The agent was fast for a week. Then it started editing the wrong module, re-deriving conventions you had already decided, and pasting plausible code that broke a contract no file ever wrote down. You spend your day correcting a collaborator that cannot read the rules, because the rules live in your head, not in the repo. Output went up; trust went down.

The reflex is to switch models, write a longer prompt, and add another tool. That scales the problem rather than the work: a better model follows a broken repository faster.

This book offers the opposite of a prompt trick: a repository designed for machine collaborators. The Agentic Codebase introduces the STACK framework (Structure, Toolchain, Agent configuration, Connection layer, Knowledge and quality): five layers that turn an agent from a guessing intern into a bounded contributor who reads the contract before it writes the code.

You will learn to:

- Lay out a repo and entry points so an agent finds the right file without being told twice.
- Write AGENTS.md and CLAUDE.md as versioned standing context with real ownership, not aspirational comments, and keep them honest across Cursor, Claude Code, and your own stack.
- Define MCP servers and tool contracts with least-privilege scopes, and install hooks and guardrails that block the bad edits they can actually see before merge.
- Promote recurring work into skills, roles, and subagents. Then gate the whole loop with evals and CI, so judgment written once does its checking on every run.

The result is not a faster way to ship one feature. It is a codebase that compounds: each rule you encode is correctness the agent inherits, and the system gets more autonomous as you write less of the code yourself.

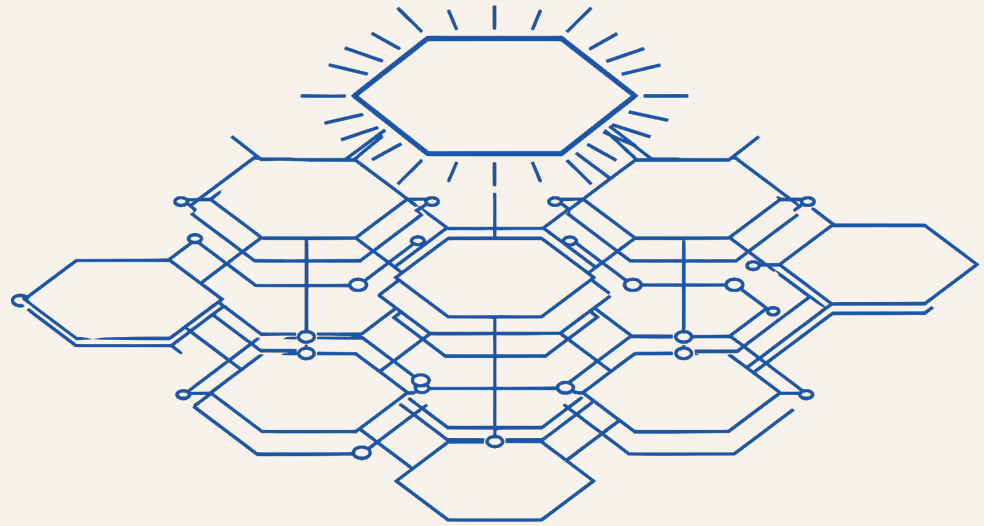
If you build with agents and refuse to let speed erode your standard, this was written for the engineer you are when the diff is large, the agent is confident, and the contract is yours to define.

Len P. van der Hof, MSc
He builds operating systems for the strategic self. Treats entrepreneurship, AI and machine learning, marketing, philosophy, psychology, and health optimization as one engineering problem. MSc in Strategic Entrepreneurship, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

Len P. van der Hof The Agentic Codebase
SftSS

The Agentic *Codebase*

The five-layer architecture that makes agent work survive production



Len P. van der Hof

Systems for the Strategic Self