BBBT

Boulder BI Brain Trust

**Leveraging
Business
Intelligence**

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.

For more, see: www.bbbt.us.

Vendor:	**Tableau Software**
Date recorded:	**March 6, 2015**
Host:	**Claudia Imhoff**, President, BBBT
Guest(s):	**Francois Ajenstat**, Vice President Product Management
	Adriana Gil Miner, Vice President Corp Communications
Run time:	**00:16:55**
Audio link:	**Podcast**
Transcript:	[See next page]

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 pleased to introduce my guests today. They are Francois Ajenstat and Adriana Gil Miner. Francois is the Vice President of Product Management, and Adriana is the Vice President of Corporate Communications for Tableau. Welcome to you both.

Francois Ajenstat: Thanks for having us. It's great to be here.

Adriana Gil Miner: Thank you, Claudia.

CI: Adriana, let me start with you because you gave a really good overview of Tableau's year 2014. It's been a remarkable year for Tableau. Why don't you give us some of the statistics?

AG: Indeed, it was an incredible year for Tableau. We had 78 percent year-over-year growth in revenues. We reached 413 million. That's a huge jump from just being at 200 million the year before. What's interesting is that this comes after five years of consecutive over 75 percent growth.

If you think about even beyond that, what does it mean? When we looked at our lifetime revenues, 2014 represented 45 percent of our overall revenue. It's an incredible feat for one year of Tableau.

CI: To be almost 50 percent of your total revenues is just astounding. It's going to be hard to beat that this year.

AG: Yeah, but I think that the important thing is to think that this really early still in the journey of Tableau. Having that kind of success only gives us more fire to do that. Of course, when we think, "OK. Well, what do we do with that money?" Well, we have invested that money in people. We are recruiting. We're pretty close to 2,000 employees worldwide.

We expanded internationally. We now have six offices internationally plus four of them in the US. You're seeing a tremendous expansion globally. It's all aimed to be able to support our customers at a global level in their location, in their region, in their language.

CI: Speaking of customers, there were a lot of questions. But briefly tell me, how many customers? Are they paying? Is this everybody under the sun, or are these real customers of Tableau?

AG: We would love for it to be everybody under the sun.

AG: But not quite yet. We reported, by the end of 2014, 26,000 customer accounts. That means companies, so organizations like a church, a school, a hospital, of course companies, a bank, even government agencies. Each one of these organizations might have one to 10,000 or hundreds of thousands of users. We actually don't know. But that's how we count our paid customer accounts.

Now, as you know, Claudia, Tableau also offers a free version of the product, called Tableau Public, and a platform. This is for people to create, and share, and learn data visualizations on the Web. For that, we look at users. By the end of 2014, we reported 70,000 users. They're publishing about 4,500 Vizzes a week.

Imagine that kind of volume. We're seeing Vizzes with a million, five million views. This is the level of YouTube. How exciting that data is getting that kind of attention?

CI: Boy, it sure is. I said Tableau is on fire. All right. Francois, let me bring you into the story, because the big news, of course, is the release of Tableau 9.0.

FA: Ooh la la.

CI: Ooh la la. Let's start there. Let's talk about what are some of the components, easier to use, making it a better user experience, and so forth. Why don't you describe a little bit briefly? Let's start with maybe working with data, that it's so much easier now.

FA: 9.0 is the next big release of the product. It's always fun to come to BBBT and share what's coming forward. Our mission at Tableau, as many of you know, is that we're all about helping people see and understand their data.

That means that we need to make access to data easier than before. We need to help people answer new kinds of questions, richer kinds of questions. We need to provide an user interface that disappears and lets people stay in that flow. We need to provide software that scales to support all the needs of the enterprise.

But it starts with data. We want to make it really simple to get to the data that you have, whether that data is in a relational database, in a big data platform, like Spark, -- we're now certified on Spark -- whether it's in a stat file, like SAS, SPSS, and R.

Those are now native connections in Tableau, which is really great, because data scientists will now be able to use Tableau and expand the reach of those statistical platforms. But sometimes, that data isn't quite right for analysis. It's dirty, or it needs some extra preparation.

In version 9.0, we're adding data preparation features from the ability to split, pivot your data, but also the ability to automatically clean up dirty Excel spreadsheets so you can spend more time doing data analysis than data cleanup.

CI: I think one of the really cool things I saw was the data interpreter. I don't know if you can describe that, or if people can go online and see it. But maybe you can just briefly talk about what that is, because I thought that was actually pretty slick.

FA: It is really slick. It almost feels like magic. When you look at your spreadsheets, you can download a spreadsheet from the Web, from the government, or even the spreadsheets that you have -- a lot of them are not really that clean. They're pretty dirty. They have headers. They have empty rows. They are formatted to be consumed in a spreadsheet, not for analysis.

Our engineers built this data interpreter that reasons on the spreadsheets and tries to understand, "Where is the actual data on the spreadsheet?

Where are the headers?" It removes all the crufts. It removes the empty rows, the headers and footers, and just finds where that data is. It does that with one click.

CI: It's actually quite interesting. Let's go on down that line then, because Tableau is also known for its flow. You get out of the way, let the people work with the data, let them continue with the thought process, the flow of their thoughts. Why don't you talk to me a little bit about what 9.0 is doing in that case.

FA: Flow is actually really interesting, because what we want is for users to spend more time analyzing their data. We always talk about the software disappearing and the user having a conversation with their data. That means that they're staying in that flow.

As they have a thought or a hunch, they can explore it seamlessly without the software getting in the way, without having to pop up a wizard or a dialog. When you look at 9.0, we spent a lot of time thinking about that flow and how do you keep the user in the data experience?

We've added things like the ability to type in anywhere. Just like you can type in Excel anywhere you want, you can do the same thing in Tableau. We've added drag-and-drop analytics, so you can drag and drop a forecast or a trend. We've added the ability to have responsive marks that gives you instant feedback for the selection that you have.

The data preparation features are also part of the flow. As you're analyzing data, if you find dirty data, you can actually clean it up during your analysis without having to go back to the data connection and then come back to your analysis. You're staying in that flow and keeping that train of thought that you have, to help you get to the end result that you're looking for.

CI: It's so frustrating to find something wrong, and then have to jump out of what you're doing, get into, in some cases, an entirely different tool, and then try to rebuild the thought process and everything else. You've really done a good job of eliminating that awful jump out, jump back in kind of routine.

FA: Absolutely. It's so important for a user to just keep that train of thought. As soon as you break that flow, it takes a really long time to come back. Flow is the user experience. It's a lot of the little things that you do to make the software get out of the way.

It's also performance. How responsive is the application? Does it give you the response as you just drag something else into the view? 9.0 also takes a giant leap in that direction, by making big performance improvements so that you get instant results or an analysis at the speed of thought. But, again, the software just disappears, and the data becomes the hero of the experience.

CI: Or the user.

FA: And the user, of course.

CI: Speaking of the user, Adriana, let me bring you back into the conversation. You gave us a few customer case studies of people using the technology. Tell me about them.

AG: At the end of the day, it's like, "What are people doing with Tableau?" It's fascinating to see just the broad range of use cases. One of my favorites is the Brooklyn Public Library, which is a very old institution. 120...

CI: 120 years old, right?

AG: That's correct. It's actually 119, but I rounded up to... But yes, it's a 120-year-old institution. How does one institution remain relevant to a community of 2.5 million people? They look at, "What are people using?" Everything from books to, actually, WiFi. That's one of the most important services they do to their community.

With Tableau, they've been able to do their entire IT planning, and it's a huge infrastructure in all of their branches, to provide free WiFi for the community. That's something fantastic.

I hear it from the CIO from the Brooklyn Public Library that one of the most exciting things he sees with Tableau is that, actually, librarians are using it. They come to him. They show him, "You know what? We need to stack up

more books on, you know, the '50 Shades of Gray.'" But this is the kind of analysis that we get excited to see in people.

CI: It's so unusual for a library, of all things, to really dive into analytics. That's fascinating. All right. Tell me more.

AG: I love baseball, since I'm from a country that actually exports baseball players, Venezuela. The Texas Rangers uses Tableau as well. They have this beautiful visualization about their stadium. They can actually see what fans do from the moment they come in, and what merchandise they buy, what food, what drinks. They also manage their staffing.

One of the interesting things is that they had all these sideload information. These were all different departments. With Tableau, they created the first 360 view of what the fans are doing and in real time. For example, if a game is delayed, they can adjust staffing right there to save money and make every game profitable. It's quite interesting.

CI: Then the last one you told us was my favorite one. It was the health care one. If you don't mind, a brief overview of what's going on there.

AG: Sure. That was Stanley Healthcare. Stanley Healthcare is a very interesting institution. They provide real-time location services to 17,000 hospitals around the world. What they're doing with Tableau, they are actually embedding Tableau in their own mobile platform. They have a mobile product.

They're getting real-time data that they attach to products, as well as patients. When you get that little tag on your...

CI: A little RFID tag?

AG: Yeah. It's a little RFID. You can map, real time again, what is the experience of those patients in the hospital. You can imagine the hospitals can look at, in reality, how to optimize the wait times: are you waiting two-three hours to get discharged, how much prep time you're getting before the OR.

It is incredible what it can do to actually help, in a sort of life and death situation, to improve that experience in the hospital.

CI: Fascinating stories. They really are. All right, Francois. Back to you. You mentioned Tableau Public. Actually, you did, Adriana. There's also Tableau Online. I want to drill in a little bit on both of them.

FA: Tableau Public, as Adriana mentioned, is, essentially, like a YouTube for data. Anybody anywhere around the world can upload data and share it publicly on the Web. We've had over 300 million people consume visualizations on Tableau Public since it's launched. It's incredible to see that impact. It's all over the world.

One thing I think is actually fascinating is, if you think of those 300 million people, they didn't go through formal BI training. They didn't have to watch a video before consuming the data. They just accessed a Web page, and their data is right there. They can interact with it. Just seeing the power that data can have to unlock that potential around the world is absolutely incredible.

CI: It's its own website. It's not tableau.com, correct?

FA: Correct. It's called tableaupublic.com. That's where you can go download the software and publish visualizations. Very similar to how you think of YouTube.com as a way of publishing.

With 9.0, we're completely redesigning the experience to make content really come alive, and help people discover and be inspired at the kinds of things that they can do with their data, helping them find information that's relevant.

More importantly is also highlighting the authors, the people that are creating the content for Tableau Public, because many of them are using Tableau Public as their résumé or their data résumé, as I like to say, where they can expose their best work and showcase to the world the kinds of things that they can do. People are using that to get jobs, and to be hired, and for consulting gigs. It's just...

CI: Pretty smart.

FA: It's exciting.

AG: I will jump in to say that, also, is an incredible tool for advocacy. For example, Ramon Martinez, he works for PAHO, the Pan American Health Organization. That's part of the WHO. He is an advocate for health issues, like infectious diseases, and helping, particularly Latin America, allocate resources.

For example, when the Ebola crisis came in, really early on, when it was under 100 deaths, he projected what the global impact was going to be of this disease. He also has looked at much less famous epidemics. He's a chemist by training, by the way, not a data analyst.

When you talk to him, for him: "This is the way I communicate to the world, what's important to me. This is the way I can grab attention." Some of his Vizzes have been published in Mashable, Forbes. We really see him like, "Look, how can we help him advocate a very important public interest issue?"

This is a fantastic thing that I personally get so, so excited about Tableau Public, that it's not just business data. We're actually helping the world by enabling people to see and understand data.

CI: Lovely. All right. We're almost out of time, so the big drumroll. When is Tableau 9.0 going to be released?

FA: We're currently in beta. It will be released early next quarter, roughly in the next 60 days. There are several thousand people beta testing it right now. It's actually already running in Tableau Public. I can't wait to see this software going out to our users and seeing what they're going to do with it to really leverage their data. It's going to be so cool.

CI: Excellent. Exciting times. I expect the same run rate that you had last year to be this year's run rate as well as far as revenues, and customers, and everything else. Wonderful.

Unfortunately, we are out of time, though. That's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been such a pleasure to be speaking with Francois Ajenstat and Adriana Gil Miner of Tableau today. Thank you to both of you.

FA: Thank you. It's great to be here.

AG: Thank you, 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!

Page 10 of 10