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 and Design
	Todd Margolis, Senior Solution Architect
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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 happy to introduce my guests today. They are Donald Farmer and Todd Margolis. Donald is the vice president of Innovation and Design. Todd is the senior solution architect for Qlik. Welcome to you both.

Donald Farmer: Thank you very much. It's great to be here again.

Todd Margolis: Thank you.

CI: It's great having you both, especially you, Donald. You've been back so many times.

DF: Thanks.

CI: Let me start with you. First of all, you talked about the Qlik Analytic Platform. If you don't mind, what are some of the differentiators there in that platform?

DF: I think one of the key differentiators is that it is a platform. We don't just have an enterprise application Qlik Sense. We've taken the core of that, the Qlik Indexing Engine, which is our analytic associative in-memory engine, the APIs that surround that, the management interfaces and the visualization library, and we've made that available as a platform for developers, and OEMs.

We don't just have the enterprise application. We have this core platform that people can use to embed, extend, and build their own applications with visual analytic capabilities from Qlik.

CI: And the whole purpose was to give it that enterprise capability, right? To get it away from just being something a department would use but actually across the entire enterprise?

DF: Exactly. It's a developer platform but it has enterprise data capabilities built in from day one.

CI: Let's turn to what you're really known for and that's your visualization capabilities. They are fabulous. There is no doubt about that. What are some of the advanced technologies that you use for the visualizations?

DF: I think there's two things which make our...actually, to be honest, three things, which make our visualizations outstanding.

One of them is just the aesthetic quality of them. Our intention is to create beautiful visualizations. So far, everyone seems to think we've done a good job of that. I'm very proud of that side of it.

Aside from the aesthetics, we are also focused on interactivity. It's very significant for us. Visualizations are not just about presenting the data just in a particular way that represents my point of view when I've created the visualization... They have to be exploratory. So, we've done a lot of work to enable people to interact with the visualizations.

The third thing is that they're responsive. We have put in a tremendous amount of effort and thought into responsive design, not just so that the visualization scales the different platforms... if you're using it on an 80-inch touchscreen monitor or you're using it on a smartphone. These are clearly very different environments.

It's not just enough to zoom and scale. You actually have to be able to present the data in different ways that are appropriate for that environment. We've put a lot of work into that as well.

I think we've done some really fascinating research, and some fascinating implementation into making that possible. It's about aesthetics, it's about interactivity and it's about responsiveness. I think that's really important.

CI: What I like in particular about the responsiveness was I can go from these various technological ways of viewing the data, end up on my phone, and then immediately go back to my PC, and pick up where I was on my phone, right?

DF: Exactly. Not only to be able to go back to your PC but also have it always connected to the data, so you can get back to the raw data and see what's underneath it as well. That's also super significant.

CI: All right. Something else that I saw today that I was very happy about was Qlik's emphasis on governance. So many companies today are so enamored with making the data so easy to access, easy to use, that they forget about governance, and the criticality of governance in these types of environments. If you don't mind, please explain what's involved there and why should I care about it.

DF: The worst way to make something easy to use is just to open it up to everyone and then let them party on it without any kind of control, or insight, or oversight. Unfortunately, that's far too often the approach. It's either we restrain everything and control it, or we just open it up to everyone.

The way I like to put it is that IT has to move from being the gatekeeper to being the shopkeeper. The gatekeeper role is we provide data access. We allow you in to see the data that we think you should be able to see. If you think of it, even the term is very controlling. We give you "access."

CI: Very rigid in its sense.

DF: Exactly, yeah. I think there's a better way to approach this. I call it the "shopkeeper" approach, which is we will make data available to you. We want you to use it. We encourage you to use it. We're going to make it available. We're going to make it available in the right format with the right kind of quality and the right security around it.

Having done that, then you're free to party on it, but we then need insight and oversight to how you're using it. Qlik provides the ability for IT to provision these data sources and provision this data to business users to work with.

We also provide a lot of insight to how the business user is using it, right down to every click that they are making within the dashboard. We can monitor and track that. You can control data access. You can control sharing rights.

You can control the way and times in which people can access data. You can also have insight to how they are doing it, who's using these applications, who's sharing it, who's getting insight, and creating stories from them.

CI: It's also who's doing something that is perhaps not in compliance with the privacy or security policies, and so forth.

DF: Exactly, yeah. Are they sharing it too widely? Are they sharing it with a small group of people? It's equivalent to "reply to all" sometimes... "I'm going to share this with everyone because I want to make this visualization available." You don't need to share it with the entire department. You can share it with a small well-defined group. So... you can identify these people and educate them into how they should be doing it properly.

CI: A good way of putting that. What I liked was the fact that it's Qlik using Qlik, right?

DF: Exactly. This is all managed with Qlik Sense visualizations over Qlik Sense. The dashboard is a Qlik Sense application that gives you complete oversight and exploration of what's going on in your Qlik environment.

CI: Yeah, I love it. You were the one that told me a long time ago that IT can't control the information assets but they should be able to monitor them. You've lived up to that.

DF: That's always been my vision, yeah.

CI: Beautiful vision. All right, Todd. Let me bring you into the conversation a little bit. Now Qlik last year acquired a company called DataMarket. What are the capabilities that DataMarket brings to Qlik? We'll get to it but why is external data, which is what they're known for, why is that so important? Let's start with what are the capabilities that they bring in.

TM: Sure. DataMarket is looking at global data that is external to companies, thinking about what is the type of information, whether that's financial, stock-based trading information, currency rates, exchange rates, or weather-related information.

All these things may affect your business, but they're not things that you would necessarily keep within your data warehouse. But they're all things that require some maintenance.

Working with DataMarket, we're able to actually get that data, bring it into the exact same environment using the same data models, and maintain it and curate it, and say, "OK, this is a standard that will work well with your data. All of the data in DataMarket works well with each other."

You can use that easily and quickly.

CI: What's the impact on the business? If you could, give me some examples. How would I use external data to give me a richer and fuller picture of what's going on?

TM: We've had a customer who had a 40% revenue drop because of shipping delays. That was due to weather-related events. That had absolutely nothing to do with what was happening within their company.

They had no way of actually reporting on the reason why they saw these massive drops. Bringing in the weather data from DataMarket was able to actually bring that data into a single report, and not have redundancy or confusion with that communication process.

CI: I could see all kinds of external data giving us richer pictures of our customers, better feel for our marketplaces and so forth and reasons why something went badly. Why did this drop? Why did it go up? What's going on? That would be more an external force impacting the company, right?

TM: That's right, yeah. You got it.

CI: All right. Back to you, Todd, again. Qlik now offers a cloud service. There are so many challenges that I think corporations don't understand when

they leap on the cloud. Let's start there. Why don't you talk about some of the challenges of becoming a cloud-based organization?

TM: Sure. I think the first thing that a lot of people think about is security. People are concerned with... if their data is in the cloud, is that going to be a problem for making sure that their data is secure.

The reality is there's probably, in many cases, more security to a lot of these big cloud provider services than there is within their own IT infrastructure. And you have some security that people are managing it.

We're obviously doing everything we can to make sure that private data remains private within the cloud. We have an entire cloud service where you get to control who you share it with and what level of access those shared users can have.

CI: People act as if there's a single cloud, right? "I'm going to put things in the cloud." That's not exactly true, right?

TM: Yeah. You may have situations where based on your region, you have different cloud services that you have access to.

Just like how we can connect to different data sources, whether that's an Excel file or from DataMarket, you can connect to different types of databases, whether that's a cloud-based data service, or whether that's a local on-premises data service. All of those things, once their data connector is defined, it's easy to actually bring them all together and they're automatically merged.

CI: How does Qlik manage these different things?

DF: If I can jump in here, actually, because I want to come back to my governance shtick. This is actually really important for governance, because you may have not only multiple cloud providers but you may even have multiple deployments within a single organization.

So many organizations nowadays are effectively global. In the US, you may have cloud deployment. In the Middle East and Africa, you may

have an on-premises deployment. You just have to have it there because there weren't cloud services.

In Asia, you may have a mixture of the two. You may have on-premises deployments. You may have cloud deployments. In Europe, you may have a managed cloud deployment, which is private but is shared.

How do you manage Qlik against all these instances? We have a single Qlik Deployment Console, which enables you to go across all these services and manage all your instances from a single dashboard. I think that's pretty important. It comes back to my governance thing that it's not just about controlling all these. It's about having the insight to all these different deployments.

CI: I think it's not only important, it's pretty much mandatory these days because people do have these multiple infrastructures that they have to deal with.

DF: Not only that, the infrastructure is evolving. Just because you've got a deployment today doesn't mean that's how the deployment is going to be next year. You can be moving to the cloud all the time, but you've got some on-premises, some on cloud.

That mix is changing over time, some on public cloud, some on private cloud. That mix is changing all the time. And you're doing mergers and acquisitions and different things are coming in all the time. I think it's very important to be able to manage the evolution of this.

So many companies have taken a cloud strategy, which is "choose to go to the cloud or choose to be on-premises." That's just not realistic. You have to be able to manage the complexity of multiple deployments.

CI: I agree with you. All right, Donald. Since you're talking, let me go ahead and end with you then. Let's talk about the extended ecosystem. You have a very friendly community, a very vibrant community of developers and so forth. Let's talk a little bit about them and in particular, the one called Branch.

DF: Yes. Branch is part of our extended ecosystem. There are three parts of the extended ecosystem just now.

There is the Community, which is super active. We have over a hundred thousand interactions on our Community a day. It's a really, really active community with tens of thousands of members worldwide. People get questions answered on there super fast.

We also have QlikMarket, which is effectively like an app store for Qlik applications. People can host dashboards, and extension objects, and download connectors, that sort of thing. It is essentially for a charge. You can host it there commercially and people can pay to get access to your applications.

We have Qlik Branch, which is for developers. It's only been going for about six months. Qlik Branch is aimed at web developers, people who just live and breathe JavaScript, and JSON, and OGS, and all these things. We already have 5,000 people on there.

There are 250 projects. The projects range from extensions to full applications to complete skins built over the Qlik Analytics Platform. You could build a complete new version of Qlik using our application platform and our APIs and then host it on Branch for people to download.

TM: I would just add that the Qlik cloud is actually built using our APIs. It's another example of the extensibility platform.

CI: How would someone get to these things? Is there a URL?

DF: You want to go to Branch? It's branch.qlik.com. We're trying to make that easy as well.

CI: You did a fine job. All right. Unfortunately, we're out of time, though. That's it for this edition of the BBBT Podcasts. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff and it's always, always a pleasure to speak with Donald Farmer and now also Todd Margolis. Thank you both for joining me today.

TM: Thank you.

DF: Thank you very 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!