

Rockton Auditor v10 vs. MSGP Audit Trails v10

Feature	Rockton Auditor	GP Audit Trails
Application Overview		
Installation	Automatic upon first log-in	Manual. Requires consulting documentation to locate menu navigation to the Installation window. Non-standard, confusing installation.
Un-installation	Un-install option provided in software, also described in documentation	No method provided
Can be used with a TEST database	Yes	No Audit Trails stores the database ID for its external auditing database inside of the company database. When a backup of the company is restored into TEST, changes made to TEST will appear in the audit for LIVE. No method is provided for changing the Audit Database name for a TEST company, so the only option is to disable auditing in TEST.
Usability Rating*	5/5	0/5
Documentation		
Documentation provides overview of auditing concepts	Yes	No
Documentation provides overview of performance considerations	Yes	No
Online documentation (compiled Help file)	No	Yes
PDF documentation	Yes (not accessible from inside of GP)	Yes (accessible from Printable Manuals window)
Documentation	Yes	No

provides background	Auditor documentation provides a lot of plain English information about why and how to use its windows, and what the impact is of various options.	
Audit Trail Specifics		
Audit by Window	Yes Auditing changes at the window level allows identification of the window used to make the change, along with capturing Notes and/or Reason Codes when changing a specific field.	No
Audit by GP Table	Yes The Dynamics GP application contains an internal definition of each database table. An audit at this level allows some additional functionality, email alerts, mapping of enumerated values (drop down lists) to plain English, and more.	No
Audit by SQL Table	Yes Auditing at this level captures any change regardless of the source (Dynamics GP, or some other application).	Yes
Audit GP Company databases	Yes	Yes
Audit GP Dynamics database	Yes	No
Audit any SQL database	Yes	No
Audit specific GP User	Yes	No
Time-based audit	Yes Users in the process of creating new master records, such as a new Item, may make multiple changes to the record in a short period of time. The time control in this software enables auditing of new record after a certain time has elapsed since creation. This prevents clutter in	No

	the audit record.	
Conditional Auditing	Yes	Yes/No It does not correctly handle some text data and will generate SQL errors when attempting to save the data.
Other		
Ability to Export/Import an Audit definition	Yes	Yes/No It exports the list of tables being edited, but not the Columns to audit, audit type (insert/update/delete), or Field Conditions. Significant loss of setup information occurs.
Attach Note/Reason Code to Changes	Yes	No
Email Alerts based on Audit Events	Yes	No
Enforces tracking Key Fields	Yes Since Auditor enforces tracking the Key Fields in the audit trail, changes can always be traced back to the source record.	No Dynamics GP Audit Trails relies on the user to know (1) that key fields should be tracked as part of the audit, and (2) what those key fields are.
Apply an audit to multiple company databases at same time	Yes	No
Audit Organization	User defined Groups can organize audits together by Series (or any other useful method of grouping)	None All audited tables are in a single list.
Setup Reporting	Yes	No
Form Selection Wizard	Yes A common problem for all but the most experience consultants/users, is identifying which tables contain the information you want to audit. Form Selection Wizard simplifies this by allowing the user to just click on a field on a window and the Wizard figures out what needs to	No

	be audited.	
Field Mapping	Yes Radio buttons, drop-down lists, and many other “non-text” fields in GP translate your input to a number (such as the 3 rd item in a drop-down list). This is stored as “3” in the database. Field Mapping allows translating that to a user-readable value in the audit.	No

Usability Rating

Points Given	Feature
1	The software follows Dynamics GP User Interface conventions. These are documented and available to ISVs.
1	User can achieve basic function of the module without reading documentation. An advanced user should be able to install the product and figure out how to use it without having to read the documentation.
1	Does not interfere with normal GP function and/or common implementation practices. The list of “standard” use and implementation practices is too long to document, but an experienced user/consultant should be able to use Dynamics GP with the new product installed and not have to modify their behavior. With rare exceptions, you should be able to handle Dynamics GP as if the product were not installed and not experience adverse consequences.
1	The software makes a reasonable effort to prevent user from accidents. The user should be prompted to confirm their actions before allowing them to do something to the system from which they cannot recover. There should be no mass updates or deletions of data without making an effort to warn the user.
1	The software makes an effort to shield the user from unnecessary complexity. The list of possible violations is long, but examples would be: (1) requiring a user to enter a certain value into a User Defined field to make the application work, and providing no documentation of such requirement, (2) requiring them to lookup or enter the same information multiple times in the course of “one process”, (3) exposing them to the technical aspects of software, such as the use of computer language in the user interface.

Usability Rating In Action

<p>The software follows Dynamics GP User Interface conventions</p>	<p>Rockton Auditor follows standard Dynamics GP conventions. The buttons are where one would expect, are sized correctly, formatted correctly, and clearly labeled. Error and warning messages tend to be informative, and help the user make correct decisions. Messages use correct grammar and punctuation.</p>
	<p>Dynamics GP Audit Trails does not follow conventions in numerous places. One example that repeatedly presented itself in testing, was that the Refresh button must be clicked on windows that should fill automatically with data.</p> <p>Usually GP allows a user to cancel a long running process (such as a large SmartList filling), but Audit Trails does not do this. In some cases this can freeze the application for minutes while a window fills with data.</p> <p>In several locations warning and error messages contain strange grammar and syntax, suggesting it was translated to English. This contributes to an overall difficult user experience.</p>
<p>User can achieve basic function of the module without reading documentation</p>	<p>Rockton Auditor is intuitive to install and configure. One example of this is "Tip" messages that help a user configure audition on a table. The process of setting up an audit also produces detailed, user-friendly reporting of error conditions.</p>
	<p>Dynamics GP Audit trails is so difficult to use that a user is unlikely to get the product working without reading the documentation. The difficulty begins at the outset when the product does not automatically install itself, and no guidance is given to locate the installation window.</p>
<p>Does not interfere with normal GP function and/or common implementation practices</p>	<p>Rockton Auditor has no impact on normal use of Dynamics GP and/or normal implementation practices.</p>
	<p>Dynamics GP Audit Trails prevents the use of a TEST database. If an experienced SQL database administrator is available, they might be able to maintain a TEST database with Audit Trails in place, but not assistance is provided in the documentation to make the necessary table updates.</p>
<p>The software makes a reasonable effort to prevent user from</p>	<p>Rockton Auditor follows conventions and prompts a user to confirm before executing a delete. Useful "Tip" messages are displayed to help the user make correct choices.</p>

accidents	
	<p>Dynamics GP Audit Trails does not confirm actions with the user before committing them. In several locations this can cause irreparable damage to the integrity of the audit trail, and can in some cases completely destroy the audit. Accidentally clicking "Remove" can completely eliminate the audit trail since the system does not confirm the user intended to click the button.</p> <p>Dynamics GP Audit Trails has poor documentation about the function of its windows. The Audit Tables Upgrade utility completely destroyed an existing audit created during testing. This utility removed the column-specific auditing with Field Conditions, and replaced it with an audit of every column for the specified tables.</p>
The software makes an effort to shield the user from unnecessary complexity	Rockton Auditor. In some cases the use of SQL tables names is unavoidable with this type of product, but the software uses when possible the "Display Name" for tables and fields.
	Dynamics GP Audit Trails displays the actual tSQL queries used to construct Field Conditions.

MISC NOTES:

GP Audit Trails

Installation: On logging-in to GP the required installation processes do not run automatically. Creates a separated Audit Database for each company database you will be auditing.

For example, my installed resulted in a new SQL database called TEST. The audit trail will create a new table in TEST for each GP table you apply an audit to. In this case an audit on the Item Master (IV00101) results in a somewhat redundantly named table in TEST called IV00101_AUDIT.

User Interface

Audit Trail Maintenance: Clicking Refresh can run for quite a long time depending on the number of products installed, and there is no way to abort the refresh if you accidentally click the button.

Tables are listed by Descriptive Name, and grouped by Product and Series. While the technical name and physical name are also listed, there is no method provided to find a table by physical name (the name you see in SQL server). The combination of Descriptive Name listing, and grouping by Series and Product can make it difficult to find a specific table.

The User Interface is confusing to say the least, and following the instructions provided in The Audit Trails.pdf does not result in success. After much random clicking you can figure out how to apply an audit to the Item Master (which is supposed to be what is described in the PDF).

The Stop Auditing button immediately, without warning, deletes the audit-triggers from the audited tables.

Any change to the columns being audited results in a new audit record with the audit_log_type = "Upgrade".

Table Auditing Setup

This window provides the ability to mark which fields in a table to audit. If you already know how to use this window, you'll be in good shape. Turing to the on-line help yields this confusing bit of assistance:

“Use this window to set up auditing options for selected table. You may choose the type of change that you would like to audit (checkboxes Audit Insert on Table, Audit Update on Table, Audit Delete on Table and Don’t track blank to non blank changes) and fields in the table you want to audit.”

This window has a column labeled “Field Condition”. The documentation says this about Field Condition:

“Use this window to set up conditions for tracking changes in a selected column.”

The PDF is perhaps slightly more helpful:

“Select a Condition Operator and Target Value in order to meet the desired condition for auditing that specific field.”

About an hour of playing with this option revealed the following: If a Field Condition is present, a change will only appear if the field

Applying the audit caused the Auditing Options window to pop open for some reason.

You can add/remove columns from an existing audit. One word of caution here: if you unmark a column from the edit and click Save, the column and all audit history for that column are immediately deleted. Given that the audit trail is irrevocably deleted for the column, a warning prior to committing the change would be a nice feature.

Several system warning & error messages contain odd syntax, appearing to have been translated into English. This is not specifically a problem, but one more area where this product can be difficult and confusing to use.

As mentioned above, applying an audit to a table creates a mirror table in the Audit Database. An important consideration here is that the software takes a starting “snapshot” of every record in the source table. If you audit a table with a large number of records, the initial application of the audit can take a very long time for each table.

It shows a significant number of tables which cannot actually be audited. Attempting to select one of these for auditing results in the message: This is not a physical table and cannot be audited.

Creating a TEST company with a backup of live resulted in records being written to the Live company audit. You can shut the audit off in test, but there does not appear to be a way to change the Audit Database for a test company. So, while the instructions suggest you try this product

in a test company before deploying in a live company, you must also have already created that test company, and should not refresh the test company from live data.

Cannot audit text fields, or dynamics database.

SmartView –

a SmartList-like window for viewing the audit. Unlike SmartList, it does not refresh when you select a favorite. Perhaps a small thing, but it is another area where this product is made more difficult to use because of its failure to display typical Dynamics GP user interface behavior.

Like Audit Trail Maintenance, there is not Cancel button, so if you click Refresh on a large table be prepared to wait.

This window shows you one change at a time. It will show you the selected record, and the “pre” value for the selected record. Curiously, SmartView allows you to multi-select records before clicking the Compare button, which suggests it might compare a series of records and show the changes. Unfortunately, it just display whatever record is at the top of your range of selected records. The ability to multi-select also implies it might affect what is sent out when you click Print or Excel, but here to the multi-select functionality has no impact.

Database Upgrade

Contains this starting sentence: “Upgrade the Audit Trials database in its strictest sense is straightforward.”

The documentation is not clear about what this utility does. A test run found that it replaced our audit of 2 columns in the Item Master with an audit of every column in the Item Master. It also deleted the Field Conditions we had established for the table.

