

THE CLUSTER OF WACK TM BRAND BOOK

**FUNNY ENOUGH TO REMEMBER.
ACCURATE ENOUGH TO USE.**



Brand / authority / visual system / editorial portfolio / product architecture / commerce gates

1. THE IDEA

The Cluster of Wack is a practitioner-built vocabulary and operating method for the moment PCI DSS architecture, scope, responsibility, evidence, and assessment claims stop telling the same story.

Brand promise: Funny enough to remember. Accurate enough to use in a serious architecture conversation.

Operating belief: PCI DSS rarely becomes difficult because of one obviously terrible control. It becomes difficult because individually explainable decisions accumulate, depend on one another, and lose their owners.

The humor earns attention. The method earns trust. Never reverse those priorities.

2. PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

The brand exists to help assessed entities, assessors, security teams, technology owners, payment teams, executives, and third-party service providers name complexity without humiliating the people who inherited it.

Primary audiences:

- practitioners who must make scope, ownership, evidence, and time visible;
- assessed entities who need an operating model rather than an annual evidence event;
- assessors who need claims that can be traced to architecture and proof;
- leaders who need to see the cost of unresolved complexity;
- builders of GRC and security platforms who want PCI to behave as a first-class product domain.

3. AUTHORITY IS PART OF THE DESIGN

Every material statement should make its authority legible.

- PCI SSC - authoritative standards, guidance, FAQs, program material, and reporting instructions.
- Johanson Group, LLP - Scott Norton's organizational and assessment affiliation.
- Scott Norton - practitioner analysis, methods, dispositions, research, humor, and opinion.

"My practitioner position on this is..." is a deliberate sentence. It is stronger than an unlabeled opinion and safer than presenting professional judgment as normative PCI DSS language.

Use machine-readable classifications where practical: PCI_SSC_SOURCE, ORGANIZATIONAL_POSITION, ASSESSOR_JUDGMENT, PRACTITIONER_POSITION, PRACTITIONER_METHOD, and AI_ASSISTED.

Never imply affiliation with or endorsement by the PCI Security Standards Council. Authorship, attribution, and authority classification do not determine legal intellectual-property ownership.

4. NAMING SYSTEM

The formal brand name is The Cluster of Wack TM. "Cluster of Wack," "the Wack," and the W/ shorthand may be used once the formal name is clear.

- Use TM on the core brand and named vocabulary until legal guidance says otherwise.
- Do not claim registration.
- Capitalize named concepts such as Wack Tax TM, Wack Gravity TM, Wack Radius TM, and Wack Conservation Principle TM.
- The dictionary is the Wacktionary.
- The operating method is Find / Map / Explain / Reduce / Prove.
- W/ is the compact field mark, not a substitute for the full name on first encounter.

5. LOGO AND MARK FAMILY

The primary illustrated mark is the hero expression. Use it where detail can breathe: homepages, talk covers, posters, large report covers, and campaign art.

The W/ field mark is the operational expression. Use it on small labels, navigation, worksheet furniture, page folios, game controls, and compact merchandise.

The wordmark is the editorial expression. Use "THE CLUSTER OF WACK" in compressed display type when the illustration would compete with the content.

Clear-space rule: preserve at least the visual width of the W/ slash around any mark. Do not crop through faces, hands, primary cables, or the central name.

Tiny-size acceptance test: every final mark must remain recognizable at 16, 32, and 48 px. Thin white lines, embedded copy, and detailed cables do not qualify as favicon masters.

6. COLOR SYSTEM

The palette behaves like an instrument panel: near-black is the operating environment; signal colors classify attention.

Signal colors must carry a consistent semantic job inside one artifact. Do not make every object bright. The empty dark field is part of the system.

Token	Hex	Use
Wack Ink	#071015	Primary background and dark surfaces
Field Panel	#0E191F	Cards, diagrams, and elevated regions
Wack Lime	#B7E34A	Primary action, proof, release, and constructive emphasis
Signal Purple	#7A5CFF	Architecture, dependency, and method
Alert Orange	#FF8A3D	Cost, change, attention, and practitioner position
Finding Red	#E63946	Scope conflict, failure, and unresolved risk
Trace Teal	#00BFA6	Data flow, source intelligence, and traceability
Field Mist	#E8EEF0	Primary light text and white-document surface

7. TYPOGRAPHY

Current production standard:

- Impact (with Arial Narrow fallback) for compressed display headlines, large numbers, and field labels.
- Arial for body copy, tables, interfaces, worksheets, and editable documents.

Headlines are uppercase when they function as a declaration. Body copy is sentence case. Use tight display line-height and generous body line-height. Never shrink a dense card until the words technically fit; edit the message or give it more space.

8. GRAPHIC LANGUAGE

The visual world is technical, tactile, and investigatory:

- tangled systems and exposed dependency paths;
- architecture diagrams, orbit maps, clocks, ledgers, and cross-reference matrices;
- evidence tags, field annotations, registration marks, scan lines, and working surfaces;
- controlled distortion, distressed print texture, and bright signal paths against near-black;
- visualizations that explain relationships rather than decorate a page.

Avoid generic hacker imagery, blue corporate shields, lock icons as a substitute for meaning, card-network lookalikes, PCI SSC marks, or unlicensed payment-brand imagery.

9. W/ A MOLE

W/ A Mole is the field investigator for buried assumptions, undocumented dependencies, inherited exceptions, and evidence gaps. The character is skeptical, competent, and a little battle-worn - not cute for cuteness's sake.

Use W/ A Mole for training, discovery prompts, games, stickers, workshop transitions, and "dig here" callouts. Do not use the character to represent an assessor, a regulator, a compliance decision, or a guaranteed result.

The game language is "Whack the assumption before it becomes architecture." The thing being hit is the unsupported assumption, never a person, team, provider, or assessed entity.

10. VOICE AND TONE

The voice is direct, technically literate, curious, funny, and accountable.

- Name the uncomfortable pattern.
- Explain why it matters.
- Give the reader a first defensible move.
- Distinguish authoritative text from practitioner interpretation.
- Let the joke point toward clarity, never toward ridicule.

Preferred constructions:

- "Show me why."
- "Necessary for what?"
- "What exactly did it test?"
- "Which requirements, which service, and where is the responsibility documented?"
- "My practitioner position on this is..."

Avoid fear marketing, false universality, magic-product language, "PCI certified," and any suggestion that a template, provider, dashboard, or game proves compliance.

11. EDITORIAL FRANCHISES

The portfolio uses distinct jobs rather than one endless post feed.

- Wacktionary: names and defines recurring anti-patterns.
- Field Manuals: practical methods for changing operating behavior.
- Wack Case Files: fictional composites that let readers practice judgment safely.
- Notes From the Wack: substantial practitioner positions.
- Practitioner Dispatches: timely arguments and operating provocations.
- PCI Pillow Talk: questions the organization should be willing to answer in private.
- W/ Operations Desk: field systems, checklists, ledgers, and working artifacts.
- W/ A Mole: gamified discovery and training.

Each franchise needs its own visual label, cadence, format contract, and nonduplication boundary.

12. PHOTOGRAPHY AND PRACTITIONER IDENTITY

Use Scott Norton's approved professional headshot for biography, speaker, author, and attribution contexts. Preserve natural proportions and adequate face space. Do not apply novelty effects, cut the portrait into mascot compositions, or imply organizational endorsement through placement.

Every substantial practitioner artifact should make the speaker identifiable and link to the authority standard where context could blur the line between PCI SSC text, organizational position, and practitioner analysis.

13. ACCESSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVE BEHAVIOR

Accessibility is a brand behavior.

- Maintain readable contrast and visible keyboard focus.
- Never use color as the only meaning carrier.
- Provide descriptive alternate text for explanatory imagery.
- Make every interactive exercise usable with keyboard and reduced motion.
- Reflow navigation, tables, cards, and diagrams for mobile consumption.
- Prefer legible point size and page count over cramped "one-page" claims.
- Screen PDFs use tagged reading order where the production pipeline supports it; editable DOCX companions remain available for adaptation.

14. PRODUCT ARCHITECTURE

Products move through a deliberate ladder:

- Public field tools build trust through immediately useful, source-aware materials.
- Licensed digital kits package repeatable facilitation and operating methods.
- Training licenses support team learning without claiming assessment outcomes.
- Practitioner services provide fact-specific facilitation under an explicit engagement boundary.
- Merchandise carries memorable ideas without becoming the core value proposition.

No product may promise compliance, assessor acceptance, risk elimination, or a universal scope result.

15. COMMERCE AND STRIPE READINESS

The checkout is the easy part. Before payments are enabled, confirm:

- the legal selling entity and Stripe account owner;
- legal ownership and licensing authority for every asset;
- currency, price, tax treatment, and nexus;
- product license, permitted use, updates, support, and refund policy;
- secure fulfillment, download access, webhook handling, reconciliation, privacy, and terms;
- appropriate separation between independent work and Johanson Group affiliation.

Until those gates are resolved, the public portfolio is a product lab - not for sale. Do not publish placeholder prices or live checkout controls.

16. MERCHANDISE

Merchandise should make a practitioner idea visible at a glance. Strong candidates include the Wack Conservation Principle shirt, a W/ Field Notebook, sticker packs, a mug, and a W/ A Mole field sticker or desk token.

Every item requires a physical sample, legibility check, unit economics, fulfillment and return path, and IP review. Avoid generic swag that would make equal sense for any security brand.

17. CO-BRANDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION

Do not merge marks or imply endorsement. Preserve visual separation between The Cluster of Wack, Johanson Group, PCI SSC, providers, and payment brands.

Standard short attribution:

Scott Norton, PCI DSS QSA | Johanson Group, LLP

Standard boundary: unless specifically identified as an organizational position, Scott's technical perspectives represent his own practitioner views and should not be interpreted as formal positions of Johanson Group, PCI SSC, or other organizations with which he may work.

18. AI ASSISTANCE AND PROVENANCE

AI may help draft, transform, visualize, inspect, and package material. It does not become the technical authority. Record AI_ASSISTED on governed artifacts where applicable and retain enough provenance to reproduce or audit the production decision.

Public technical claims still require practitioner review. A polished derivative cannot outrun the authority state of its canonical source.

19. FILE NAMING AND VERSIONING

Use stable identifiers for canonical records and descriptive lowercase file names for derivatives. Keep source records in data/, editable masters in governed distribution packages, and public downloads as byte-identical derivatives where practical.

Never recycle an identifier. Never overwrite a meaningful prior visual experiment without an explicit supersession record. Mark drafts, review state, and release state honestly.

20. BRAND PREFLIGHT

Before release, ask:

- Is the speaker and authority layer clear?
- Is the technical claim sourced and reviewable?
- Does the humor expose a pattern without ridiculing a person?
- Does the visual explain something?
- Are typography, color semantics, and spacing consistent?
- Does the artifact work on mobile or on screen at normal zoom?
- Is the non-affiliation boundary present where needed?
- Is AI assistance classified?
- Are authorship and ownership being treated as separate questions?
- If money is involved, have all commerce gates actually closed?

Find the Wack. Map the Wack. Explain the Wack. Reduce the Wack. Prove what remains.