Engineer Advisory

Made six collectors state what they skipped

Made six reporting collectors state the part of their input they never read — files that stayed shut, probes not installed, journal lines unrecognised — and fitted thresholds to 116 measured samples, after establishing that a blind collection and a healthy host render the same page.

September 2026

116

measured samples behind every threshold

Situation. Six read-only collectors rendered a live host into Markdown, and not one of them recorded its own runtime, the files it could not open, or the inputs it skipped. Several had failure paths that swallowed the failure outright, which produces a specific and dangerous shape of report: a page of numbers that looks complete and healthy whether or not anything was actually read. A rotated log that arrives truncated removes its whole span from every figure on the page, and a week of missing traffic reads exactly like a quiet week. A mirror whose daemon changed its log format produces the same zero as a mirror nobody visited. Every probe in the security report sits behind a test for the tool, so a host missing the firewall, socket and ban tools rendered no rules, no sockets and no jails — the visual signature of a locked-down host, and in fact a blind one.

Task. Two things had to become impossible to mistake for health. A report had to state what counts as bad rather than leave a human to decide, and every collector had to state what its own collection cost and how much of its input it could not use.

Action. Thresholds were fitted to the 116 samples the metrics report had already measured, never to a guess, with the observed ranges recorded next to the bounds. The judging finds every column by name rather than by position and refuses to judge a row whose value count does not match its label count, which is what protects it from a clock-format change that shifts every

label by one. The report then distinguishes three outcomes rather than two: a breach, no breach, and not judged because nothing measured it. On the collection side each one now reports its runtime and its blindness — files read against files unreadable, journal lines read against journal lines recognised, repositories git refused to read counted rather than rendered as a zero, sources asked against sources that answered, probes asked against probes not installed — and every one of those rows is printed even when the answer is zero, because a row that disappears when it is empty is the same silence in a different form. Every template gained an explicit branch for output written by a collector older than itself.

Result. A page of this platform's numbers now carries its own blind spots beside its findings. None of the self-measurement is a gate, and that is stated rather than implied: no bound is fitted to a collector's runtime, so a collection that doubles is visible and stops nobody, and fitting one would need a baseline from the real host that this work deliberately did not invent. The existing bounds are daily averages, which can hide a one-minute spike. The fifteen-minute switch samples available memory and free disk; a brief breach between checks can still go unseen. The two mechanisms do not replace one another, as both reports explain.

Bring this experience to your project

Use "Made six collectors state what they skipped" as a starting point for a similar challenge in your organisation. The services behind this work are available for your project. Handovers, runbooks and manuals that let your own staff operate the system without ringing whoever built it.

Explore our services Get in touch →

Look behind the result

Read the situation, decisions and result in this example. We can discuss which parts transfer to your constraints and which need another approach. Made six collectors state what they skipped — 116 measured samples behind every threshold

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Does your dashboard know the difference between quiet and blind?

Talk through your project with the engineer responsible for delivery. We agree the scope, price basis and handover in writing before work begins.

Role context: Site Reliability Engineer. It draws on Automation & CI/CD, Reliability & Backups, Monitoring & Observability, Testing & QA, Python and Documentation. And while you are here, we are rather good at Site Reliability & Monitoring, Custom AI Agent Development, System Administration and Technical Documentation.

Get in touch Explore our services

One piece of **a longer record** — and it is all on this site.

Every entry is written the same way: the situation, the task, what we did and what changed.

See the whole record

Define the improvement you need

Bring the decision, the people affected and the options already considered. We can make the tradeoffs explicit and leave a documented recommendation.

See what it costs Get in touch →

Does your dashboard know the difference between quiet and blind?

Ask about the decisions behind “Made six collectors state what they skipped”. You will speak with the people who can explain the work and assess your own project.

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Contact card

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