



# Raf Gemmail

Scaling SaaS platforms & leading globally distributed teams  
Ex-Booking.com, BBC iPlayer, Morgan Stanley

in [www.linkedin.com/in/rafiqgemmail](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rafiqgemmail)

github.com/fiq

www.infoq.com/profile/RafiqGemmail

✉ raf AT dreamthought.com

📍 North of Auckland, NZ

🌐 British and New Zealand Citizen

## Summary

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

Currently leading ~50 engineers across the Philippines and NZ. I bring hands-on expertise in cloud architecture, DevOps transformation, and high performance product delivery. I am passionate about mentorship and growth. My own leadership style balances technical depth with business impact - I am equally comfortable cutting code or driving technical strategy, as I am enabling business partners at all levels.

## 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:** Organised remote conferences, NZ DevOps Days, Techweek workshops, maintenance of AURs and nixpkgs

## Senior Leadership Experience

### Senior Director of Engineering

March 2025 – Present

#### Marigold Loyalty (Remote NZ with teams in the Philippines)

- Led engineering org for a Forrester-wave loyalty platform, serving global brands
- Headed a 50+ engineer org with teams shipping multi-region AWS stacks from Rails to Scala
- Drove technical strategy for high-scale AI, event-driven, POS and ecommerce integrations
- Built a culture of security, SRE and cross-org collaboration within leadership team
- Invited to C-suite coached SLT program tackling 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, US, NZ)

- Oversaw platform engineering including UI, Mobile Push, Data Engineering, and Platform
- Modernised platform capabilities for improved outcomes, with waste and cost and delivery optimisations
- Established engineering practices for distributed teams across multiple time zones
- Led petabyte-scale data eng team while backfilling, and optimised for cost and reliability

### 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
- Introduced BigRoomPlanning and data-driven leadership using cost, delivery, & reliability metrics
- Active participant in PagerDuty rotation and incident management

### Head of Technology (and formerly Head of Product)

November 2020 - July 2022

#### Developers Institute

- Led scale-up from single-digit to hundreds of learners with cloud-native SaaS platforms
- Architected and delivered AWS-based platforms and IT infra with security by design

- Managed full technology stack, from product development to enterprise IT
- Recruited, mentored, and developed technical leadership and early teaching teams
- Designed NZQA-approved vocational pathways for learners from diverse backgrounds

## 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
- Led Agile delivery of Cabinet legislative-workflow for NZ Government

### 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, NixOS enthusiast, Vendor Management

## Education & Certifications

**BSc Hon. Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence**

University of Birmingham and University of Pisa  
1994 - 1999

**ICP-ACC IAgile 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 outdoor jogger. Lifelong musician playing guitar🎸 and ukulele. Exploring VR, oss AI models, video transcoding and NixOS in my spare time.