

RETIRE INHERITED WACK WITHOUT BREAKING EVERYTHING

The opposite of "leave it forever" is not "delete it Friday." It is a measured path from folklore to evidence.

PRACTITIONER POSITION

Inherited architecture becomes safely changeable when the team assigns a current decision owner, observes real dependencies, states the expected behavior, designs a bounded experiment, prepares rollback, and records a new keep-change-remove decision.

THE FIELD PATTERN

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

A permissive network rule has survived several migrations. The original ticket is gone. Flow logs show occasional traffic, but the source names are inconsistent and nobody recognizes the destination service. Operations will not approve removal without impact evidence; security will not approve indefinite retention without a rationale. Both positions are reasonable, and neither produces a decision.

SIGNALS DETECTED

WHAT SHOULD MAKE YOU STOP

- The configuration is preserved because impact is unknown rather than because current need is known.
- No active service owner accepts the keep-or-remove decision.
- Available telemetry has not been translated into a dependency inventory.
- Testing is rejected as too risky before a bounded test and rollback plan are designed.
- Each review ends with a new temporary exception but no new knowledge.

WHY IT MATTERS

THE COST OF LEAVING IT UNEXPLAINED

Immediate removal may create unacceptable operational risk. Indefinite preservation creates security, scope, and evidence cost of its own. The productive path is staged learning: observe, identify, constrain, test, and decide.

The key transition is from inherited rationale to current evidence. A modern decision can still be to retain the configuration, but it should name the present owner, dependency, boundary, monitoring, review date, and reason-not simply preserve the absence of knowledge.

QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS THAT EXPOSE THE WACK

01 Who owns the current risk decision even if no one owns the original implementation?

02 What traffic, identity, process, job, or control may depend on this behavior?

03 What is the smallest safe experiment that would increase confidence without creating uncontrolled impact?

04 What evidence and date will trigger a keep, narrow, replace, or remove decision?

THE CLUSTER OF WACK

FIND / MAP / EXPLAIN / REDUCE / PROVE

ESCAPE THE WACK

01 / FIND

Create a queue of inherited configurations ranked by reach, privilege, uncertainty, and recurring assessment cost.

02 / MAP

Use telemetry, code history, tickets, interviews, and controlled observation to identify consumers and expected behavior.

03 / EXPLAIN

Assign a current decision owner and state the hypothesis, risk, constraints, rollback, and success criteria.

04 / REDUCE

Narrow exposure, migrate known consumers, run a bounded test, and remove or replace the behavior when evidence supports it.

05 / PROVE

Record the new decision, observed dependencies, test results, remaining boundary, monitoring, and next review date.

THE FIELD LAW

THE LINE WORTH REMEMBERING

DO NOT PRESERVE THE MYSTERY. PRESERVE SERVICE WHILE YOU REPLACE MYSTERY WITH EVIDENCE.

Which inherited rule could move from folklore to a bounded experiment this month?

TECHNICAL GROUNDING

START WITH THE SOURCE MATERIAL

These references ground the practitioner interpretation. They do not turn the metaphor or method into official PCI DSS terminology.

- WACK-SOURCE-0001 / PCI DSS v4.0.1 / PCI Security Standards Council / [Open source](#)

- WACK-SOURCE-0004 / Guidance for Compensating Controls and the Customized Approach / PCI Security Standards Council / [Open source](#)

AUTHORITY CLASSIFICATION / PCI_SSC_SOURCE / PRACTITIONER_POSITION / PRACTITIONER_METHOD / AI_ASSISTED

Practitioner reviewed by Scott Norton on 2026-09-09 against canonical digest

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