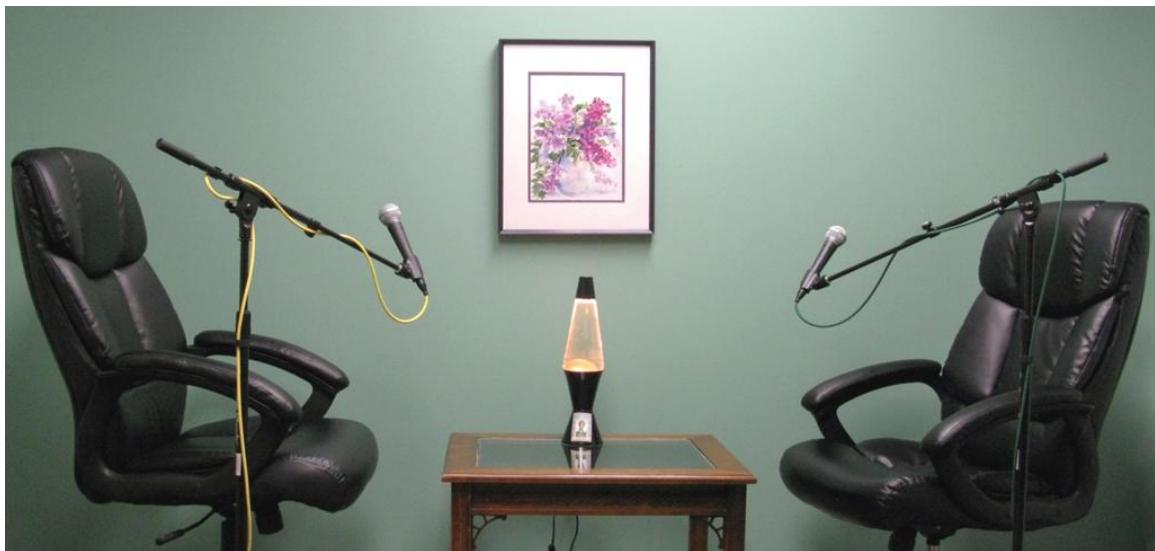




BBBT Podcast Transcript



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's my good friend, Glen Rabie. Glen is the CEO for Yellowfin. So, welcome, Glen.

Glen Rabie: Thank you, Claudia. It's awesome to be back. Really, really enjoying it.

CI: It's been a wonderful session. I wish we could get all of it into the podcast, but unfortunately it's not possible. We'll get as much as we can. Let's start off with an interesting survey by BARC, a lovely company. I think they're out of Germany, aren't they?

GR: I believe so.

CI: They did a survey recently, a BI survey. Boy, Yellowfin scored high on a whole bunch of areas. Why don't you talk a little bit about the highlights of the survey from Yellowfin's point of view?

GR: Firstly, just a context of the survey. It's a survey done of our customers. For all the vendors, there's about nearly 3,000 people respond to this, so it gives us a good context about what people are thinking, whether they're getting value out of their BI tools.

One of the keys for me was really the way in which Yellowfin was number one for price and value. I think that's really critical. One of the inhibitors that we saw for people rolling out BI tools to the entire organization was just the sheer cost.



I think the price links we've got is right in the way in which we address pricing, so that was nice to see that reflected in the survey. It was fantastic.

The other one which I really liked was, which we didn't really cover today, was percentage of user adoption in our deployment. Again we ranked the highest there with the large proportion of employees for an organization using Yellowfin as compared to other tools.

Again, it reflects us trying to break down these barriers and make it really simple for people to roll it out to a large audience. Then, cloud BI being a real again leader in that, which sounds odd when we don't host it ourselves, but the fact is many, many of our customers deploy Yellowfin in the cloud either for themselves or through some of our partners who do that for them.

CI: Where can people find this report? Your website, I'm assuming?

GR: It is on our website. Yes, it definitely is, so they can download it from there.

CI: YellowfinBI.com?

GR: That's the one. Thank you, for helping me out.

CI: Very good. Well, let's continue on with the past year. Again, it's been a remarkable year for Yellowfin. Major wins, you've got some real traction going on. What do you attribute that to?

GR: Years and years of hard work.

CI: Well, of course.

GR: It didn't happen overnight. I think we're starting to be recognized in the market. Again, I think we talked about my reflection on when I first came here, so this was three years ago, the first BBBT that I did. We're still learning a lot, but I think we really understand what our product is, where it fits in the market, how organizations can use it.

We've really started to fine-tune that a lot, so the product is fantastic and continues to really evolve, and evolve in a really great direction. The nature of our customer base is again very disparate, so we're getting lots



of feedback from customers in different ways. Lastly, I think we're really just a great team of people and really dedicated to what we do and keeping it simple.

The result of that is obviously referrals, brand awareness, brand building, and all those good things that happen because we're not there building a short-term business. We're here to build a long-term one.

CI: It certainly is reflected in the surveys as well as your traction. It's been a remarkably year for you. Congratulations.

GR: Thank you.

CI: All right. Well, let's get down to some of the presentation itself. You stated BI and analytics should be easy. I don't think anybody would disagree with that. What's unfortunate is that it doesn't seem to be getting to that point.

It's not quite so easy to use, easy to consume, easy to collaborate with, and so forth. What do you see as things that are needed to bring us into that world of easiness?

GR: We have it as a mission statement ultimately to make BI easy, and it's a funny one because we actually spent a lot of time reflecting on it and thinking, "Well, what does it really mean?" It means different things for different roles within an organization or people who are involved with BI. I think that's the challenge.

I think that there are so many use cases that need to be addressed and need to be thought through. If a BI tool only focuses on one of those use cases, then you basically make it harder for the others. For us the way we think about it, we do think about it holistically.

We think about the role of the analyst. We think about the role of enterprise IT. We think about the role of the BI consumer, of a line of business people within an organization, and we think about what is it they really need ultimately?



For us the three core principles in which we work is really around building a beautiful interface. That's really thinking about how people engage with the product and that it's something that they want to use.

The second of that is around balancing the needs of people who want to access data, do that quickly, and do that in an unfettered manner, versus the needs of enterprise IT, who do want to bring some governance to the process and lock it down as much as possible. They are quite disparate, but they are a reality for enterprise organizations.

The last one obviously is that it is a brilliant experience for everyone. Whether you're an analyst or you're telling stories with the data or you're a consumer of data, it's going to give you that insight. If it doesn't do that and doesn't do it simply and easily, then we're failing in our mission.

CI: I think I would agree with you wholeheartedly, which leads us to that balance you talked about between IT and the business-user. One of the big areas I guess or certainly discussed areas is self-service BI.

It's a difficult balance between IT trying to lock things down as you put it and the business-user saying, "No, I want unfettered access. I want to be able to do anything and everything that I want with any kind of data that I can put my hands on." A lot of companies are touting self-service BI.

Whether it's a cloud-based one or it's on premises, it doesn't matter. They're all saying, "We can do self-service and have at." I think your approach to it is, first of all, balanced as you said, and I think it is a good one. Why don't you describe a little bit about what is needed to support a self-service BI environment?

GR: The metaphor we used about self-service BI was the queue in a supermarket.

CI: The self-service checkout, which I hate by the way.

GR: I think it's a really good metaphor for self-service BI because again it's being thrust upon you. It's like, well, there's a huge queue. You don't want to stand in the queue for 20 minutes, so you'll have to use this tool yourself.



Rather than waiting six months for your report to be written by a centralized IT, you want to just get in there and do it yourself regardless.

At the same time you don't necessarily have the skills to use the tool set that you've got nor maybe the analytic capability. It takes a lot of your time, and it's a bit frustrating. That, I think, is really the experience that a lot of people have with self-service BI.

What we're saying is that self-service BI isn't actually the end game. It's not really what people should be focused on. They're going to be focused on a number of issues, and one is the queue. Can we actually build a product that reduces the queue that makes it really easy for a centralized BI competency center to really do analysis quickly, and to publish it, and to get it right the first time?

For those guys that want to do self-service, can we at least again make a tool that's efficient for them? We look at it, and all of this comes back to the use cases that it's not just about self-service BI because we're only servicing a small sector of the market. It's frustrating for those that don't want to use it.

There are people who just want to ask for a report. There are people who want to build their own, and there's people in between, who want to take something that's half been written and then play with it. I don't think we should be trying to meld everyone in the same mold exactly and let people be free to choose how they want to interact with the application.

One of the core ways that we do that, fundamentally, is that we don't have functional pricing. When we sell Yellowfin, the organization and users are fundamentally open to choose how much or how little functionality they want to use without any financial implication to them. I think that was probably one of the really critical components.

It just, for us, actually really helped us synthesize where is the need. An outcome is -- we didn't talk about it but -- the number of people who create content in organizations actually dropped. It didn't increase. It dropped.

CI: Oh, that's interesting.



GR: Because organizations were buying from us in the past when we had this sort of functional pricing. They bought a lot more creators than were really, really needed. It's our pricing model.

Seeing the impact of that has made us truly realize that fundamentally people don't want to wait in a queue, and they don't want to do it themselves. They just want the information at their fingertips to do their job.

CI: Well, let's spend the remainder of our time, which is around five minutes or so, talking about how you are different. What are the differentiators from the other companies that make very similar claims? Why don't we start off with some of your differentiators? I think you went through them quite well.

GR: I think the first one and the probably the largest and the most technical is that Yellowfin is a single integrated platform. There are no moving parts. You install us on a server. It's completely browser based, so there's no client components you have to worry about.

No matter how you interact with the application, every component of the application is aware of what you're doing. We know that if you're deleting a report. We know who uses it, how often they use it.

We can tell you. We're not going to tell you not to delete it. We're just going to say, "Hey, did you know your boss uses this report every day?" "Do you need to delete this one?" Little things like that, so the result of that is this fully integrated harmonious experience that you get end-to-end with the product.

The second part of that again is thinking around what is it people buy us for? The vast majority buy us for a dashboard capability, so really strong in terms of the kind of dashboards you can build, the interaction.

Again, because of the way in which you can build interaction at different levels, we can have dashboards that are designed purely for people who want to monitor their performance.

"I just want to know how well I'm doing. Am I hitting target? Am I going to make my commission this month? I've got simple needs, and I've got



simple ways to be motivated," versus those that you want to have dashboards that are far more analytic where I can slice and dice, I can drill into. We can support all of that.

Really, again the core is that whole idea about how we engage with data and at appropriate levels, so I'm going to give you as much or as little data as you need to do your job, as much or as little interaction you need to do your job.

The second part of that then is for those analysts that they're focusing on the queue or people who want to do it themselves, how easy can we make this? How simple is it? Again, we approach the problem differently. One of the key elements again in people's perception of a BI product is its performance.

How quickly can you use and engage with the application? We do some really clever stuff around the data discovery and the visualization that you can create multiple visualizations off a data set. That's a shrunk down data set that you've already prebuilt.

Again, we're trying to optimize performance, let people do it really easily, suggest the best chart for them based upon the attributes they drag in. The model previously was you choose which chart you wanted. I think on the one hand it's great if you know exactly what you want to do, but if you're looking for something the application needs to help you.

We have this again a balance between the AutoChart versus some other charting components. The next piece, I think the really the glue that holds everything together is Yellowfin's collaboration features.

The ability to be able to really share, to make commentary on any piece of content, to be able to see what other people are working on, what other people are creating, and get involved with that.

Then ultimately is the story-board functionality, the ability to build really strong presentations within Yellowfin. For us, again, it was just another way of thinking about where does a dashboard fail? It's a different use case. The dashboard's great if I want to monitor and I've got predefined



analysis, but if I want to communicate information to people what's the best way to do that?

If I do regular communication, then I want to be able to package this up so I can have my monthly predefined pack ready to go. I'd just add rich commentary to it. No BI tool can tell you why, in many cases. They can tell you what's gone on, and they can do some prediction about whys.

The reality is, it's people. People will say, "Well, we didn't get that shipment from China, so production's down. It doesn't matter what we do." That's something that you could have put in as commentary. It's not something that the data necessarily tells you.

CI: It's interesting because you can tell them the what, you can tell them the when, and even the how in some cases, but the why is elusive.

GR: That's the bit that really is the glue to all of this that says, "Whatever I'm tracking is it going up or down? What if I'm trying to predict? Where's it going? Then how do I use the fact that we're human beings and we make human decisions and we think about things?"

We can meld far more information, contextual information together and tell a story around it. Really, that's what the whole piece of the story board is for. Again, all of this is just one application. It's not several applications that you have to meld together.

CI: Well, I think that's a critical point. It is your architecture where everything is within the four walls. You're not going outside. The metadata is there. All the users are there, what they're doing, what they're using, what they're using it for. I think it really does put a fine point on that governance capability.

You're not stopping anyone from doing anything, but you are at least giving someone the ability to monitor the environment, right?

GR: That's right. You can see... We track every interaction with the application so every event, but again if people are creating content and publishing that, they can go through an approval process so it can be vetted so that ultimately people build trust.



One of the conversations we had really was around why do BI products fail? One of the big reasons is trust. If I don't trust what's in there, I'm going to stop using it.

We need to put mechanisms in place that allow validation that just says, "This is accurate. This is something you can rely on and make decisions on." If you don't trust it, at least you can have a conversation around it.

CI: Otherwise, you're in the blind. I love the fact that you could certify a report or something as saying, "This has been vetted. We're good with this," so people use it.

GR: It's more than just a certification. It is actually watermarking. It's making sure that, if I then print it or take it to PDF, if I walk around to someone's office and show them, immediately they can look for this marker and say, "Well, no. Sorry, this is a private report. It hasn't been authorized. I really can't trust the data in here 'till someone else has had a look at this."

CI: It's brilliant. Very bright future I see for Yellowfin. You guys are on fire, and now you've just got to kick it into high gear and go throughout the world, right?

GR: That's right. That's right. It's building the team internationally, which is certainly something that's been on our radar this year. We've really started to ramp that up, and it's really certainly exciting times ahead.

CI: I think so. I'm very proud of you guys. You're doing good stuff. Unfortunately we're also out of time, though, so that's it for this edition of the BBBT Podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff, and it's been such a pleasure to speak with Glen Rabie of Yellowfin. Thanks so much, Glen.

GR: Thank you, 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!