

GEMA Hits the Right Notes with Data Intelligence

A modern data intelligence platform helped GEMA harmonize governance, boost productivity, and achieve 140% ROI.

When it comes to managing music royalties, precision matters. For GEMA, Germany's largest performance rights organization, every note, stream, and public play generates data that determines how music creators are compensated.

Representing approximately 94,000 members and more than two million rightsholders, GEMA is one of the most data-intensive organizations in the global music industry. As Markus Zachai, Head of Data Governance at GEMA, puts it, "It's fair to say, the music business is a data business."

Like the music industry, data landscapes can change quickly. For example, GEMA's data environment had grown increasingly fragmented over time. Data silos, legacy systems, and complex workflows made it difficult for employees to ensure accuracy, consistency, and transparency.

The Challenge: Managing a Complex Data Landscape

GEMA's challenge wasn't a lack of data. The issue was bringing it together for a trusted, single source of truth. Data was scattered across systems and business units, limiting how the data could be governed and reused effectively.

"We had data in silos. It was hard to combine them," explains Martin Zurn, Head of Data Engineering at GEMA. "We had a growing quantity of data and a growing complexity of data."

A second challenge was scaling to meet rising demand for data to meet business needs. GEMA stakeholders recognized that in order to achieve the full value of their data, they needed a modern governance model that would establish trust, accountability, and accessibility across the company.



Get to Know GEMA

As an association, GEMA represents the interests of 94,000 composers, lyricists, and publishers by ensuring music creators earn what they are due. It also represents over two million rightsholders from all over the world.

Established in 1947, it is one of the world's largest authors' societies for musical works.

"We needed first and foremost a governance model that made sure that the data is valid and correct," Zurn says. The data is complex, which made scaling the central data team difficult. The organization needed to empower business users to take ownership of their data.

GEMA also wanted to modernize how it delivered insights. The goal was to transform data from static reports into reusable, AI-ready products that could power innovation, partnerships, and informed decision-making.

The Solution: A Platform for Governance, Discovery, and Data Intelligence

After evaluating several data catalogs and governance platforms, GEMA selected the Actian Data Intelligence Platform as the foundation for its modernization strategy.

What set Actian apart was its intuitive, user-friendly design. The platform made data governance and discovery accessible to everyone, not just technical teams.

Actian’s platform stood out with “a great user interface that’s very clean and very sleek and easy to use,” Zurn says. “Our users liked it from Day One. It makes it easy for them to figure out what data products we have, where the data is coming from, and then what visualizations, for example, the data gets used for.”

The Actian platform enables GEMA to:

- Establish a centralized governance framework to ensure data validity and compliance.
- Catalog and certify hundreds of data products, making data more discoverable and reusable across business domains.
- Automate stewardship workflows, reducing manual work.
- Scale data ownership by empowering business teams to manage and trust their own data assets.

“For the first time, our business units really felt responsible for the data they have and work with,” Zachai explains. “It is important to have something like [the Actian platform] to give the users a great overview about the data you have in your organization and who’s responsible for it.”

The Outcomes: Harmonized Data, High ROI, and a Scalable Future

The results have been transformative. According to Nucleus Research, GEMA achieved a 140% ROI and a payback period of just 15.1 months by deploying the Actian Data Intelligence Platform alongside its analytics stack to accelerate governance, discovery, and data-product innovation.

By decommissioning legacy platforms and eliminating redundant administrative tools, GEMA avoided over €1 million in annual costs. The organization also reclaimed €2.25 million in productivity gains by automating stewardship workflows and increasing data engineer efficiency.

These gains improved operations while also positioning GEMA to deliver greater value to its members through faster royalty distribution. The platform also helped GEMA cultivate a true data ownership culture in which business users understand, trust, and use data to drive innovation.

Users now have a clear understanding of the data landscape. They can easily see who owns what, how data is being used, and how to improve it. That transparency builds trust and confidence.

The Sound of ROI

OPERATIONAL RESULTS

140%	15.1 months
Annual ROI	Payback Period
€372,836	€549,688
Net Present Value	Average Annual Benefit
€2 for every €1 invested	
Return	

PLATFORM IMPACT

€1M	€2.25M
annual cost avoidance	productivity gains
5 times	400+
platform user growth	certified data products
11	9
AI models in production	monetizable data partnerships

A Data Intelligence Platform That Keeps Pace with the Music Industry

With the Actian Data Intelligence Platform, GEMA has advanced from fragmented reporting to modern, high-impact, AI-powered services. The platform drives efficiency, governance, and continuous innovation.

The platform also gives GEMA the structure and visibility to manage data at scale and the flexibility to keep innovating as the industry evolves. In an era where every song, stream, and download generates more data than ever, GEMA now has the trusted, scalable platform it needs to keep the music and the business playing in perfect harmony.

About Actian

Actian empowers enterprises to confidently manage and govern data at scale. Organizations trust Actian data management and data intelligence solutions to streamline complex data environments and accelerate the delivery of AI-ready data. Designed to be flexible, Actian solutions integrate seamlessly and perform reliably across on-premises, cloud and hybrid environments. Learn more about Actian, the data and AI division of **HCLSoftware**, at actian.com.

