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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Vendor:	**Tableau**
Date recorded:	**06-03-2016**
Host:	**Claudia Imhoff**, Founder, BBBT
Guest(s):	**Francois Ajenstat**, VP Product Management
	Adriana Gil Miner, VP Corporate Communications
Run time:	**00:16:31**

Claudia:	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 guests today. They are Francois Ajenstat and Adriana Gil Miner. Francois is the vice president of Product Development, and Adriana is the vice president of Corporate Communications for Tableau. Welcome to you both.
Adriana:	Thank you, Claudia. We're excited to be here.
Francois:	It's great to be here.
Claudia:	Let me start with you, Adriana. Tableau. Wow, oh wow! It's been about a year and a half, and it has been a very busy time for Tableau, so if you don't mind, just touch on some of the news that has happened in the last year.
Adriana:	Well, it's been a very, very busy year for us, and lots of things happening, but I would say three big things. Number one, we've accelerated our pace of innovation so much in the last year. Since we were here we've released four new versions of Tableau. We're on Tableau 9.3, and Tableau 10 is coming around the world in just, I'd say a few weeks, or over the summer, actually.
	We've also launched new products on mobile, and new apps on mobile as well, Android and iOS. There's a lot happening on the product side. There's a lot happening of how we are distributing Tableau and how are we reaching mass markets. For example, we expanded all of our distribution channels, and you can procure Tableau server today in all the major cloud platforms: AWS, Azure, and Google.

The third thing that's really more on the CSR type of things, and that social responsibility side of things, is that 18 months ago, we launched our Tableau foundation, and we've invested a lot of time and money into increasing greater literacy in the world.

We have new programs, for example, where we offer free software to non-profits as well as training and support, and of course, we've expanded our Tableau academic program, and so on. You'll see lots of efforts to help more people see and understand data.

Claudia: I am so thrilled. Your non-profit support is just stunning. The other things I'd like to mention are some really quick statistics, if I can rattle them off: 42,000 customers in 150 countries, and over 3,000 employees. Is that about right?

Adriana: That is absolutely correct.

Claudia: I remembered! Tableau has been very focused on selling to the business, but that's changed. Your focus is now a more even keel between IT and the business, right?

Adriana: Yeah, and I wouldn't say we've changed the focus as much as we have scaled and been able to bring Tableau or self-service analytics of scale. Of course, you can't do that without a strong partnership with IT, and we've also seen that the market is mature, so self-service analytics is something that is mainstream now. You see a lot of IT leaders, IT champions, looking for the right solution, bringing that into organizations, at scale.

It is changing a little bit of this audience and Tableau getting better at advocating and connecting with the IT audience.

Claudia: Can you give me a couple of examples of customers that you think fall into that category?

Adriana: Yes. A recent one is Boston Scientific. They're a medical device manufacturer. One of the IT leaders there really was into creating a culture of analytics, in the organization. What's amazing is that in just four months, he had 245 desktops, he had over 1500 users on

Tableau's server, and he was excited to bring a tool that wasn't just about creating dashboards.

Anybody can do that, but it's how he could enable the ad hoc analysis -- the unpredicted type of question that comes up in every meeting.

Claudia: You had another one that I thought was kind of interesting. Tune BI?

Adriana: Yes. That's a fantastic embedded case, and we're seeing a lot more of those types of things, where you have a company like Tune that is a mobile analytics customer, creating a brand new product, revenue streams, powered by Tableau. It's white labeled. The interesting thing is that, really, data is out of the cost centers and the pattern of cost-saving money and decision-making, and actually becoming a revenue stream for many companies.

Claudia: The other thing that you mentioned is that you're supporting more than just traditional BI users. Can you explain what you mean by that?

Adriana: That's been from the get-go, a belief that data is an incredible resource. If you think about where data is being generated, is everything. Our bodies, of course all of our computers, everything that's digital, everything, and you can think of every single human activity that we do generates some kind of data. So what happens?

You have all of that information lying there. Then more and more people need to analyze it, understand, and make informed decisions based on that. So when you look at the market that way, it's not about the traditional BI people that have typically bought the systems. It's about everybody out there.

Think about how many people use Excel. From the get-go, we've always really gone into building a product that anybody can use. Doesn't matter how much experience you've had in the data analytics world, and that's our goal.

Claudia: It's a good one. I think it's working for you. Francois, let me bring you into the conversation a little bit. You've studied your customers. You've analyzed your customers a lot. Why do they pick Tableau?

Francois: Well, they pick tableau because we help them really unleash the power of their data. The mission of the company is to help people see and understand their data. But fundamentally, when our customers use Tableau, the first thing they say is that Tableau saves them time. They want to work with data, but it's just been too hard. Too time-consuming. And time and time again, they say Tableau saves them time.

But Tableau's also really easy to deploy, and so whether we're talking to the business users or IT, they're seeing that Tableau's really easy to deploy and manage and configure. It makes the process of enabling a data-driven culture just so much easier than before. And we give them a lot of flexibility, which is another key factor.

We talked today about how Tableau can be deployed on the premises, in the cloud, hosted in AWS, or Azure or Google Cloud, on mobile devices. It's really everywhere. But I think there's a last piece that is really unique to the Tableau community, which is our community.

There are over hundreds of thousands of people in our community, available to help one another, to help people be successful. The amount of training and resources and support that exists to make people really successful is really a key differentiator of Tableau.

Adriana: I call that a community of data heroes. When you become part of the Tableau family, you have the chance to become a data hero yourself.

Claudia: It's remarkable that the fifth reason, perhaps, is the enthusiasm of your community as users. Those customers are...I have never seen so many happy people than at your conference, and of course, you always promote them at your conferences. You give them that little

shiny light on them every now and then. I think that's your fifth key element, there.

Francois: The reason they're so excited isn't just that we're building tools and providing them with great features. They're excited because we're making them a hero. We're making them be more valuable in their organizations. We're enabling them to do their jobs better, to add value, to have impact, in a way that they've never had before.

It's really kind of this freedom and empowerment that we give that is beyond just products and capabilities. It's what it does to them that has made them so enthusiastic about the company and the product and the mission.

Claudia: It's reflected, also, in the adoption rate, going from one version to the other one. You have a pretty remarkable adoption rate, but you showed us a slide that was even more remarkable, and that was that the adoption rate for 9.3 sort of blew all the other ones out of the water. Why do you think that is?

Francois: Being a product person, you never really know if the features you're going to build are going to have impact. Generally speaking, we're really proud that our customers will upgrade to the latest version, roughly within a quarter of a release.

Two-thirds of our customers are on the latest release within a quarter. In the enterprise space, that's unheard of. It's amazing, and that's because we make the upgrade experience so simple. But something happened with 9.3. Normally we have this nice adoption curve, it follows a pattern, and with 9.3, it's a hockey stick. People are jumping on it so quickly.

I think there are a lot of great reasons in there. We've added a lot of self-service features, version control, content analytics. We've added features for users, like Union. We've added features for the enterprise, like Kerberos support for different databases, or support for initial sequel.

We've got some great capabilities for high DPI machines. So across the board, 9.3 is just resonating. It's a product that people want, and it makes them successful.

Claudia: If they want 9.3, wait until they see what's coming, and let's talk about it.

Francois: There's even more coming in 10.0, which is just a quarter after 9.3 came out.

Claudia: I know. So let's talk about that one, because I think that's where people are going to be very interested to hear what you have to say. There are four main focus areas, and I'm not going to pretend that I can rattle them off, so if you don't mind, tell me a few of your favorite features and functions in each of these four focus areas.

Francois: The four focus areas that we have are around providing any data to everyone, anywhere, at enterprise scale. That's really, really important. So when you think about any data, we're adding more connectors – connectors to Google Sheets, and Marketo, QuickBooks. Really, really important.

But one of the most exciting features in 10.0 is data integration. We're enabling row level data integration across databases. Imagine connecting your Hadoop system with your Oracle system, and doing essentially a federated query on the fly. Something that an end-user can just do ad hoc. Of course, you can govern that and manage it, but that will enable our customer success to go to a whole new level. That's data.

But it's about anyone. It's about any user, regardless of their sophistication, regardless of their skill sets. We want to give them great capabilities. In 10.0, we're adding support for things like clustering. Very sophisticated capabilities if you've ever heard of K-means analysis. We're essentially providing drag and drop K-means in Tableau. Huge power, huge sophistication.

When it comes to everywhere, so now we have data, we have deep analytics, people want to distribute everywhere, we've got a

version of Tableau for the Android device. But a really exciting feature in 10.0 is what we call device-specific dashboards.

This is where you can customize the experience, customize the dashboards for each device, because the experience matters. You want to tune and craft the experience to be just, just right for that device. Now you can customize it, you can get a preview, and it's going to be one dashboard, one URL for everyone.

And then lastly, at enterprise scale, we're adding tons of features in here, from version control for data sources to the ability to do full web authoring on the web, or full authoring on the web, I should say, to deeper self-service capabilities, to be able to subscribe other users. It's just a rich, comprehensive platform for all of our customers.

Claudia: I'll let you know what I thought was my favorite, and that's when you did the little slide from 9.3 to 10, and the reason I really liked it is that it was very clear that you made somewhat subtle changes to the interface, but they were remarkably powerful. Things got a little softer, the focus became much more on the graph, not on the tool. I don't know who came up with these, but they were really remarkable, but very subtle changes.

Adriana: I'll give you a little tidbit of that process. We actually partner with one of the most important typography designers. His name is Tobias Frere-Jones. He and his partner created Hoefler. So if you're a type geek, like myself, this is like rock star moment, this person created...that font that you see in 10 is custom-built for Tableau, specifically optimized for cognition.

It is built in relation to what could be a blank canvas, and it's considered one more mark in that entire system. It was tested, and tested, and tested, over and over. Over a year of work to just fine-tune. Just to tell you the level of detail and care that the product team goes in Tableau, and all the scientists that we have, to create this amazing experience.

I love that you pointed that out, because it's subtle, but it's so powerful, and I think people that really understand the finesse of a product can see the power of what is changing in 10.

Francois: And we spent so much time thinking about the user experience. It's not just about design. It's also about how people work with data and interact with data. So all those little details matter. We have a psychologist on staff, that understands how people perceive data and color, and they tune it just right. And doing something that is simple is really, really hard.

You have to get it just, just right, so people can stay in that flow. Sometimes I like to describe what we want to do, is that we don't want the users to know anything about Tableau. We want the software to fade to black. To go in the background, and for the user to just spend time having a conversation with their data.

To do that, it means you have to have a great interface, you need those details like the font, and those details to come to the surface, and let that person just engage and interact with their data. That's the success, and the tools should just go in the background and let the user be successful.

Claudia: Wow. All right, I don't think I can add anything to that. You have achieved that goal quite nicely. Unfortunately, that means that we're out of time, so that's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff, and it has been such a pleasure to speak my friends, Francois Ajenstat and Adriana Gil Minor of Tableau. Thanks so much for speaking with me.

Francois: It's always great to be here. Thanks for the opportunity.

Adriana: Thank you, Claudia. 'Til next time.

Claudia: 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!