

Richard Parkins

Head of Architecture

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Personal Profile

Initially educated in Electronic & Electrical Engineering, I gained 1st class degree at Loughborough but had a passion for computers and programming (ZX Spectrum!). I have moved from being a junior developer to now heading up the engineering and architecture division of Talent Consulting.

I have worked in many sectors including education, retail and insurance, in varied roles from Senior software engineer, Staff Engineer to head of Architecture. I have two passions which are building simple solutions to customer problems with a focus on moving from on premise to cloud as well as green field cloud solutions

My current role is a mix of 70-30 hands on project work helping deliver solution and infrastructure projects in the cloud with 30% leading and building a permanent team and introducing community of practice, ways of working and best practices in the way we deliver solutions to our public sector clients

Experience has given me a great understanding, that teams just don't build themselves, you need the right people with the right behaviours, alongside a good clear direction and career path to gain that ownership and community that successful companies foster.

Key Skills

- Cloud architecture and development, PaaS, IaaS and SaaS
- Migrating to the Cloud, AWS and Azure
- Micro-service architectures
- Distributed messaging platforms, Kafka, ServiceBus and RabbitMQ
- CI/CD: GoCD, Pulumi, Team city, Octodeploy
- REST, Swagger and HATEOS
- Agile principles, Lean development, pairing and mobbing
- Data storage, NoSQL and SQL (Mongo Atlas)
- Github Automation - reports, cost savings making data visible
- Monitoring: Splunk, Grafana, Prometheus, ELK, Azure App insights, Log Analytics
- NetCore, Net framework and nodeJS
- Successful team building and management
- Career and line management for individual developers
- Managing departmental architectural change
- Leadership and communication. Bringing the team along with your vision

Work

Head of Architecture

Talent Consulting (2021 - present)

Technical

Brought in as an architect and 'head of' role to help create a permanent talent team and support our existing public sector contracts. Responsible for overseeing the delivery of over 10 contracts in the public sector posting up to 200 people in role across all engineering roles

Brought in in excess of £10M of business for the DfE and ESFA, through bid process as part of the team answering questions and presenting our vision and the roles we play in delivering solutions to the public sector

As Principal architect for DfE I had lead a lead role in moving our public sector client to a hub and spoke architecture in Azure. Working collaboratively with the business, security architects and network experts, I created the main High Level Documentation and Low level documentation, which included 'as-is' and 'to-be' architectures and a road-map for the business to sign off. Solution provided Palo Alto Firewall within the hub to simplify the network traffic across 7 Azure tenancies moving to an Azure vWAN solution from expressRoute. All documentation to GDS standards and reviewed and signed off by the senior stakeholders.

Conducted a review of the Identity and Access Management (security operating model) for public sector dept, focusing on 7 Azure cloud tenancies and their RBAC and access controls. Presented a roadmap for the department going forward in the next 3 years to move to a single tenancy, simplifying network, access control and providing savings of at least £1m per annum

Management

Building a business plan for how I want the dept to grow, including milestones for growth and how I see the organisation changing in the next 3 years. Building in specific solutions for problems as we grow, for example, line management of people, collaboration sessions, ceremonies, employee well being and D&I. Presented to senior management and got sign off on the plan

Candidate packs created for each role required in the permanent team and holding regular catchup's with our recruitment teams to gauge progress in getting the right people. I also conduct interviews and delegate where necessary as the team grows

Building a company identity on the web, especially for tech people through github. Initiated a handbook for 'What Talent stand for', allowing public consumption of our ways of working and how you join and what to expect from Talent.

New business and initiatives

Chosen as technical expert to win new business for Talent. Successfully won in excess of £10M of business in first year leading to an extra 75 contractors and permanent staff.

Process involves talking about technical excellence, team building and diversity and Inclusion at Talent.

Quarterly meetups with engineering to grow the Talent products, currently in POC for the Talent Suite which is a suite of products to aid consultant agencies to manage their day to day and give visibility to the company on who we have where. Azure platform purchased to help permanent team members learn about cloud, brought in new tools to aid education and expertise for our permanent team, eg pluralsight licensing, resharper, visio

Alongside the project commitments, have helped grow the team from myself to 25 architect, developers and business resources as permanent staff and hope to increase by 100% in the next 6 months

Applications Architect

CompareTheMarket (2017 - 2021)

Technical product owner for our Pricing platform and Partner Risk Mapping service. These systems are the 1st class citizens of the business and hosted in AWS. Responsible for 3 tech leads and a developer team of around 20.

Responsible for the architectural vision for the new Pricing Platform at CompareTheMarket. Focused on developing scalability, stability and security for the system, keeping the customer at the centre of our business.

Moved the platform over to a micro-service architecture from on premise over a period of 2 years. Went from intra month deployments to daily real time deployments and better scalability under heavy load, thus reducing our costs by 25%

Architected and developed a new real-time quotability system allowing fast feedback of issues and problems at our providers. This reduced our time-to-fix from hours/days down to minutes.

Chair of Technical forum, and many working groups, including concepting and rolling out common initiatives across the department. Contract testing introduced reducing our incidents on deployment

Introduced the concept of having a service catalogue and giving teams the power to automate the population of the catalogue. This had an effect of driving generation of our documentation, allowing us to reduce the mean time to failure during incidents. Also allowed us to automate a lot of the immunisation reporting

Introduced automation of specific immunisation tasks hosted on our own AWS github action runner. Scheduled on cron timers each micro service repo can be scanned via sonarqube, checkmarx and owasp zap

Attended many tech leadership, speaking and influencing workshops where the lessons learned were implemented in real world to bring people along in the journey at CompareTheMarket.

Technical Lead Developer / Architect

CompareTheMarket (2016 - 2017)

Leading a team which concepted, developed and maintained the new Pricing Platform.
Developed with security, scalability and diagnostic capability up front

Supporting up to 10 journey and retrieval transactions a second and hosted in AWS
implementing EC2, Lambda, S3 and CodeDeploy

Swagger specifications defining REST endpoints to communicate with the system all secured
by bearer token through OAuth

Mentoring and helping form the career paths of the developers in the team

Consultant Lead developer

CompareTheMarket (Energy and Motor Journeys 2013 - 2016)

Architected and developed with the team the concept of taking a picture of you energy bill
on an IOS app and getting a quote

MongoDB use for storage and hosted in AWS. AngularJS for front end

Administration site in bootstrap using AngularJS

Developed a re-buy portal for Customers to one-click for renewal

Consultant

Easyjet (Seat purchase: Consultant (2012 - 2013)

Part of the team developing one of the first seat selection services by the airlines. MVC and
knockoutJS solution hosted on Microsoft Azure

Developed Azure ServiceBus solution for 3rd party provider to access Restful API to pass
pluscard data for real-time validation. Required to allow validation of card at booking time

Implemented PHP client for 3rd party to access windows Azure ServiceBus

Consultant

Tesco Entertainment (2011 - 2012)

Part of a team developing new functionality on the www.tescoentertainment.com website
and supporting applications. Using Agile (SCRUM) to plan and present on bi-weekly sprints

Developed concept Android application using Java supporting purchase and download of
MP3 tracks within time and budget allowed. Picked this up as a project alongside the dot net
development I was brought in to start

Maintained and developed new functionality on the Endeca search service used by the main
entertainment site

Developed the price cross out (was/now/save) for all 400,000 products and saw successful implementation to live

Consultant

Cambridge University (OCR) (2008 - 2011)

Part of a team developing new functionality for the main OCR Examination portal for Cambridge University. A site that supports a base of 35,000 different centres across the world managing their candidate entries and results through one site. Developed under Agile (SCRUM) split into bi-weekly sprints and presentations using new MVC design pattern

Lead developer to upgrade existing disconnected entry sites into one site where users can manage their GCSE and Vocational Qualification data in one area saving users time when entering candidate entries

Responsible for bringing Code review and new unit testing methods into the department

Developing process of silent deploys removing site downtime in many cases

Director

TouchScreenData (Director 2004 - 2008)

Formed company developing online management systems predominately written in C# .NET 2.0/3.5 but small scale sites developed in LAMP

Tendering and presenting our solutions requiring good communication and the ability to describe technical solutions to a wide audience

Other

1994 - 2004

Thompson Reuters

Developer writing financial applications for the city. Merrill Lynch WAP site developed in PHP and Windows based apps written in .NET 1.0. Implemented world cup SMS messaging service with Tib Rendezvous messaging platform

Maintained and developed new pager systems on the front and back ends using Java and websphere and apache tomcat to host

ICS Triplex

Safety Critical systems for the Oil and Nuclear industry. Embedded software development with external company audits

Emerson Liebert

Developing embedded software control systems for Uninterruptible Power supply units

Education

Loughborough University

1st Class Hons in Electrical & Electronic Engineering

4 years (3 years + 1 in industry)