PROSPYR 305 · FREE CHECKLIST

Delete Before You Harden

The five-check checklist for control surfaces you should stop having.

A pattern shows up in every operation that grew by addition. A failure gets traced to an admin panel, an automation platform or a shared login, and the fix that holds is not a repair. It is deletion. The surface was doing a job something else already did, and once it was gone there was nothing left to fail. Meanwhile it had been sitting on the hardening list, due to receive a credential rotation, a monitoring probe and a line in the security budget. In our own operation this autumn, two redundant control surfaces were deleted and a third was kept because it was load-bearing.

The doctrine is delete before you harden, and the order matters. Hardening a redundant surface spends money to protect a door nobody needed. Deleting it removes the credentials, the approvals and the attention it consumed in one move. The condition is that you prove redundancy first, with evidence, not a hunch. These five checks are that proof. Run them on one surface at a time, record the answers in the worksheet below, and let the kill-test make the final call.

The five checks

Pick one surface. Pass means the surface justified itself on that check. Fail means it did not.

1. Function uniqueness

Does anything else already do this job? A surface is unique only if removing it would leave a function with no home.

Test: write the surface's function in one sentence, then name every other place the same action can be taken. Two places that can issue a refund is one too many.

- ◯ Pass: nothing else does this
- ◯ Fail: something else already does

2. Approval-surface count

How many places can a human or an agent approve a consequential action? Every extra one is an unmonitored door.

Test: for the action this surface approves (a payment, a send, a record change), count the total number of surfaces where that approval can be given. One is the target. If this surface raises the count above one, it fails.

- ◯ Pass: this is the only approval point
- ◯ Fail: approvals happen elsewhere too

3. Credential blast radius

Which secrets does this surface hold, and what else do they open? A redundant surface with broad credentials is also your largest exposure.

Test: list every key, token, shared login and integration the surface stores. For each one, list the systems it can reach. If the list reaches beyond what the surface's own function needs, it fails.

- ◯ Pass: credentials reach only what it needs
- ◯ Fail: credentials open more than this job

4. Cost-per-surface

What does it cost monthly to keep, including the attention it consumes? License, hosting, the rotation it needs, the monitoring it needs, and the person who has to remember it exists.

Test: write the monthly number. Add one hour of someone's time for every month it needs a check, an update or a rotation. If the number is higher than the value of the function it uniquely provides, it fails.

- ◯ Pass: it earns its cost
- ◯ Fail: it costs more than it returns

5. Kill-test

Turn it off for a week. What broke? Nothing broken means delete. Something load-bearing means keep it, document it, and harden it.

Test: disable the surface with a rollback ready and the owner informed. Record every complaint, failed job and workaround for seven days. Silence is a result, and it is the most common one.

- ◯ Pass: something load-bearing broke
- ◯ Fail: nothing broke in a week

Verdict: run the checks

Checks 1 to 4 build the case. Check 5 decides it. A surface that fails the kill-test is deleted whatever the other four say; a surface that passes it is kept and hardened.

Worksheet

One row per surface. P is pass, F is fail. Fill it in here and print it, or print it blank and use a pen.

Surface	1 Uniq	2 Appr	3 Cred	4 Cost	5 Kill	Decision
Admin panel, platform, login						Undecided
						Undecided
						Undecided
						Undecided
						Undecided

Surfaces to delete: **0** Surfaces to harden: **0** Undecided: **5**

Run the five checks on everything

The Redundant-Surface Elimination Audit maps every surface that can take an action in your operation, scores all five checks in one table, runs the kill-tests one at a time with a rollback ready, and hands you a keep/delete register with a one-line reason per decision. It runs before a security assessment, so the assessment that follows covers less ground.

Redundant-Surface Elimination Audit **Book 15 minutes**

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