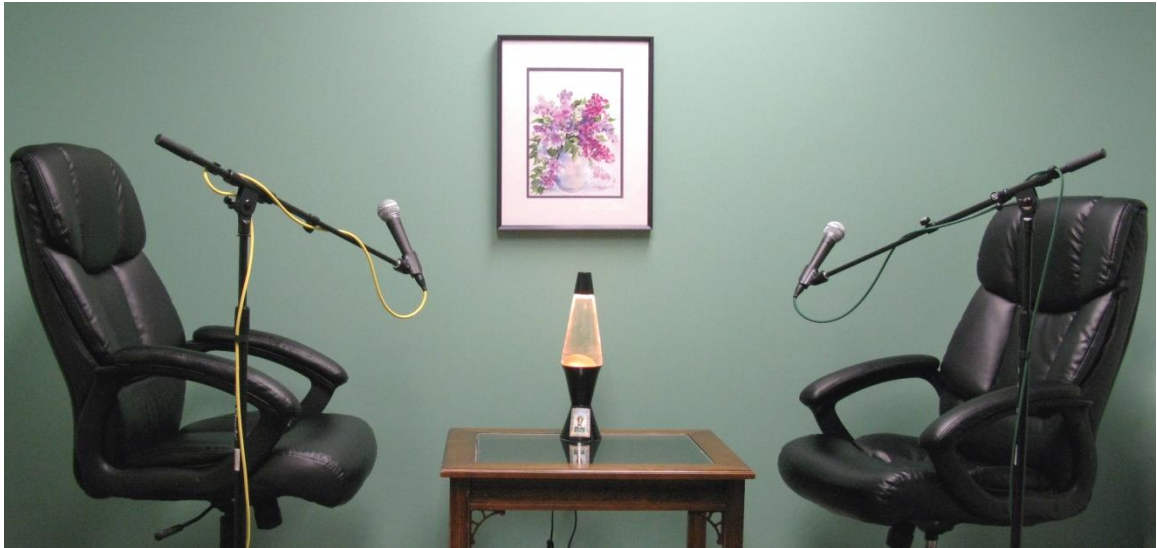# BBBT Podcast Transcript

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.

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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'm pleased to introduce my guest today. He is Jeff Morris. Jeff is the Vice President of Product Marketing for GoodData. Welcome, Jeff.

Jeff Morris: Thanks very much, Claudia. It's great to be here.

CI: Let's start off with a little bit of an overview of GoodData. It's been around since, what, 2007, I guess. It started out as a SaaS BI, grown a lot from then. Tell me what's happened in the last 18 months since we last did a podcast.

JM: Sure. Yes, it's grown quite a bit. I think around the time that we were here last, we were offering up both pre-built applications for organizations as well as really highlighting the strength of our analytic engine and the dashboard delivery capabilities. While we're still really solid in all of that, what we've been working on is the back end of the platform, to build that out.

We announced back in March our Open Analytics platform as a service. In doing so, that actually opens up two things for us. While we're not abandoning at all the application template capability that we've been offering all the way through last year, we sell those to a line of business.

What we're seeing now is we're now able to talk to IT staffs much more effectively as we describe the capabilities of the platform. In doing so, it's opening up more opportunities. It's increasing the data sizes that we're able to deal in and the kinds of business problems that we're able to resolve.

CI: One of the things you did mention is this focus the company now has on the "all data enterprise" -- and I put that in quotes. I want you to explain what it is and why it's important to GoodData.

JM: An all data enterprise is a classification that we have for an organization who wants to really take advantage of every available data source that they happen to have.

What we've noticed is most organizations don't take advantage of their existing data sources. They use somewhere in the area of 10 or 12 percent. That's a shame, in that their analyses could be significantly more productive, and more insightful if they are able to take advantage of what is indeed available to them. We help them become inspired that way.

When we do that, we will take big data, we'll take internal data, we'll take small data like spreadsheets, we'll take Internet of Things data, we'll take public data, social data, et cetera, and help them combine all of that into useful ways so that, if they're an enterprise and looking to perform customer analytics or sales and marketing analytics, they get great insight from that.

If they're a "powered by" customer who is presenting their analytic wares to a downstream to their own customers, they too take advantage of this.

CI: Let's talk about that "powered by" a little bit, because that's going to get into the differentiators that do set you apart from your competitors. It seems like every BI company now is claiming that it's at least got some kind of Cloud offering. You guys are 100-percent Cloud. There is no on-premises offering at all. How do you differentiate your company from these other companies that offer Cloud capabilities?

JM: You're correct in that we are a 100-percent pure Cloud and very much invested in our entire infrastructure, our single-instance deployment of the GoodData service, and it brings us some really, really wonderful kinds of benefits that flow downstream to these all-data enterprises. For example, organizations that are seeking Cloud, Internet-based data itself, we offer over 50 different data connection interfaces to your popular Internet sources, like Salesforce or Marketo, but also data sources like Google Analytics, or many, many custom sources that our customers are seeking to find those insights.

CI: On-premises as well as in the Cloud.

JM: On-premises as well. Keep remembering that on-premises was easy, because that's just JDBC that we're accessing the data from, so reaching in. Of course, we still do that, but Cloud-based data sources are all API-driven. Those Cloud vendors, they have a very, very difficult time offering up information to their customers. They recreate all of those siloed instances of information that existed even on-premises over the last 15 years. That's happening in the Cloud with all of these different SaaS-based applications.

We help bring that all back together in a single location inside the platform, and then give our customers all of the different end-to-end capabilities, from data collection to data storage to combination and data integration, dimensionalized analytics, and then visualization so that the end users really love what they see.

CI: You just answered my next question I was going to ask you about the Open Analytics platform. Let's go into the new parts in a little more detail, though. Let's break it down a little bit. You do have three pretty important components that support data governance, or at least the ability to get at the data, to integrate it and clean it up a little bit, and then pop it into your analytics engines, and so forth.

JM: Yes, absolutely.

CI: Let's talk about those.

JM: On the data-governance side, and this was part of the intention of introducing our offering as a platform itself, was so that the IT folks could get involved and were able to ensure that their needs of bringing true, reliable, good data to their end users was indeed able to happen.

What we did, inside of our environment, we've added capabilities such as our Cloud-Connect offering -- is an OEM of CloverETL.

We've added in staging services for gathering up data in its most raw form. We don't really care whether it's very, very structured or something very, very unusual.

We'll store that and parse that out in whatever technology is appropriate. It could be something very simple, or it could be Hadoop in using MapReduce to take that and provide structure to the information, as we then store it in our data warehouse.

The data warehouse is brand new. That's certainly one of our more interesting both partnerships and technologies that we have adopted. We power our data warehouse with HP's Vertica Columnar database.

We love that because of not only its performance in ingesting information, and then making it very, very quickly available of IQuery, but it also offers a massive scalability which, as I said earlier, the types of opportunities and the types of customer requirements that are coming our way have really driven us to do this.

Where they were 18 months ago, we were talking in very, very small sets of rows. That's no longer the case. We're talking in terabytes and sometimes petabytes to our new customers.

That whole data governance problem becomes so, so important and involving the IT staff, making sure that they have everything that's available, including everything that's available via API, so that even if they choose to use a different technology, it's all there for them to take advantage of.

CI: The other part of that, that I thought was quite interesting, is that you have made a concerted effort, where possible, to use Open Source technologies like CloverETL, like Hadoop and a few others.

You've got a massive list of Open Source technologies that you can bring to bear if the problem requires it, right?

JM: Certainly. If the problem requires it, and if indeed that technology is what we felt was the best to suit our needs.

In many cases, we've chosen Open Source. Then, in many other cases, we have chosen commercial products because the commercial product for our needs either performed better, or was more secure, or was something that, as I said, fit our needs in particular, gave us our own cells' insight into our operation.

We just recently migrated to a private Rackspace space environment from AWS.

That whole exercise of choosing a new hosting provider transparently and invisibly to our customers -- they didn't know when we were doing it or that it even happened -- that was a big important decision for us to gain the better economies of performance and definition of the operating environment that we require for supporting our customers.

That's a commercial decision. Then, likewise, we use things like MongoDB and Cassandra on the Open Source side because they allow us to not only scale and manage the platform effectively, but we use Cassandra to marshal the information of logins and customer access because of its real-time processing capabilities.

It was the right technology. I think you'll see that through and through. Back to the Vertica discussion, through and through. Vertica was just for what we wanted, which was a massively scalable engine that had built-in analytic functionality and capability that we could then extend and offer back to our customers, as well as be very, very high performance in feeding our analytic engine.

It met those needs. We evaluated somewhere in the area of six or seven different Columnar technologies in order to make that decision.

We pick what's best. My concluding point on this one is as soon as a new technology comes along that exceeds what we could do previously, we know how to unplug it so that it is indeed completely invisible to our install base.

For example, we put Vertica in as our storage for our analytic engine. That's our third generation of analytic storage. We just keep growing that bigger and bigger so its performance keeps pace with customer demand.

CI: Innovative times for technologies and you have got to keep up. Quickly, we've got a few minutes left.

Let's talk about some of your customers and a few of the case studies that you presented this morning. In particular, I thought the Bonobos...Is that how you pronounce it?

JM: Mm-hmm.

CI: The Bonobos story was quite interesting, so why don't you talk about that one and your choice on the others?

JM: Bonobos is an online retailer, and they've implemented GoodData as their internal analytic environment, and they integrate somewhere on the order of four to six different analytic data sources that they're drawing information from. We liken them to the Tesla model, where you go into a retail store to gain your measurements, but then you go back online in order to order your clothing.

What they found -- their example is really wonderful -- is their implementation didn't require any additional resources once they were up to speed, and they used this internal analytics on the most important Internet retail day of the year, which was Cyber Monday. On Cyber Monday, they had set their sales goals in one direction, but realized that their customer base, or shoppers, were looking for something completely different -- a different style or different size and color configuration. They were able to, through this analytics, pivot and turn the entire day around, from drastically not meeting their goals to dramatically beating them. A really, really wonderful situation for them.

CI: That's a good story.

JM: Another favorite of ours is ServiceChannel. ServiceChannel is a facilities-management software. They bring together two unusual types of users and user communities. The facility servicers, those are guys in trucks, and they're plumbers and janitorial services and air-conditioning services. Their customers are the retailers, your favorite retailer at the mall. That's Best Buy and Target and Walmart and The Gap, et cetera. Those are their customers who are managing hundreds or thousands of facilities all at once.

ServiceChannel marries these two really disparate customer types together, and then helps the servicer be more efficient. It gives them instructions on where to go, which customer is a higher priority, which customer do you have a higher service level with. Then, on the retailer side, it gives them better economies of scale. They say, "Order all of your light bulbs for The Gap", for example, "from a single electrical provider," rather than having that electrician go to Home Depot and buy them on a case-by-case basis.

It works out really well for both types of communities. Now, what makes ServiceChannel really special, though, is the fact that as they look at all of that data, they now are able to perform analytics on what's happening in the retail space. They actually want to become a bellwether for retail information, because they know when a retailer stops spending on maintenance. Before Radioshack announced the closing of a bunch of stores, for example, ServiceChannel knew. They actually score their different retailers on their investment in their facility brand. Of course, Apple has a wonderful facility brand, and other retailers don't. As I said, they're the bellwether for that kind of information.

Now, they want to add predictive functions into their environment. They've requested, specifically, weather data. The weather is interesting because that changes the service level that one of these service providers can deliver. When the air conditioning blows out in New York City, the service level changes from an hour turnaround time to days, because there's just not that many resources to serve the entirety of Manhattan. ServiceChannel wants to know when to predict that. They would take that, and every 10 degrees of increase in temperature according to the forecast is going to help them understand how they should be communicating to their retailers and how they should be queuing up those service providers. Really, really fascinating situation.

CI: It's an interesting story. You got about 10 seconds, so tell me what the future's going to hold for GoodData.

JM: We continue to power the all-data enterprise and allow organizations to come across and help them define these kinds of really interesting business problems. We do so, of course, through the Powered By channel, which is

our internal ISV program. Organizations like Zendesk -- congratulations, by the way, on their recent IPO -- are Powered By customers that use our analytics to upgrade their own service from the freemium model to their enterprise model, another great case study.

What do we see as our particular future is, while we've now covered the breadth of the space and of the end-to-end data-warehousing problem in the Cloud, I think you'll see us invest more in the depth of capability that many of the point solutions are offering. Again, our world is different in the Cloud, and so we have to do so, and always be vigilant about security and always be vigilant about what's happening with our customers, because we oftentimes declare ourselves as partnering with them and owning every single problem that they end up happening to have.

CI: New partnerships with BI companies and ISVs and your technology partners, are all of these things expanding?

JM: Yeah, we really want to build out the community in all areas, whether that's the Powered By community or the technology-provider community, like HP and Rackspace and Splunk even, or as well as the visualization community, and allow other third-party products to plug into ours. You could use a different Open Source ETL product as a vehicle to load your data in, or you could use everybody's favorite data-discovery tool to provide off-line or on-premises-style analysis from data that's generated and prepared by GoodData. You'll see all of those happening throughout the course of the year.

CI: All right. Unfortunately, we're out of time, so that's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff, and it's been a great pleasure to speak with my friend, Jeff Morris of GoodData today. Thanks, Jeff.

JM: Thanks so much, 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!