

Product Review

APM (Authorization Process Manager)

THE SOLUTION

Nutshell:	Reduces effort of security/authorizations testing
Great for:	Testing-intensive phases (upgrades, M&A)
Fits:	SAP ERP users – 4.7 and higher
Alternatives:	Manual processes

- + **Streamlined security testing**
- + **Easy installation and training**
- **Core ERP kernel only**
- **New product: 50+ customers**

Who they are

Founded: 2007

Employees: 175 (including sister company resources)

HQ: Frederiksberg, Denmark

Customers: 50+

User seats: 100,000+

Top four countries: US, Denmark, UK, Netherlands

What they do

[APM](#) was developed by Applicon Consulting due to their clients' frustrations with the cumbersome and time-consuming process of security testing. APM provides a new level of transparency and control over security testing

by equipping security team members with an "APM Cockpit" to manage the security testing process. APM also gives business users a simple means of role-based testing without needing to involve IT each time an error is encountered.

What companies use it for

- Increase the efficiency of security and authorizations testing
- Validate security testing results
- Create, standardize and clean up SAP security roles

In the real world

To better understand how APM works in a real world setting, *The ERP Executive* talked with Aku Lehtimäki, IT Solutions Manager with [Teliasonera](#), Europe's 5th largest telecommunications provider. In the fall of 2010, Lehtimäki and his SAP security team were looking to make some big improvements

in their SAP role management and testing processes. Testing was too cumbersome and time consuming for business users. Role creation had become too complex; there was a pressing need for process standardization.

When Lehtimäki found out about Applicon's APM solution, he decided that this was the right tool to help Teliasonera sharpen their security processes. The APM implementation took place in December 2010 – "easy," says Lehtimäki. After go-live, Lehtimäki saw an immediate impact on Teliasonera's security testing. "We now have a shortened lead time in process testing and better quality of testing," says Lehtimäki. "User satisfaction in the testing process is a big benefit, and it has also kept our costs in line."

We asked Lehtimäki why business users like the new process better. "When there is a need to test end-to-end processes, there might not be much time to do authorizations," says Lehtimäki. "Without a tool like APM, that testing can take so much time. With APM, we are able to do all the updates in roles and structures and continue the user testing immediately. We are immediately able to assign the relevant access rights. Users don't have to wait on IT anymore. That also impacts quality, because we are able to do the actual testing with the right user roles. It has been better from a controls perspective also."

Lehtimäki cited one more benefit: role standardization. "We used to have several different ways we created roles," says Lehtimäki. "Now we have one standardized process we are using for role creation and authorization testing." During the testing process, many business users ended up using APM during their end-to-end testing. We asked Lehtimäki if this was a problem from a training perspective. "They needed additional training," Lehtimäki says, "but it's more or less the same testing activity."

Bottom line? APM's screens were not hard for users to navigate. "For the business users, APM looks like the typical SAP error reporting screen, but with more functionality," says Lehtimäki. The security and authorizations team required additional training to use all the features in the APM Cockpit, but Lehtimäki believes the benefits Teliasonera gained were well worth that upskilling effort.

Pricing

One refreshing aspect of APM is the transparent pricing. Most of the information needed to get a realistic view of APM's pricing can be [found on their web site](#). APM's pricing consists of a one-time license fee, a one-time installation and training fee (always 4K Euros), 20 percent annual maintenance, and optional hosting fees if a customer chooses a hosted APM solution. (Hosting is a flat rate of 3K Euros per annum.)

The pricing breakdown for a large APM project (10,000 user installation and larger) would be as follows: just under 100K Euros for the license, 20 percent maintenance, and 4K for training and

installation. A much smaller installation (500 users) would start at 13K Euros for the license and add up to a total cost of just under 20K, including maintenance, installation and training.

The maintenance fee is also optional, though all of APM’s customers to date have chosen to pay for maintenance. The maintenance fee guarantees future compatibility with SAP releases, unlimited customer support and training and new software releases. APM is also available as a service on a monthly basis, with rental plans customized to the buyer. A typical six month APM rental is 50 percent cheaper than an outright purchase.

APM in Action

The following screen shots illustrate the APM authorizations testing process from both the business user and security team perspective.

In Figure 1, the tester (business user) gets an authorization error executing XD01. (Without APM, the users would wait for hours or days for a correction to be delivered before continuing testing.)



Figure 1: Authorization Error Executing XD01

The tester goes back to the APM test screen and reports the error in Figure 2. After completing the form, the tester presses “Save and update” and the report is sent to the APM Cockpit, where the tester’s credentials are automatically updated.

Authorisation Error Report

<input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value="Save and update"/>																			
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Error reporting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>APM Issue</td> <td>1991</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transaction code</td> <td>XD01</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Test case no.</td> <td>8877</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Step:</td> <td>01</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Error reporting		APM Issue	1991	Transaction code	XD01	Test case no.	8877	Step:	01	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Error description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="2">In order to crt sold</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Error description		In order to crt sold					
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Figure 2: Error Reporting with the APM Test Screen

This update allows the tester to successfully continue testing XD01, as in Figure 3. The test ID has only been approved with the precise access missing to do the task intended. This access can be reviewed by the security team at a convenient future time.



Create Customer: General Data

General Data Company Code Data Sales Area Data

Customer: 8877

Address Payment transactions Marketing Contact persons

Preview International Versions

Name

Title

Name

Search terms

Search term 1/2

Figure 3: Continuation of the Testing of Transaction XD01

After completing the functional test of XD01, the tester can check off XD01 as “Accepted” and continue with the next transactions (see Figure 4). APM will keep track of what is tested for the benefit of both the test managers and the tester. Many different test IDs can be simultaneously tracked.

APM Test

Project: REPORT

User: REPORT022

Authorization error

1 / 1

Tcode	Description	Status	Change status
FD32	Change Customer Credit Management	⊗○○	<select>
FD33	Display Customer Credit Management	○○○	
XD01	Create Customer (Centrally)	○○○	<select>
XD02	Change Customer (Centrally)	○○○	<select>
XD03	Display Customer (Centrally)	○○○	<select>
XD06	Mark customer for deletion (centr.)	○○○	
XD07	Change Customer Account Group	○○○	<select>

1 / 1

Figure 4: APM User Test – Transaction List and Test Status

In the APM Cockpit, the authorization team can follow both the progress of the user testing, analyzing and correcting the APM issues that are reported. In Figure 5, the “Project Overview” screen shows both the progress of the individual test IDs and the status of the authorization issues that APM is tracking.

Project Overview for project REPORT (System A81 / Client 800)

User	R/3	Σ	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓	Assigned roles	○○○	○○○	⊗○○	○○○	Tcode
REPORT001	9	0	2	0	1	6	6	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT001 ZS_OSH_CC1000_SD_CUSTOMER	2	1	1	3	7
REPORT002	9	0	3	0	1	5	5	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT002 ZS_OSH_CC1000_SD_INVOICE	0	0	1	3	4
REPORT003	17	16	0	0	0	1	1	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT003 ZS_OSH_CC1000_SD_REPORTING	3	0	0	1	4
REPORT004	10	0	0	3	1	6	6	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT004 ZS_OSH_CC1000_SD_SALES_ORDER	0	0	0	6	6
REPORT005	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT005 ZS_OSH_CC2000_SD_CUSTOMER	0	0	2	5	7
REPORT007	4	0	3	0	0	1	1	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT007 ZS_OSH_CC2000_SD_INVOICE	0	0	0	4	4
REPORT008	9	7	0	0	0	2	2	/APPLISOL/APM_TC_REPORT008 ZS_OSH_CC2000_SD_REPORTING	3	1	0	0	4

Figure 5: APM Cockpit – Project Overview Screen

Figure 6 shows the XD01 error reported by the tester as seen in the APM Cockpit. The authorization team can continue the process of solving the issue by adding a responsible party, adding a comment to the issue, analyzing the APM issue and finally executing a work task to update the role or add a role to the user. All relevant actions within APM are recorded and documented for each individual APM issue.

←

APM Issue 1990 (System A81 / Client 800)

Header information

APM Issue	1990	Userinit	REPORT022
Test case no. / Step	5615 / 01	First name	
External issue no.		Last name	REPORT022

Technical details

Tcode	XD01	Error description	In order to crt customers on sold acces.
Object	F_KNA1_GRP		
Fields	ACTVT 01 KTOKD ZSP1		

Actions

Status	Analyze
Responsible	Blake

Action log

#	Timestamp	User	Event	Details
6	2011-06-06 14:37:24	OSH	Create task	Change role ZS_OSH_MASTER_SD_CUSTOMER
5	2011-06-06 14:37:24	OSH	Issue status	Analyze
4	2011-06-06 14:36:48	OSH	Responsible	Blake

Figure 6: APM Cockpit – XD01 Error Report Tracking

Support

As noted, the APM maintenance fee qualifies customers for unlimited support. Though partners might sell the APM solution, APM always provides the support directly to the end customers. In addition to formal support, the APM web site is stocked with product documentation in the [APM Knowledge Hub](#). The Knowledge Hub includes video tutorials on many of APM’s product features. There is not currently a support forum.

Buying experience

Appicon Solutions provided us with [a product intro](#) and a one-hour demo of their product, just as they would any customer prospect. The demo started with a summary of how the product evolved out of the frustrations of Appicon clients as they struggled with authorizations testing. The rest of the demo was customized around our needs and interests. Without forcing us to yawn through a slide deck, APM’s team offered to show us any product feature we wanted to see live. Although APM addresses a range of SAP authorization management functions, we asked to focus on the high-impact testing scenarios. APM walked us through the process a business user would go through identifying an authorizations testing error within APM and how that error would be monitored by the security

and authorizations team. We asked to see how a business user would deal with the same issue *without* APM and saw the differences for ourselves.

APM had both a technical and marketing expert on the call; for the first time in our Product Review series, all questions, including our pricing and support inquiries, were handled during the demo call itself without a need for any post-call follow ups. There was a good discussion about what kinds of projects are the best fits for APM solutions (for the testing part of APM’s solutions, upgrades and mergers & acquisitions are sweet spots). If APM provides the same kind of honest give and take with their buying prospects, it’s fair to say they excel in the demo side of the buying experience.

The ERP Executive take

APM’s product is a lot like their demo – no frills, but very thoughtfully executed. The APM suite was not built as a hypothetical “game changing” technology but as a solution for SAP pain points. The use of a dual interface, one for business users and one for security and authorizations team members (the APM Cockpit), is the right approach – one that will serve APM well as they enhance the product. There’s not much to argue with in terms of the core product, which is focused on the [SAP ERP](#) kernel.

Though APM has just 50+ live customers, their customer base includes household names like GE and Xerox. Selling into large enterprises is clearly not an issue. Because APM installations can be done remotely without a consultant on site, geography should not be an object as APM continues to expand from its Denmark base.

In addition to solving a known pain point, APM addresses a buyer’s pain point as well: lack of pricing transparency. APM’s clear and open pricing is one more factor that establishes them as a vendor to watch. APM has room to expand its product – right now, the security features are focused on operational issues, not GRC. Over time, APM could consider expanding to other Business Suite areas (CRM) or into SAP BI products that have a different security structure but, in some cases, similar problems.

While APM can be used on mobile devices via email alerts, it might make sense to extend some key pieces of functionality (such as authorization approvals) via mobile access. APM’s UI is not what you would call “sexy,” but it’s easy to use. APM may want to consider enhancing its UI for business users, who are getting used to the slicker UIs of the Sharepoint/social era. Selective social features such as live error resolution between authorizations team members and testers would add another dimension to APM. Right now, APM has no competition in the SAP security testing space, excepting those customers who prefer to continue with a clunky manual process. They should extend their early advantage with even deeper functionality.

THE VERDICT	
Pricing	10
Functionality	7
Value	8
Ease of use	8
	

Though APM can clearly enhance its product further, the more pressing question is: Why don't more people know about it? APM's biggest mission in the next few years is simply to get the word out regarding a product that has obvious value. With that aim in mind, APM does have a [better than average web site](#) with plenty of easily accessible documentation and instructional videos. APM could benefit from a greater "social presence" beyond their sister company's [LinkedIn profile](#) that would allow more sharing of their informational content and more conversation with those new to the product. APM's growth will be a story to monitor.

Applicon did not pay for this feature and ERP Executive had editorial control of the content. Screen shots provided by Applicon. This review was written by [Amit Bendov](#) and Jon Reed.

Comment to "Product Review – APM (Authorization Process Manager)"

Franklyn D Waithe, KRKA says (July 7, 2011 at 9:14 am):

I have experience of the Applicon APM tool since since 2008, when the first version was available and can back up the advantages stated in this article. Authorizations testing is not like ABAP testing, so requires a dedicated test tool in order to better manage the test environment and defects logged.

The APM tool is the ideal tool for SAP Authorizations testing, as it enables effective/efficient management of the test environment: Enables the Authorizations team to manage the user administration aspects of the test, enables testers to progress the test with minimal interaction with the Authorizations team by directly correcting issues experienced and finally, enables the Authorizations team to progress the logged issues at their convenience. One other plus is that the corrections to the roles can be managed via the workflow process within the APM tool. i.e. directly in SAP backend, therefore minimizing the the possibility of human error when updating the required roles.

Conclusion: If you are looking for an effective tool to efficiently/Effectively manage your Authorizations test, the Applicon APM tool is the answer.

Contact details

If you have interest in the APM tool please send an email to solutions@applicon.dk.