InBrief

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MUTABLE AWARD 2020

ONE TO WATCH

ACTIAN™

> " With Actian, we turned it on and it worked. After months of switching over to NetSuite, the Actian solution took only 8 hours and we were up and running smoothly without errors. All processes are now automated and data flows instantaneously between platforms. "
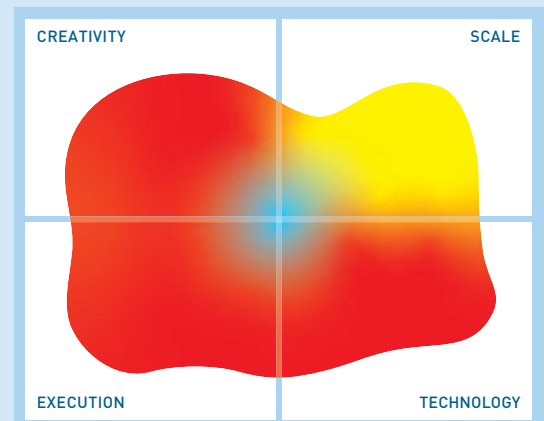>
> **Netwrix**

Actian Data/ Avalanche Connect

The company

Actian is a hybrid data management company that became majority owned by HCL Technologies in 2018, which is a company headquartered in India but with offices around the globe. The company has more than 120,000 employees.

Actian is headquartered in the Silicon Valley and operates independently of HCL. It develops and markets multi-cloud data warehouses (Actian Avalanche), data integration technology, and transactional and edge databases.

What is it?

Actian DataConnect is a (data) integration offering the intent of which is to allow anyone (that is, multiple personas) to connect anything, anywhere (cloud, on-premises, hybrid), at any time. There are three different options: DataConnect Inside, which is targeted primarily at partners who want to embed connectivity within their own applications; DataConnect Integration Platform, which offers

CREATIVITY	SCALE
EXECUTION	TECHNOLOGY

The image in this Mutable Quadrant is derived from 13 high level metrics, the more the image covers a section the better. Execution metrics relate to the company, Technology to the product, Creativity to both technical and business innovation and Scale covers the potential business and market impact.

traditional ETL (extract, transform and load) capabilities as well as ELT and other integration options; and DataConnect iPaaS, which is powered by Actian Avalanche to provide access to cloud-based resources.

Avalanche Connect includes Actian DataConnect connectors and the two share a single management console. It is available as a managed service with support for Kafka streaming, and connectivity to semi-structured data such as JSON and RESTful web services, without coding. Its features are illustrated in *Figure 1*. Actian does not provide change data capture (CDC) itself but instead partners with HVR for this purpose. Note the support for various third-party machine learning technologies though Actian is somewhat late to the party with respect to the use of machine learning within DataConnect, with the automation that derives from it very much on the company's roadmap, as opposed to something currently within the product.

What does it do?

DataConnect has four main components, as can be seen in *Figure 2*. What this doesn't mention is Actian's UniversalConnect, which is patented technology for developing and implementing
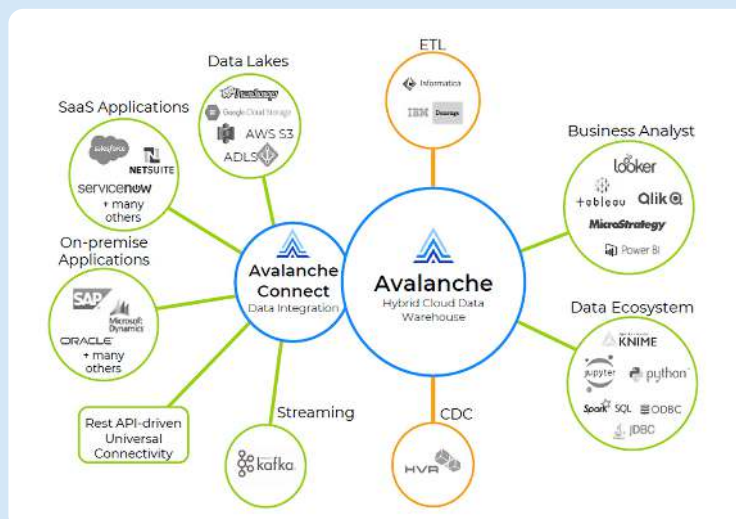

Figure 1 – Avalanche Connect Marketecture

Architecture	★★★★	Structured connectivity	★★★★
Automation	★★★★	Transformations	★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★	Unstructured connectivity	★★★★
Flexibility	★★★★	Workflow	★★★★

> **"** We deal with data from disparate insurance clients, the data types are diverse. Files range from small and manageable to complex and large... we needed to pay special attention to the integration process because the more sources, the more complicated the process. Our data model needed to... provide a consistent data structure for any downstream process... The power of Actian DataConnect enabled us to manage all this very efficiently. **"**
>
> *Hannover Life Reassurance Company of America*

connectors, either those that are available directly from Actian (more than 200 of them) or that you can develop yourself.

Integration Manager is being enhanced (2021) to support containerised deployments via Kubernetes. Its capabilities are illustrated in **Figure 3**. In addition there is Actian Studio, which is an Eclipse-based environment for developers, while the company should also have released Web Designer by the time this report is published. This is a browser-based no-code interface intended for use by citizen developers that will not require IT input. Finally, Actian plans (2021) the release of an actionable metadata repository with support for streaming data.

Why should you care?

Actian DataConnect has been available, under a variety of names, for more than twenty years. It has the sort of reliability that you would expect from a product with this sort of pedigree. It is also one of the few products in this space that has focused, at least in part, in providing embedded capability. Historically – and this does not appear to have changed – it has had significant total cost of ownership benefits when compared to many of its competitors. However, data integration is a mature technology and DataConnect has languished somewhat over the last few years without significant new development. But it is now clear that that has changed and that Actian is putting significant efforts into extending DataConnect's functionality and reach. This is especially associated with the launch, earlier in 2020, of Actian Avalanche.

In this context it is worth commenting on the potential of Actian Avalanche with Avalanche Connect, which will allow its data integration capabilities, as well as the functionality of the forthcoming Actian DataFlow, to leverage the elastic scaling offered by Avalanche. Moreover, as far as we know, this will represent the only cloud-based data warehouse on the market that also includes its own integration capabilities built into the environment: something that must be appealing to potential users.

The Bottom Line

Actian DataConnect, and particularly Avalanche Connect, have significant potential. The former is a comprehensive and competitive data integration product. Though it appears to be lacking any remarkable feature or functionality, Actian Data Connect has a strong following of ISVs that embed the technology including ADP, Xactly and FICO. The company's future plans for extending further with its integration hub service, where has been proven in its Healthcare Claims and Service exchanges, make the company a definite *"one to watch"*.
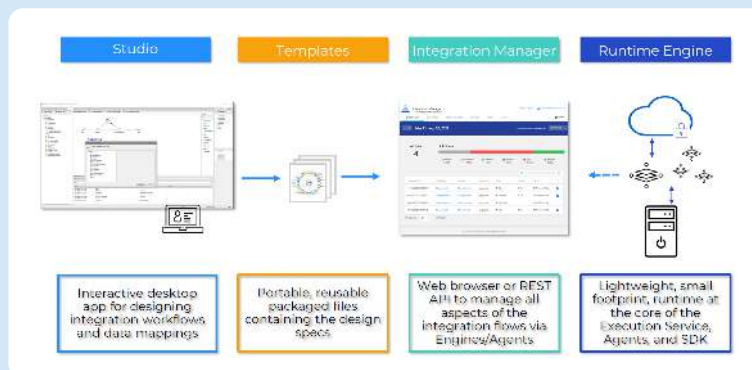

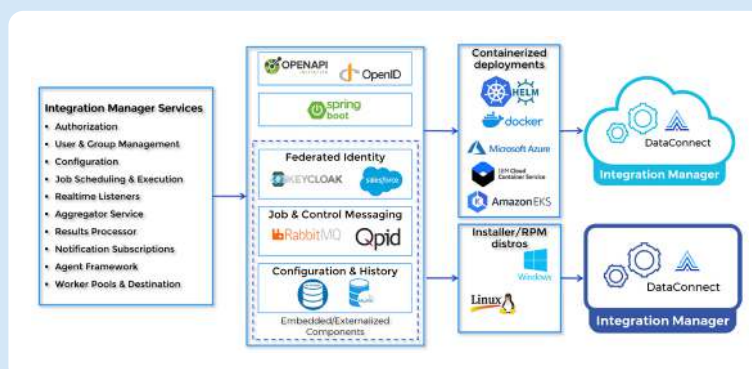
Figure 2 – The main elements of DataConnect

Figure 3 – The Capabilities of Actian Integration Manager

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