



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.

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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 guests today. They are Dale Skeen and Rajiv Onat. Dale is the CTO and Founder, and Rajiv is the Director of Product Management for Vitria. Welcome to you both.

Dale Skeen: Thank you, Claudia. It's a pleasure to be here today.

Rajiv Onat: Thank you, Claudia. It's an absolute pleasure to be here.

CI: It's nice to have both of you here. Dale, let me start with you. You started off the morning with a bang. First of all, you started off by defining what operational intelligence was. It's a relatively new area, I think, for some people. Why don't you give us your definition of operational intelligence?

DS: I'll be happy to. Operational intelligence is really about analyzing your business situation, identifying threats and opportunities, and then being able to take the right action at the right time.

In today's world, so many opportunities are threats, if you don't respond in a timely fashion, you can get the business in real trouble. For example, if a customer is having a problem, you want to be able to detect that early and mitigate it as soon as possible, while the customer, for example, is still engaging with you. If someone is perpetrating fraud, you want to make sure you detect that out early, hopefully while it's still in progress, before the goods are taken.

CI: What are some of the requirements to handle this? This is fascinating. You're right, it's absolutely critical to nip off fraud as fast as you can, fix a customer's problem as fast as you can. What do you see is the requirements that are necessarily for operational intelligence?



DS: There are essentially three basic pillars of capability. The first is to be able to acquire the data as near as real time, as possible, then being able to visualize it and show that information in context. If you're looking at a customer having problems, you can see maybe at what step of the process they were, or if you're looking at threats, for example, you can see the geo location of those threats.

The second is to be able to analyze this in real time, using real time analytics, to provide real time insight into what's going on. Who's the perpetrator? What type of customers are being affected?

The third then, is to be able to take action quickly. So the third pillar is having some sort of action capability, perhaps the best way is using a business process management suite. As soon as you detect a problem, you can correct it.

CI: What I found fascinating, I'm going to ask you to talk about a few of these things. We're not talking about the luxury of 10 or 15 minutes, you're talking about, doing all three of these things, in less than a second. Right?

DS: It can be less than a second. Certainly, you want technology that is able to do that. Now, whether you need that in less than a second or not... In fact, we did a survey recently, we said, "How real time is real time to you?" 41 percent of the customers said that we need to be able to detect it in seconds or minutes. Another 21 percent, that means 62 percent total, said that we need to detect it in time frame from seconds to hours.

Now, not all of this is real time in the strict sense of the word, but they all are use cases where operational intelligence can help because it means fast detection and fast action.

CI: Let's talk about some of these use cases. If you don't mind, maybe a real case study or two.

DS: One of our customers, O₂, which is large mobile customer, in the UK. The largest telecom provider in the UK. Wanted to make sure that they had the best service for their best customer. They used operational intelligence to do that.



They used operational intelligence to continuously monitor their telecom networks to look at problems they were having that was affecting customers. Then correlate that to customer profiles that they can identify what problems were affecting, which kind of customers, then they could prioritize action accordingly.

Now, they are an example, where they wanted to be able to do this all in one second. So from the time of discovering a problem, to analyzing it, to acting on it, they could do so. That's one great example.

CI: A problem, in this case, would be something like they're getting a series of dropped calls or something is happening with their service?

DS: That's right. Dropped calls, or bandwidth is curtailed, et cetera.

CI: All right, continue.

DS: That's one example. Another one was a large retail restaurant, who wanted to make sure that their goods were being delivered on time. Their fresh ingredients had to get there on time. They wanted to avoid "out of stocks", so that when customers walked in, they were not disappointed.

They are using real time operational intelligence to manage all of their supply chain, manage all of the order fulfillment, across office supply chain. Now, even though a particular order may take days to fulfill, and you don't think that in terms of real time, what's important to them is to be able to discover problems really quickly. If, for example, a shipment misses a truck, then you want to detect that as early as possible because it may be that another truck is leaving in the next 10 minutes. If you can hit that truck, then you can avoid that outage or that shortage.

CI: Interesting. Again, like you said, it's a mixture of maybe not real time but and real time analytics and that sort of thing. I found the case studies fascinating. I'm assuming they can find more on your website?

DS: Absolutely. Go to www.vitria.com.

CI: All right, very good. All right, Rajiv, let me turn to you then. You have a new product operational intelligence apps. Let's talk about those, a little bit. Rajiv, what are they?



RO: Yeah, we do. It's a recent addition to our offering, just like Dale mentioned. He walked us through different use cases. Across those use cases, what we saw was, there was repeatable patterns of functionality that was applicable across those different use cases.

CI: Can you give me some examples of patterns here?

RO: Sure. One of the things was to build and monitor a key KPI over streaming data and that we saw was being applied across all those different use cases. We wanted to abstract that problem out, make it really simple and easy for a non-technical person to be able to come and define these KPIs and judge the performance of those KPIs.

All our apps, actually, of KPI builder was one of the very first one that we introduced in the OI apps category, but now we have a few more things in that portfolio. Like discovering patterns of activities from live stream of events, tracking a process across different business monitoring silos and applications silos. The intention was to keep it simple, keep it really fast for non-technical users to be able to use our platform really quickly, and learn it very fast, too.

CI: Excellent. One of the examples that you gave us was tracking a process from start to finish. I found that fascinating. Back to what Dale said, it's a combination of gathering up information, over a period of time, analyzing it for patterns, and then looking at the live stream to see, are these patterns occurring again. Very interesting. Why do you give us a little bit of insight? How does that work? How did you do that?

RO: One of our core use cases around what we call, "Business activity monitoring." It is monitoring, activities across owner, business, processes, spanning across different applications and systems.

Usually, real live business processes are really complex. They have multiple touch points. They're serviced by many different applications and systems. Usually, you want to put a layer of monitoring on top of that. And each of this individual system, they provide their own monitoring, but it doesn't connect the dots, end to end. That's where we come in. We put a layer of monitoring on top of your existing systems and applications without then having to replace any of the things that you're already invested on.



To get started, we actually have two approaches. A bottom up approach, where we walk in and we tap into those stream of events that is happening and those systems and be able to automatically build a process model for the users so that they understand what is happening now.

How are those process being executed? What are the different flows that happen on a business process? What are the activities that occur? We do that automatically for them, which is a starting point for business actually monitoring.

What that establishes is that, traditionally how that it is being done, is you sit with your stakeholders, you have a lot of interviews in place, and then it spans in weeks and months. At the end of this, you produce a 60 page report saying this is your process. By that time, your process is already obsolete.

We wanted to really streamline that process. That's where one of our ROI apps, which is capable of discovering those activities comes into play. Once you establish that business processes, you can build a tracking process, where you can specify what KPIs you want to measure and monitor, and how and when you want people to be notified when thresholds are violated, and so on. That's how we actually approach that particular problem.

CI: What I found interesting was that, I didn't realize this, I probably should have, if I had thought about it for more than two seconds, when you did that, you actually found that there were 27 different pathways, which I found stunning. If I want to fulfill an order, I have 27 different ways that I can fulfill it.

RO: Every time we present there's a shock and awe moment in that room. They just cannot contemplate the fact that there is so much different variations and the processes and the way they do their things, which is one of the fascinating things. You're able to bring that to the fore and help them optimize or get to a way to help them streamline that process, if you will.

CI: In looking at the demo, it was a wonderful demo, by the way, thank you very much. In looking at it, it struck me that you got to have somebody that knows what they're doing to create these dashboards or these overall



monitoring capabilities. This is not something that you would turn a relatively naïve technology person loose on, correct?

RO: There're are a lot of different participants, in terms of building operational intelligence solutions. There is core developers who know how to connect a system, how to make those data available.

Then, we have the business analysts and the data scientists, or the data analysts, if you will, which is where the OI apps is really targeted for. It is for those kind of people who knew what problems they want to solve and how they want to actually go about solving that problem.

Then, there are end users. At the end of the day, the dashboards that you build, the KPIs that you create, need to be presented to your operational users because they are the ones, who, at the end of the day, are really solving different the customer-facing issues. Yes, there are a lot of different variety of users that play in the operational intelligence landscape, if you will, that participate in creating and making that solution.

CI: What I really liked about it, just to wrap it up with a bow, the techie person can certainly create a very beautiful dashboard. They can, then, share it with their manager or with their group or whatever it is. That group or manager can then begin to change it a little bit, by changing the parameters or the filters. In other words, it's not frozen. It's a dynamic dashboard.

RO: Sharing is a huge thing for us. We not only allow sharing dashboards, but we also share analytic result streams. People can build their own dashboards. Once, as you said, once the dashboard is shared to a non-technical user, they can play around with their dashboard. They can filter it. They can do slicing and dicing and look at that particular data in a little different perspective.

CI: Brilliant. Dale, let me go back to you. One of the things that I thought was most interesting, and again, it's something that I don't think companies get or see, until they see this whole picture, but there are a lot of additional benefits, not only do you see where you have bottlenecks and where you can make the process more efficient, but you also listed a whole bunch of additional benefits that were surprises to people. What are they?



DS: A number of these benefits, which we call them "bonus benefits" because the customers were not expecting it -- it was something that was a pleasant surprise -- come in the following forms. We had one large bank that was trying to monitor its transaction processing. A lot of this takes place in legacy systems, little visibility. In operational intelligence we gave them visibility into that actually using some of the tools that Rajiv has talked about, the process tracking tool.

Now, they were able now to see those flows and define KPIs, but they were also able, now, to document their pathways, the process pathways. It had never been documented before. Because it was now documented, they could now start looking at how to optimize it. They could now start monitoring also, if something fell out of one of those pathways, which could be maybe fraudulent activity.

These were the type of things that they did not expect but came as a benefit of using a general purpose approach, but using OI.

CI: Things like hidden processes that they didn't even know where going on.

DS: Exactly, yes.

CI: I thought that was fascinating, redundant processing, all kinds of things that a company can find, can streamline, can say, "Oh, this hidden process is actually one that should be formally be put into our standard operating procedure," or whatever, right?

DS: That's exactly the type of insight that using operational intelligence can deliver.

CI: Excellent, last question. I'm just curious where you see this going. You've been in this business now for a few years, where do you see it going?

DS: As I mentioned before, we see more and more awareness of the needs for these types of tools, operational intelligence tools. What we're trying to do to support that trend is that our goal is really we want to make operational intelligence easy and ubiquitous. How we're doing this is with our OI apps, as we mentioned. That is really targeted to solving a particular problem but



making it much easier to solve, so you don't need a technical person to solve it. The KPI builder was the one example of that.

We have a number of other similar problems that we think that we can target to make an app. If you say, "I have an operational intelligence problem." We say, "We have an app for that."

CI: Excellent.

DS: That's one way, that's really addressing user empowerment and making it accessible to a wider variety of users, inside the enterprise itself.

The second one, to make it ubiquitous, we want to make sure that all these analytical results can be delivered to any user on the platform of their choice. We already deliver dashboards, on mobile devices, and a wide variety of devices. But we now are finding that, back to one of your points, is that these are just not aesthetic dashboards, they're living and they're changeable.

We're seeing now they want the opportunity to be able to define their own KPIs and change these dashboards and redefine them. Not just only what we would expect on their PC at work, but at home, and on their mobile devices. We're empowering to do that, as well, and we'll continue to do so.

CI: First of all, mobile, any mobile type of capability, is huge. Then, of course, the ability to customize and make things better for everyone, is also something that is quite useful.

DS: Yes, the last thing we're doing is, really, we're putting up the capability to do all this in the cloud.

CI: Excellent.

DS: Again, to make it more easy accessible to all participants, not only inside your company but outside, as well. I would say, stay tuned for some more news on that in the very near future.



CI: I will indeed. That's it for this edition of the BBBT podcast. Again, I'm Claudia Imhoff. It's been a great pleasure to speak with Dale Skeen and Rajiv Onat of Vitria today. Thank you both for speaking with me.

DS: Thank you.

RO: Thank you.

CI: I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. You'll find more podcasts from other vendors at our web site. That's 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!