

Managing the SAP Access Control 10.0 Upgrade: Lessons Learned

Introduction

Interest is growing as organizations learn about the advantages of upgrading to SAP BusinessObjects GRC Access Control 10.0 (GRC AC 10.0). This product suite helps security and compliance teams improve their ability to manage risks and controls pervasively and within a single platform. The new version is a completely integrated and standardized suite of tools that streamlines processes and delivers a greatly enhanced user experience.

Clients who have gone through the upgrade agree that GRC AC 10.0 delivers greater efficiencies and higher return on investment once installed. However, upgrading is not a trivial process, as moving to this major release is somewhat more complex than previous versions. We at Protiviti have gone through this process multiple times with clients and have gained some critical insights and lessons learned to share with organizations contemplating this shift.

Why the Upgrade Is Worth It

Despite the greater complexity of upgrading to GRC AC 10.0, the benefits of the new solution definitely make the effort worthwhile:

- Internal audit departments are excited about it because the reporting capabilities have many more options. There are more ways to tailor and share reports than before, making these more informative and providing more intuitive ways to look at data. The enhanced logs are more flexible and require less manual intervention, making them more accessible, timely and useful.
- Finance teams and IT departments also have a lot to be happy about. Workflow capabilities provide flexibility to customize access request approvals and speed the process to grant or terminate access. In addition, workflow for Emergency Access Management – EAM (formerly known as FireFighter or SPM) has made the process for reviewing logs significantly more efficient and automated. Other enhancements include options for mobile devices and the ability to mass mitigate risks for multiple users immediately.
- IT departments are also enthused because of the integrated platform, making the architecture easier to maintain. In large part this is because GRC AC 10.0 has shifted from the JAVA programming language to Advanced Business Application Programming (ABAP), which enables more consistent security, change management and standardized configuration settings. This also allows for easy integration with other GRC AC 10.0 solutions such as Process Control and Risk Management.

When Should the Organization Upgrade?

The benefits are so significant that, as the saying goes, there's no time like the present. From a practical perspective, however, any changes in the organization's current IT environment, particularly those touching SAP, present an opportunity to upgrade to GRC AC 10.0 – and may even necessitate an upgrade. For example, introducing new functionalities (HR, SRM, etc.) would likely require an update to the rule set and security architecture anyway, opening the door to improving the entire GRC Access Control system.

Another point to consider when contemplating upgrading is support and maintenance. SAP is reducing its investment in the 5.3 version, and the following older versions are already experiencing end-of-standard and extended maintenance support:

- Access Enforcer 5.2
- Compliance Calibrator 5.2
- Compliance Calibrator 4.0
- Role Expert 5.2

And finally, if the company is considering adopting other portions of GRC, such as Process Control or Risk Management, the common platform and integration strongly suggest a synchronized approach.

Preparing for the Task

To gain the full benefit of the new version, experience suggests going into the upgrade with a mindset similar to a new implementation (i.e., functional upgrade, not just a technical upgrade). Therefore, it is important to be prepared for some challenges, as with all implementations. Good preparation and the involvement of the right people at the right time will help to mitigate these challenges and streamline the overall process.

The new approach to workflow using BRF+ (SAP's standard workflow technology) is much more powerful and flexible in GRC AC 10.0, but the initial setup and configuration is therefore also more complex. This will require people with specialized skills to maneuver through this configuration.

In addition to careful planning, it is important to verify a sound technical foundation before diving into functional implementation. We have seen that when companies try to upgrade as quickly as possible, they sometimes miss subtle but essential technical installation/configuration steps, causing problems downstream. In one case, a company missed some key background jobs that were not configured, producing inaccurate violation results that were only belatedly discovered. It is always harder and more time-consuming (as well as more expensive) to go back and figure out what was lost in the process than to take the time to do it right in the first place. For our implementations, we have developed and follow a tight QA post-install checklist to avoid any wasted time or frustration down the road.

Training and procedural enhancements are just as important as a successful installation. Even though much will be familiar to current users, it is important to highlight new functionality that they may not otherwise notice but should consider taking advantage of. Moreover, some processes in GRC AC 10.0 are quite different from previous versions. People will need to understand these changes to achieve a smooth transition. Further, companies may want or even need to take the time to refresh their processes and procedures around the technology.

For example, the Emergency Access Management logs are much more visible now thanks to the automated workflow. This can be a challenge for companies that have fallen into the trap of users accessing EAM on a daily basis, creating unreasonably large logs. Therefore, the upgrade offers companies the opportunity to revisit the emergency process and encourage users to utilize it as intended (i.e., for exceptions only).

Criteria for Success

As with most implementations, three elements are required for a successful deployment of GRC AC 10.0: people, process and technology.

People:

- Engage people with the right technical skills to support the implementation.
- Involve individuals from the business as well as the technology side. Business personnel understand processes from the user's perspective and can provide insight into what will be the most effective and user friendly configuration options to encourage use and productive reviews.
- Recognize that people will need to be educated about the new interface. As organizations roll out new components, more people may become involved in the processes associated with those components. Take the time to identify those affected (even tangentially) and train them in a manner that is intuitive to their responsibilities (not just a technical point-and-click walkthrough).
- Develop quick reference guides to help users master what they need to know and grasp quick refreshers when needed.

Process:

- Recognize that implementing GRC AC 10.0 will likely take longer than a typical upgrade due to the platform change and significant functional improvements to introduce.
- Implementing workflow is more powerful and potentially more complex, so allow sufficient time for education, discussion and decisions for routing and escalations.

Technology:

- Ensure that complete post-installation checklists are confirmed to avoid missing critical tasks.
- Allow sufficient time to convert your ruleset and other master data (via the migration tool or download/upload). This process is not as simple as it sounds.

The Business Case

Most companies seem to view the 10.0 upgrade as a “when” not “if” consideration as part of the ongoing application lifecycle. However, in a few cases management has needed to be educated on the importance and advantages of taking this step. As discussed in some detail here, there is ample fodder to justify the upgrade on the basis of maintenance concerns, infrastructure consolidation and time savings from enhanced functionality.

In particular, the aspect of automation afforded by GRC AC 10.0 is pointed to as a clear means to freeing resources from tedious manual tasks and dedicating them to more strategic activities. For example, one client spent a great deal of time and resources on exporting, reviewing and storing EAM (firefighting) logs for internal and external auditors. After rolling out the new Emergency Access Management functions, our client immediately realized huge efficiency gains using the automated workflow and enhanced reports.

In addition, IT departments can improve the GRC change management process. Since GRC AC 10.0 is now a completely ABAP-based platform, standard SAP transports can be utilized to migrate elements across the development and production environments. This will result in a more timely change management process with a reduced risk of human error.

We consistently hear from our clients that while GRC AC 10.0 was not a slam-dunk to implement, once it is up and running, it has proved more than worthwhile.

About Protiviti

Protiviti (www.protiviti.com) is a global consulting firm that helps companies solve problems in finance, technology, operations, governance, risk and internal audit. Through our network of more than 70 offices in over 20 countries, we have served more than 35 percent of FORTUNE® 1000 and Global 500 companies. We also work with smaller, growing companies, including those looking to go public, as well as with government agencies.

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As the world's leading provider of business software, SAP delivers products and services that enable enterprises of all sizes to improve their business operations. SAP facilitates a company's effort to manage risk and compliance while optimizing efficiency, strategy and growth with a single integrated financial management platform. Addressing business processes in more than 25 industries, SAP has maintained its role as the authority on business software.

Protiviti and SAP are actively working together to help clients improve their capability in this important area by implementing and effectively utilizing the full SAP BusinessObjects suite of GRC and EPM solutions to enhance their integrated enterprisewide risk mitigation and compliance efforts. For more information, visit www.protiviti.com/ERP-Solutions.

Protiviti's Information Technology Consulting Solutions

We partner with chief information officers, chief financial officers and other executives to ensure their organizations maximize the return on information systems investments while at the same time minimizing their risks. Using strong IT governance to ensure alignment with business strategies, we drive excellence through the IT infrastructure and into the supporting applications, data analytics, and security. We also facilitate the selection and development of software, manage the risk of implementation, implement configurable controls on large ERP installations, and implement GRC software applications.

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