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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Guest(s):	**Peter Evans**, Senior Integrated Solutions Consultant
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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 very pleased to introduce my guest and my friend today, Peter Evans. Peter is the senior integrated solutions development consultant for Dell Software. Welcome, Peter.

Peter Evans: Thank you, Claudia. Welcome.

CI: Nice to have you here. You mentioned that you work for Dell Software, and you emphasized that, because most people think of Dell as a hardware company. Why don't you talk a little bit about the software side of the business?

PE: Yes, not problem at all. You are correct. When people think about Dell, they think about server racks and hardware and screens and laptops. But we are far more than that now. We started over six years ago, acquiring software companies, and about two and a half years ago we created the Dell Software group.

The Dell Software group is an overarching organization which looks at all of our acquisitions and brings all of our acquisitions under that band of Dell, and it gives us this huge software company now.

We've got things like data integration, data management, database management, security, information management. It gives us a completely different view of the enterprise for our customers.

We mean that we can look at not only the hardware requirements, their infrastructure requirements, and the services to set all of that up, but we can also enable them to have a completely covered software package from end to end. We give them an end-to-end solution.

CI: Let's talk a little bit about...We can't do this without talking about big data, I suppose. I loved your comment. You stated that we simply need to get past the hype of big data. Oh boy, do I agree with that. But what do you mean by that, and how do we get past it?

PE: The problem with big data and the hype of big data is that everybody has jumped on the bandwagon, and everybody wants to know everything about their organization.

They're all thinking that they've got big data. They're all thinking that they've got a huge ability, velocity, and variety. It's really a misnomer, because if you look at where data is and where it comes from, the data is the same.

It's the actual way that we connect the data, and the problem with connecting the data is we don't know what we want to do at the end point. Getting past the hype of big data is understanding the question that you want to answer.

I said for many years that the first thing I've always used to ask when I was an independent contractor was I'd go into a company and say, "Before we start talking where your data is, how much you've got, what do you want to do with it, what is the question you're trying to answer?"

Because if you know the question, you can then filter that down through the integration, through the extract and transform a load, so you get to be able to curate the data in a way that makes sense to the question you're trying to answer.

By getting past the hype, getting past the fact that everybody is worried about where the data is, how much data they've got, where they're collecting it from, how they're going to connect to it, and getting to the real thing that they need to do with the big data, which is answer the question.

CI: Yeah, focus on the business problem. At some point, it is my fervent hope that we get to the point where we stop calling it "big data" and call it "data."

PE: Yes. I've never bought into the big data, as you know.

CI: Let's talk a little bit more about the Dell architecture, then, in support of this approach to focus on that business problem. Why don't you tell me a little bit about that?

PE: Dell's architecture is well known on the hardware side. We have a variety of servers, appliances, partnerships with major vendors to be able to deliver enterprise data warehouses.

But what we also have on the software side is the ability to look at all of the data, where it fits, and how you integrate it, and then push that data to a collaboration platform to advanced analytics, and be able to understand the analytics.

Our architecture is totally flexible, and it's modular. We don't want to get caught with being the one vendor that a company has to come to for all of their reach.

What we want to be able to do is enable a company who had started down the route, and they're struggling to make whatever they bought work, we want to be able to come in and enable them to make it work by giving them pieces of the puzzle that fit into their architecture and be totally modular.

We like to think about it as a plug and play organization. For instance, if you've got major vendor A and major vendor B as your integration platform and your data warehouse, but you're suddenly struggling with legacy application data that you need to access, we can bring in Boomi, we can plug it in, drag that enterprise data across, and drop it into enterprise data warehouse for you.

If you're looking at huge amounts of social media data, if you're a company that is looking at media responses or looking at social responses.

We can connect to that data using the statistic of big data analytics, but we can also drop the data off using replication and maybe a quick-start appliance, which, again, we partner with and we can supply.

We can put the services around building that for you. We have this completely flexible modular architecture, which allows you, as a company, to move forward to lower cost of ownership and a very fast ROI, because we can supply everything to fit against everything else you've already got.

CI: Let's turn to using that architecture, because you gave us a very interesting case study, a healthcare one this time, on asthma. You explained very well, the whole workflow, the fact that there are these three phases.

The ability to integrate the data, to analyze the data, and then, so importantly, the ability to act on it. Tell me about this incredible case study that you've got.

PE: You are right, it's all about these three phases. We're talking about the ability to access the data, to integrate the data, to analyze the data, and then our final stage is this ability to act on the data.

With healthcare, that's hugely important. It means lives can be saved and costs can be brought down. This really is what we're trying to do with this use case.

The asked use case is based something that's very critical, in North America, especially, $18 billion is spent in healthcare for asthma alone every year. We have critical asthma events affect over 44,000 patients a year.

What we have to do is we have to look at why they're not being treated directly, why their case management isn't performing as well as it should be, and why hospitals tend to spend more money on preparing for something that they may have not actually achieved.

So what we've done is, in our integration phase, we've not only looked at the traditional source of analytics for healthcare, which is the medical record, but we've extended that to look at different types of phases.

We're looking at outside data to affect the algorithmic models that we put together for this particular use case. We've brought in data from air quality, we brought in data from a weather company to look at weather prediction, trends, and past history. Then we finally brought in pollen counts where we're looking at how pollen has been affected in the past for that area, and how their prediction for the next four days is.

Having all of this data and collaborating it, we pull the data via Boomi for our web account, and we connect to the medical EMR system using HL7 with Boomi.

We then stage that obstipated medical data in an Oracle database and connect to it with Toad Data Point, and that allows us to then integrate all these data sources in Toad Intelligence Central. We've now connected, we've integrated, and we've aggregated the data, ready for analysis, because analysis, especially predictive analysis, requires you to have a wide table to work on. We position that data in Toad Intelligence Central, and Statistica, our advanced analytic platform, dives into that data and connects to it and works with it as we go through.

What we've done once we've got that is we've got the ability to look at the data and work predictive models using banyan trees and neural networks on that data to work out which patients are going to suffer a critical asthma event.

That would be fine, and that's where a lot of this normally stops in business, as they get the analysis, they get a list, and then they stop. But we at Dell decided that we needed to take that to another level, and we wanted to be able to act in a way that's important to the customer.

In this case, the patient with work that could show them how to be better at what they're doing. What we've done is we've taken the data and we've acted on it in three different ways. The first way is we've enabled a visual data discovery tool, in this case, Qlik, to be able to come in (Quick

Sense), look at that data, and provide a geo-located view on a dashboard for the case manager in the asthma case center, so he can directly drill into that data and understand in which location his patients are going to suffer.

We then use Boomi to send an email to all of the EMR systems within the area, so out in the emergency rooms in the critical care centers, to tell those managers where their resources are going to be needed in the next week.

Because we're telling them, "There are going to be possibly 88 critical asthma cases in the next week, of which 52 may present at your doors." Therefore, they can immediately start looking at manpower, and they can start looking at drug use.

They can bring in extra people if they need to, or they can reduce the drug use if it's going to be a short week. But that, again, demands forecasting directly, making cost savings or cost enablement in the healthcare industry.

Then, lastly, the most important person is the patient. What we've done is we've enabled, if these patients sign up and agree to be contacted, we've enabled the system to send them a text message on a Sunday evening, after the predictive analysis has run, to tell them if they may suffer a critical asthma event that week.

Therefore, they can then start planning their own healthcare. They can start managing their own going out and going into their wrong areas, making sure they take their medicine correctly, making sure that they're sleeping well and they've got the window shut if it's a hot and heavy pollen season.

We're enabling the patient to look after themselves, which is hugely important, because, again, that reduces costs in care.

CI: Like I said, a really interesting case study. It involves, you mentioned them—Boomi, and Statistica and a lot of Toad, Toad Data Point and Intelligence Central. We've only got a couple of minutes left. Can you

briefly maybe talk a little bit about these three and how they all fit together in this environment?

PE: Absolutely. Very briefly, Boomi is the leader in the iPaaS space as you know. It's a hugely popular tool, it enables a lot of organizations to connect to their legacy application data, to standard data, and bring that data in to position it for analytics.

We've teamed it up with Toad Data Point which allows you to do Toad data profiling on the data as it comes through, to provide a more granular view of the data and do light ETL work. Then we position all of that data in Toad Intelligence Central, which allows you to collaborate around the data.

Some of the very good things that you're seeing now in things like Boomi are the suggest feature. You go into a connection to a database that you've never worked on before, and you want to transform it into a standard style ETL notion into a data warehouse.

Normally, you'd have to go through a process where you have to manually map each of these columns. With Boomi Suggest, you touch a button. That button comes up with a suggestion in three different levels of a high, a medium and a low suggestion for that connectivity and for that mapping.

That allows you to be far more productive in your work in a fast speed of time. Toad Data Point now has hugely more important features, like the ability to be able to do far granular profiling on the data, be able to look at pattern matching and types of data so that you can get the data the correct way before you provide it to your end user.

Toad Intelligence Central allows you to connect to that data, and we've moved into the area where we're looking at this big data map. Cassandra, they decided to bring out their own...language.

We've mapped our connector so it will use CQL, so that we can provide a faster way of connecting to that type of data and bring it into the mix.

Lastly, you've got Statistica, the 30-year-old advanced analytical platform, which is one of the leaders in the Magic Quadrant for Gartner. It provides a way, in one implementation, of connecting to data, analyzing data, providing visualizations of that data through internal visualization systems, and also passing that data back out to Toad Intelligence Central, which, as a collaboration platform, is totally open.

So that allows us to share that data with all of these other visual data discovery tools out there, in a much easier way. It allows them to access data and provide a line of business fields of data, but from a trusted source that is known and worked with by IT.

CI: The overall solutions architecture is pretty amazing, I have to admit. It does seem to have pretty much everything covered, end to end. What else would someone need? Do you need to have all of this, or is there room for anybody else?

PE: Again, as I spoke right at the beginning of the podcast, Claudia, the whole thing with Dell is this ability to be modular. We don't want vendor lock-in, we don't want anybody to push in and say, "You can have Dell and nothing else."

What we want to come to a customer with and say, "OK, you're having problems. What do you want to achieve? Let us show you a way to achieve that." We do that by providing modular programs and modular application, modular hardware. And on top of that, services teams that are available and have the ability and experience to work with a customer, to deliver exactly what they want.

We're not in this game to say, "It's Dell or the highway."

What we're in this game is to say, "Let me see what your problem is, and let's fix that problem. Let's deliver the answer for you." Because that's what it's all about, it's about delivering the answer for the customer. The customer is centric to how we go forward at Dell.

CI: Brilliant. Unfortunately, we're out of time. So I have to say that that's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been such a pleasure to speak with Peter Evans of Dell Software today.

Thanks so much, Peter.

PE: Thank you for having me as usual, 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!