



JAMES SOCOL

I like helping engineers and teams
build and ship more effectively.

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Experience

Senior Staff Engineer, Policygenius Feb 2021–July 2023

Established company technical vision to improve time-to-market for product development. Mentored engineers on successful projects to improve timeliness of dependency updates, increase SLO adoption, and improve DevEx. Built technical solutions to achieve order-of-magnitude improvements for common engineering tasks. Introduced standards-based collaboration to enable team alignment and autonomy. Contributed to due diligence processes. Embedded on teams to improve cross-functional partnership, establish effective practices, and execute strategic pivots. Introduced Hashicorp Vault with SRE and InfoSec teams. Revamped on-call practices to improve responsiveness and illuminate the cost of product and technical defects. Established department-wide roles on product teams to improve relationships with non-engineering stakeholders, decrease the risk of burnout, and increase the growth opportunities for engineers.

Sr Mgr/Director of Engineering, Policygenius Apr 2019–Feb 2021

Built growth Engineering Management function by promoting internal talent and hiring, including sourcing and managing interview pipeline health. Leveraged distributed experience to help teams navigate the rapid change to fully-remote work in March 2020. Contributed to strategic plans for 2020 and 2021 for both product and sustaining engineering work. Launched Estate Planning product, Policygenius's first mobile product.

Owner/Operator, TodaysMeet Jan 2008–June 2018

TodaysMeet was the premier educational backchannel chat platform, serving millions of students and teachers every year. From 2008–2018, designed, built, and ran the service and developed new product features.

Director of Engineering, Condé Nast Jan 2016–Aug 2018

Led consumer product teams totaling up to 20 engineers. Owned 10 web properties and company-wide UI libraries. Led consumer rearchitecture for all web properties involving 70+ engineers, PMs, designers, QA, and others. Grew teams >25%. Led adoption of CI/CD. Oversaw >100% brand growth.

Platform Engineer, The Groundwork Feb 2015–Jan 2016

Built core services and architecture to support application developers, as well as mentored other engineers in Python and system architecture.

API Evangelist/Platform Engineer, Bitly July 2013–Apr 2014

Built partner relationships with platform integrations. Supported sales and customer success teams as technical support contact for clients. Acted as community liaison and code mentor. Maintained open source client libraries

Engineering Manager, Mozilla Dec 2010–May 2013

Lead the Firefox Help and Mozilla Developer Network engineering teams. Grew teams via hiring and professional development. Drove department effort to adopt CI/CD. Managed product and technical projects. Participated in security reviews and maintained security-related open source projects.

Web Developer, Mozilla Aug 2009–Dec 2010

Drove in-place platform replacement of Firefox Help web application while continuing feature development. Lead web development group to adopt culture of testing, automation, a common development platform and tools.

Technology and Skills

Go, Python, TypeScript, JavaScript, Ruby, AWS, GCP, CI/CD, Distributed Systems, API Design, Team Building, Mentorship, Technical Communication

Selected Talks

The Engineer's Path(s) QueensJS, May 2020

Zelda and the Art of Continuous Delivery QueensJS, May 2017

The Hierarchy of Great Docs ManhattanJS, April 2017

PIEfection ManhattanJS, Jan 2016

Choosing an Open Source License Wisely BrooklynJS, April 2015

Now you're thinking with Queues! ManhattanJS, April 2015

SOA you want to be Service Oriented? QueensJS, Jan 2015

Going Faster: Dozens of Deployments FirstMark Tech Summit, June 2013

UX, IA, and Firefox Help: 7 Million Happy Users WriteTheDocs, April 2013

How do I Feature Flag? NY Continuous Delivery Meetup, Dec 2012

Mozilla's Best Practices for Django Security DjangoCon 2012, Sept 2012

Selected Open Source Projects

statsd Python client for Etsy's StatsD server.

django-ratelimit Popular rate-limiting tool for Django projects.

Waffle Feature flag tool for Django.*

Bleach Python HTML5-aware, whitelist-based sanitization library.*

* Creator and original maintainer, since handed off.

Special Interests

Open Source software, continuous deployment, engineering culture and community, automation, scalability, distributed systems, distributed teams, application security, the science of baking, tabletop roleplaying games

Education

Michigan State University — B.S. Mathematics