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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.

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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 pleased to introduce my guest today. She is Sherry Brown. Sherry is the president of AptiMap. Welcome, Sherry.

Sherry Brown: Thank you, Claudia. Thank you so much for having me today.

CI: Sherry, it's been an interesting day for me. This was one of our Boulder BI Brain Trust start-up days. We had your company, AptiMap as one of our first start-ups to come in. Let's start with a little bit of an overview of AptiMap. What is the company all about, and why did you get it started?

SB: AptiMap actually started because I personally had to put together some field mapping business requirement myself, using spreadsheet. I just found it to be very tedious, time-consuming, error prone, and was just so wishing there was another way to do it.

That is actually how the company AptiMap, was born. AptiMap's goal is to create easy to use intuitive software. The first product, MappenMaven, was born from this need of being able to do field mapping business requirements with ease.

CI: Let's talk about then some of the benefits, because you talked about you didn't want to do it by hand. You wanted to be more productive. What are the benefits of something like MappenMaven then?

SB: The way it works is you've got visual mapping, which takes a ton of time, because there are no copy and paste errors with visual mapping. There's the source comparison, which allows you to get your sources right in, let the tool do its work, and find those matches for you right away.

That, by itself alleviates the tediousness because you can take advantage of letting the tool capture the quick wins for you.

Not to mention, when you are using spreadsheets to do the business requirement, anything that you would want to find data lineage wise or impact analysis wise or completely by hand as you mentioned—by using the tool and having all your rules inside of it—you can quickly and easily find that data lineage and impact analysis.

There are also other features that allow for plain efficiency and effectiveness, and saving you time. That includes being able to validate faster, and do auditing faster.

CI: The other thing I liked as well, and maybe we'll talk about this when we talk about the demo, were some of the statistics that you supply something I have not seen in other data prep tools, or data mapping tools or so forth. Let's hold off on talking about that though until we get to how you differentiate a little bit. Maybe you can talk a little more about those statistics.

SB: Sure.

CI: If you don't mind then, let's move a little bit more into the demo itself. Tell me about it. Is it cloud-based only? Is it something that I put on my desktop? Tell me a little bit about your technology. How does it work, and then a few of the features, if you don't mind more about the features?

SB: Sure, so it is cloud-based. It's a subscription model. The way that it works is you would pull in any of the sources that you have. If you already have your requirements, you could start from there. The second you pull it in you know your data lineage, as a matter of fact. Then, if you haven't started your project already, then what you will do is just pull in your sources from CSC file. You would go ahead and perform that source comparison. And, there are different properties that you can take advantage of. One of those properties is that you can set the ETL rules right there. You can even identify who is responsible for that field or particular source. You can put all kinds of information in that are specifically database-related, like what values are allowed.

You could even take it as far as a developer letting you know or entering on his own, where the file is, what server the file is on for the script that runs the ETL. Then, keeping to point though, we want to remember that the purpose of MappenMaven is for the business analyst. That person is the one who would typically use a spreadsheet to set these rules.

Now instead of doing that, you're going to use whatever files you already have at hand, due to visual mapping, and use the source comparison to go forward. Other features, which we'll touch on in a moment…that other features are you can use field prioritization, so you can right away feel which fields are using most often. That can help you know where to start for your priorities. You can also use that field prioritization to learn about the different rules within one source right there without doing any extra effort. The flip side of that, you can look at all of the rules across the sources for a particular field.

CI: Let's get into the guts a little bit of the technology. First of all, tell me a little bit about the stats. Then also, I want to hear...you have some interesting capabilities in addition to the technical Metadata. You actually do capture a fair bit of business, what I would call business Metadata as well. I'd like to hear you talk about that as well. Let's start with the stats though.

SB: Basically, when you pull your source into MappingMaven, the tool automatically—there is no extra step at all—the tool automatically shows you how many fields you have in MappenMaven, which ones have been started, meaning which have lines to or from them and/or have an ETL rule, which ones have been finalized officially by - the user, and which ones have been ignored for example, meaning they are in MappenMaven, but you don't really care about them. And it also tells you based on the ones you have finalized and ignored, versus the total, how far along you are with the process. That applies for the whole project. You can additionally get that information by source.

So by source, you can tell how far along are you for that one particular source. And, you can even finalize or ignore an entire source if you happen to know you're already finished with that source in one way or the other. It will tell you as well by source how many other sources are coming into it, and how many are heading out.

CI: Very clever, very cleaver. Tell me a little bit about your business Metadata. It's so very difficult to capture. We tried to capture it in data modeling tools. We captured in spreadsheets, whatever we can. Your tool has a fair amount of business-oriented Metadata as well. Tell me a little bit about that.

SB: You can go ahead and create your descriptions and comments in for a field, as well as who the go to person is for that particular field. All fields have those properties. You can do that as well for the source, so you can describe a little bit for anybody who might need to research, or take a look back or to just remind yourself, as you report in the project, where do those sources come from, where do those fields come from, how are you intending to use them? I've mentioned in this before that you can even go so far as to the more technical side of that. What kind of data is involved?

Another topic that I'd like to hit on that part is there's a property called Source Type. What that does for you is it allows you to identify which sources just came in raw if you will, and then which sources are representing your data warehouse layer, and which sources are representing your report layer? This actually allows you, should you have that information available to you—when you go ahead and pull those sources then—that allows you to go ahead and compare what you need on your reports, to what you already have in the data warehouse.

Those are also things that allow you to do the prioritization by a particular type of source. If you want to focus on just your report sources, you can. If you want to focus on the warehouse layer you can, and so forth.

CI: Yeah, I get it. Let me ask you another question then about your users. Who is exactly is your target audience? Who would be using this new technology?

SB: The user for sure is the business analyst. Someone who is preparing the business requirement, and then anybody who is either fulfilling that type of role, so it could be a data warehouse or business intelligent consultant, coming into a small or medium-sized company, who is also learning about that particular company's business and needs to play the role of the business analyst. It could be for a larger company, where they actually do have a business intelligence department, and because they have a

business intelligence department, they're going to have business or system analysts, for example, working in this arena, and they certainly don't want to keep doing research after research over the same things.

So, they can put their requirements and such inside MappenMaven, and just go from there. That's the big time saver right there. If you're saving time you are certainly saving money, and you have the ability to go on to other projects and such.

Then, of course the other part of the target audience are those folks who need to consume that data. It could be that somebody who wasn't even involved in preparing for the data warehouse that they're writing reports. Well they could certainly just go in and say, "I want to use this field. What was that field intended for?" Then, naturally the people who are doing the development and implementing for the data warehouse will certainly need to be users of MappenMaven as well.

CI: Pretty broad audience. Any differentiation in industries or size of company?

SB: No, not necessarily. It really is a good fit for the business or systems analyst in whatever the role is. The catch there is that many people in many different size companies will perform that role.

If I would focus on in anything, it would be that person who is responsible to set the requirements, and then who also is the main go-to person for any questions that might come up about the requirements for somebody who may not be involved on a daily basis, or somebody for whom it's faster to check with this business analyst rather than even look for themselves.

CI: A quick question then. You put up about four use cases which I thought were quite interesting. Just quickly go over those four use cases where you see MappenMaven being used.

SB: Right for sure, anybody who is involved in creating a data warehouse, this would be the perfect business requirement tool for them. Anybody who, well as we know, the data warehousing industry has come a long way. Often, it's time to recreate the data warehouse. Whenever you're in that situation, this is a good opportunity to use MappenMaven for the requirement.

As well as folks who are involved in system integrations or system migrations, and maybe that means it's just somebody is upgrading their system, or maybe there's been some buy-out and either a merger or replacement of the system needs to take place.

Certainly, somebody sometime is going to take some sources and do some comparing. MappenMaven would be the perfect tool for all four of those situations.

CI: Anytime you've got any kind of source to target type map it sounds like.

SB: Yeah.

CI: Alright, last question. What about the future for your product? Where are you going to go with the product and the company?

SB: The first step definitely is to allow folks to connect directly to databases, more of the traditional relational databases because we don't want any extra stuff in here that are not necessary. We'd rather let you connect directly, and get your source right into MappenMaven and go from there.

I definitely see the tool being enhanced or simply making it easier to deal with the research that's involved in setting the requirements. When you're comparing sources, what you want to do is when you think two fields might match, you want to be able to view that data right away. That would be another shorter term step—it's to let you see the data right in the system of the fields that you are comparing, so that you know if you're really dealing with the same information or not.

From there, it can go into data profiling, and potentially integrating with tools whose purpose is data modeling as well.

CI: It sounds good to me. I look forward to having you come back for a BBBT maybe in about a year, year and a half, and telling us all the good news, all the new changes to your company as well as to your technology. Unfortunately, we're out of time this time around. That's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast.

Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It has been a great pleasure to speak with Sherry Brown of AptiMap today. Thanks so much for being one of our start-up queens.

SB: Thank you so much, Claudia. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to yourself, and in all the folks involved.

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!