

Richard Parkins

Head of Engineering

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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

- 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
- 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

Work

Head of Engineering

Talent Consulting (2021 - present)

Employed as head of engineering to help Talent build a permanent team allowing the business to retain the knowledge gained while our consultants work within our public sector contracts. I have helped build the team from myself to a core team of 30 individuals in all team disciplines includes architects, developers, dev-ops and testing. The team also comprise of the business side including Delivery managers, Business Analysts and Product owners which I was core to building along side our head of Delivery.

I am engaged as an principal architect at SLT level in the DfE and am responsible for team collaboration, individual career programmes and delivery of a core product for Talent involving a PaaS platform (multi-tenant) to help us automate the business and make our business more transparent for our clients. This product is core to the team collaboration allowing individuals to try new technology to further their understanding and bring learnings to our clients.

As a member of the SLT at Talent I am engaged in winning new business, engaged in creating presentations, responses to tenders to navigate our way through the bid process on the technical development and delivery of solutions to public sector initiatives. To date I have helped the business win £30M of new business at the DfE, MOJ and ESFA

Team management

Building a business plan for dept growth, including specific milestones which align to my key objectives defined by the board. Building in specific solutions for problems as we grow, for example, line management of people, collaboration sessions, ceremonies, employee well being and DE&I. Presented to the board and got sign off on the plan bringing in a permanent delivery manager to help deliver the plan.

Weekly collaboration meet-ups to touch base with progress on our core product offering with monthly Talent days where our engineering team come together to build our new product offering called the Talent Suite working in an agile process. This product will help us engage with customers generating weekly reports, help in bid management allow more transparency for our permanent staff on our client projects and opportunities for them across our portfolio. Azure platform subscription to allow our permanent people to test, play and learn alongside tools such as pluralsight, github co-pilot

Core leader and organiser in the quarterly meetups with the business to collaborate on how to grow Talent, focusing on clients, business and having some fun seeing people face to face.

Architecture & Technical

As Principal architect for the DfE I have lead multiple teams on projects at the DfE on both integration projects in the cloud and solution architecture of new platforms

engaged around the Families and Vulnerable children portfolio. The majority of the projects are hosted on Azure and all projects are subject to intense review, IT Health check and WACG testing from outside agencies

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

Leading our team on a core product offering to help us automate aspects of our business. Roadmap priorities project reporting which allows our leadership Team to receive reports on status of projects with RAG status, with any RED status' flagged to our SLT. Bid management as priority 2, implementing AI against our library of bid responses to help us formulate responses to tenders and reduce time spent forming response documentation.

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)