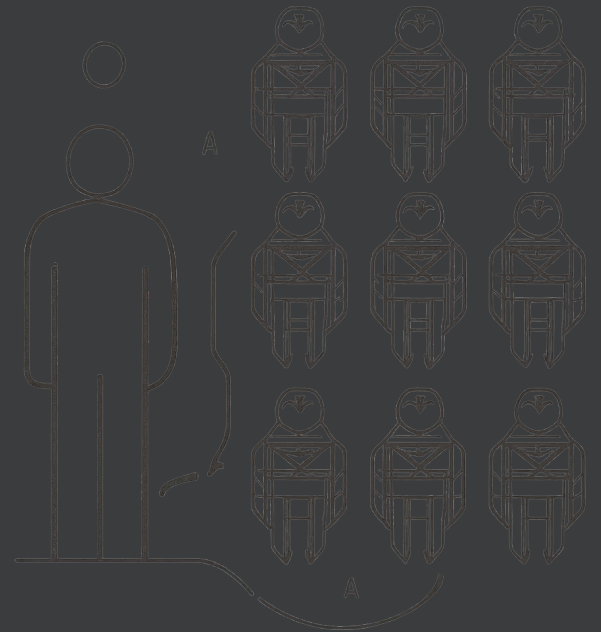
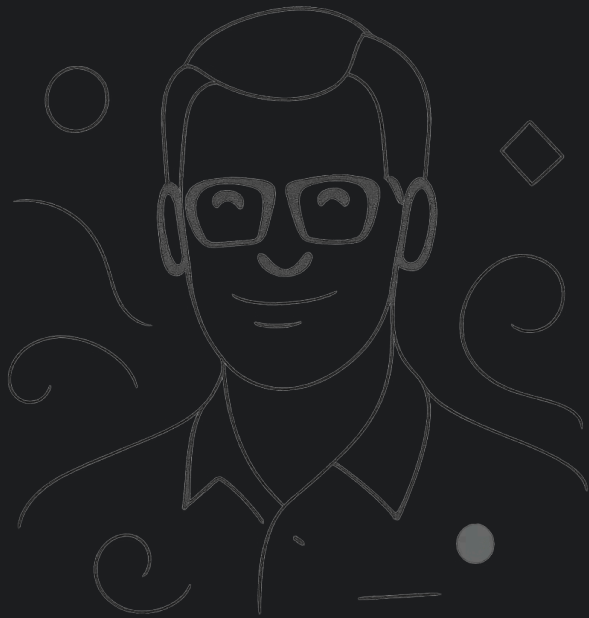


How to Be Human in the AI Era

Kevin Alemán · Backend Dev · Open Source Maintainer





ABOUT ME

Kevin Alemán

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THE PARADOX

Easier Than Ever to Contribute. Harder Than Ever to Stand Out.

2015

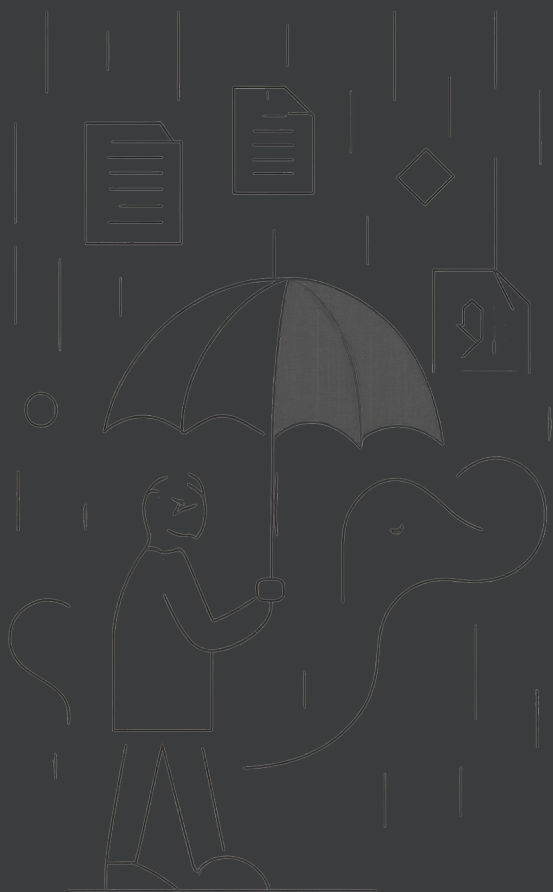
A developer at their desk late at night. Weeks of work. Deep context. A single meaningful PR.

Weeks of effort → one contribution

2026

A prompt box. Three minutes. A PR lands in your inbox. The barrier to entry has collapsed.

3 minutes → another PR

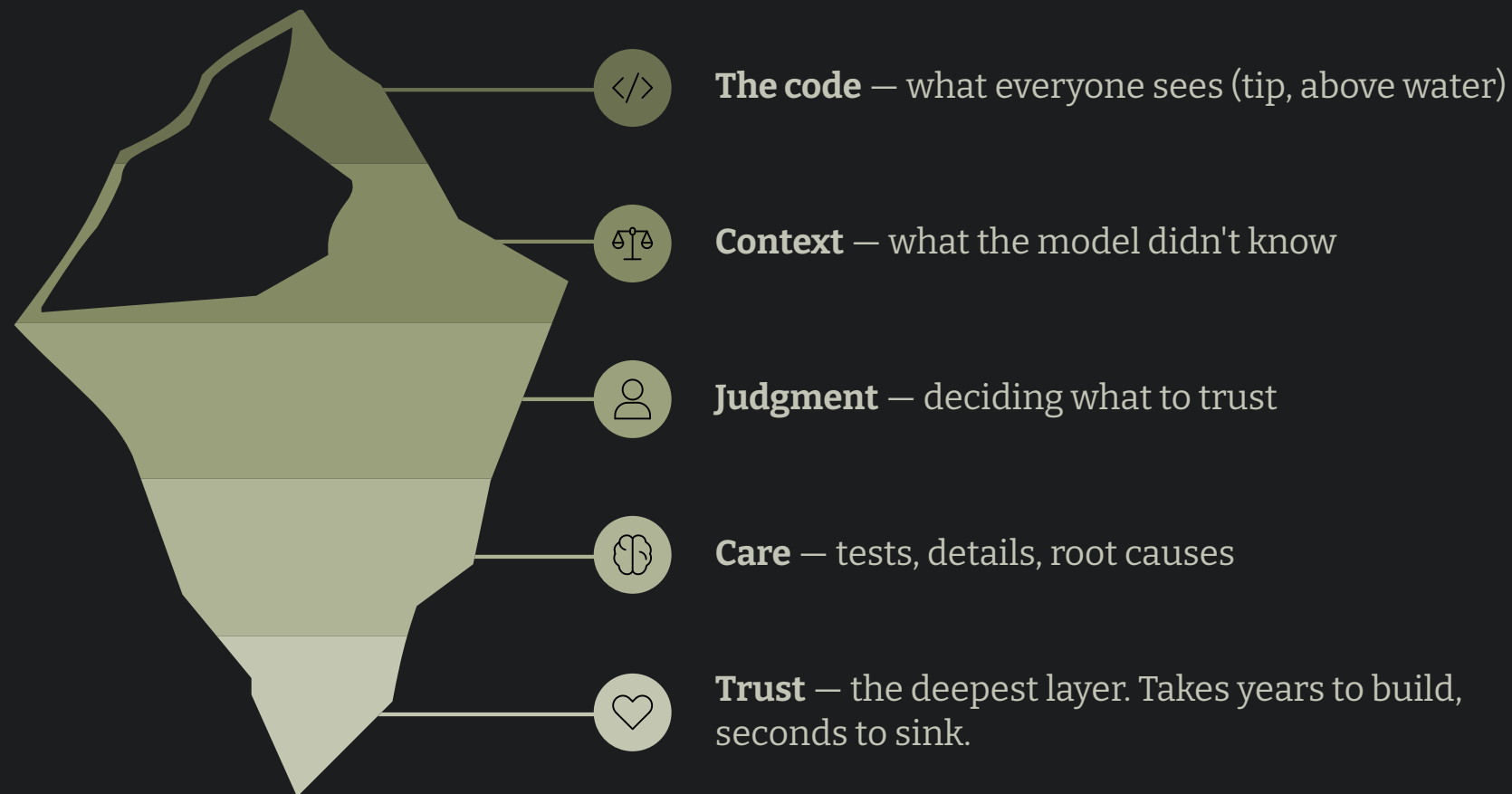


THE FLOOD

Code Costs Nothing Now. Review Still Costs Everything.

When AI can generate PRs at zero marginal cost, maintainers absorb the entire review burden. **curl** — one of the most critical open-source projects — was drowning in AI-generated vulnerability reports and had to publicly push back. Their post had a title that said it all: *"Death by a thousand slops."*

The Scarce Resource Is No Longer Code. It's Being Human.



AI has commoditized output. What it cannot replicate is **context, care, and judgment** — the very things that make open source work.

PRINCIPLE 1

THINK

You cannot prompt what you don't know exists. AI gives you confident answers — but only you know what changed last week.

✗ AI's "Fix"

```
logger.error('Some error:', error);  
// Looks valid. Compiles fine.  
// Typings changed last week.
```

✓ What We Needed

```
logger.error({ msg: 'Some error', err });  
// Correct structured logging.  
// Requires knowing the change.
```

PRINCIPLE 2

EMPATHIZE

Maintainers are humans, not endpoints. Someone told an agent "*create one PR per issue*" — and flooded the repo with 100 PRs. All technically valid. None reviewed. That's a denial-of-service attack against any human.

Before you submit

Ask: would I want to review 50 of these?

Batch thoughtfully

Group related changes. Respect reviewer time.

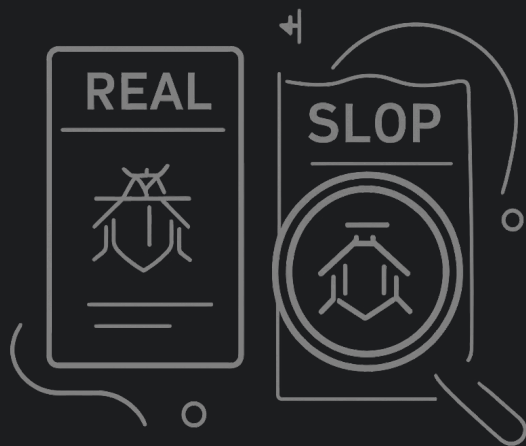
Context is a gift

A good description saves hours of investigation.



CARE

Care is visible in the details. In february we closed ~700 issues and received 300 new ones. Every single one checked by hand — because a slop report and a real bug look identical at first glance.



Slop Report

Generic title. No reproduction steps. AI-generated phrasing. Zero context.

Real Report

Specific scenario. Version info. What was expected vs. what happened.

At first glance: identical. Under scrutiny: worlds apart.

PRINCIPLE 4

BE CONSIDERATE

Ten typos. One PR. Not ten. Each separate PR triggers CI, notifications, and reviewer attention. Batch your fixes — it's 10× cheaper for everyone.

The Offender

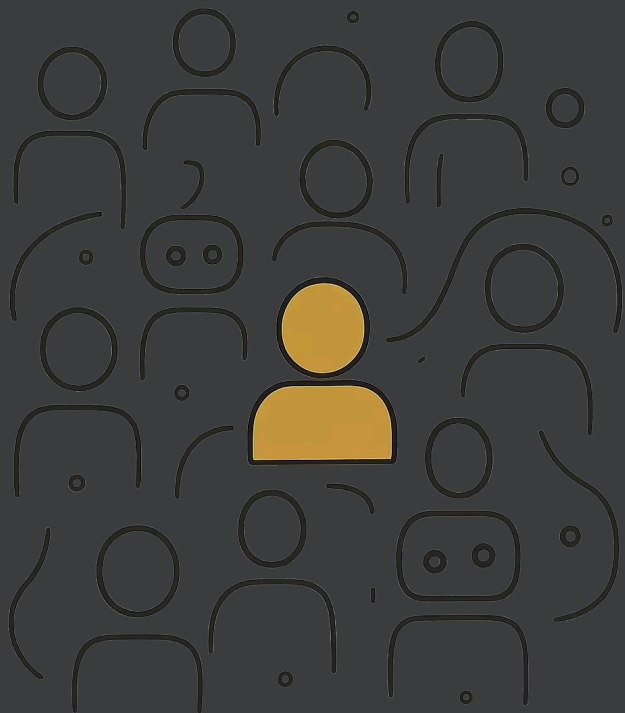
```
throw new Error('subscription not found')  
//      ^^^^^^^^^^^^^^ missing "r"
```

Ten files. Ten separate PRs. Ten CI runs. Ten pings to a maintainer who already has 47 open PRs.

The Considerate Fix

```
throw new Error('subscription not found')  
// Fixed across all 10 files in one PR
```

One PR. One review. One merge. CI runs once. Maintainer sanity preserved.



AI Is Not Human. Maintainers and Contributors Are.

Be Mindful

Every PR is someone's time.
Treat it that way.

Be Human

Context, care, and judgment
can't be prompted.

Be Considerate

The open-source commons depends on all of us.

— **Kevin Alemán** · dev.to/kaleman15 · kevinaleman.com · [@kaleman15](https://twitter.com/kaleman15)