



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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Host:	Claudia Imhoff , President, BBBT
Guest(s):	Donald Farmer , VP of Innovation & Design Josh Good , Director of Product Marketing
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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 so pleased to introduce my guests today. The first one is my good friend, Donald Farmer. The second one is my new friend, Josh Good. Donald is the Vice President of Innovation and Design, and Josh is the Director of Product Marketing for Qlik. Welcome to you, both!

Donald Farmer: Thank you very much. Great to be here again.

Josh Good: Thank you very much. Great to be here.

CI: It's good to see you both. All right, Josh, let me start off with you. You introduced us to Qlik Sense. It just launched last month. Your presentation was based on three themes. I thought they were very interesting themes. If you don't mind, tell me what they were.

JG: The first theme is, "Stop waiting. Anyone can do it." That's all around getting people engaged at the level that they're comfortable at, and the growth that they want to engage at. They can do the analysis and then can find the insights that they are looking for.

When you have everybody doing it, you have some chaos that could be created. Then, it's around the second theme of "Controlling the chaos." How do we govern the deployment without restricting users from the flexibility they need?

When we have a well-oiled machine, a well-oiled deployment, we then can really get into the very interesting work of finding the unexpected. "Finding the unexpected" is the third theme. That's about where you sometimes get taken to where you maybe didn't think you would be going when you first sat down to do the analysis.



CI: Well, Donald, let me bring you into the conversation. Obviously, Sense was designed with the business user in mind. It is obvious that it took a lot of thoughtful consideration, that you've put a lot of effort into that user interface. Why don't you explain what the philosophy means to the design of the product?

DF: I think the key thing that I would say about our design process for Qlik Sense was that it was based around a lot of research. It was based around a lot of cognitive research into how people actually make decisions and to how your mind works when you are looking at data.

We didn't want to make assumptions about how people will use data. We didn't want to build things from a technical point of view. We actually wanted to build experiences that really worked with the human mind. So, the way we use color. The way we use motion. The way we use the different layouts. The way in which people interact through touch. All of these things are built to create what we call a natural analytic experience.

The idea of that is that it enables people to use the cognitive skills they already have to navigate through data, just as we navigate through cities, or forests or the sea. We have those skills. The application works with those human, very basic cognitive skills.

CI: Which I really like, and it does show. It's such a different interface.

DF: I know. It's rather difficult to describe, isn't it? It's easy when you see it.

CI: It is. People just have to see it at your website to believe it, I guess or whatever, to experience it.

DF: I guess so, yeah.

CI: It is subtle, but it is meaningful I think, these new functions in Qlik Sense. If you don't mind, talk about some of these new functions. Let's see if we can use our words to describe something that is so visually pleasing.

DF: Right. Sure. Well, one of my favorite examples of this is the pie chart.

CI: The much-maligned pie chart.



DF: The much-maligned pie chart. Of course, one of the reasons people malign pie charts is because they're very difficult to use. They are very easy to create, but they are very difficult to use. You can't see how the different segments relate to each other. You can't see how they add up to the whole.

There's a whole list of explanations why pie charts aren't very good. All of those explanations are actually based on the idea that a pie chart is static. It's something that you draw, print out and show someone. What if a pie chart is actually something interactive? What if it can be rotated? What if you can select segments? What if you can move them around? What if you can investigate them?

Well, then it becomes a very different experience. Those are the kind of experiences that we're building in. Everything has been designed to be interactive. When you show something to somebody on say an iPad, their instinct is to touch it and to interact with it.

This is what we do whenever we see photographs. I showed you photographs today. The first thing you did was you touched them to expand them, and zoom in on features. That's the sort of thing we're building into the product.

We're trying to get away from this idea that business intelligence is about providing static information to people. It's a very dynamic experience.

CI: Well, I think you've touched on it perfectly, that color and motion. The fact that we are hardwired to react to color and motion for survival, if nothing else.

DF: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

CI: And how to bring that into something like BI is not a simple thing.

DF: It is not a simple thing. It's a simple thing to use. It should be. It's not a simple thing to develop, especially when it then has to be available on any platform, on any device, on all sorts of platforms and devices that we haven't even thought about. Those are really tough technical problems. The art is to make it seem seamless and natural.



CI: Simple. What appears to be simple is so incredibly complex.

DF: Exactly, yeah. I'm glad you used the word "simple," because one thing that drives our user experience designers crazy is when people say "easy." It's not easy. It's simple. A very big difference.

CI: Josh, let me go back to you. You're my hero, by the way. We had an unfortunate little glitch in the demo. You seamlessly switched from your PC to an iPad, picked up exactly where you left off, and continued on with your demo. It was unfortunate that we had the little glitch, but it was also this incredible demonstration of the ease with which a person does switch from a tabletop kind of computer to a mobile device. It was seamless. It was absolutely seamless!

To me, it was remarkable and it was a great demonstration of what you're trying to get at. How do you make that possible?

JG: It's not simple to do that, but it needs to be simple for the user.

CI: Somebody had to think through all of the gotchas.

JG: Somebody threw a lot of gotchas in there. What it is, it's a responsive design and responsive interface. Qlik Sense is actually looking at the size of the screen that I'm on, and it's displaying the various objects on the screen appropriate for that interface. It's all being run through browser technology. It doesn't matter really what hardware I'm on. All it is, is whatever browser I'm on.

The great thing about this is it's not only great for today, where we know we have iPads and we know we have laptops. It future-proofs us so that over time, as new devices come out, we'll be able to display on those devices and give great rich interfaces with those devices.

If you compare that to closed systems, even in closed systems today, like say IOS. If we said, "Oh, we're only going to support IOS." Well, today there's four phones and two iPads that both have two orientations. There is actually 12 screen sizes you need to accommodate.

Instead, we just say, "Well, why don't we just accommodate them all through this responsive interface?"



CI: Or remove the device from the equation, right?

JG: Yes. Remove the device from the equation and use the technology to display. Another portion that we did show was we could actually change the size of the objects on that device as well. Have that ability, like you were talking about with Donald, to zoom in on a particular object and zoom out as well. That's all part of that responsive interface.

CI: The other thing that I found really interesting is that you made BI very easy for the business user. The second theme, if you will, was that fear of chaos. IT taking kind of a backseat at this point, and saying, "OK, business users. Go build whatever it is you want to do. Go do whatever it is you want to do." The ensuing, or at least perceived, fear or reality of chaos coming into that. If you make it as easy as a spreadsheet, we all know what happens when spreadsheets get out in the wild. You know, it's complete chaos.

Again, how did Qlik respond to that? How do you control, or manage -- I guess "control" is not the right word. How do you manage this environment, so that we don't spread mart hell, basically?

JG: Self-service, and the ability to create in self-service visualizations. That's very hot right now. There's a lot of talking about that. That's only half the equation. Enabling the governance on that side, and controlling the chaos is really important.

We do it in several ways. One is we want to make sure the people who are doing the self-service, it's easier for them to do the governed thing. For example, I can create my own sheets right inside an application and I can publish those out to other users inside the environment. I don't need to export it out to say like Excel or my favorite desktop tool, and then work with it that way. That enables the users to be in an environment where they are controlling the accounts themselves. They're choosing to do that.

In the administrative side, for IT -- and one thing that Donald likes to say is, "IT are people too." I add to that in saying that they're not only just people too, but they're actually becoming more and more a fundamental core



business driver. They're business partners. They want to enable the business.

We have the rules engine in Qlik Sense. What that enables the administrators to do is they have very, very flexible rules, that they can determine who is going to see what, and when and how. The IT department isn't constrained by the tool that they're using to fit into the business. The tool fits the business, not the business fitting the tool.

Now, when you have all of these rules out there, you of course need to understand what rules you have and how they're affecting your system. Running around and asking for people's logins, and just saying, "Hey! What are you seeing when you go into that part?" is really not an effective way to do that.

We have a very strong auditing capability, where you can understand how particular rules are affecting particular users or particular assets within the environment.

CI: OK. Thanks, Josh. Donald, let me go back to you. The last big goal for Qlik Sense was to "Find the unexpected." To be quite honest with you, that to me was the most exciting, most interesting, and probably most valuable part.

The other parts, the simplicity of the interface and, of course, the lack of chaos or at least the somewhat monitoring of chaos are all well and good, and they're certainly necessary. But "finding the unexpected." Isn't that where the joy is of analytics in business intelligence? I'm curious, again. Do you have examples of this, and how is it performed?

DF: Well, I think our understanding of what is unexpected has actually changed a little bit. Previously, and with the traditional BI tool, I would drill into some data.

Let's say I was wanting to look at low performers in my sales organization. I would select "low performers." I might select people below a certain sales margin level, or something like that. Therefore, I would see their numbers. I may be surprised about how bad they are. That might be unexpected. I didn't know this number was so bad.



What would be really interesting is if I went in for say low performers and found, "Well, I didn't realize that we were in these geographies," or "I didn't realize they were actually aligned in a particular organization," or "I didn't realize that French low performers were so much worse than German low performers," or some such thing.

CI: Or one product they were selling outstandingly, and the rest of them were bad.

DF: Well, exactly, which brought them down. How would you find that? Well, traditionally you would only find that if you had that thesis, if you were actually exploring to find that. "I have an idea that there might be a problem here, so I'm going to find it."

What we do in Qlik Sense is we show you continually a contextual awareness of where you are in the data. For example, if you select "low performers," we'll show you, in a little histogram under the selection bar, a percentage of how many low performers you have in your organization. You can immediately see that low performers actually make up 40 percent of my organization, or 5 percent, or whatever it is. From there, you can then see what's happening in the rest of the organization, or you can see what's happening in different geographies.

We continually show you visually -- through color, through little information clues, like histograms and selection hints -- the other areas you might want to explore. We use green, white, and gray in order to show data that you've selected, and data that's associated, and data that's unassociated. That's all something that we've done in Qlik View for some time.

But in Qlik Sense, we also show you data which is closely associated but not actually part of your selection. For example, a doctor might see, "Here are drugs that I'm prescribing for patients. Here are drugs I'm not prescribing. Here are drugs that other doctors are prescribing, but I'm not. That's kind of interesting," or "I'm prescribing to some patients, but not to others."



That kind of subtlety of information enables... Again, it comes back to these natural cognitive abilities. If you can just peak someone's curiosity, they will explore these things and they will discover the unexpected.

CI: Yeah. They will. That I think is, like I said, the pure joy right there.

DF: It is. It's actually fun. That's a great thing. It's fun doing that.

CI: You've actually put fun in BI, which who does that? Alright, unfortunately we're out of time where we can talk about all of the fun that's going on. That's it for this edition of the BBBT Podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It has been such a pleasure. It always is to speak with Donald Farmer and now you as well, Josh Good, of Qlik. Thank you both for speaking with me.

JG: Thank you very much.

DF: 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!