

# Ashwanth Fernando

## Principal Engineer

Distributed Systems | Backend Engineering | AWS and GCP

Microservices | Product Focused and Customer First

New York / San Francisco

Australian Citizen

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## Summary

- Hands-on principal-level engineer/architect with **15+ years** building, scaling **distributed systems** and teams at **Apple, Canva, eBay, Atlassian** and **Walmart** driving reliability, performance, and business impact for multi-million-user products.
- **Deep expertise:** Java, Go, Python; AWS (EC2, RDS, DynamoDB, SNS/SQS, ElastiCache), GCP (BigQuery, Dataform, Pub/Sub); Kafka, Redis, Apache Solr; Spring, GraphQL, gRPC, Temporal; Terraform/IaC.
- Specialised in **search, event-driven & microservices architectures**, active-active/consistent-hashing topologies, and low-latency platforms.
- **Highlights:** Scaled **Canva Search from 20M to 80M users**; built 7 new live/collab products in 24 months—Playlist, Canva Live, Talking Presentations, Reactions, Presentation Remote Control, Whiteboards real-time collaboration & timer—delivering caching, database, and scale patterns. Architected a **consistent-hashing load balancer** for active-active Elasticsearch, lifting **Confluence search availability +7% globally**; trimmed **Macquarie Bank cloud spend -7%** via JVM/GC + concurrency tuning/caching.
- **Leadership:** Led teams up to 12; built/managed a 6-engineer squad at Canva while remaining hands-on (20%); authored **5 patents**; shipped **99.999% availability** load balancers and **10x commerce dialog conversions**.
- **Current focus:** AI/ML infrastructure (LLMs, RAG, agentic workflows), cloud-native platforms.

## Location

Available for onsite roles in New York, SF and surrounding areas. Also open to remote arrangements from Sydney.

## Work Rights

**USA Work Authorization:** Australian Citizen eligible for E3 specialty occupation visa ([click here for info](#))

- **Immediate availability** - No lottery system, processing typically within 2-4 weeks
- **Cost-effective** - Only \$315 application fee, no additional issuance or reciprocity fees
- **Unlimited renewals** - No maximum duration limits, providing long-term employment stability
- **Spouse work authorization** - E3D visa allows spouse to work in any field in the US
- **Premium processing available** - 15-day guaranteed processing for urgent hiring needs
- **Simplified employer process** - Only requires Labor Condition Application, no Form I-129 filing

## Technical Skills

**Primary Languages:** Java, Go, Python, Kotlin, Scala, Node.js

**Cloud & Infrastructure:** AWS (EC2, RDS, DynamoDB, SNS/SQS, ElastiCache), GCP (BigQuery, Dataform, PubSub), Terraform, Kafka, Redis, Zookeeper, Elasticsearch

**Frameworks & Tools:** Spring, GraphQL, gRPC, Temporal, Protobuf

**AI:** LLMs, RAG, Langgraph, Agentic workflows, Prefect

**MANAGEMENT:** Deep focus on efficient execution | Relentless pursuit of pragmatic excellence | Building relationships within and across teams to broaden impact

## Experience

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**Principal Consultant**, Atlassian, WEX and Macquarie Bank Feb 2022 - Present

- Served as a high end product engineer, driving technical roadmaps, architectural reviews, and production readiness across multiple client engagements.
- **Macquarie Bank**: Optimized Wealth Adviser platform by GC tuning, optimising completable futures, thread pool optimization, and performance enhancements across multiple microservices, resulting in a 7% cloud cost saving for the division.
- **WEX**: Led backend modernization efforts for billing and reporting services, reducing billing inconsistencies by 14% and significantly improving speed and reliability of monthly statements.
- **Atlassian**: Architected a consistent-hashing load balancer for active-active Elasticsearch clusters, boosting Confluence search availability by 7% globally. Built insta-deploy to all regions from main which was a significant improvement to dev productivity.

**Software Engineer**, Packsmith Jul 2024 – Nov 2024

- Drove the end-to-end technical strategy for a distributed reverse logistics platform, collaborating closely with PMs on architectural decisions, design standards, and code quality.
- Built a priority/vip tagging system for Shopify feeds, improving shipping times for priority orders by 140%.
- Streamlined workflows in Temporal to optimize shipment flow, ensuring accurate stage progression and significantly reducing operational overhead.

**Engineering Manager|Staff Engineer**, Canva, Sydney, Australia Nov 2018 - Jan 2022

- Transitioned from an early-stage individual contributor to leading a team of six engineers, guiding the development of back-end infrastructure for five innovative products—Canva Live, Playlist, Talking Presentations, Reactions, and Presentation Remote Control.
- Balanced product ownership, people management, project oversight, and hands-on coding (20% capacity), ensuring both team effectiveness and technical excellence.
- Authored three patents based on original work in live interaction features and large-scale presentation technology.
- Published technical blogs on Canva's engineering platform and delivered internal talks on auto-correct systems.
- Scaled Canva's search infrastructure from 20M to 80M users, performed a complete rewrite of search infra across all the layers queuing, caching, indexing, serving to support long term scale.

**Senior Staff Engineer**, eBay, San Jose, California Nov 2014 - Aug 2018

- Headed the design of a dynamic configuration system and page assembler for search result templates, enabling business teams to adapt search UI/UX without direct engineering involvement, cutting weeks off typical release cycles.
- Built dialog system SDK to quickly ship multi-turn dialogs that include carousels, text, videos, images, questions to production. Has integrations for Facebook and Google Assistant. This dialog system can ship new complex conversations in a matter of minutes and increased Shopbot sales by more than 10x.
- Created an open-source regression-testing framework (Regressr), adopted across multiple departments for real-time performance comparisons between service versions.
- Led multiple project teams of six or more engineers, setting technical vision, coordinating development roadmaps, and facilitating inter-team collaboration.

**Principal Engineer (ICT 5)**, Apple, Cupertino, California Sep 2013 - Oct 2014

- Principal Engineer for a globally distributed load balancer with 99.999% availability across several API services.
- Oversaw a team of 12 engineers, managing project timelines, code quality, and architectural decisions. Regularly facilitated consensus-building on design proposals and led strategic engineering initiatives.
- Operationalised infrastructure for device activations across US, Canada and Europe.

**Staff Software Engineer**, Walmart, San Bruno, California Oct 2010 - Sep 2013

- Served as architect and technical lead for Walmart Canada's SEO platform and base-variant management

system, reducing bounce rates by 30%.

- Integrated product reviews into the website with BazaarVoice.
- Drove cloud infrastructure modernization efforts across a large-scale fleet, invented two patents and decreased deployment cycles significantly.
- Instituted an enterprise-wide configuration management framework, unifying deployment practices for over 200 microservices.

**Consulting Engineer**, BestBuy, Walgreens, Pearson VUE

Aug 2005 - Sep 2010

- Coding for web-scale backends, focusing on reliability, resilience, and high-traffic optimizations.
- Led implementation of JSP-based backend services and front-end templates for retail and testing clients.
- Developed offline batch processes for advanced fraud detection, enabling proactive identification of high-risk transactions.

## Certifications

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- Sun Certified Java Programmer
- Sun Certified Web Components Developer
- Sun Certified Business Components Developer
- IBM Certified Solution Developer in XML 1.1. and Related Technologies
- IBM Certified Solution Designer - Object Oriented Analysis and Design

## Patents & Intellectual Property

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- **Systems and methods for interactive presentations** - US 20230205552
- **Systems and methods for storing and replaying presentations w/ video and audio** - US 20230205808
- **Systems and methods for remotely controlling electronic presentations** - US20230076902A1
- **System and method for increasing throughput of a PaaS system** - US 9342369 B2
- **Verification of complex multi-application and multi-node deployments** - US 20140109082

## Current Areas of Interest and Exploration

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Generative AI, Cloud, Mathematics for Machine Learning, Large scale architectures.

## Technical Focus Areas

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AI/ML Infrastructure, Distributed Systems, Platform Engineering, Cloud-Native Architectures, Engineering Excellence