cbs Authorization Concept for GTS-Systems

The authorization administration of GTS systems brings with it very specific challenges. We meet these challenges both in new implementations and in everyday GTS Managed Services. cbs Corporate Business Solutions has developed its own GTS Best Practice authorization concept in order to be able to offer a targeted and efficient solution for secure authorization management. Due to its modularity, the concept can be flexibly adapted to the needs of the customer (size of the company, different GTS modules/services in use, country specifics, etc.).

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"Data protection" is the word of the hour. Driven by an increasingly demanding legislation, companies are investing considerable sums in the modernization of their ERP authorization concepts. However, "satellite systems" are often neglected – which is more than an unfortunate lapse. Considering the criticality of both data and processes in those systems, it seems obvious that it is just as worthwhile protecting them with the same amount of care as their ERP equivalents.

The reason why there is not that much attention paid to the security of satellite systems' data cannot be attributed to one single root-cause. On the one hand – at least until a few years ago - satellite systems were not always understood to be in the focus of auditors. Therefore, companies which have only been "reactive" to authorizations issues (i.e., mitigation took place only after audit findings triggered change) have not felt required to being proactive.

On the other hand, satellite systems are often operated by a relatively small number of users, which results in management placing lower priority to invest in high-quality authorization concepts.

Both with Global Trade Services (GTS) implementation projects and GTS-managed services daily operations (support), we constantly encounter a large proportion of all users operating with considerably more rights than can reasonably be recommended.

Inconsistent authorization administration

In other words, the principle of minimum privilege of authorizations is hardly observed in these "concepts", which may almost certainly result in significant risks.

For example, there are often contradictions between the different systems in terms of the protection of certain data: information from documents that in ERP are accessible only to a very specific number of users is – in contrast - freely accessible to a larger and not accurately defined group of users in GTS. A prominent use-case of this may be "read-access" to business partners and employee data.

Functional separation (segregation of duties, SoD) is also a challenge in GTS. Not all users are aware of potential vulnerabilities from this process-oriented perspective. Nevertheless, it is immediately understandable for all stakeholders that an adequate functional separation is highly desirable. For example, with regards to Compliance Management, access rights for activities relating to the allocation of export licenses should be kept separate from Customs Management functions by means of appropriate authorizations. Classic SoD conflicts relating to master data maintenance and "release-authorization"-rights, may also constitute challenging conflicts of interest.

However, when re-designing GTS permissions from the ground up, GTS system owners and authorization administrators are often faced with the challenge to provide reliable effort estimations. So, the "good intentions" often end before they properly start because the effort to set up a concept is supposedly "not in relation to the benefit", i.e. it does not seem to pay-off.

Based on the experience of over 70 GTS projects, cbs places an important focus on the comprehensible implementation and maintenance of GTS systems. Over the years we have been repeatedly confronted with roles & authorization challenges. To support the community with the GTS authorization design, we have decided to include our own leading-practice authorization concept for GTS systems as a stand-alone out-of-the-box product in our portfolio. In this concept, we provide our customers with a kit of roles designed and developed specifically for the needs of GTS systems. For example, role naming conventions, role structures, transaction mappings, etc. are exactly aligned with the GTS functionalities. The concept´s modular structure allows it to be flexibly implemented according to the precise needs of a specific company/business.

Due to its modularity, the cbs concept can be flexibly adapted

The GTS services Compliance, Customs, Risk and ECR provide the framework here. The role structure through the services is largely identical. That means the building blocks can be deployed in the concept for both small and large companies with a minimum of effort. Not all GTS services need to be deployed with the company to benefit from the advantages of the cbs leading-practice approach. Only those concept elements which are really required are implemented in the system (avoiding unnecessary management & maintenance overhead on unused roles, etc.).

The authorization assignment is organized in a modular way for all GTS services by means of dedicated job roles. For example, in the Risk Management area, predefined roles for preference processing, letter of credit processing, and management of Risk Management specific master data are available e.g. customized (display) roles for department managers, logistics staff, etc.

GTS-Specific segregation of duties is also taken into consideration. The GTS-specific interface topics (feeder-system integration, customs converter, etc.) are also covered by our concept. All roles are equipped with roots for roll derivation, which greatly facilitates the setting up and maintenance of international concepts (roll-out & future proof) while helping to keep the stability of assignments.

The system administrator (depending on how the local user management processes look like and which user admin tools are in use, if any) can decide whether to use composite roles or single roles for rights assignment. Both possibilities can be implemented with the pre-configured role sets.

Broad set of country-specific transactions

A broad set of country-specific transactions and authorization variants are also available in the concept (e.g. to be able to directly cover the intricacies of customs clearance in other EU member states). Our design of role concepts for existing GTS systems also includes the analysis of data usage. Through this analysis we ensure that all customer-specific transactions are indeed automatically build in. At the same time, we check compliance with the principle of minimum privilege.

Another advantage of this leading practice approach is that it can be implemented without any additional third-party tools (unlike many of the r&a-concept solutions found in the market). All adjustments are made using SAP (GTS) standard resources. This means no additional costs for e.g. software licenses incur. And that is, as we think, good news for the GTS community. It is high time to make the most of the existing GTS installation - especially when it comes to proper, qualitative authorization management.

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