



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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Claudia Imhoff: Hello and welcome to this edition of the Boulder BI Brain Trust, or the BBBT. We're a gathering of leading consultants and experts in business intelligence, who meet with interesting and innovative companies here in a beautiful Boulder Colorado. We not only get briefed on the latest news and releases, but we also share our ideas with the vendor on where the industry is going, and help them with their marketing direction and messaging.

The BBBT podcasts are produced by my company, Intelligent Solutions. I'm Claudia Imhoff and on the phone with me today, from Israel, are Rony Ross and Tomer Paz. Rony is the Founder and Chairmen, and Tomer is the Product Manager for Panorama Software. Welcome, Rony and Tomer. Nice to have you here.

Rony Ross: Our pleasure indeed.

CI: Rony, let me start with you. Panorama has had a long history in BI. You've been around for quite a while. Almost as long as I have. Why don't you tell me a little brief history of Panorama?

RR: Panorama started is a BI company developed its first generational BI product back in 1994 actually. This was an OLAP-based product with a new Windows-based, very innovative user interface, with some great ideas on how to construct a multidimensional database, that is optimized to size and to usage.

We actually sold that technology, which was third generation technology to Microsoft, and that was the latest foundation to Microsoft's foray into business intelligence -- to the building of Analysis Services. My former team moved to Redmond as Microsoft employees, and they actually manage and run the development and all the business intelligence development in Microsoft today.

Panorama continued as Microsoft's partner, first in order to maintain the customer base that we had at the time, and then as a partner to complement the solutions that Microsoft provides.

We actually evolved over the years with various innovative products. Until two and a half years ago, we actually viewed a huge opportunity in the



market that we will be developing. We started developing a new product called Necto. Necto is completely different, it takes concepts from the consumer world and moves them into this amazing world of business analytics and decision making.

CI: It has been an interesting 19 years that Panorama has been around. It's also been a very innovative and almost disruptive time in terms of what the consumers are now demanding out of BI. You mentioned some of the consumer trends that are really changing business as well as BI requirements. Tell me about these a little bit?

RR: What we see is the paradigm -- the computing paradigm let's put it -- that people use the technology to run their social life, their private life, has changed dramatically over the years. With things like Facebook and LinkedIn, and environments that enable you to collaborate and to consult with others and understand better what to do.

There are packages that recommend to you hotels that you prefer to stay in, and give you figures from others. The things that you do -- all of these crowd sourcing capabilities in the consumer world -- this has not yet penetrated the business world and the way that enterprises manage their own data and their own systems.

Neither have these personalization and contextual discovery features of systems like LinkedIn and Amazon, where Amazon will tell you the people who read this book that you have just bought, also read these other books that might be of interest to you. LinkedIn telling you here are some more people you may think will be relevant to connect with, based on the people you are already connected to.

All of these are amazing capabilities. They haven't found their way into the corporate paradigm. And the third paradigm which we see, that is changing business, is people are asking for business-driven, self-service solutions and yet they want to keep one version of the truth. They don't want to create these isolated isles of information that is not related to corporate IT and to incorporate BI, which is so well organized, so secure and so reliable, and they keep creating, they want to be able to create, an environment where they can both incorporate BI, as well as enable



self-discovery type of tools that are all well managed and still maintain the one version of the truth.

CI: Yeah. Well, Tomer, let me bring you into the conversation, because a very interesting paradigm shift indeed. In fact Panorama just released Necto 12, and it was under the message of "bringing the best of corporate BI and data discovery together", exactly what you just mentioned, Rony. Tomer, why don't you tell me what's new in version 12?

Tomer: Necto 12 brings a lot of great new capabilities to the market. With Necto we talk about three types of capabilities. We talk about the ability to connect to data sources. Explore the data, and then collaborate on the data.

With Necto 12, we've added an in-memory engine that allows users to connect to a variety of data sources. Really different types of data sources, starting from the classic standard data sources, such as tables in SQL or in Oracle. Also to connect to a newer type of data sources, such as Big Data, or semi-structured data, that exists in company reports, etc.

Then, Necto allows users to explore the data, to really go through the data, run analytical processes, whether it's manual processes or automatic processes that Necto does for them, that allows Necto to recommend to users what are the issues they should look at and where are things they should take notice.

Then, Necto allows users to work together collaboratively on the data to gain better insight together as a team, because people usually work in teams. They want to analyze the information as part of the teamwork and work collaboratively to better understand the environment and get better insights together.

CI: Certainly a refreshing change from many of the messages we've seen in other BI companies. Rony, let me return back to you, and let's talk about what I found was one of the more interesting Necto features. That was the ability to create this social ribbon. You've talked about connecting, exploring, and collaborating. You also have this social ribbon. If you don't mind, spend a few seconds and just describe what it is and how it's used.



RR: OK. So, what is special about Necto? Necto extended BI, the boundaries of BI, to include -- on top of data, which BI was always about data, showing data, analyzing data -- we extended the BI to the next level by adding the users to the paradigm, and by adding the insights created by users to the paradigm.

In what way? We added users to the BI system. So, the system, when you look at the view, or a report or KPI, the system shows you the social ribbon, which has a picture of your work buddy within the organization, who are people who use the same type of data as you do, that they viewed this report as well. They use this report. They were the authors of that report. They are relevant to this report. You know who you can collaborate with about this information.

If you see an issue, what you do is you actually drag the users, create an ad hoc team right there on the fly, and create a discussion team, which is like an ad hoc team. Send them a question and, when they open the discussion in their own time, what they get is, they get view that you saw when you asked the question.

Now, what we do here is we solve a very critical issue that organizations have. When they viewed the data and they wanted to collaborate with others regarding the issue that they saw, they had a big issue getting everybody to the same page. They would either set up a phone call to explain, "Here, open up you BI system and see what I see right now on my screen", right? Or, they would go out of the BI system and create some screen sharing capabilities, or they would cut and paste and send emails. Or they would cut and paste into Excel and collaborate on the Excel.

In any case, they always have to leave the BI system, and they were never really sure that the people that they were asking the question really see the same thing that they see.

That is what you solve when you add the people into the question. Not only that you can collaborate effectively on the data, but the system can also suggest to you what relevant people that you can work with. The people in Necto are part of the meta data of BI, and their comments, the discussions that were held, the process of tracking information, the



process of the analytical steps that we took in order to solve something, all these are steps out of our meta data, and it's much richer and much more powerful meta data than before.

CI: Most unusual. I really liked that feature. There were a couple of others that were also equally interesting. Contextual discovery for example. You emphasize contextual discovery. Why do you see that as an important feature for an organization?

RR: This is one of the amazing capabilities that we find in the consumer world, like LinkedIn, that can tell you -- and it's really improved tremendously over time -- and can suggest to you new people that you want to add to your network, because they might be relevant to you.

We found that we can do the same simply by using information that is already relevant and already exists in most of the BI systems, but we're building a very special BI recommendation engine. This BI recommendation engine can, for example, suggest to you who are the right people you want to collaborate when you view system data.

It can also suggest to you what are the relevant data, what are relevant views in KPIs and reports, that may be relevant to you. One of the things that people have an issue today is to know how to choose between these hundreds and maybe thousands of potential views, reports and KPI's, and dashboards that are created by the BI system. And you never know what is relevant to me.

What is relevant to me? How come the system doesn't know what is relevant to me if she knows what I've been looking at all the time. The system knows what I'm doing. The system knows what I'm looking at. So, she can recommend things to me, things that other people like me have used before.

The system also suggests things to the users. She suggests, "You know, people who viewed this report also viewed these other reports", and shows you snapshots from these reports, and you can opt to view these at your time.



So, the system encourages improved and more proficient usage of the BI system, and really breaks through the glass ceiling of BI usage patterns that we see in organizations today.

CI: That's marvelous. We certainly do need to break out of that mold, where BI is only being used by technologically savvy individuals or data scientists, or business analysts, or whatever. We really do need to broaden it and I think you've hit the nail on the head.

Now, Tomer, let me bring you back into conversation a little bit to talk about another feature that I found to be somewhat unique, I think. The cause and effect feature. For example, if a business person could ask the question, "What are the reasons for a sales drop?", they would want to see the cause and effect. The effect, obviously, is the drop in sales, but what caused that drop in sales. How does that work?

TP: This is a great example of how it's important to build a useable product in business intelligence. Not only follow the paths that feature tested allows intense analysis. If I see a problem in the data, for example, I see a sales drop, as a BI specialist, I can now start to research the data and really spend a lot of time analyzing it to find what were the causes for the drop in sales.

For me, it's very time consuming and something that I'll have to spend a lot of time in. For a business user, it's really not something he's able to do. It doesn't have the intimate understanding of the data structures and the knowledge of how to use BI analysis tools.

What we did in Necto is we developed the algorithms that allow Necto to do this analysis work for the user. It really analyses the data and brings to the users the topmost results of reasons that explain the causes for the problem we're seeing.

If I see a problem, I can ask Necto what are the reasons for this drop, and Necto will run the analysis for me and bring me the most important causes, based on analyzing data that is part of the modeled data that exists in Necto. It saves a lot of time for BI experts and it allows business people to, now, really use BI solutions for their needs without needing to be BI experts.



CI: Yes. The last two features I wanted to discuss with you Tomer, very quickly. One is the in-memory engine, and the other one is something that is becoming more critical to BI environments, and that's the ability to handle variably structured, some people call it unstructured, data. Briefly tell me a little bit about them.

TP: We've added an in-memory engine to Necto. This allows users to have fast results when they analyze data in Necto. It also allows Necto to connect to a really long list of data sources, really any data source you want to connect to. Now Necto, with that, can connect to different types of data sources. Whether they're highly structured data sources, such as the standard databases, to variably structured data, such as forms that exist in the organization, reports from a variety of sources, different types of big data sources, all of these that have looser structures.

We still have the capability of taking this loosely structured data and adding it to the properly structured data. And with that, building environment that gives us a much better understanding of the environment of the organization and a uniquely in-memory engine environment that allows us to analyze the data on the go, with the changes that the data gets in a real-time environment.

CI: Alright then, the last question, Rony, I want to go back to you because it's a nice wrap up question, I would like to hear some of the benefits that your customers have seen from this new and rather refreshing take on business intelligence. What do you see as their benefits?

RR: OK. First of all, we see the ability to do self-service from any data to action as a major capability. The fact that you can conserve one version of the truth, while doing a data exploration is just critical to the organization.

Another thing that our customers tell us is with this new capability you really see how fast people can shorten the decision time, the decision window, between identifying an issue and getting it resolved. All of the collaboration is faster and more efficient, the system is suggestive, so people can explore the information more readily, more effectively and with more people. You get faster decisions, and not only that, you get to use more information. Because we're kind of doing crowd sourcing,



which means you can really collaborate better with your peers, you actually make better decisions.

Now, not only that, with the ability to focus on the relevant, and the ability of the system to suggest to you what additional things to do and how to do them, BI is getting much, much more viral in the organization.

So, as I said, we're breaking through the glass ceiling of the BI usage. With that, we actually make the organization more strategic, because more people make better decisions faster. That's what makes a difference to the way the organization really executes.

Here we are, with fast, secure, enterprise deployment.

CI: It certainly is, like I said, refreshing and certainly a very interesting session that you had with us today at the BBBT. I think we could continue on for many, many hours talking about it, but, unfortunately, that's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been a very great pleasure to speak with Rony Ross of Panorama, and Tomer Paz, as well, of Panorama Software today. Thanks to both of you.

RR: Thank you, Claudia.

TP: Thank you.

RR: Thank you, and thank you everybody.

CI: I hope you enjoyed today's session. If you want to read more about it, please search for our hash tag on Twitter, that's #BBBT. Please join me again for another interview. Good-bye and good business.