



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, experts, analysts in business intelligence who meet with interesting and innovative companies here in a beautiful, but hey, maybe snowy today, Boulder, Colorado. We not only get briefed on the latest news and releases, but we also share our ideas with the vendors on where the BI industry is going and help them with their marketing direction and messaging. The BBBT podcasts are produced by my company, Intelligence Solutions.

I'm Claudia Imhoff and I'm very pleased to introduce my guests and good friends today, Suzanne Hoffman and François Ajenstat. Suzanne is the Senior Director for analyst relations, and François is the Senior Director for product management for Tableau. Welcome to you both.

Suzanne Hoffman: Thank you.

François Ajenstat: It's great to be here.

CI: All right. Nice to see you both. Let me start off with you Suzanne. Wow, you gave us an overview of what's happened since your last BBBT visit, which I think was December 2011, sounds right?

SH: That's right.

CI: Yeah, about 12 or 13 months ago. So many changes. Give me just a high-level overview of those.

SH: I think that the fact that we're growing so rapidly, both in our customer base, our partner base and obviously, with the increasing productivity from the software itself, that it lends itself to the changes that will support a much larger organization, much larger footprint of users, both from a developer perspective and end-users in the community. And that's really... We're here to support our customers so we have to grow in the same fashion.

CI: You've had tremendous customer growth. What do you attribute -- I mean over the year it's been remarkable -- what do you attribute that to?

SH: It's all about... We're helping customers simply see and understand their data, and be able to use it more effectively within their business, and that



data itself is proliferating in the market place. It's engendering the expansion of usage, internally by adding new layers of people within the companies -- our customers -- who can actually use the technology, and the technology spreads virally throughout, in an organization. The expansion of BI itself. It's still the fastest growing market, and we're attributing our success with delivering good product to new customers.

CI: Yeah. Let's talk about delivering that product because you have a somewhat unique way of getting your product into companies. Customer adoption is quite high, but it's not just one person getting Tableau, you've got a rather unique model of expanding, so why don't you talk about that a little bit?

SH: I think the model you're referring to is our "land and expand" model. It's probably less well known within the BI culture, because typically what organizations would do, vendor organizations, is they would sell at the CIO level or they'd sell at a strategic level and have a huge footprint. Sort of like a Goliath coming in and trying to do an enterprise implementation.

CI: And shoehorning everybody into that model.

SH: Exactly. What we find is that there's pockets of users who are underserved by that model. We reach out and they reach out to us as individuals, as small departments, as application specific, and want to use the technology. We enable them to buy over the web. So, it's as simple as using a credit card. We enable a single user, and it spreads virally from there. We also have the disconnected user. We have product even though it's very simple in that it's either a desktop version or a server version. The models lend themselves well to conforming to the type of implementation that the user needs.

So, we very often will have small implementations that are lands. We actually have patterned how long it will take an organization to expand. We can tell you exactly when they're going to buy more desktops, when they're going to migrate to a server implementation, and when they're going to go beyond a server named user to a hardware based solution as well.

CI: Yeah. So, you're using your predictive analytics, I see.



SH: Absolutely.

CI: All right, François, let me bring you into the conversation, then. It's been about 13 months since you were here last and it certainly has been a very busy 13 months for the company. Why don't you tell me a little bit, at least touch on the highlights of what's gone on.

FA: It's been a phenomenal 13 months since the last BBBT. Now, since then we've released version 7, which was our latest, greatest release of our software. We've also delivered connectivity to new data sources such as SAP BW, SAP HANA, multiple flavors of Hadoop from Cloudera's Hadoop, Mapbar, HortonWorks. We've also released our software in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

We've added support for Android tablets. We've added numerous new capabilities for our users. When you think about that in the last year, we've really haven't been sitting still. We've been focused on delivering value to our customers throughout the year. Now we've got our next major release coming, version 8, which is...

CI: Which we're about to talk about.

FA: It's going to be a big one.

CI: But, it's a release a month almost, isn't it?

FA: What we do is we deliver maintenance releases every single month. The reason we do that is that we're focused on delivering the fixes that our customers need as quickly as possible. So, we're really kind of delivering those monthly.

When there's new databases that we want to support, rather than waiting a full release cycle, which is still fast -- once a year, we try to deliver it as soon as it's ready. So, we get that innovation out to the market very, very quickly.

CI: That's excellent. Well, let's talk about the new release. Let's talk about The Kraken. This is Tableau version 8.0. As I understand it's out about, I guess, in about a month, mid-March or so. Hundreds of new capabilities, well over 200 people working on this. So, this is a pretty massive release, isn't it?



FA: This is a big release. The codename is The Kraken.

CI: The Kraken. Let's talk about it.

FA: We've been having fun with The Kraken. As you said, there's over 100 new different capabilities that are for both the individual to be empowered and drive ease of use, to capabilities for the enterprise to deploy the solution to more and more users, to capabilities for predictive analytics, new visualizations and also capabilities for developers to build new kinds of solutions using Tableau.

CI: Let's get into a little bit of detail about these. The first one you talked about were the new capabilities in the visual analytics space. You talked about fast performance. You talked about going after any data business, and so on and so on. Business integration, web and mobile authoring and so forth. If you don't mind, go over some of the details of each of those. At least enough so that people can understand them.

FA: Sure. There's five themes of this release. Visual analytics, performance, any data, business integration, and web and mobile authoring. When we talk about visual analytics, this is everything from new chart types, from tree maps, bubble charts, word clouds, but also new analytical capabilities.

We built in forecasting or predictive capabilities directly in the product. One click and you can forecast your data. We're really focused on that ease of use to deliver analytics to any user.

Now, when you talk about performance, it's one thing to be able to ask a question, but it has to come back quickly. We've really invested in performance with something that we call the Viz Engine, which marries the power of graphics capabilities that you might see in the gaming industry, and applying that to the database industry. So, you get blazing fast performance and you can really render a lot of points so quickly. That has really been an important innovation that we've delivered in this release.

Then any data in this release, we've added support for salesforce.com, Google Analytics, Google BigQuery, new data sources that our customers



have asked for. Now it's all built in. We've also added in API for developers to extend the kinds of data sources we can connect to. We've added APIs as well for programmability with a JavaScript API for partners.

Then lastly, we've invested a lot in this release with web and mobile authoring, so that now a user that is connecting through their iPad, their Android device, or browser can just, with one click, press edit and then start answering their own question.

Imagine using your finger to start looking at sales trends or looking at different geographies. You get that ease of use and power of Tableau that our users love, now available to anybody, anywhere they are. That's just so exciting.

CI: Right in the palm of their hand, isn't it?

FA: Absolutely.

CI: A lot going on there. Now, two of the things that were mentioned in a little more detail. Let me start with the first one. You made a point of differentiating between data blending and data virtualization, which I really like. So, if you don't mind, go over it again.

FA: The reason I made that difference is that they are two different things. In Tableau, one of the capabilities we have is something called data blending, where any user can, essentially, integrate two different data sources together with a few clicks. We make that so easy so that anybody...

CI: They're not physically moving the data, though.

FA: They're not moving the data. It's more of a concept of a left join, really, if you want to think of it that way. Where you connect to one and you enrich it with the other. Now, we've made that simple, and in this release, with version 8, we've actually tried to remove some of the barriers that existed before for users to bring that data into the product.

Now, I differentiated with data federation or data virtualization because that's really a unified query across multiple different data sources, and



bringing that all together as one. Which is really different, and I didn't want to lead the impression that that's what we're doing. What we're really doing is enabling the users to enrich their data.

CI: With the other sources of data.

FA: Exactly.

CI: Which I like. It is sort of a form of virtualization, but not quite the way that you had talked about where you're really going after multiple sources. Wonderful. All right. Well, let me end on this last little bit here. Something else that you mentioned earlier this morning were parallelized dashboards. That got everybody's attention. They were all going, "Oh, oh. What's that? What's that?" Pretty unique to Tableau. Why don't you tell me a little bit about that?

FA: I think people just like things executing in parallel. We feel more productive that way.

CI: Don't we though?

FA: As I mentioned, one of the themes of this release is around fast performance. We really looked at a lot of different things to make the performance of Tableau just blazingly fast. That's everything from how we execute queries, our in-memory engine, and how we just construct the visualizations.

Thinking about that, one of the things that ends up happening with a dashboard is, with all the different zones that you might have on a dashboard, the different charts and data points, those tend to execute one after the other. So, the performance of your dashboard is as performant as the number of zones that you have.

With version 8, on the server what we're doing is we're executing those in parallel. Imagine a dashboard that had 10 zones on it. I call them zones. Just think of them as charts or data points. Each one takes a second to execute. They're fast, but it takes 10 seconds to execute all of that.

Now that it's in parallel, the whole thing will take maybe three, four seconds to execute the queries and compose them and present them



back to the user. So, you just can see a tremendous boost in performance, which the users will really realize because things will load faster and interact faster.

CI: Yeah. It's very clever. Very clever. I commend you for that.

FA: Thank you.

CI: All right. Version 8, coming out soon.

Unfortunately, we're about out of time. So, that's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff and it's always a pleasure to speak with Suzanne Hoffman and François Ajenstat of Tableau. Thanks to both of you.

FA: Thanks for having us. It's always great to be here with the BBBT.

CI: I hope you enjoyed today's session. If you want to read more about it, please read the blogs at our website, www.boulderbibraintrust.org or you can search for our hashtag on Twitter. That's #BBBT, and join me again for another interview. Goodbye and good business!