



SECURITY CONFIGURATION WITH ACTIVE DIRECTORY FOR MICROSOFT DYNAMICS:

A MORE SECURE ENVIRONMENT WITH LOWER CONFIGURATION
COSTS LEADS TO QUICKER ROI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Managing regulatory compliance is becoming increasingly complex. Challenges include a lack of system knowledge, too many complicated processes, and an overall lack of standardization. With these challenges, many organizations are looking improve by:

- Creating a secure environment
- Limiting configuration time
- Consolidating user security configuration at the lowest level possible

Fastpath has created Fastpath Config AD to meet these requirements. Fastpath Config AD consolidates the security configuration and maintenance functions for many Microsoft Dynamics applications like Microsoft Dynamics AX, Microsoft Dynamics GP and Microsoft Dynamics CRM in Active Directory. As a result companies can delegate user security configuration to support resources responsible for network maintenance.

Research indicates that Fastpath Config AD yields a reduction in security configuration costs of as much as 65% compared to standard security configuration methodologies provided with the target software systems. These costs improvements additionally brought on increased quality of the security configuration.

The following study includes:

- Current security challenges
- Key configuration criteria
- An in-depth TCO analysis

Fastpath's research was based on interviews with Microsoft Dynamics clients using standard security configuration within the underlying applications and Fastpath Config AD. The aim of the study was to understand the amount of time necessary to perform standard security functions in both environments and the cost of the resources associated with the tasks in each situation.

SECURITY CONFIGURATION CHALLENGES

SYSTEM KNOWLEDGE

In order to configure security in many ERP solutions, a user has to have significant knowledge of the underlying system in order to simply configure a new user. Whether it is the need for an “administrator” password or a very complex navigation tree in order to complete user creation and assign the appropriate authorizations, user creation can necessitate the participation of a more senior advanced administrator in order to add a user.

MULTI-STEP PROCESS

The addition of a new employee at a company leads to the creation of a new user for the network, e-mail client, Microsoft Dynamics system as well as other specialized systems in many companies. The individual users created are often not coordinated and have to be done by different resources in the different systems which creates the possibility of data mistakes as well as the opportunity for missing a step and not creating one or several of the necessary users.

LACK OF STANDARD ROLES

Many companies have not designed their Microsoft Dynamics security process around business roles which can lead to the proliferation of both roles and users as each new user id leads to a new evaluation of the necessary security. In both large and small organizations, there can be a variety of roles and one off changes to those roles which need to be managed and controlled.

MORE SECURITY AUTHORIZATION IS EASIER ON THE ADMINISTRATOR

For large organizations the focus is often on creating users that will yield the least amount of access problems in a given system. For each failed transaction or business process, there is effort necessary to diagnose the security problem and adjust the record as necessary which will lead to additional testing. Many security managers select security profiles that are limiting, but perhaps not limiting enough in an effort to minimize problems for themselves and new users.

FASTPATH CONFIG AD AND USER CONFIGURATION

Fastpath Config AD was designed to allow customers of Microsoft Dynamics AX, Microsoft Dynamics GP and Microsoft Dynamics CRM to configure ERP users within Active Directory. The product offers security administrators the means to create, change and delete ERP users from a right click menu in Active Directory. Fastpath can meet the needs of the Microsoft Dynamics customer in the following ways:

Single Point of Maintenance

Within Active Directory a security administrator can create network users, e-mail users in Exchange as well as ERP users in the Microsoft Dynamics products. This allows the organization to consolidate the maintenance responsibilities with a “Help Desk” or IT support user which will usually be much less expensive than an accounting user with knowledge of the underlying ERP application.

Synchronization of Credentials

Fastpath Config AD makes it possible to synchronize security credentials across all applications. The most critical result of this is increased user satisfaction in that they only have one user id and password combination to remember. The impact on security costs comes in a simplified environment which will mean less password reset responsibilities and general support calls on user names and passwords.

Less Security Permissions Needed for the Administrator

The administrator needs no special access permissions to the ERP and does not even need the application on the desktop for user maintenance. This eliminates a large audit concern in that IT staff will not need access to a “super” user for security configuration and will not have access to the application to commit any kind of fraud or have access to sensitive information.

Reliance on Standard Roles

With security being configured from Active Directory, the security administrator will have to pick from the available roles in the ERP system. This will lessen the possibility of role proliferation as the creation of additional roles will have to be done by an ERP system user with the appropriate credentials. The end result will be better defined roles and more adherence to the available roles in an effort to make the process as efficient as possible.

TCO EXPLANATION

Fastpath Config AD demonstrates a clear advantage in TCO and ROI over other security configuration options available for Microsoft Dynamics in most environments. The research suggests that the product will lead to an annual decrease in security administration costs of approximately 65% on average even when conservatively calculated. The primary drivers for the Fastpath Config AD advantage are as follows:

Security Administration by a Less Expensive Resource

Most Microsoft Dynamics customers use an accounting resource of some kind for security administration because of the increased user rights necessary, but with Fastpath Config AD, the user security administration is done by an IT user. Even with no improvement in efficiency, the maintenance costs decrease by the difference in the salaries of the different resources in accounting and IT.

More Efficient Process

With Fastpath Config AD, the security administrator can simply right click in Active Directory and create, change and delete a user. User deletion can be a simple 2 click process and is much more complex when managed from within the ERP. At least one additional login will be necessary to access the system and then the necessary navigation within the system to get to the desired transaction. On average tasks, you are decreasing the number of clicks and password challenges by up to 80% and moving those tasks to an IT user who presumably has better computer navigation skills.

Less Security Training

Most network administrators understand and embrace the use of Active Directory. Any change in your IT staff will lead to a minimal disruption, if any, in your security configuration process for Microsoft Dynamics. On the ERP side, security configuration is a task with little redundancy and the departure of a resource will lead to what could be significant training in security maintenance and a potential disruption in workflow.

APPENDIX A: TCO STUDY

The research focused on the amount of time necessary to complete certain tasks in the Microsoft Dynamics GP v10. We also analyzed the amount of turnover and job changes in target companies that would necessitate security configuration changes.

The resulting costs savings are a function of the amount of time necessary to perform the tasks and the cost of the resources completing the tasks and the number of tasks per year. The results would change dramatically in organizations with larger user counts and higher turnover.

Actual costs incurred by any organization may vary therefore costs cited in this study should be used only as guidelines.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Average # of minutes to create a user using Fastpath Config Standard	3.4
Average # of minutes to create a user using standard ERP	6
Average # of minutes to change a user using Fastpath Config Standard	2.1
Average # of minutes to change a user using standard GP10	4.1

Number of users at company	25
Hourly pay rate of accounting user(1)	\$36
Hourly pay rate of help desk user(1)	\$20
Annual turnover	20%
Annual job change percentage	20%
Average # of logins per day per user	1.8

Annual maintenance costs for user security

New Users	
Cost in standard GP	\$ 1,080.00
Cost in Config Standard	\$ 340.00
Savings	\$ 740.00
User Changes	
Cost in standard GP	\$ 738.00
Cost in Config Standard	\$ 210.00
Savings	\$ 528.00
Annual Return On Investment	\$ 1,268.00