

David Gray

Over 20 years of software development and management experience

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Summary

Hands-On Technical Leader | Senior Software Engineer | Scaled Teams, Built SaaS, Delivered Acquisitions, Wrangled AI

I'm a hands-on technical leader with 20+ years of engineering experience, previously operating as CTO and Head of Engineering. I specialise in taking products from concept to acquisition, leading teams, modernising architecture, and delivering high-reliability, low-cost systems.

I've run full-stack engineering functions end-to-end - backend, frontend, DevOps, infrastructure, security, product alignment, hiring, and delivery.

Most recently I led the technical stages of acquisition, migration, and integration of workrest into Voly, rapidly scaling the team across multiple disciplines and locations; managed the onboarding process; ensured cultural cohesion during growth; and architected the very successful Voly Payroll SaaS platform.

Work Experience

Head of Engineering

Dec 2024 - Present

Voly - Remote, UK

- Acquired workrest in December 2024
- Led the full migration of workrest's PHP and Laravel platform, handling real-time compliance data across hundreds of vessels, into Voly's AWS infrastructure with 99.998% uptime and no compromise on stability or security
- Rapidly scaled the engineering team from 2 to 8 in less than 6 months
- Directed technical design and delivery for the new Voly Payroll SaaS, built on the migrated workrest platform using the same PHP, Laravel and React stack and integrated into Voly's financial and operational systems - now live in production, with revenue share projected to grow to greater than 60% of all ongoing revenue across the group
- Scaled systems and analytics to handle growing data volumes, from workrest's fleet-wide reporting to Payroll's multi-currency, multi-jurisdiction requirements
- Drove "One Voly" for engineering, bringing the best of workrest and Voly together and aligning teams around shared technical standards, release pipelines, documentation, coding conventions and AI adoption
- Improved engineering throughput by refining processes, documentation, and coding standards via tooling, AI, and mentoring
- Brought group-wide observability and accountability with shared application monitoring (Sentry) and uptime monitoring (UptimeRobot)
- Drove major platform speed gains and stronger FE/BE contracts via Apollo-generated types from GraphQL schemas
- Successfully delivered key strategic initiative of demoing VCS Payroll at the Monaco Boatshow under time constraints while VCS Payroll still being defined
- Maintained and enhanced the existing workrest platform throughout organisational change, ensuring uninterrupted customer value through careful planning and coordination across teams
- Responsible for all major technical decisions for Voly Crew Solutions (VCS) (formerly workrest) and the new Voly Payroll system
- Partnered closely with Product on delivery, owning the technical design and planning that took Voly Payroll to market
- Responsible for all DevOps for VCS, including cost analysis, scaling, backups, disaster recovery planning, out of hours support, etc.
- Daily hands-on with Laravel 12/13 and PHP 7/8, JavaScript, TypeScript, React, node 20+, Flutter, Dart, GraphQL, Apollo and more
- Senior code sign-off and release manager
- Hands-on with technical interviews across backend (PHP, Laravel) and frontend (JavaScript, TypeScript, React) hiring, and led onboarding alongside the wider process
- Hands-on management style - one of the team, know the code
- Domain knowledge expert, the go to guy
- System architect, caching, event driven, action pipelines, queue processing and scaling, offline sync, pub/sub and more
- Hiring, 1-2-1's, Personal Development Plans, Reviews, and Mentoring of fellow engineers
- Made firm calls on culture and ownership through team restructuring to sustain delivery pace
- Encouraged ambitious engineering ideas through formal feedback loops and business buy-in yielding system wide improvements and better UX/DX

Chief Technology Officer

Sep 2018 - Dec 2024

workrest - Remote, UK

- Delivered major architectural upgrades that improved system reliability and sync performance for low-connectivity vessels, supporting thousands of yacht crew worldwide
- Built and developed a high-performing engineering team, improving delivery speed and code quality
- Modernised infrastructure, strengthened data integrity and security, ensuring compliance with ISO27001, IMO and MLC standards
- Launched new automation and workflow features that reduced manual workload and strengthened compliance insights for maritime operators
- Enhanced customer satisfaction through consistent feature delivery and platform stability
- Positioned workrest for acquisition by establishing strong technical foundations, a mobile-first design and clear product-market fit - publicly cited by Voly as key reasons for the acquisition
- Played a key role in the successful acquisition and migration of workrest by Voly
- Led technology strategy for workrest - web, mobile and integrations
- Owned technical roadmap, system architecture and delivery across core modules: hours of rest, scheduling, leave management, watchkeeping and crew lists
- Responsible for all technical decisions
- Primary backend engineer working with Laravel 12 and PHP 8.4, etc.
- Designed and evolved a cloud-based, offline-capable platform and oversaw the real-time sync engine that kept it reliable in low-connectivity environments
- Evaluated emerging technologies and guided architectural modernisation
- Technical staff hiring, onboarding, and development
- Improved cross-team collaboration by aligning Product, Operations, Customer Success and commercial teams around shared delivery and business goals
- DevOps, infrastructure and 3rd party platform provider decision making, deployments and maintenance
- 3rd party integrations and technical consultation
- Technical feasibility and reporting to the board

Lead Software Engineer

Oct 2017 - Aug 2018

Ridown Design + Communications - Fareham

- Development of multiple, multi-platform ecommerce solutions
- Banking and financial services integrations (Vindica, GoCardless, PayPal, Netpay)
- Migration of largest platform from an ancient bespoke framework into Laravel 5.6
- Technical planner and system architect of multiple solutions
- Consultant on technical feasibility and time-cost factors in new projects
- Educator and mentor to junior staff

Lead Software Engineer

May 2017 - Oct 2017

Maru/edr - Southampton

- Integration of US and CA based software service acquisitions into UK based primary platform
- Development of intermediary solutions to facilitate transformation of acquisitions' data and asset migration
- Assisted in dockerisation of legacy services and championed DDD for future development
- Formerly eDigitalResearch Plc
- Brought back to help with domain knowledge and onboarding of Maru group acquisitions
- Resumed previously held responsibilities, including solution architecture, project planning, scrum lead, sign-off, build processes and deployment

Software Engineer

Mar 2017 - May 2017

Audiolock - Southampton

- Developed a solution to scan millions of sites for pirated content
- Evidence collection, screenshots, fingerprint analysis of audio/video
- Counter counter-copyright protection enforcement solutions
- Multi cloud service provider distribution and residential IP providing VPN utilisation
- Primarily PHP, Docker, Redis, Beanstalkd and MySQL on AWS and Azure

Lead Software Engineer

Mar 2016 - Mar 2017

Efficio Limited - Fareham

- Brought development team up to modern standards, tooling, methodologies and practices (Git, TDD, SoC, Agile, Scrums, etc.)
- Implemented versioning, QA, peer review and build process; installed, managed and maintained associated software
- Rewrote form handling and validation; implemented background queue and job processing; updated codebase to not use facades; separated generic library functionality; implemented session handling, breadcrumbs, authentication and authorisation,

and separation between view and model

- Lead developer of a team of 9 (2 external, 1 remote)
- Scrum master and basic reporting to senior management (burndown, velocity, etc.)
- Mentored developers, handling 1-2-1s, basic HR, performance reviews, objectives, etc.
- Conducted interviews and hiring including contractors and remotely located staff; helped manage relationships with external software development partners
- Consulted and assisted in implementing application development workflow and procedure
- Senior sign-off on peer review

Lead Software Engineer

Mar 2013 - Mar 2016

eDigitalResearch Plc - Southampton

- Architected and oversaw and/or implemented multiple platform solutions
- Responsible for multiple platform subsystems (3rd Party Integrations, Mail Integration and Mass Mail System, Panel System, Site System, Analytics Driver and Charting Engine)
- Designed and championed new stack, coding standards, coding styles, build process, tooling, implementing up-to-date technologies, methodologies and documentation with a focus on reduced overheads, higher iterative rates, lower learning curve and industry standardisation to aid in recruitment, training and company growth
- Chief contributor to conversion from a platform provider to a SAAS provider
- Handled research/product/technical communications, technical requirements, feasibility studies, and consultancy of technical capabilities
- Senior sign-off on code review and solution acceptance

Sr Data Systems Developer

Jun 2011 - Mar 2013

eDigitalResearch Ltd - Southampton

- Responsible for largest client's technical aspects; jointly responsible for quadrupling client worth, before handing over to team and moving back to Strategic Development team
- Developed multiple bespoke solutions to resolve client requirements; converted many into products or subsystems of existing platform
- Lead Technical Operations team of 3; handled technical communications with clients, team personal progression, scrum mastering, mentoring, reporting, etc.
- B2B data transfers, big data, including ETL processes and encryption

Applications Developer

Apr 2009 - Jun 2011

eDigitalResearch Ltd - Southampton

- Designed and implemented analytic driver for core platform
- One of three who designed and developed eDR's core platform v2
- Responsible for various optimisations (PHP/SQL queries)

Systems Developer

Dec 2004 - Apr 2009

murphx Innovative Solutions Ltd - Southampton

- PHP and MySQL software development of XML based web service applications
- Development and use of APIs and client-facing portals
- Project planning and management
- Technical and client-facing documentation writing
- Procedure writing and maintaining internal company wiki and task tracking systems

Skills

JavaScript / TypeScript; React; Vue; Laravel; PHP; HTML / CSS / SCSS / Bootstrap / Tailwind; Font Awesome; AngularJS / jQuery; API; GraphQL / Apollo Client; Zend; System Architecture; Permissions; PHPUnit / Codeception / Code Sniffer; Google Store / Apple Store / Expo; AWS; IIS / Apache / nginx / node / Caddy / Octane / FrankenPHP; REDIS; JIRA / Bitbucket / Confluence / Atlassian admin; Teams / Slack administration; Sentry; Feature Flags; Auditing; Query Optimisation; Symfony; Git; OpenAPI / Swagger; PostgreSQL / MSSQL / MySQL; Linux / Windows / Mac; Docker; DevOps / Platform Engineering; SVN; Cassandra / Couchbase / MongoDB / S3; Java; Selenium; Realtime Responsiveness; Technical Team Leadership; Team Management (incl. remote); Project Management; Technical Documentation; Database Management; Mentoring & Coaching; Stakeholder Management; Cross-functional Collaboration; Hiring & Interviewing; Decision Making Under Ambiguity; Prioritisation & Roadmapping; Empathy & Psychological Safety; Performance Management; Vendor & Partner Management; Incident Leadership / Crisis Response; Knowledge Sharing & Enablement; Product Sense / Customer Empathy; Risk Assessment; Continuous Improvement / Retrospectives; Prompt Engineering; Specification Engineering; Spec-Driven Development; AI-Assisted Software Development; AI Agent Workflows & Tool Use; AI for Code Review & Refactoring; Responsible AI & Data Privacy; Automating QA & Test Generation with AI; Cost, Latency & Token Optimisation; IDE integrated AI (e.g.: Junie); Claude Code; Cursor; ChatGPT Codex; Domain-Driven Design (DDD); Twelve-Factor App; Software as a Service (SaaS); Single-Page Application (SPA); Full Stack; API Design; Test-Driven Development (TDD); Behaviour-Driven Development (BDD); Agile; Scrum; Kanban; MoSCoW Prioritisation

(Must, Should, Could, Won't); Observability (Logs, Metrics, Traces); Infrastructure as Code (IaC); Pair Programming; Trunk-Based Development

Education

University of Portsmouth
Computer Science