Raf Gemmail

Lean Engineering Leader – Hands-on, High-Performance Systems

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British & New Zealand Citizen • North Auckland, NZ

Summary

Transformational technology leader with a track record scaling webscale platforms and video systems. Known for staying deeply **hands-on** even while leading large teams—reviewing code, building POCs, and creating data analysis tools—while driving product-focused engineering cultures. Early engineer (#4) at **Booking.com**, with career highlights at the **BBC iPlayer** and **Morgan Stanley**, as well as **Stuff.co.nz** where I led Brightcove video integration and transcoding initiatives. Currently leading a division at massive scale in Martech.

Regular **InfoQ** contributor and podcaster, conference speaker, and DevOps community organiser. An avid **NixOS** user, passionate about high-performance engineering, cost optimisation, and developer experience.

See Me Here

A sample of public content from community contributions and my InfoQ passion-work:

- Annual InfoQ Culture & Methods Podcasts: 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025

Selection of Talks & Case Studies

- On growing junior developers – NZ JS
- On coaching ensemble/mob/pair programming – NZ JS
- On addressing technical debt at the BBC – QCon, London
- Organised a remote conference to support folks during early lockdowns
- Helped organise New Zealand's DevOps Days

Featured Experience

Senior Director of Engineering – Marigold Loyalty

Mar 2025 – Present | Global Remote from NZ

Leading ~40 off-shore engineers building the global leader in loyalty systems, integrated into POS and ecommerce at scale. Hands-on in incidents, swarming critical issues, prototyping AI/automation, and evolving engineering culture.

Director of Engineering (Platform Capabilities) – Marigold Sailthru

Jul 2024 – Mar 2025 | Remote

Promoted to oversee leaders across UI, Mobile Push, Data, and Platform Engineering. Introduced mentoring circles, guilds, and a hybrid ShapeUp/Big Room Planning model. Championed product-focused engineering and high-performance culture.

Engineering Manager – Marigold Sailthru

Jul 2022 – Jul 2024 | Remote

Owned platform and mobile reliability delivering billions of messages per month. Participated in on-call, reviewed code, and drove improvements in DevEx and architecture alignment.

Head of Technology (promoted from Head of Product) – Developers Institute

Nov 2020 – Jul 2022 | Remote

Scaled remote learning platform from single digits to hundreds of learners. Built and shipped a secure cloud-native SaaS. Hands-on with Python/AWS development.

Technical Coach & Lead – Stuff.co.nz

2015 – 2018 | Wellington, NZ

Hands-on leader of video platform initiatives including Brightcove integration and transcoding systems. Delivered high-performance news platform features using microservices and continuous delivery.

○ Senior Software Engineer – BBC iPlayer

2009– 2013 | London, UK

Delivered and optimised services for video renditions, programme metadata, and integrations at massive scale. Migrated legacy Perl services to high-performance Java/Spring microservices. Worked closely with transcoding teams.

○ Software Engineer – Booking.com

2002 – 2003 | Amsterdam, NL

Developer #4 and first commit. Refactored core system for scalability and maintainability, setting foundations for Booking.com's hypergrowth.

○ Other Roles

2000 – 2020

Engineering leadership and individual contributor roles across ING, Morgan Stanley, Santander, VisionOSS, Trinity Mirror, Assurity Consulting, NZTA, MPorium, BNZ, Catalyst IT, OpenClassrooms. Focused on **high-performance systems at scale**, applying **lean methods** and **fast feedback loops** to deliver reliable, maintainable and maintainable software. Deep experience of customer-centric build-it/ship-it/own-it cultures.

Skills

- **Leadership:** Coaching, Lean, Agile, XP, DevOps, FinOps
- **Languages:** Java, Node.js, Scala, Ruby, Python, Go, Perl
- **Frameworks:** Spring Boot, React, GraphQL, Spark, Camel

- **Platforms/Ops:** AWS, Kubernetes, ECS/EKS, Terraform, Kafka

- **Datastores:** PostgreSQL, Elastic, MongoDB, Databricks

- **Other:** Video transcoding interest, NixOS enthusiast