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:	**Logi Analytics**
Date recorded:	**June 28, 2013**
Host:	**Claudia Imhoff**, President, BBBT
Guest(s):	**Brian Brinmann**, Vice President of Products
	David Abramson, Director of Product Management
Run time:	**00:14:20**
Audio link:	Logi Analytics
Transcript:	[See next page]
Transcribed By:	CastingWords

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.

CI: I'm pleased to introduce my guests today. They are Brian Brinkmann and David Abramson. Brian is the Vice President of Products and David is the Director of Project Management for Logi Analytics. So, welcome to you both.

Brian Brinkmann: Thank you, we're happy to be here.

David Abramson: Yes, thank you.

CI: All right. Well, Brian, let me start with you. Let's start with a quick overview of Logi analytics. First of all, you've changed your name. What was it before, and what is it now?

BB: Logi Analytics has been in business for over 12 years. We were formally known as LogiXML. The reason we changed our name back in March of 2013 was really to reflect better the way our customers have been using our product, and that is really to analyze the information inside their corporations for better business performance.

CI: The company's done remarkably well since a whole bunch of new things -- new leadership, new name. Tell me about that a little bit.

BB: Primarily, we serve three businesses, the small to medium enterprise, the large enterprise, and the OEM business. So, other software companies embedding our analytics into their products to improve their customers' experience. Really, over the course of the last four years, we've really gotten a good tract, a good bead. We're growing just under 70 percent a year. Our business is looking very good and very strong. At this phase,

we're looking at adding new capabilities to the corporation and new products to keep our growth trajectory on that same...

CI: ... pretty remarkable path. Let's talk a little bit about the flagship product. We're going to get into the new one immediately, but let's talk about Logi Info. That is the flagship product. You mentioned that there are really five use cases for Logi Info. Tell me about those.

BB: When we surveyed our customers and looked across everything they were doing, they really did fall into five cases. Not surprisingly, dashboard and reports are really number one.   [That is,] understanding and monitoring the behavior and performance of the companies. People were also building mobile apps with them, and interactive mobile apps that were actually full applications that would do write-back and initiate processes. It wasn't just a one way dissemination of information, but a very interactive, full blown application that's analytics driven.

We have people building web front ends. They have lots of systems where they couldn't get the analytics out, and they realized that our BI platform was great for being able to surface that information where they couldn't do it before or it was very, very difficult.

We also work with information portals, so some of our largest scale distributions. People are taking our analytics and making it available even, in many cases, publicly available, to tens of thousands of users. Really, as a theme running through most everything we do is embedded analytics. One of our segments, the OEM or SaaS software segment, in particular uses our analytics to improve the products that they in turn sell to their customers. That business itself has been very strong for us.

CI: Let's turn to the big news, which of course is the fact that you're releasing Logi Vision, or at least releasing the news about Logi Vision, today. It is really a data discovery, visual discovery type of tool, right?

BB: That's correct.

CI: Why don't we start there? If you don't mind, let's take just a moment and define what you mean by visual discovery or data discovery.

BB: Logi Vision, we believe we're bringing a new, fresh take to data discovery. It's not just about the visual analysis, which, of course, Logi Vision will do. But it's also about a more sophisticated level of analytics that are capable, that you can do, that businesspeople can do. But we're trying to make that far simpler. Not only do we have these analytics and the visualizations, but we're also taking a very novel approach to how individuals share or disseminate that information.

Classically, people would build and publish. We think that's old and not very effective. We think it's time to bring the social techniques of what almost everyone does now, well over billions of people on the planet do now, and apply those to sharing and finding the most important analytics that a company has. That's what we mean by analyze, visualize and share. That's why we believe we have a very fresh view and fresh take on visual data discovery.

CI: It certainly was an interesting view. You made a comment that it was designed for business professionals, not data scientists. I think I understand that, but why don't you explain what you mean by that?

BB: It's a good point. I do want to clarify. It's not that data scientists can't use Logi Vision. It certainly is great and powerful for them to do. What we did is we wanted to set ourselves a high bar on the experience. Data scientists are very educated. They're very intelligent about the business and about data structures and about computational algorithms. Business people don't necessarily have that intersection of skills, so we want the experience to be simple. That's what we're really shooting for. That doesn't mean it's inappropriate for data scientists. They can absolutely use and benefit from it as well.

CI: David, let me bring you into the conversation, then. Let's continue with Logi Vision. There are three parts to it. Why don't you explain the three parts?

DA: OK. The three core components or parts of the application that we're bringing to the market are the data smart technology, which is all about making it very easy not just to connect to a multitude of data sources and even blend data, but also build in a lot of very easy to use, intelligent

features around the data that open up new opportunities for ways to analyze and work with your data. The second piece is what we call the think space, which is our main analysis user interface area of the product. This is something that we're bringing, again, a slightly new output paradigm. We want to show users the data right away so they can very easily and quickly take action on that information, build visualizations quickly, use a very interactive drag and drop mechanism by connecting the dots together within their data, and generate best fit recommendations, visualizations, around the datasets they plan to analyze.

Lastly, that third piece, which we call the info board, is how users can really socialize those insights that they've gleaned from the data through very easy mechanisms for sharing the complex visualizations that they've built, creating social tools to make it easy to search and follow and find what other users have done. Really, create a very simplified and curated experience to take in all the information that people have gathered into the application.

CI: It really was a beautiful demo, and I commend you for that.

DA: Thank you.

CI: It really was quite nice. We also had, though, a discussion, because you started out, first off, by using a spreadsheet as your source of data, which kicked off a whole conversation. It sent shudders down some people's backs. [For] others, it was like a refreshing change. It brought up a whole discussion, though, in this data discovery mode, of governed versus ungoverned data. I can mix and match data all over the place, I can bring in a bunch of spreadsheets, I can blend data with those spreadsheets that I get from somewhere else, I can bring in my EDW data if I choose to.

One of the questions that I think I asked was how does someone monitor this environment, then, to make sure that data discovery will bleed into production at some point? You discover something of interest. You then want to put it into production. How does someone monitor this environment to know when that has occurred, then?

DA: Well, so let me start just by highlighting one of our driving principles behind the product, and Brian alluded to this a little bit earlier, and that is, we really want to make the application and the interface very simple and easy to use for a large number of individuals within the organization.

A lot of what we've been hearing from our customer base, our folks that we've talked to in the industry, and folks that either use our products today or use other products to build their business intelligence applications and do data discovery, [is that] the challenge that they face is not only on the data side, but they want to be able analyze and work with their own data. They want to be able to analyze and work with data that's behind the firewall in their corporate data warehouses, enterprise data warehouses.

One of the driving principles was really being able to make that process as easy as possible. Now, obviously, when you bring it closer to the business user, you're introducing a degree of risk, in that they're going to bring data that's not governed by the enterprise. We see that as both a positive and a negative.

Certainly, it's positive because users can bring any kind of data they want, blend it with other sources, and generate a lot of interesting visualizations and analysis and insight from that. There is the need, however, to continue to keep tabs on the types of things that people are working on and understand the bigger picture of the data that exists in your organization. I think we will be able to get there with both models, in that we have our BI platform, Logi Info, which we talked about a little bit earlier.

Part of what we're aiming to do is couple the two experiences together as well, which will allow for both a platform-governed experience for the users as well as a visual discovery experience for the business. By merging those two capabilities and integrating those two, I think we'll, hopefully, achieve best of both worlds.

CI: It's a very interesting paradigm shift, I think, for a lot of BI environments, BI developers and implementers as well. Let's get back to Logi Vision a little bit, in terms of the features that you're offering. The demo, as I said, was

really quite good. I particularly liked the binning idea, or the binning demo that you did. But why don't you tell me a little bit about the features of Logi Vision?

DA: Sure. We talked about the different capabilities or components of the product -- the data smart, the think space, the info board. All of these really drive the types of features that we're trying to bring to the user. You mentioned binning, which is a great way to take continuous data, such as dates and numbers, and give users more flexibility to perform sophisticated analysis on that data by automatically creating the appropriate groupings and logic to pivot on those datasets, to build the right labels and analyze the distribution of that data. It just gives you a ton of flexibility to get there.

That's both part of the analysis experience as well as the data smart capabilities that we're bringing to the users to make it easy for them to work with the product.

Obviously we're looking at bringing lots of different types of visualizations. All the different standard visualizations that users are going to be able to create are there in the product. The ability to generate calculations, the ability to work with different types of filtering models, making it very easy to get at the data that you really want to learn from. All of those are different types of features that we're bringing into the product.

Then on the information sharing side, I think we're taking a very socialized approach to how we're working with collaboration and sharing. Users will be able to not only generate the most relevant visuals, but then share those, apply tags and categorization of that content. Then they'll be able to socialize that with other users, find what other people are working on very easily, and complete the circle of how they not only work with their data, but then share and learn from others who are also working with their data in the system.

CI: Yeah, the collective intelligence idea. I like it a lot. We've got about 30 seconds left. The big question, of course, and back to you, Brian, when will Logi Vision become GA?

BB: We are targeting late summer. We are currently in beta, a very active beta period. We're making lots of changes and modifications, as you would well expect in beta. We're still targeting that and we think we're going to be there. But we are being very responsive to our testers and make sure we've got great product coming out of the gate.

CI: Maybe September? Thereabouts?

BB: Maybe September or thereabouts.

CI: I'll hold you to it.

That's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff, and it's been a great pleasure to speak with both Brian Brinkmann and David Abramson of Logi Analytics today. Thanks to both of you.

BB: Thank you, Claudia. It's been great.

DA: Yes, thank you very much.

CI: I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. You'll find more podcasts from other vendors at our web site, www.boulderbibraintrust.org. If you want to learn 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!