

# Brian Lai

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[Github](#)

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Experienced backend engineer with over 9 years of technical leadership across startups and scaled environments. Proven track record in building distributed systems, leading high-impact teams, and shipping production-grade services in advertising, machine learning, and payments. Passionate about building scalable systems, solving ambiguous problems, and mentoring engineers.

## EXPERIENCE

### Senior Software Engineer | Justworks Labs – New York, NY | Mar 2024 – Present

Lead engineer across fraud, financial services, and analytics platforms; own delivery across backend, infrastructure, and production operations.

- Run the team's day-to-day execution, including sprint planning, task assignment, cross-functional coordination with product, delivery tracking, and scope negotiation when timelines shift.
- Built a real-time reporting & analytics platform in Go with <50ms p99 latency via streaming ingestion and scalable pipelines.
- Operate services across Kubernetes, CI/CD, observability, and incident response, improving reliability and performance.
- Decomposed a legacy Rails monolith into independently deployable services, increasing release velocity.
- Built an AI-powered payroll ingestion workflow, reducing onboarding from 4 days → ~15 minutes.
- Authored design docs, led architecture reviews, and mentored engineers on distributed systems best practices.

### Founder / Tech Lead | LevilUp – New York, NY | Oct 2023 – Feb 2024

Founded and launched a sports-coaching marketplace; owned product strategy, customer development, and business execution.

- Led customer discovery, market validation, and roadmap prioritization using retention and engagement metrics.
- Built early-coach partnerships and shaped onboarding, expectations, and success criteria for both sides of the marketplace.
- Designed experiments across pricing, onboarding, and engagement and iterated using qualitative + quantitative feedback.
- Managed go-to-market, operations, and customer communications, growing to 300+ active users in six months.
- (Technical summary: built the mobile app & backend; deployed on Kubernetes.)\*

### Software Development Manager | Juno Diagnostics – Remote | Nov 2022 – Sep 2023

- Managed a distributed team of 4 engineers; provided technical guidance and roadmap alignment.
- Led event-driven microservices in Java Spring and AWS Lambda (Python/Java).
- Worked with product and operations to translate business needs into scalable systems.

### Head of Engineering | Phosphorus – NYC | Feb 2020 – Nov 2022

Owned architecture, reliability, and infrastructure strategy while leading an 8-engineer team.

- Built and scaled data-pipeline infrastructure with containerized Python workflows and automated orchestration.
- Owned DevOps, deployments, observability, and CI/CD, improving stability and developer productivity.
- Defined foundational platform architecture for service isolation, configuration, and secure cloud operations.
- Led development of a multi-tenant SaaS platform evolved from an internal LIMS and aligned with core pipeline systems.

## Earlier Experience

Senior Software Engineer – Phosphorus | 2018–2020 – Built and scaled a multi-tenant LIMS SaaS platform.

Software Engineer – SocialFlow | 2016–2018 – Built analytics and pacing systems for large-scale ad operations.

Software Developer – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | 2014–2016 – Built Python-based GIS modeling tools.

## EDUCATION:

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
BS Biological Engineering '14

## TECHNICAL:

Languages: Go, Python, Java, Ruby, JavaScript/TypeScript  
Systems: Kubernetes, Docker, AWS (EC2, S3, Lambda), PostgreSQL, MongoDB

## Projects/Writing:

PARA-Programming (<https://brian-lai.github.io/ PARA-Programming/>)  
Slate AI (<https://app.buildslate.dev>)

## ACHIEVEMENTS:

Guinness World Record for building the world's highest altitude wind turbine in Pastoruri, Peru