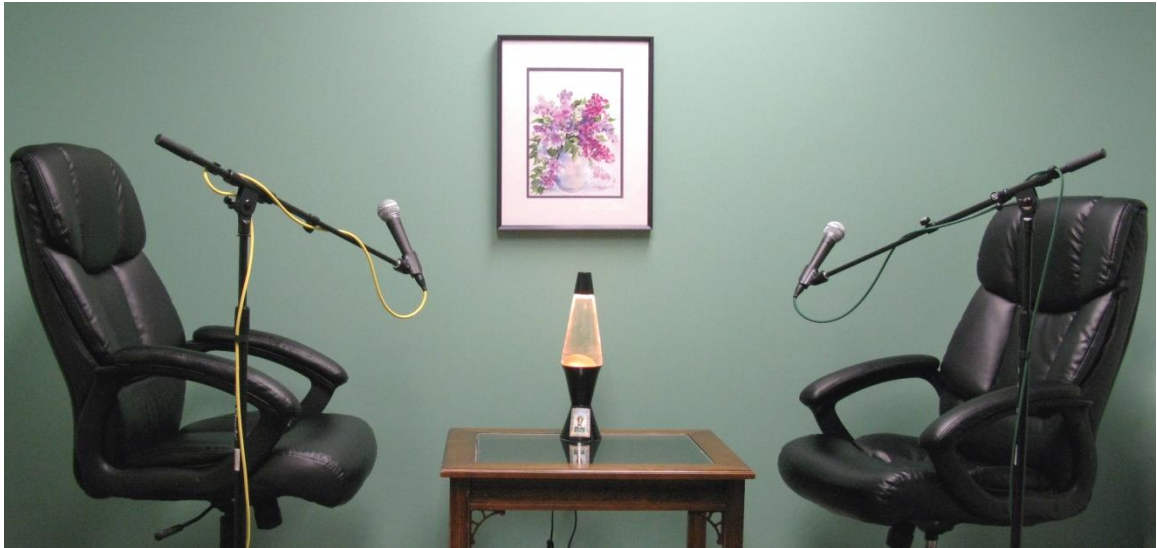# BBBT Podcast Transcript

About the BBBT

The Boulder Business Intelligence Brain Trust, or BBBT, 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 BBBT provides a variety of services, centered around vendor presentations.

For more, see: www.bbbt.us.

Vendor:	**QlikView Expressor**
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Host:	**Claudia Imhoff**, President, BBBT
Guest(s):	**Donald Farmer**, Vice President of Product Management
	Bill Kehoe, Product Manager
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Transcript:	[See next page]

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'm pleased to introduce my guests today. They are Donald Farmer and Bill Kehoe. Donald is the Vice President of Product Management and Bill is the Product Manager for Qlik. Welcome to you both.

Bill Kehoe: Hi, Claudia. It's great to be here.

Donald Farmer: Hi, Claudia.

CI: Alright Donald, let's start with you. Qlik acquired Expressor in 2012. Why? What did it add to the Qlik bag of solutions here?

DF: We've been known for many years as a self-service business intelligence company. We had business users developing their own solutions. That was a very popular scenario. But at some point, once those solutions grow to a certain degree of either importance in the enterprise, they become mission critical or they have large volumes of data or thousands of applications, then you need to really manage the backend of that system.

How does the data specifically get into those solutions? How is it governed? How do you know the metadata's consistent? Expressor had a great solution for that.

On top of which, they were in Boston, which is right down the road, which is an important part of our development center and an important part of our marketing organization. It was a very natural decision.

CI: Let me stay with you for just a second. We talk about data management a lot. It really helps to get a definition of what does that mean to Qlik? What is data management?

DF: In the Qlik world, data management, we often talk about the new role of IT that they're moving from being gatekeepers, try to prevent access and stop people getting into the data. They're moving from gatekeepers to storekeepers, where they're provisioning fresh, healthy, delicious produce for the business users to consume.

For us, data management is about that. It's about how does IT create good quality, effective data sources that business users can easily consume on their own terms. Then, of course, how can you govern that entire process of delivery and consumption?

CI: Bill, let me bring you into the conversation. Tell me a little bit about the integration of Qlik with Expressor. A bit of an overview of how integrated is it? What are some of the architectural features there?

BK: The integration is at several levels. First of all, one of the more exciting parts of it and really distinguishes it from anything else like it is the fact that we are able to harvest the metadata that exists already in your existing QlikView applications.

We can read in and load all the information that's already available in your QlikView application files, as well as your QlikView data files, to understand the natural shape of the applications that are already out in your environment.

That's the level one. Of course, level two is the ability for Expressor to be able to read and write the native data file's formats within QlikView, which is, of course, a necessity if you're trying to use QlikView as one part of a phase, a stage of moving data into QlikView.

CI: In terms of integration then, is it still a standalone product?

BK: Yeah, it is a standalone product and that's because Qlik has a very broad customer profile. The product is really a power tool for customers that have lots of applications that need to organize and govern their data sets.

For that reason, we offer, actually, three different packagings. The first is a free offering that provides all the ability to create your integrations and actually stage data into your QlikView applications. The point in which you

have to purchase a license is when you want to automate the execution of your QlikView Expressor projects to feed data into operational applications.

There are two license levels. A standard license and an enterprise license edition for those paid licenses.

CI: Donald, back to you then. Let's talk a little bit about the benefits of bringing Expressor into Qlik. It seems like there are two big audiences that are going to benefit from this. Of course, as you mentioned, you started out with the business when the Qlik environment grows to a certain level that's when Expressor is really needed. That's going to make IT happy, I'm assuming.

What are the benefits to these two big audiences, the business versus IT?

DF: The key benefit to the business user is that they can now get their hands on data which is correctly provisioned by IT. Business users, in general, aren't motivated to do bad things. They often do bad things and they work around restrictions. If those restrictions aren't in place, if IT is actually provisioning their data proactively, then business users are happy to have good quality, sanctioned data that they can use.

Expressor enables them to do that. Expressor enables IT to deliver the kind of good quality data that business users want. Equally, IT gets the benefit of what we call a "descriptive meta data model" as opposed to a "prescriptive model". Prescriptive model, which is where IT would define in advance. These are the only semantics you're allowed to use.

A descriptive model goes out and says, "This is what business users are really doing. Let's import that into the application and give an overview of it so we can understand the real world usage, if you like." IT gets a much more realistic view of what's going on in a business, and a business gets good quality sanctioned data that they can consume.

CI: Let me stay with you for just a second. Can the business still do their things, so to speak, outside of Expressor though?

DF: This is a great thing. Business users, if they do have data sources, which they need to use, if they do have their own thing they want to do, they can still

do that but IT can still have an overview of it, because they can scan in those applications and understand exactly what's going on.

They may find the business users using some unsanctioned source and say, "OK, we've got to take that sourse, and sanction it, and create a version of it."

CI: Or leave it unsanctioned if it's not in a critical report. OK, fine, go do your thing. As soon as it does end up in a compliance report or something, then that's when IT has to step in and say, "No, no, no."

DF: Sure. A good example would be Web data. If they discover that a user's out there on the Web, scraping some statistics off a website and using that in a report, IT could look at that and say, "Well, it's only a one off. We'll just let them do it." Or they could say, "They're using this in a mission critical report. We should actually go out and find the data feed that's behind those statistics, bring it into our organization, use Expressor to deliver that to the business user and now the business user can consume it as a sanctioned data source."

CI: Back to your analogy, IT can be the shopkeeper.

DF: Exactly, they can be the shopkeeper.

CI: The business user can grow their own vegetables.

DF: That's true, too.

CI: That's it for that analogy. Bill, let me go back to you, then.

A lot of questions this morning about the governance capabilities, the governance functions. Let's talk about that in detail a little bit more. First of all, what are some of the governance capabilities that you now bring to the Qlik environment?

BK: The way to look at it is Expressor provides a set of building blocks. Starting from where you access data and cataloging, the nature of that data, the structure of that data, and how it maps into your business model. Then, in the middle, you have all sorts of operators and building blocks that allow you to apply business rules to that data to conform that external data into

a consistent business model that can then be used across either one or multiple applications.

It's really a building block approach. On top of that, we have a separate product, the governance dashboard, which does provide operational statistics into how QlikView applications are being used and the kind of performance that you're seeing in your QlikView environment.

CI: Well let's talk about that because I found that performance dashboard, if you will, absolutely fascinating. Something that was really, I think, a differentiator for Qlik itself. Let's talk about the actual metrics that you capture in this performance dashboard.

BK: What's really exciting about this, and I think it differentiates us quite clearly, is the fact that we have an application. Incidentally, it's a QlikView application. It takes advantage of QlikView's associative search model and the green, white, gray ability to see, not only the related aspects in your environment.

When you select, for example, a particular application, you want to see how many different users were using that session in a particular period of time, you also have the ability to see what users were not using that application in that period of time. That's where the gray part comes in. By having both the operational data, things like how much CPU is being used, how much network IO, operational statistics about your actual servers run in QlikView, you also have all the metadata associated with the applications.

It cuts across both ways. You really get a sense of how effectively and efficiently you are using these applications within a QlikView environment.

CI: The other part of it was the governance piece itself. The ability to...We talked about a dimension product, for example. Where is that being used across the QlikView environment? By the way, are there multiple product dimensions, which is a problem?

BK: As we expand our footprint within a particular customer's scenario, you'll find situations in which a new business unit wants to start building their own applications. Why should they have to start from scratch?

You have an asset base with all these QlikView applications, why not go have an ability to search into that asset base and pick out examples that are already working.

With QlikView's associative model that's embedded as part of the QlikView governance dashboard, you have the ability to put in a keyword search and instantly find out what applications are using that label for any number of artifacts that describe that application.

An example you talked about, we typed in the word "product," as a potential interesting dimension. Immediately we could see all those applications that were using product as a dimension in that application and allowing the user to identify that application and take advantage of the functionality that's already there.

CI: It's nice. It really is. Bill, let's continue down this path. You also mentioned a pretty interesting customer case study. It was Holmes Murphy. Give me an overview of that. Tell the audience what it's about.

BK: Holmes Murphy was a QlikView customer before they purchased Expressor. They've been using QlikView for about four years but they had some other challenges beyond what they've been using QlikView fo,r initially.

They needed a way to deal with a very large variety of data. They are an insurance brokerage firm in the Midwest, and they have to deal with very large variety of data coming from the insurance providers themselves.

They need to look at claims, policy data, and resubmit back reconciliation reports back to those insurance providers as a standard part of their business. The vast variety of the data that they were getting—by the way, which they don't control the format of, they basically have to take the format of the data as it comes from these insurance providers—they needed a solution to be able to map that variety into a consistent, logical business model. QlikView Expressor provided that ability.

CI: It was a pretty darn complex environment. I didn't realize all of this was being done manually, right, to begin with?

BK: Largely manual. I would say that there was some automation in the form of some, a 12,000 line visual basics program that they'd written. There were still many aspects of the error detection and reconciliation process that were fully manual.

It would take a matter of weeks to get through a cycle of getting these exception reports back to the providers. By building out an Expressor data flow, they were able to codify all the exception rules that they were applying manually into automated business rules within the Expressor data flow so that now it's a fully 100 percent automated process.

Now it's a major major reduction of work load on the people who were doing that work in the past.

CI: Did it work? What were the benefits?

BK: For example, for the first time ever they've been able to reconcile over 25 years' worth of claims history data that was in the neighborhood of $300 million worth of claims data down to the individual penny. That's something they had never been able to achieve in the past. They've really been able to reduce errors and improve productivity in that part of the business.

CI: They also had a pretty substantial reduction in personnel. As you mentioned, less people had to get involved in this.

BK: Yeah, I imagine those people have a lot of other things that they can...

CI: That they'd rather be doing.

BK: ...put their mind to. Exactly.

CI: It was a very good case study. I thought it was quite good.

Donald, back to you. A different question for you. Qlik has had a lot of pretty important partnerships with ETL vendors in the past. What's going to happen to those partnerships as you integrate Expressor into the Qlik family?

DF: We still have those partnerships. We have great partnerships with Informatica, Paxata, and Ulterix, and quite of few of the smaller ETL and data vendors, and the large ones, as well.

Those continue. They continue for a couple of reasons. The first is that, very often, customers already have those products. They already an enterprise ETL infrastructure. Or, they have an enterprise infrastructure that requires ETL which is not solely targeted at Qlik. In other words, they may need to source from many different destinations. They may need to load all sorts of products now. Obviously, I would say they're crazy to have anything else except Qlik in their organization but there are crazy people out there.

They need a solution which is going to integrate across many other products, not just in the Qlik environment. That's a great environment for companies like Informatica to be involved, Paxata, and Ulterix, as I say.

Actually, in some ways, we focus Expressor very much on the governance of the Qlik ecosystem. That's the important part of this.

Many companies have other ecosystems that they also have to manage.

CI: Exactly and you also have to be able to understand who's using your technology. How they're using it? When they're using it? What kinds of data problems are they going to be running into? That, quite honestly, is not something that Informatica, for example, would be able to do anyway.

DF: Absolutely. We work in a very complementary way there. We can absolutely pick up, if you like, where their process ends.

CI: Yeah, exactly.

Bill, last question to you. It's an easy one. You've already talked about your three models. You've got a free offering. You also have one that has a limited usage. Then you basically have an enterprise version of Expressor. What are the costs of these things?

BK: Obviously the free version is free. I should say all three of these are downloadable directly to your system from our QlikView download site.

The free version is pretty much fully functional, in terms of, we don't limit you in which operations you can perform. We don't limit you on the volume of data you perform. The only way we limit you on the free version is preventing you from doing a scheduled reload or scheduled execution of your QlikView Expressor projects or data flows.

The point where you want to make your data flows a part of your automated business processing, that's when we're asking customers to step up and at least come to that standard edition license which is priced at about 50K.

Then, if you really need high volume, high throughput beyond what eight cores of CPU power can deliver on the standard edition license, you purchase the 95K enterprise edition license, which is unlimited core.

If you want to run on a 64 core box, full out, using the full parallel and pipeline, parallel processing capabilities of QlikView Expressor, you have that option available to you.

CI: Excellent. That's a good place to end. That's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been a great pleasure to speak with my good friend, Donald Farmer and my new good friend Bill Kehoe, of Qlik today. Thanks to both of you for speaking with me.

DF: Thank you very much, Claudia.

BK: Thanks, Claudia.

CI: I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. You'll find more podcasts from other vendors at our web site, www.bbbt.us. If you want to read 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!