

Active Cyber - a Cloud Consultancy Firm Dedicated to the Offices of CIO, CFO, and CHRO



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Founder

Active Cyber
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"Active Cyber is a leadership incubator; we are incubating the next generation of leaders who know how to succeed while collaborating with each other. I am hopeful that they will someday start companies of their own or lead large organizations in an ethical way. For the world, we are a cloud consultancy firm dedicated to the offices of CIO, CFO, and CHRO." Rohit Mehrotra

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Mehrotra, what is Active Cyber?

Mr. Mehrotra: From my perspective, Active Cyber is a leadership incubator; we are incubating the next generation of leaders who know how to succeed while collaborating with each other. I am hopeful that they will someday start companies of their own or lead large organizations in an ethical way. For the world, we are a cloud consultancy firm dedicated to the offices of CIO, CFO, and CHRO.

CEOCFO: Does the name Active Cyber throw people? Are they expecting a cybersecurity organization when ActiveCyber is so much more?

Mr. Mehrotra: Well, there is a story there. The name really comes from two enterprise perspectives, and we wanted the name to reflect what we are accomplishing. That is bringing business solutions to market that are delivered with world-class security in mind. The first part of the name to us means activating the cloud and activating business process to function at its peak level. This means implementing application solutions that do so. The second part of the name is more foundational architecture that delivers secure environments so these modern applications can thrive.

CEOCFO: Who is turning to you for services? What are they looking for when they come to Active Cyber?

Mr. Mehrotra: Our customers come to us for one primary reason – they want to maximize the value they get from their investments in technology. However, the challenge starts with who is asking for the help within the customer. Is it the CIO, the CHRO, the CFO, etc.? What makes Active Cyber unique is that we know the language needed to support each perspective. We know that we are most successful when we speak to the individual needs that each executive role brings to the table. That makes us a great partner to work with.

CEOCFO: *When you are talking with a prospective client, how do you help them recognize what they need, understand what they want? How do you help them hone in on what they should be looking at so you can provide the best solution for them?*

Mr. Mehrotra: That is a good question. Our approach to the market is a little bit different. We are not trying to be one of the big four consulting firms. Our approach to the market is to become a specialized boutique, where we say, "From our perspective, these are the cloud offerings that are best of the breed in the market, and we can help you take full advantage of what this software is capable of in your environment." On the ERP side, we have chosen Workday, and on the cyber identity side, we have chosen solutions such as Okta. We do strategy sessions where we will tie everything together. However, if someone comes to us and says, "Please implement SAP here," that is not us.

CEOCFO: *What types of companies, industries or countries are turning to you?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Our sweet spot is the Midmarket, but we do a lot of work with large companies that want more of a boutique approach and small companies that are growing very quickly. That is where we focus, and it is pretty industry agnostic.

CEOCFO: *Do companies tend to use some of your services and then realizing there are other things they need, come back so that you can help them with more gain more insights?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Yes, they do actually. It is funny you ask that question, but one of the primary reasons that they really come back to us is the type of experience they had when they were initially engaged with us. Among our consultants, companies experience a level and consistency of talent they normally do not. Unlike larger organizations, we do not have variations in talent level. As I said, our focus is very different. We may or may not be a fit for an organization that is solely looking for volume.

Organizations that come to us want the best of the best. They want to make sure that if someone leaves, the next person stepping in is going to be just as good as the previous one. Consistent quality and exceptional talent are woven into the fabric of Active Cyber.

CEOCFO: *How difficult is it for you to find people that are right for Active Cyber given the labor market we are in today?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Talent gets talent. We fundamentally believe that. I have been in the business for 30 plus years, and I have never compromised on talent when hiring employees, regardless of their job function. I will take lower growth, but I will not settle for mediocrity.

The type of people we attract demand the chance to work alongside others who are just as good as they are.

The way we do that is that we hire the very best when it comes to experienced staff. These people are not just the best at what they do, but they enjoy the process of mentoring younger people. Then, we go to the top schools in the country and get graduates from there. The moment they join, they are assigned a mentor, and within 6-12 months, they are mentoring somebody else. Therefore, the process of learning and giving back is coached into them from the time they start. This is consistent with all of the organizations I have co-founded.

CEOCFO: *What types of projects you have worked on? How were you able to craft the right solution for a company? What did you look at when you are figuring out the best solution that less knowledge people do not take into consideration?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Let us look at the fundamental level first, as to how the office of CIO, CFO, and CHRO could work. I think a great example is when you hire a new employee. First, what sort of experience is that employee going to have when they join? Will they have access to all the tools they need to do their job? Can they easily interact with key systems during recruiting, the offer stage, the start date, and beyond? If one of our customers has a negative response to any of these questions, then they are prime for our services. This doesn't even begin to touch on the challenges of security, not only during the hire but when the person's role changes over time. All of this can be automated, giving the employee a delightful experience, making them the most efficient they can be, and preventing security challenges. Said another way – CHRO, CFO, CIO.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to potential new clients?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Most of our customers come from referrals from existing clients and our software partners. We do business development in the form of customer education: webinars, events, demonstrations – things that promote conversations that may lead to new relationships.

CEOCFO: *What has changed in your approach over time, whether because of the economy, or Covid, or new technologies, the state of the world? What have you learned as the company has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Technology continues to change at this stage. If you look at our software partners, primarily Workday and Okta, their own footprint continues to expand, and just keeping up with that can be challenging. There is also a real labor shortage across US; layer that with our recruiting process which only hires the exceptional, and it compounds the problem of finding staff.

CEOCFO: *What is ahead for 2023 for Active Cyber?*

Mr. Mehrotra: I am very confident that we are going to have 60 to 70% growth year over year because our offerings are expanding. If things fall in place, we could even double from where we are today.

CEOCFO: *Are you able to handle all the clients that come your way? How are you planning for keeping up with that type of growth?*

Mr. Mehrotra: Sometimes people ask, "Why do clients choose you?" My answer: we are not a fit for everybody. Let's sit down and discuss the challenge you are trying to solve, and we will know quickly if this would be a good long-term relationship – we are different.

CEOCFO: *What, if anything, might people miss, or misunderstand, about Active Cyber that they really need to know?*

Mr. Mehrotra: I think, many times, clients are so focused on the project they have in front of them, that they do not realize there is a whole lot more we can do for them. It is not just a challenge for us; it is also a challenge within the client organization itself. CIO or the CTO are so focused on the challenges in front of them, that with a little broadening of the initiative, how valuable it can be for the office of CFO/CHRO and vice-versa. It is our job to highlight it; however, it is a difficult job.

CEOCFO: *How has your experience been with customer service and all of that?*

Mr. Mehrotra: 90%+ of our workforce is US-based, which is by design. AI is going to reduce the cost of customer service more than what an offshore person would. In the next 12-24 months, AI chat bots are going to be able to answer most simple questions correctly. For complex questions, not only do you want to be able to understand the person on the other side, but you also want the other person to understand the context & culture. Accent, etc., will get solved by technology; context, on the other hand, is a different challenge, and we experience that all the time.

