

Elevating with Actian

Insights from Actian's Executive Customer Advisory Board



Actian Executive Customer Advisory Board and the Actian Executive Leadership Team met in San Juan, Puerto Rico

The Actian Executive Customer Advisory Board (CAB) held its first meeting of 2024 in San Juan, Puerto Rico with the primary goals of both hearing about Actian's strategic vision and discussing data and business challenges faced by Actian's customers. The meeting coincided with the Actian Sales Kickoff in which CAB members attended and shared their stories about their use cases while learning about the road ahead for Actian.

The CAB meeting covered key topics such as an overview of Actian's solutions and capabilities, discussions around CAB members' top data challenges and GenAI use cases. CAB members also joined an exclusive discussion with Ray Wang, CEO of Constellation Research to discuss top of mind issues within the C-suite. This group enjoyed various networking opportunities among the CAB and the Actian Executive Leadership Team to strengthen peer networks and foster new relationships.

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CAB Attendees Included:

- **Leo Brunnick**, Chief Operations Officer, Naviga
- **Miguel Carbone**, Chief Executive Officer, MC Software
- **Tony Feminis**, Director of IT, Miniat Holdings, LLC
- **Nick Fuller**, AVP of Technology, Equifax
- **Tom Kientz**, Chief Operations Officer, Academy Bank
- **Jim Senge**, Senior Vice President, Ebix Health

Key takeaways from the CAB meeting

1. Journey to the Cloud and Hybrid Solutions

The CAB shared their unique journeys to the cloud and the need for solutions addressing cost and scalability concerns. While the migration to the cloud remains a prominent trend, the group agreed that hybrid solutions were critical, especially for sectors like financial services, government and healthcare due to the volume of data, regulatory compliance and data accessibility needed to run mission-critical applications.



[right to left] Ray Wang, CEO of Constellation Research leading a panel discussion with CAB members Leo Brunnick, COO of Naviga, Tom Kientz, COO of Academy Bank and Steve Lennon, COO of Actian

The discussion centered around the “cloud backlash” in recent years in which companies are pulling back from a full migration to the cloud due to unexpected crippling operational costs. “The original reason for going to the cloud was the cost [savings] and environment. Great for startups, but for some companies, we are realizing the cost could double in a single month” one CAB member noted. Another member shared, “The backlash comes from not being able to predict cost. Our approach involves hybrid capability in a “single pane of glass” so we can determine what to run on-prem & cloud and maintain our costs.”

The group agreed that cloud made sense for specific use cases, but a hybrid approach to maintain data both on-premises and in the cloud for specific use cases is key to maintaining data reliability and scalability. One attendee stated, “Our CEO wanted to move fully to the cloud. The only way that makes sense is if you have a ton of new use cases, but with our M&A activity over the last few years, we need to be able to scale quickly – this is only possible with hybrid cloud. In other cases, we need to be in the cloud so it can be accessed all over the world. Still, hybrid is key, [as we need] to run our business 24/7.” Another attendee stated that connectivity was a concern for their end users: “The problem is not the move to the cloud, it’s the connectivity. Even with 99% connectivity, we cannot accept the 1% lack of connectivity – so hybrid is crucial as we need to be able to access it without connectivity in some areas of the world.”

2. Unlocking the Potential for GenAI

Trustworthiness of AI models, data quality readiness and privacy regulations were top-of-mind topics for CAB members who shared their perspectives as they embarked on GenAI opportunities. The conversation revealed a fundamental disconnect between leaders and data practitioners in gauging their data readiness. Actian shared insights from its recent study Actian Data Prep for GenAI Research that stated 79% of organizations rated themselves above average for data quality and cleanliness, while 4% from a recent Gartner focus group with data practitioners in charge of data readiness stated that their data is not ready for GenAI. The group agreed that having the right conversations with the right stakeholders was the key to getting started.

One CAB member stated they were further along with data readiness, but continue to face challenges around data trustworthiness and potential impact to their business. “The quality of data is there. But the trust in the ML is not there yet. Our people are scared that it might learn incorrectly and delete petabytes of data. They are okay with not as important data with AI, but not consumer data.”

The discussion illuminated the need for enhanced data profiling and remediation solutions to establish trust within the organization and to comply with regulatory standards as companies explore new use cases for GenAI.

However, one attendee noted how they had overcome some of these challenges in order to implement an AI solution that helped their company “classify data and determine volatility rate and other criteria, through a data lake in combination with ML” to resolve 100s of near similar incidents.

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3. Navigating the Data & Technology Landscape

As the data landscape is rapidly evolving through new technologies and innovations, CAB members discussed their most pressing challenges and opportunities to transform their business with these technologies. They noted that lack of data skills, data literacy and vendor consolidation were priority issues as they optimize their businesses operations at scale.

An attendee shared how their organization has access to a large data set, but has not yet figured out the best strategy for empowering their employees with access to these insights. Building data analysis skills and educating their employees on data literacy was mentioned as a starting point. "We need people with enough knowledge of [our] data and how to use it. We don't know what data to use and how to personalize our customer's experience without being too invasive. Fundamentally, we don't get it yet. A lot of our competitors are starting to figure it out and we have to be fast followers."

Vendor consolidation challenges were also highlighted, with the group emphasizing the need for comprehensive platforms equipped with a broad set of flexible capabilities to seamlessly integrate diverse data sources. "We have a group of developers who built applications through a bunch of acquisitions. We have people warring over what's best. Everyone wants to use different solutions, and they're still using all sorts of tools so we are trying to get to vendor consolidation. Ultimately, we will look at costs and overall optimization across the tool sets."

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What's Ahead for CAB

The Actian Executive Customer Advisory Board will continue the discussions around the top business challenges for Actian customers as the CAB gathers across the globe in 2024. The meetings will be offered in multiple formats including virtual and in-person in the US and Europe and will include opportunities to provide feedback about strategic investments and new innovations from Actian.

About the Actian Executive Customer Advisory Board

The Actian Executive Customer Advisory Board (CAB) is a partnership with our strategic customers that provides a unique opportunity to directly influence Actian's strategy and technology roadmap. Our objective is to deepen our understanding of your business challenges so that we can optimize our customer experience and maximize your business value working with Actian. The Executive Customer Advisory Board fosters peer discussions among CAB members and with Actian senior executive leadership.

To learn more, please visit: [Actian.com/customers/CAB](https://actian.com/customers/CAB) or contact Becky Staker, VP of Customer Experience at Becky.Staker@hcl-software.com

About Actian

Actian makes data easy. We deliver cloud, hybrid cloud, and on-premises data solutions that simplify how people connect, manage, and analyze data. We transform business by enabling customers to make confident, data-driven decisions that accelerate their organization's growth. Our data platform integrates seamlessly, performs reliably, and delivers at industry-leading speeds. Learn more about Actian, a division of HCLSoftware: www.actian.com.

