Engineer Advisory

Put the documentation under its own linter

Put the documentation under its own linter — a per-file line budget that only ratchets down, an index requirement and a real-path check — which found six of nine plans marked done while carrying unchecked boxes, and fourteen commit-gating tasks named in no document.

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the documentation put under its own linter

Situation. The repository governs itself with written instructions — twenty-six documents covering the quality policy, the design system, accessibility, print, metadata, translation and git. Instructions have a specific decay pattern: they get longer, they drift from the code, they start referring to files that moved, and at some size they stop being read. An unread rule is not a rule.

Task. The documentation needed the same treatment as the code — a linter with limits that fail rather than advise.

Action. Eight policies, each mechanical. A hard ceiling on document length and a softer one that warns. A per-file line budget that only ever ratchets downward, so a document can shrink and cannot grow back. An index requirement above a threshold, and a section index above a smaller one. A location rule about which document owns which subject. Link validity. Plan honesty — the status a plan claims must match its own checkboxes. A rule that every task gating a commit is named in some document. And a real-path check, that every directory-qualified path and every code symbol a document names actually exists. The first run was the argument for the whole exercise: six plans marked done while carrying unchecked boxes, fourteen tasks gating every commit and named in no document at all, three broken links, one orphaned document, and three dead paths across five documents. The budget then refused its own author — writing the summary of this work into the development document pushed it past its limit, which is how a separate document came to exist, which is the policy working exactly as intended.

Result. Twenty-six documents totalling about 2,666 effective lines, each under a budget that cannot grow, with every path and symbol they name checked against the tree. The uncomfortable finding is the one worth repeating: fourteen checks were gating every single commit while appearing in no document, so the rules the machine enforced and the rules the humans read had already come apart.

Bring this experience to your project

Use “Put the documentation under its own linter” as a starting point for a similar challenge in your organisation. The services behind this work are available for your project. Somebody on your side of the table when a supplier, a budget or an architecture decision needs a second informed opinion.

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. Put the documentation under its own linter — the documentation put under its own linter

Explore our services Get in touch →

Is your documentation quietly drifting out of date?

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: Technical Product Manager. It draws on Automation & CI/CD, Testing & QA, Python, Technical Leadership, Project Management and Documentation. And while you are here, we are rather good at Technical Leadership & Consulting, Project Management (Agile) 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 →

Is your documentation quietly drifting out of date?

Ask about the decisions behind “Put the documentation under its own linter”. You will speak with the people who can explain the work and assess your own project.

Explore our services

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