



Baseline Integrity Check



A quick self-assessment to determine whether your security baseline is aligned with operational reality.

A baseline can look healthy on paper while slowly becoming harder to maintain in practice.

Teams start spending more time working through findings than actually fixing them. Exceptions begin to pile up. Compliance becomes harder to coordinate. And little by little, confidence in the reporting starts to slip.

These are often early indicators that the baseline is no longer fully aligned with the environment it was built to support.

Use this checklist to assess whether your baseline is still serving as a reliable foundation for security, compliance, and continuous monitoring.

The 5 Signs

Sign #1: Teams Spend More Time Explaining Findings Than Fixing Them

Do scan results regularly require manual review before action can be taken?

- Findings are frequently questioned
- Teams routinely investigate false positives
- Different groups interpret results differently
- Significant time is spent validating findings before remediation

Why it matters: When trust in findings declines, trust in the baseline often follows.

Sign #2: Exceptions Continue to Grow

Do approved deviations accumulate without clear ownership or lifecycle management?

- Exception lists continue to expand
- Approved deviations are difficult to track
- Teams rely on institutional knowledge to understand exceptions
- Exceptions are rarely reviewed or retired

Why it matters: Excessive exceptions can indicate the baseline is no longer accurately reflecting operational reality.



Sign #3: Compliance Depends on Multiple Disconnected Processes

How many separate processes are required to maintain compliance?

- Different teams manage different parts of the compliance lifecycle
- Manual handoffs are required between activities
- Compliance reporting depends on information from multiple sources
- Teams spend significant time coordinating rather than executing

Why it matters: The more disconnected the process, the harder it becomes to maintain alignment. Unified automation helps establish a standardized approach to policy implementation, validation, maintenance, and reporting.



Sign #4: Approved Policy and System Reality Are No Longer Aligned

How closely does your implemented baseline reflect your approved policy?

- Policy updates require significant effort to implement
- Baselines lag behind approved policy decisions
- Different systems enforce different versions of requirements
- Teams routinely create workarounds to accommodate operational needs

Why it matters: Baseline integrity depends on maintaining alignment between policy intent and actual implementation. When the two diverge, compliance data becomes less reliable and drift becomes inevitable.



Sign #5: Audit Readiness Requires a Sprint

Can your team demonstrate compliance at any time?

- Significant preparation occurs before assessments
- Teams perform manual cleanup before audits
- Reporting requires special effort
- Compliance confidence rises and falls around audit cycles

Why it matters: Continuous compliance should reduce audit preparation, not depend on it.



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0–4 Checks: Your baseline appears to be maintaining integrity. Continue validating that policy, implementation, and monitoring remain aligned.

5–10 Checks: Early signs of baseline integrity erosion may be emerging. Small gaps today can become significant sources of drift over time.

11–15 Checks: Your baseline may be struggling to keep pace with operational reality. Trust in findings, reporting, and compliance metrics may already be affected.

16–20 Checks: Your baseline may no longer be serving as a reliable source of truth. Baseline integrity issues are likely creating compliance risk, operational inefficiencies, and increased audit burden.

Hardening Holds Only When Baselines Do

Learn how organizations build baselines that remain accurate, current, customized, enforceable, and continuously validated.

Download the White Paper:

[Baseline Integrity:
The Foundation
of Hardening
That Holds](#)

