AN EXAMPLE TRAIL MAP

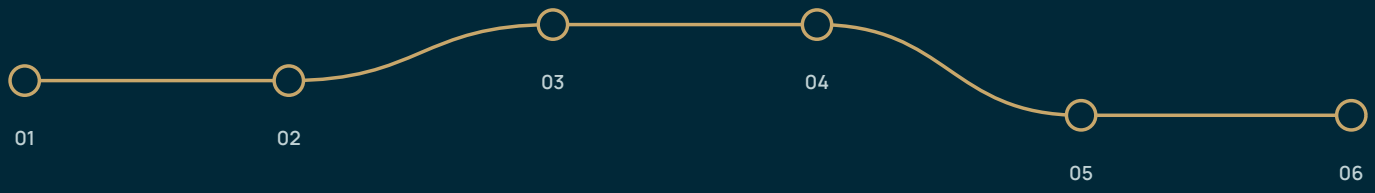
Know what a return must carry.

A Trail Map (the reviewed report format) for authorized return, receipt, disposition and draft credit before a system change.

Redfern Industrial Supply

A fictional US industrial distributor preparing one returns unit for an ERP change.

THE SIX-STEP TRAIL



Customer return authorized TO Supported draft credit presented for approval

This fictional sample shows the format and reasoning. Every record and operational figure is authored; pilot targets are proposals to test. In a paid assessment, a named analyst reviews and signs off every finding before delivery.

Explore the interactive report

01 / DECISION AND BASELINE

Start with a decision.

Redfern's returns carry inconsistent item codes, incomplete disposition decisions and approval evidence outside the credit record. A new system will still need those decisions. Define the meaning and approval trail before treating the migration as a field-transfer exercise.

RECOMMENDED FIRST MOVE

Pilot a return-field mapping and disposition gate in the existing workflow. Reconcile draft credit evidence before approving requirements for the new ERP.

ILLUSTRATIVE BASELINE / AUTHORED DATA, NOT MEASURED CUSTOMER RESULTS

8 business hours / return

Receipt-to-draft-ready time

Elapsed time from recorded return receipt to a supported draft credit ready for approval.

400 business hours / 50 draft-ready return cases = 8 hours.

Includes waiting; excludes returns still awaiting draft readiness, customer transit and final credit approval.

Source E01

12 of 50 return cases

SKU or unit code inconsistent

Cases with unreconciled item or unit codes at first draft review.

12 mapping exception flags among 50 return IDs.

Authored example; compare the same cohort definition in a real pilot.

Source E02

7 of 50 return cases

Disposition not recorded

Cases lacking the retained stock-treatment decision at first draft review.

7 missing disposition records among 50 returns.

Authored example; compare the same cohort definition in a real pilot.

Source E04

9 of 50 return cases

Approval link missing

Cases with approval in email but no link from the credit at first draft review.

9 disconnected approval records among 50 returns.

Authored example; compare the same cohort definition in a real pilot.

Source E05

02 / FOLLOW THE HANDOFFS

The work, before and after.

In scope: One legal entity, one returns unit and returned-stock cases. Return authorization, receipt, item mapping, disposition and draft credit. Evidence and requirements needed before an ERP migration.

CURRENT TRAIL

Authorize return
Customer service / Return request

Record the accepted return and original sale reference.

Receive stock
Returns clerk / Receipt log

Identify the actual item and received quantity.

Interpret item codes
Data steward / Mapping workbook

Resolve SKU and unit differences between return and credit records.

Choose disposition
Returns supervisor / Notes + email

Decide stock treatment; some decisions are not retained on the case.

Prepare draft credit
Finance analyst / Current ERP

Build the draft and locate approval evidence in email.

Submit for approval
Credit controller / Review queue

Check the draft against source and authority before issuance.

PROPOSED TRAIL / PILOT DESIGN

Retain return authority
Customer service / Linked return case

Attach accepted return, original sale and authorized scope.

Record actual receipt
Returns clerk / Receipt record

Capture actual item, unit, quantity and condition evidence.

Reconcile item meaning
Data steward / Approved mapping

Use tested SKU and unit rules; stop on unknown conversions.

Approve disposition
Returns supervisor / Disposition gate

Name reviewer and retain the stock-treatment decision.

Assemble supported draft
Finance analyst / Draft-credit pack

Link sale, receipt, mapping, disposition and credit authority.

Review the exact version
Credit controller / Approval queue

Reconcile the supported draft before authorizing any issued credit.

Outside scope: ERP selection, production migration and system implementation. Credit issuance, tax decisions and inventory write-off policy.

03 / INSPECT THE AUTHORED EVIDENCE

Evidence before interpretation.

Four authored working weeks; 50 returns that reached supported draft readiness. At first draft review, 12 have inconsistent item or unit codes, 7 lack recorded disposition and 9 lack an approval link. These historical gap flags overlap; they are not the final readiness state. Timing uses an authored eight-hour weekday clock.

E01 Return-to-credit event register

Synthetic event records / 50 returns reaching supported draft readiness in four weeks.

Receipt-to-draft-ready intervals total 400 business hours, averaging 8 hours. Each case retains the original sale, receipt and draft credit references.

Interpretation: Returns still awaiting draft readiness are excluded; keep their age visible separately.

E02 Return-field mapping workbook

Authored mapping audit / SKU, unit and quantity fields at first draft review of the same 50 cases.

Twelve cases contain inconsistent SKU or unit codes. The workbook identifies source meaning, proposed target meaning and unresolved conversion decisions.

Interpretation: A syntactically valid mapping can still change quantity or meaning. Reconcile values and units together.

E03 Returns-clerk to finance walkthrough

Authored walkthrough / RED-012 at first draft review, before its evidence gaps are resolved.

For RED-012, the clerk receives legacy item AX-6 in CASE units and emails the disposition to finance. A conversion needs review, and the draft credit does not link the approval message.

Interpretation: The walkthrough describes a requirements question, not a proven target-system capability.

E04 Disposition decision register

Synthetic case review / Stock-treatment evidence at first draft review of all 50 cases.

Seven returns have no recorded disposition. The proposed register separates inspection evidence, the stock-treatment decision and authority to adjust inventory.

Interpretation: A missing record does not establish that stock was mishandled; establish the authoritative source.

E05 Credit approval trace

Authored control audit / Draft credit and supporting authority at first review of the same cases.

Nine cases have approval in email but no link on the draft credit. Credit authority must refer to the actual scope and version presented.

Interpretation: Linking an email is insufficient if its author, amount or approved scope cannot be verified.

04 / OPPORTUNITY 01 / RECONCILE THE DATA

Map meaning before moving fields.

PROPOSED OWNER

Returns data owner

EFFORT

Medium; mapping and test cases

WHAT THE EXAMPLE SHOWS

E01 E02 E03

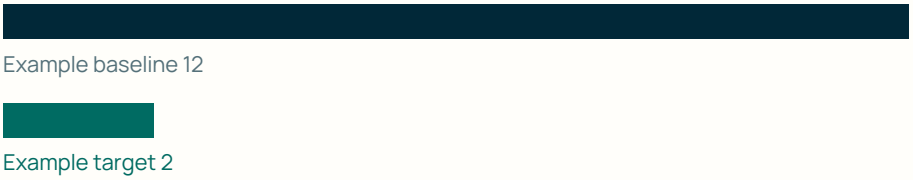
At first draft review, twelve of fifty returns have inconsistent SKU or unit codes. A migration could copy the fields while preserving an unresolved difference in meaning.

WHAT CHANGES

Define approved SKU equivalences and unit conversions with source evidence, effective dates and an owner. Reconcile representative quantities and values in a test set. Treat unknown or conflicting conversions as an explicit hold.

ILLUSTRATIVE PILOT TARGET / UNMEASURED

mapping gaps / 50 returns



Pilot threshold: at most 2 mapping gaps at first draft review per 50 comparable returns, versus 12 in the example. Every accepted mapping must reconcile quantity and value; completeness alone cannot pass the gate.

CONTROL THAT STAYS

Do not alter a credit or inventory balance to force a match. Preserve original values and require authorized review for changed interpretation.

MEASUREMENT AND DECISION GATE

Source and target meaning reconcile for each pilot case. Stop on a wrong conversion or unexplained value difference before migration requirements are accepted.

Competing explanation: Some differences may be valid packaging conversions. Preserve their approved meaning instead of forcing the same code everywhere.

04 / OPPORTUNITY 02 / KEEP STOCK TREATMENT EXPLICIT

Make disposition a decision gate.

PROPOSED OWNER

Returns operations lead

EFFORT

Low; decision checklist and owner

WHAT THE EXAMPLE SHOWS

E03 E04 E05

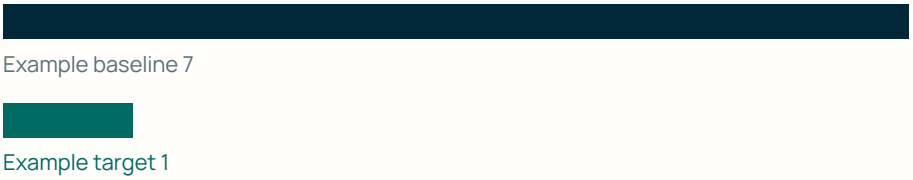
At first draft review, seven returns lack a recorded disposition. A received quantity alone does not tell finance whether the stock-treatment decision is ready.

WHAT CHANGES

Record inspection evidence, proposed disposition, reviewer and approval on the return case. Separate stock treatment from the credit decision. Name who resolves missing evidence and keep the case waiting until the required authority is present.

ILLUSTRATIVE PILOT TARGET / UNMEASURED

disposition gaps / 50 returns



Pilot threshold: at most 1 disposition gap at first draft review per 50 comparable returns, versus 7 in the example. Inspect decision quality and authority as well as the presence of a record.

CONTROL THAT STAYS

The workflow does not grant write-off or disposal authority. Keep inventory policy, safety obligations and authorized exceptions with the responsible owners.

MEASUREMENT AND DECISION GATE

Every pilot draft has a valid disposition or an explicit approved exception. Stop if a status is closed without supporting evidence.

Competing explanation: A disposition may exist in a warehouse record. Link the authoritative decision before adding a second approval step.

04 / OPPORTUNITY 03 / SUPPORT THE CREDIT REVIEW

Carry authority into the draft.

PROPOSED OWNER

Finance controller

EFFORT

Medium; evidence links and review

WHAT THE EXAMPLE SHOWS

E01 E03 E05

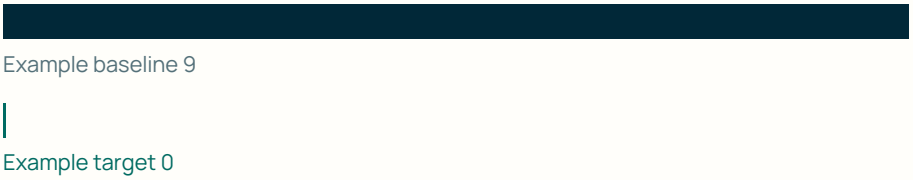
At first draft review, nine cases have credit authority in email but no link on the draft record. The reviewer must reconstruct which decision supports which version.

WHAT CHANGES

Attach the authorized credit evidence to the draft, along with the original sale, receipt, item mapping and disposition. Reconcile the scope and amount to that authority. Specify these links as migration requirements before approving a target design.

ILLUSTRATIVE PILOT TARGET / UNMEASURED

approval-link gaps / 50 returns



Pilot threshold: 0 approval-link gaps at first draft review per 50 comparable returns, versus 9 in the example. Compare the 8-hour elapsed baseline separately; a linked approval does not by itself make review faster.

CONTROL THAT STAYS

A draft is not an issued credit. Preserve final approval, separation of duties and the version trail before posting any financial change.

MEASUREMENT AND DECISION GATE

The controller can inspect the exact source and authority for each pilot draft. Any amount, scope or identity mismatch remains a hold.

Competing explanation: Email may be the accepted authorization source. The problem may be stable linkage and versioning rather than the channel itself.

05 / TURN THE REPORT INTO DECISIONS

The next 90 days.

An illustrative sequence. Replace the synthetic baseline with authorized evidence, then scale only what passes its gate. A failed pilot is a reason to revise or stop.

DAYS 1-30

Define what must survive.

Data owner + returns lead

Replace sample records and identify authoritative source fields. Test SKU and unit meanings on known returns.

Decision gate: Mappings reconcile meaning, quantity and value.

DAYS 31-60

Pilot the decision gates.

Returns supervisor + controller

Record disposition and credit authority on one case trail. Test holds, corrections and approved exceptions.

Decision gate: No draft bypasses required stock or financial authority.

DAYS 61-90

Accept evidence-led requirements.

ERP sponsor + process owner

Turn proven fields, controls and exceptions into requirements. Scope target validation and production migration separately.

Decision gate: Approve only requirements with traceable evidence and acceptance tests.

ASSUMPTIONS TO KEEP VISIBLE

- All 50 returns and their timings are authored.
- Gap flags describe first draft review; the elapsed clock ends at supported draft readiness. Gaps can overlap.
- No live ERP migration or financial posting is represented.

OPEN QUESTIONS AND OWNERS

- Data owner: approve conversions and authoritative source fields.
- Returns lead: confirm disposition and inventory authority.
- Controller: confirm credit approval and retention requirements.

06 / YOUR NEXT STEP

Make this your workflow.

Edge is ProcessScout's guided assessment service for one recurring workflow.

$1,500 USD

PAID UPFRONT

One legal entity, one business unit and one workflow.

WHAT YOU RECEIVE

A Trail Map (the reviewed report you receive), three prioritized opportunities, a baseline and a sequenced 90-day plan.

One supported starter asset: an SOP, control checklist, requirements specification or automation blueprint. Production implementation is a separate engagement.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE IT

Five business days after your evidence checklist is complete.

The clock starts when sources, recordings, documents, interview and blocking questions are complete. Payment alone does not start it.



David Bell ProcessScout review lead

25 years in operations and finance, including Shell and Deutsche Bank; founder and CEO of JustPayroll through its 2024 acquisition.

David Bell leads the review approach. The analyst assigned to your assessment owns its recommendations and sign-off.

THREE OPPORTUNITIES, OR YOUR FEE BACK

If ProcessScout cannot identify at least three evidence-backed opportunities from a good-faith intake, the assessment fee is refunded under the assessment terms. This is a deliverable guarantee, not a promise of realized savings.

Read assessment terms

CANCELLATION AND SCOPE PROTECTION

Cancel before analyst review starts for a full refund. If the report materially misses the agreed brief, tell us within 14 days of full access and choose an in-scope correction or a refund after review.

Read the full protection policy

Book a 15-minute fit call

Discuss fit, scope and your decision. The call is not the assessment itself.

Open this interactive sample