Engineer

Added a one-second preflight for secrets

Added a preflight play that runs the same code as the converge against operator-local secrets in about a second, after a half-applied production run died on its ninth task with the swap settings already written to the live host.

September 2026

the production run rehearsed in about a second

Situation. Operational secrets had just been split so that each host carries its own backup repository, passphrase and alert switch. The repository code was correct. The operator's encrypted vault still held the previous single-host value, and nothing could see the mismatch, because the vault is deliberately local to the operator's machine and invisible to the repository's own quality gate.

Task. That class of failure needed somewhere to fail cheaply, because it had just failed expensively.

Action. The first converge after the change connected to the live host, ran eight tasks and refused on the ninth — correctly, but from inside a run that had already written swap settings to production. A half-applied converge is a worse answer than a refusal, so a preflight play was written: it reaches no host at all, runs locally, gathers no facts, and executes the same two task files the real converge uses against the operator's vault. It answers in about a second, and provisioning runs it first. The load-bearing decision is that it is the same code rather than a second implementation of the same rule, because a check that restates a rule in another language eventually disagrees with it and disagrees silently. Writing it surfaced a trap it nearly created: facts set during a play outlive that play, so chaining the preflight and the converge into one invocation would have handed the real role a passphrase the preflight had already resolved, and passed the check on a vault that was still wrong. That was reproduced before it was guarded, in both task files.

Result. A secret that does not resolve now costs a two-second refusal on a laptop instead of a partly-applied change to a live server. The preflight is deliberately not tagged to always run and is deliberately not serialised, and both of those are recorded as decisions rather than defaults.

Bring this experience to your project

Use “Added a one-second preflight for secrets” as a starting point for a similar challenge in your organisation. The services behind this work are available for your project. The whole setup written down as files, so it can be recreated exactly and never lives only in one person's head.

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. Added a one-second preflight for secrets — the production run rehearsed in about a second

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Tired of deployments failing halfway through?

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: Infrastructure Automation Engineer. It draws on DevOps, Infrastructure, Automation & CI/CD, Reliability & Backups, Security and Testing & QA. And while you are here, we are rather good at Infrastructure as Code, DevOps & CI/CD Automation, Security & Access Management and AI Agent Security.

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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 deployment path, the operational risks and the people on call. We can scope a change with checks, a recovery route and clear ownership.

See what it costs Get in touch →

Tired of deployments failing halfway through?

Ask about the decisions behind “Added a one-second preflight for secrets”. You will speak with the people who can explain the work and assess your own project.

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