



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.

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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 Brian Brinkmann and Charles Caldwell. Brian is the VP of Products, and Charles is the Principal Solutions Architect from Logi Analytics. Welcome to you both.

Brian Brinkmann: Thank you, Claudia.

CI: First question, let's go to you Charles. The mission of Logi Analytics is to help organizations discover insights in data and deliver valuable information to those who need it throughout the business ecosystem. A big statement.

How do you do this for your targeted market segments?

Charles Caldwell: With my S&B's, it's a combination of utility. They need to be able to do a lot of different types of apps, but also, rapid development and a low total cost of ownership. That's the core value proposition there.

With my enterprises, it's about the extended enterprise reaching customers, partners, and vendors. With my ISP's, it's all about embed-ability. They're enriching their applications with analytics to add a lot more value for their customers.

CI: Yeah, I think that's one of your differentiators in fact is the ability to be embedded, is it not?

CC: Absolutely. Absolutely, that's highly embedded into an application workflow. It's not just bolting a reporting module.

CI: Yeah. I was very impressed with that. Brian, let's bring you into the conversation.



Self-service analytics, it certainly seems to be picking up a lot of speed, a lot of interest, a lot of acceptance in organizations.

First of all, let's get a definition of what you mean by "self-service analytics."

BB: Really, it's the ability to let the business user, the end user, determine what it is they want to see, how they want to put it together, and what the end product is.

That usually means a combination of selecting the data, and then, building out some sort of data visualizations that make sense. It can go as far as working with data that is sanctioned, meaning someone prepares it for you, or just working with data that you have, whether it's on your desktop, maybe from a cloud source, or from an on-premises system.

CI: Let's go back to, why is it picking up speed then? It does seem like it's getting a lot more attraction. The other half of that question, though, is that there are still some challenges.

Let's start off with, why do you think it's picking up speed? What do you see as still the potholes on the road to success?

BB: It's picking up speed for just the reasons we think it is. Everyone needs data. They need it quicker. They need answers quicker. They can't afford to wait.

Our IT folks are stretched. It's not that they don't want to help. It's just that it's much simpler for the business people to do it themselves. They'll get ultimately exactly what they want much quicker.

As far as challenges, there is still a lot about just understanding the data and the business around it. I think really the challenge is really more on the data side than the tool side. I think the tools are getting much better in terms of how they select the data, and visualize the data. I think it's really just making sure they understand their business, and how it's modeled to the data well.



CI: It also seems like there's still fear or trepidation I think on the technologically naive side of the house. A lot of business users are afraid. They don't know how to use the tool, they're afraid to ask.

Do you also see that, as well?

BB: Actually, I'm going to disagree with you, I don't. I would say the younger modern workforce, this is how they work. They're on their devices. They're on computers. This is probably the first generation that only ever knew Google was a verb.

I think they're just fine actually. They're fine with searching and struggling, and discovering on their own. I think they're actually learning very quickly. They don't give up. It's all really good. I think they have a very analytic mindset. They want the data. They expect it, and so, they go after it. I think it's great!

CI: That's good! I am actually very pleased to hear you say that. The other thing you did, was you did a very interesting survey on self-service analytics. It came out with some remarkable findings. I think some we didn't expect. Some, of course, that we did expect.

One of the findings was that both IT and the business believed that self-service analytics is essential. It wasn't IT with the fear of, "Oh, my gosh. My job is going away." It wasn't the business saying, "Heck, no. I don't want this stuff." They both were saying that it was essential. Not what I expected. What do you think of that?

BB: It wasn't what I expected either. I sat down and took the data for what it was worth. I am really pleased. Not only were they in line, they were in line with each other almost perfectly.

As I thought about it, I think the IT groups in general have been much more service focused. I think they have been making a transition, honestly, for probably the past five years. They also are constrained. I think their resources are constrained, both in terms of the tools they have, the amount of budget they're allowed to spend, and personnel.



I think they really do have the overall business's best view in mind. They see this as a win-win. The business people get what they want. They're able to meet their own goals and expectations, and the business wins out. It was not what I was expecting either. I thought it was great. It really feels like we're turning the corner. I'm hoping that more people and more studies will corroborate than what we found.

CI: I think, also, what's going on in IT, is it frees them up to more value-added activities, not creating yet another report. They're actually doing some really good things for the business.

CC: We talk a lot about this. The tools over the years haven't necessarily lent themselves well, but you want to optimize people's skill sets.

Business people have business knowledge, Data specialists have data wrangling knowledge. You would like tools where those people can collaborate better. You want to free up the business users to bring their business experience, to searching through data, generating ideas, and doing that work. You don't want to burden them with all the data prep work though.

At the same time, you don't want to burden highly skilled folks with the data prep with formatting reports. That tends not to make them very happy in their work day.

CI: Make everybody happy. I like that idea.

Back to you, Brian. You showed us a continuum, your version of a continuum of self-service analytics. I thought it was quite good. I agreed with almost all of the things that you put up there. There were in particular three main continua. I guess that's the plural of continuum, "continua."

Could you explain the three that you had on your graph?

BB: Yeah, I'll be happy to do that. If you don't mind, I'll just take a slight half-step back, in that with the self-service capabilities and analytics, there's a lot of confusion. I think the continua will make sense in that context.



One of the continua is just about what we think of as a range of the individual skills. We label it "consumer" on the one end, which is what it sounds like. Someone is getting the information and reading it too. More of an analytical view, where I'm working with the data in a much more free will environment.

That's important, that continuum of skill sets and being able to consume the data all the way through, interact with the data, is also important. What you see is people progress.

Typically, from the consumption side to the analytical side, which is exactly what we want to have happen. When I think about some of those challenges, one of the challenges is to make sure people are matched appropriately with their skill sets, they can be successful.

The second continuum is about really, who's controlling the data? Where is the data coming from? We think again about people being successful. In the consumer end, where I can interact with the data and make selections and do drills. Really, the IT is making sure that data is OK.

If I go to the purely analytical end, the business person, the person at the other end, needs to understand that data and make sure that they've got that taken care of. There is a range there.

To do self-service well, I think there is a mix, where sometimes your IT folks can take care of the data. Sometimes, the business people can take care of the data. Sometimes, there's a hybrid in between, where the IT folks can sanction data. The business people have free rein on how they combine it, define those visualizations.

I think that's what is really important. I think it's that middle piece that a lot of people are forgetting right now, and are being confused when they're talking about self-service analytics.

The last continua is about sharing. When you think about it, when you get these great insights, they're fun to have. They're much better if you can share them with your colleagues. They're much better when your colleagues look at them critically and ask you questions, and you improve upon them.



I think having that sharing capability, whether it's just with a report or being able to talk about it in an almost social like discussion is absolutely critical in making sure the analytics and insights get around.

CI: Yeah, excellent. I really like that slide. I have to admit.

Charles, back to you. Quickly, if you don't mind. You have a reporting module, the Logi Analytics Reporting Module. It does so much more than just reports. In fact, it's a pretty sophisticated tool. Why don't you tell the audience a little bit about its capabilities?

CC: Yeah, absolutely. With the self-service reporting module, it is about allowing end users. It's that middle piece that Brian just spoke about. It's meeting that middle piece.

It allows IT to sanction that data and make it available. It allows end users then to go assemble the pieces they need, and to mash it up the way they want to, author reports. One of the trends that we've seen over and over in the market is self-service reporting, very often it's not just about self-service. It's about a business user creating reports for other business users. It allows for sharing of those reports, as well.

It hits that kind of middle spectrum, where I as a business user need to get it my information and work with it, but still in a somewhat managed context, so IT is able to prep that data and sanction it for me.

CI: Yeah. I really liked it. I thought it was so much more. It's almost unfair to call it a "reporting module" in some ways. It doesn't do it justice.

Let me stay with this idea of what you guys do. Brian, back to you. You do have a very nice data visualization capability. You mentioned some guiding principles that drove its design.

Then, I'd also like to hear from you about what's new since you were here last year?

BB: Really, we've worked very hard on the data visualization side. I think the biggest piece is helping people get to understand those patterns and see those insights quicker.



Data visualizations are data visualizations, but they're most purposeful when I can detect things I wasn't expecting and find those nuggets of information. We had a combination of making them very simple to use. We use a concept of a recommendation approach, where we employ best practices.

So that when you combine data together, our data science algorithms know how they should be combined, but still gives you the control to override it or make it look the way you want. I think that capability is absolutely critical when people are trying to find those insights.

CI: We've got a little bit of time left. Unfortunately, we're getting to a really meaty topic. Charles, I'm going to see if you can give me a concise answer to this. It does seem like data visualization is becoming table stakes, that it is not a real differentiator. Any BI company worth it's weight in anything is going to claim that it has data viz capabilities. If that's the truth, then, what do you see as your differentiator in this area?

CC: Yeah. You've got to have effective visualization to support people. It really comes down to being able to support the outcomes that your users are trying to produce.

As an industry, we've been so data focused. Data is a big problem. We've over focused on that problem. We haven't focused on UI/UX. We haven't focused on what are end users are trying to accomplish. A big differentiator for us is having a platform that allows people to build very targeted applications. As we look at things like data discovery, and the social aspects is bringing in how people actually work with these things to get to insight.

We really see. My iPhone has 40 apps. Each one of them does exactly what it does very well. That's what people want. They don't want one app that does everything poorly. They want very targeted apps that gets them to their outcomes. That's been a product principle for us since the founding.

CI: It certainly does seem like Logi has taken to heart that user experience, that user interface. You've brought in a lot of capabilities, a lot of things, I



think that do differentiate you from others that claim to have data visualization capabilities.

You also talked about the visual data discovery abilities. Again, I think the data discovery is another aspect that you've paid a lot of attention to.

How would you say that you differentiate? Again, how do you differentiate from your competitors, who also claim this capability?

CC: I think one of the big things we've worked on is the social aspects and the sharing.

Data discovery has always been about creating a little bit of chaos. You're working iteratively. You're trying to find new patterns. You're throwing things against the wall and see if they stick.

Unfortunately, that traditionally it's happened on the desktop. It turns out to be not much better than Excel, in terms of creating silos of information. If we look at social technologies, that model is really great for sorting out chaos and creating meaning. It not only uses the tool to create insights, but it uses the gray matter and the expertise of the people involved to enrich those insights.

That's something that we've focused on a lot is, how do we take the 10,000 meetings that usually need to occur around data, and really, just shrink those down by having real-time collaboration to enrich the visualizations, and help a work group, working side-by-side or asynchronously, get to the insights faster?

BB: If I just jump on. My phrase for that, and Charles said all the words, is analytics for the work group. It really is analytics for the work group. It's not just about the social collaboration, that's a mechanism to have a very valuable discussion.

It's also for the individuals being able to get to those discoveries and those insights, and then, being able to share it in a way, that as Charles says, "Organizes that chaos."



It's not about the individual. It's not about keeping that information myself. It's about how fast I can iterate and get to the answers that are meaningful.

CI: I agree. You talked about the new workforce coming in. They are extraordinarily collaborative. They share everything.

BB: Yes, they are.

CI: They send out texts to the group to say, "Hey, what do you think about X, Y, Z?" I think your tool is well-positioned to support these new information workers.

BB: I fully agree. In fact, we really designed it with the modern workforce in mind, and the way that the modern workforce is working, and what they're demanding.

Charles pointed out with the mobile apps, they're demanding a consumer grade approach to their business solutions. It's funny, that's a reverse. We would always talk about professional grade or enterprise grade. Now, consumer grade is really what is the highest culmination.

CC: It's setting the mark.

CI: Yeah, it is. I agree. We could talk about it forever, but unfortunately, that's it for this edition of the BBBT Podcast.

Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been such fun to speak with Brian Brinkmann and Charles Caldwell of Logi Analytics today. Thank you, both.

BB: Thank you.

CC: Thank you.

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!