

User Level Security in Access 2007

An OpenGate Whitepaper



The new Microsoft® Access™ 2007 delivers several new security enhancements, along with one significant change that is less publicized. Namely, the lack of workgroup security in Microsoft Access for accdb format databases. If your organization is considering or deploying Office 2007, Access databases that rely on user-level security present a considerable, and potentially costly, migration challenge. Moreover, recent legislative and regulatory requirements across the globe, such as Sarbanes-Oxley in the US, make control of user access to sensitive information a corporate imperative. This brief paper outlines key considerations for migrating databases that rely on user-level security to Microsoft Access 2007.

CONTROLLING ACCESS TO FORMS

In previous versions of Microsoft Access, workgroup security offered the ability to lock down forms and other database objects to limit user access to approved activities and information contained in your database. Migrating to Microsoft Access 2007, you must find alternative ways to lock down forms at a user role level. The Microsoft Access switchboard, commonly used to give users a quick launch-point to various forms and reports, does not support user-level menus. Consequently, without the native security capability offered in previous Access versions, users can access any form available in the database window or via your switchboards.

The Enterprise Edition of UI Builder™ for Access provides the ability to create user-level menus that can limit which forms and reports a user can access during their session, as well as whether they have read/write or read-only access to each form. After hiding the database window, or converting your solution to an MDE file, your Access database has a moderate level of security that ensures only the most experienced Access users can find ways to access forms they are not authorized to view.

CONTROLLING ACCESS TO DATA

In addition to limiting access to forms and reports, restricting users' ability to view or modify database tables is also key to ensuring your solution is secure in Microsoft Access 2007. While you may not be able to lock down access to data for determined and experienced users in Access 2007, you can avoid casual access to your database tables by hiding the database window and limiting your users to specific forms and reports with UI Builder. Determined individuals will still be able to gain access via ODBC connections or un-hiding your database window, however the most common risk is typically that of a user exploring what they can view in the database.

CONCLUSION

When considering a broad migration to Microsoft Office 2007, security impacts to your Microsoft Access databases are a matter of risk and compliance. You may need to consider the cost of upsizing your solution to leverage security available in MySQL or SQL Server, or finding ways to maintain an adequate level of security in your current Microsoft Access database application. Whether you choose to upsize, create workarounds with your own development, or leverage the out-of-the-box functionality offered by UI Builder – Enterprise Edition, security changes in Access 2007 will require your organization to dedicate time and energy to solve the challenge.

To learn more about UI Builder™ for Access – Enterprise Edition, visit www.opengatesw.net