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What makes an internal dashboard actually get used.

Most internal dashboards get built once, demoed once, and opened twice. Here is the pattern behind the ones that survive.

The demo problem

Dashboards are built to impress in a demo: dense, colorful, comprehensive. Then they ship, and the person who needed one number a day opens a page with forty.

The dashboards that get used daily tend to be almost boring. Two or three numbers that matter, updated reliably, in the place the person already looks.

Design around the moment, not the data

Before building anything, we ask when someone would actually open this. Once a morning, before a shift, mid-service on a busy night? The answer changes everything about layout, refresh rate, and what counts as “important.”

A kitchen dashboard checked mid-service needs to be readable from four feet away in bad light. A weekly ops review can afford density. Treating both the same way is why most dashboards fail.

The dashboards people actually use are almost boring, a few numbers, always right, always where they expect them.