

Raf Gemmail

Head of Engineering

Scaling SaaS platforms & leading globally distributed teams

Ex-Booking.com, BBC iPlayer, Morgan Stanley

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📍 North Auckland, NZ (APAC)

🇳🇿 British and New Zealand Citizen

Summary

Head of Engineering with proven success scaling high-growth SaaS platforms and leading distributed teams across APAC. I specialise in building resilient, cost-effective systems while fostering high-performance engineering cultures.

Currently leading ~40 engineers across the Philippines, I bring hands-on expertise in cloud architecture, DevOps transformation, and high performance product delivery. My leadership style balances technical depth with business impact - equally comfortable cutting code or driving technical strategy as I am mentoring teams.

Thought Leadership & Community

Regular contributor to engineering community through conferences and podcasts:

- **InfoQ Culture & Methods Podcasts:** [2022](#), [2023](#), [2024](#), [2025](#)
- **Conference Talks:** [Growing Junior Developers](#), [Mob/Pair Programming](#), [Technical Debt at BBC](#)
- **Community Leadership:** Organised remote conferences, NZ DevOps Days, Techweek workshops

Leadership Experience

Senior Director of Engineering

March 2025 – Present

Marigold Loyalty (Remote NZ with teams in the Philippines)

- Leading engineering for Forrester-wave leading loyalty platform serving global brands
- Managing ~40 engineers across platform and product teams in APAC
- Driving technical strategy for high-scale POS and ecommerce integrations
- Mentoring and establishing a culture of security, sre and cross-silo collaboration with eng leadership team
- Invited into a, C-suite coached, SLT program focus on ELT-level challenges
- Introduced AI, Eng Productivity, Functional programming and other guilds

Director of Engineering (Platform Capabilities)

July 2024 - March 2025

Marigold Sailthru (Remote NZ with teams in India, Philippines, USA, NZ)

- Oversaw platform engineering including UI, Mobile Push, Data Engineering, and DevOps
- Led migration from managed services to internal platform capabilities
- Established engineering practices for distributed teams across multiple time zones
- Drove cost optimisation and reliability for petabyte-scale data platforms

Engineering Manager

July 2022 - July 2024

Marigold Sailthru (Remote NZ with teams in NZ, US and India)

- Led Platform and Mobile Messaging teams delivering billions of messages monthly
- Hands-on leadership with ECS/EKS/Kafka/AMQ/Rails/Elixir/Java services
- Implemented data-driven leadership using cost, delivery, and reliability metrics
- Active participant in PagerDuty rotation and incident management

Head of Technology

November 2020 - July 2022

Developers Institute

- Led scale-up from single digit to hundreds of learners with cloud-native SaaS platform
- Architected and delivered AWS-based platform with security by design
- Managed full technology stack from product development to enterprise IT
- Recruited and mentored technical leadership team

Technical Leadership & Engineering

Hands-on Technical Consultant & Agile Coach Roles

2019 - 2020

Companies: Assurity Consulting, NZTA, MPorium

- DevOps coaching and BDD consulting for government and enterprise clients
- Led AWS serverless implementations and ML stack development
- Agile transformation coaching for distributed teams

Technical Lead & Architect Roles

2013 - 2018

Companies: BNZ, Stuff.co.nz, Catalyst IT

- Microservices migrations and cloud-native platform development
- Technical coaching and team leadership for high-traffic platforms
- DDD workshops and event storming for complex domain modeling

(Senior) Software Engineer Roles

2002 - 2015

Companies: BBC iPlayer, Morgan Stanley, ING, Booking.com

- High-performance systems development for webscale platforms
- Platform optimisation and scalable architecture design
- Early adopter of cloud technologies and DevOps practices

Software Engineer Roles

1999 - 2007

Companies: Codix.net, Sportingbet.com, VisionOSS, Santander

- Full-stack development and systems administration for commercial applications
- Early career experience across financial services, gaming, and web platforms

Skills & Capabilities

Leadership: Engineering Leadership, Coaching, Lean, Agile, XP, DevOps, FinOps, Security & Compliance

Frameworks: SpringBoot, React, GraphQL, Spark, Camel, Rails

Datastores: PostgreSQL, MySQL Elastic, MongoDB, Databricks, DynamoDB, NoSQL

Languages: Java, Node, Scala, Ruby, Python, Go, Perl, Elixir

Platforms/Ops: AWS, Kubernetes, ECS/EKS, Terraform, Kafka, GitHub Actions, Jenkins, CloudWatch, DataDog

Other: AI/ML adoption, Video transcoding, NixOS enthusiast, Vendor Management

Education & Certifications

BSc Hon. Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence

University of Birmingham and University of Pisa
1994 - 1999

ICP-ACC ICAgile Certified Professional - Agile Coaching

Trained by Shane Hastie, Director of Learning at ICAgile
2016

Interests

Homeschooling dad passionate about science and futurism🙌. Amateur astronomer and coastal runner. Lifelong musician playing guitar🎸 and ukulele. Exploring video transcoding and NixOS in my spare time.