Curriculum Vitae – Ian Pleasance

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A career Platform Engineer and Architect, I have worked with a ride range of organisation sizes from startups to Enterprises.

My experience allows me to scale systems and processes, lead digital and process transformation projects, and guide the design and building of scalable performant systems. Something which differentiates me from other IT professionals is that I am customer focused and well versed in business issues - having built and scaled technology businesses of my own and therefore possessing experience of both the implementation of technology and its application to business goals.

I have worked for B2C product and B2B service supplier organisations, and within group sizes ranging from one through many-hundreds. I am experienced in managing, leading, and mentoring engineers and have a proven history of levelling up engineers and engineering teams.

Career summary

2021-2022   Principal Platform Engineer – hyperexponential.
2018-2021   Principal Engineer – Just Eat.
2013-2018   Contract architect, engineering lead/SRE consultant, and fractional leader
        2016-2018   Architect, Head of Architecture, Engineering Lead – News UK
        2014-2016   Architect and Engineering/SRE lead - The Financial Times
        2013   Digital Architect and Engineering Lead - News International (News UK)
2011-2017   Technical Director, Architect and co-founder – Mindings
2008-2011   Content-management system designer and developer – The Financial Times
2005-2008   Web/IT consultant and freelance software developer.
2003-2004   Senior Support/Pre-sales Technical Specialist – Yahoo! Europe
2002-2003   Lead Technical Specialist-Asia and Europe – Inktomi Corporation
2001-2002   European Technical Support Manager – Inktomi Ltd
1999-2001   Technical Support Engineer for Inktomi Ltd
1999   IT Contractor.
1989-1999   The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ("RBKC")
        1996-1999   Internet design, implementation, and support specialist
        1993-1995   Unix/IP network design, development, and lead support
        1990-1992   Operating System developer
        1989-1990   Systems administrator and Technical Support specialist

Career history

2021-2022

hyperexponential ("hx") - Head of Excellence/Principal Platform Engineer. Creating Platform and Customer Engineering teams, creating an improvement strategy, improving scaling/cost-efficiency, improving release processes and quality of deployment.

hx is an "insuretech" scale-out. Founded by two insurance actuaries it created a web based insurance model and risk calculation system "Renew" allowing insurance actuaries to model risk and price insurance policies via a web-based UI – replacing complex and brittle Excel spreadsheets – and made initial sales.

In Spring 2021 hx completed a series A £10m fund-raise allowing it to scale from startup level. As with most startups Renew had been built by a small number of talented generalist engineers, knowledgeable in multiple areas such as architecture, front/back end, and infrastructure, but lacking in-depth platform knowledge. This resulted in a platform which required improvements in areas such as resiliency, performance, scalability, and cost-efficiency, as well as architectural and tooling shortcomings.

hx's CTO hired me to make improvements in these areas by creating strategies for Platform and Customer Engineering, hiring and building out PE/CE teams, identifying areas of improvement, and acting as an advocate for quality within internal processes.

I analyzed the hx platform, and built a comprehensive backlog of prioritized improvements – ensuring that these aligned with the business priorities and OKRs while simultaneously delivering robust improvements to performance, reliability/scalability, cost efficiency, resiliency, and the deployment/release process.

In parallel I developed job specifications for the 3 levels and 2 types of engineer role required, working with the internal talent team to build a candidate funnel via LinkedIn, Workable, and direct connections.

Over the next 3 months I successfully engaged consultant engineers and hired mid/Senior Customer and Platform Engineers, building it to a team of 6 split across two sub-teams. After creating an onboarding process and using it to build the new hires' knowledge, my teams rapidly started delivering the highest priority improvements, immediately resulting in increased resilience and performance.

I next turned our focus on the release process. For contractual reasons hx releases software quarterly, these large infrequent releases resulted in a very complex and manual release process which required full-time effort from a large number of engineers for many weeks, and a uncomfortably high level of failure or manual ad-hoc/on-the-fly fixes.

Working with a specialist test-engineering consultancy, I introduced formal test documentation via Gherkin, completed a test-matrix, and we implemented automated testing. In parallel my team improved the release tooling, taking it from a brittle process which required one engineer to manually upgrade one environment at a time by typing over 30 manual commands, to an automatically triggered container-based process which allowed all environments to be upgraded in parallel and triggered out-of-hours. This reduced the deployment time by 60%, the engineer time required for a deployment by 80%, and deployment errors to 0.

Having completed these tasks, I onboarded career managers to oversee the delivery of this plan.

2018–2021

Just Eat - Principal Engineer. Working with Heads Of to re-define engineering practices and technical architecture, and redesign the platform to the new architecture, guiding and mentoring teams in the implementation of this.

Having restructured their engineering division for future growth and with a plan to re-architect their platform for future growth, Just Eat determined that a new type of senior leader engineer was required. Although for historical structural purposes the job title would be 'Principal Engineer' they sought people with experience of both startup, midsize, and enterprise businesses, who had experience at Head of/Lead level and who would typically be a Head of Engineering elsewhere. This person would report directly to the Director of Engineering and have responsibility for improving technology and processes across multiple teams.

I was Just Eat's first Principal Engineer, and my responsibilities were split into three work-streams.

- I worked with the Director of Engineering on large scale initiatives, e.g. team expansion, building guilds for Architecture and Performance, creating standards for documentation, evaluation/R&D, and other areas.
- I was paired with a division Senior Technology Manager to work across multiple teams at a time helping to guide and validate their designs and work, mentor them, and generally be their go-to advisor for questions regarding engineering practices and their work. These teams included Search, Menu, Order, OrderPad, Delivery Estimation, and other critical parts of the order flow.
- Finally, I acted as an engineering lead on key projects including the design and implementation of a competition engine for the Euro 2021 sponsorship campaign, the addition of alcohol and other age-restricted projects to the Just Eat platform, and work on allergen and food lifestyle filtering.

When I joined Just Eat the engineering department had 12 teams and approximately 200 engineers and other technical staff. During my tenure and the merger with Takeaway.com this grew to over 600 engineers across 30 teams. I worked with most of these teams, and my work on standards and practice improvements influenced them all.

2016 – 2018
News UK - Architect, Interim Head of Architecture, Tech Lead, and Principal Engineer. Leading a full re-platform design, transformations including DevOps and CI/CD implementation, and leading architectural practices.

After the success of my previous News UK project, I was asked to return to News UK to lead the development of a new digital news platform. The technical remit was the delivery of a new distributed digital platform for both web and app content, which was; highly flexible, served fast-loading "mobile first" sites, decoupled from the title's CMSs, reusable across multiple consumers (web, mobile, apps, feeds) and suitable for the rapid addition of new features in the fast-changing digital news market.

The first title scheduled to be re-platformed was at that time measured by unique viewer/page-view usage as the 5th most-read online news site in the UK – the goal was of course to make it number 1.

A secondary goal was to help News UK's engineering team move towards more modern development practices, such as Agile working, CI/CD, Open source toolchains, and to work in a more DevOps manner.

As Architect for the project I was responsible for designing a flexible architecture, ensuring that it met the project goals, and ensuring best engineering practices were followed.

As Tech Lead and Principal Engineer I was responsible for; working with the business, programme leads, project managers and scrum masters to ensure that the project's development teams delivered quality work to an agreed schedule, for mentoring and upskilling team members, and for helping the Head of Technology

and Director of Engineering transform and grow their teams into highly performant development teams using efficient modern development practices.

In April 2017, Head of Engineering resigned. It was decided not to hire an immediate replacement, and I was asked to additionally take on this responsibility on an interim basis. This meant that I had responsibilities for; strategic growth, recruitment and team building, mentoring of senior developers within the team, technical decisions and strategies, and other leadership tasks.

In August 2017, towards the end of the first phase of delivery of the new platform project, it became apparent that the title's mobile app development team was in need of senior engineering leadership. I therefore took on responsibility for this team, including reviewing the current architecture, performance and stability improvements, and mentoring the team.

In September 2017, the Head of Architecture left the company and I was asked to act as interim Head of Architecture. This meant taking on responsibility for the architecture team, and thereby authority over all architectural designs created at News UK, as well as liaising with News Corp and News Australia to ensure that architecture was consistent across the wider business.

As a result of these, I had leadership responsibility for a team of 4 architects, and technical leadership responsibility for 60 engineers across 7 sub-teams.

The digital platform project was successfully delivered and then refined, including the migration of other titles to the new platform.

By May 2018 the goal of turning that first re-platformed title into the most-read news site within the UK had been achieved and verified by industry standard independent scoring. In parallel site performance was drastically improved, with key metrics such as time to first relevant paint halved, user engagement was significantly increased, page views per visit doubled, and advertising revenue near doubled.

A through DevOps process chain was implemented along with full ownership of the technology stack by the team, CI/CD, and fully automated testing. This allowed the time required in order to release code to be reduced from 1 week to below 45 minutes, as well enabling a fix-forward and feature-flag based policy which meant no rollbacks were required.

2016 – 2016
Bloomberg LP – SRE (Market Data Feeds). Advising on Reliability Engineering practices.

Bloomberg's Market Data Feeds teams develop and operate software to allow exchanges and other data contributors to feed securities, fund values, and other financial trading data into the Bloomberg Terminal.

I advised on the growth of a tactical SRE team for the data feeds division, which would then own the "non-functionals" around the division's technology. These included; monitoring, release/deployment, tooling and automation, performance, scaling, and best practices. In parallel, I helped the business's engineering division to engender modern working practices and team structures.

2014 – 2016
The Financial Times – Architect and Engineering Lead.

During this role I worked with the FT's membership services engineering team to; lead the design and build of a new membership and subscription management stack. The project also included a transformative element, adopting Agile ways of working and implementing DevOps practices.

This included :-
- Design and implementation of highly-available multi-region clustered application, database, and message-layer systems
-Mentoring/training development teams to empower them and transform them to modern DevOps style teams.
- Implementation of continuous deployment and delivery workflows.
- Adoption of modern development practices including Agile/Kanban, CI/CD, XP/pair programming.

2013
News UK – Digital Architect. Ensuring architectural quality, performing integration and architectural design, mentoring and guiding teams,

News UK's "Newsroom 360"was a 3-year transformational project to build a new multi-channel publishing system allowing the creation, curation, and publishing of all of News UK's print and digital publications.

I was hired on a 2 month contract to re-examining the architecture and design work that had been completed over the previous 2 years and identify issues which could cause the project's July go-live date to be at risk or could lead to stability/support issues in the early weeks of production usage.

I completed this task, identifying and leading the resolution of areas of concern, and ensured a successful go-live.

Senior management asked me to continue for another 7 months to assist with architecture and solution design for the remaining parts of the project's scope. This included; Multimedia (video and audio) production workflows and integrations, print and digital archiving, and pre and post-publication syndication. I also enhanced other integrations, and provided general architecture and design consultancy, and assisted other teams working alongside the project team such as the; deployment, infrastructure, and monitoring teams.

2011-2017
Mindings. Technical Director/Designer and co-founder. Co-creator of the award-winning Mindings service, responsible for taking it from a concept to an multi -award-winning product.

I became the Technical Director and co-founder of "Mindings", a start-up based in the Social Media and Consumer Telecare markets. Mindings used social media and digital content as a light-touch form of telecare, allowing elderly users to better engage with their families, increase their well-being, and remain independently living.

Mindings was highly popular with users, families, care homes, and national care organisations. Our product won awards ranging from Cambridge Angels to the international Cura-B competition, and was enthusiastically reviewed by magazines like Wired and newspapers such as the FT and Guardian.

I was responsible for managing and leading the technical development of the business/product and taking its early prototype software to market, turning it from a "proof of concept" idea to a usable scalable solution for large scale use. This included responsibility for; designing architecture, designing and creating new features, managing outsourced developers and other team members, and generally overseeing all technical work.

2011
Contract/Freelance - Web and software developer. Providing freelance development and consultancy services to businesses, predominantly using Linux and the LAMP stack.

2008-2011

The Financial Times – Platform Engineer. Performing platform development work and high-level support for Newspaper and Web content-management/publishing systems.

The FT had a small team known as the "Integration Team", effectively widely-skills Architecture/Platform/DevOps engineers, and required an engineer who had these skills but also comprehensive knowledge of content-management systems and digital publishing in order to perform a full ground-up rebuild of its "Méthode" Content Management System.

This required a complete stack rebuild; new Sun hardware, a switch to Solaris 10, upgrades of all application and server software. All local customisations had to be rewritten or recompiled, utilities ported across, and everything made completely transparent to the user base. Concurrently we designed and implemented a Disaster Recovery solution using parallel data centres, SAN storage, and real-time synchronisation through EMC's SRDF.

I lead this project, gaining domain knowledge and then ensuring that it was shared across the team, and I upskilled more junior engineers and editorial users.

2004-2008
Contract/Freelance - Consultant and software developer. Specialising in Search Engine optimisation, Content Management System design and implementation, and IT/Telephony convergence.

I performed development and consultancy work for a wide range of customers, completing many projects and contracts covering a broad-range of IT areas, such as infrastructure design, support planning, and business/IT infrastructure review.

This included the design and development of a state-of-the-art browser-based Content Management System which provided SME businesses with a fully-managed Internet/E-business presence including the ability to self-create/maintain web sites which were highly accessible to end-users, search-engines, and disabled users. The resulting system was marketed by Flatpack Software Ltd and was particularly popular with charities, NGOs, and other types of organisation/business which required their web site to be rapidly maintained by multiple people in parallel.

2003-2004
Yahoo! Europe - Senior Support/Pre-sales Technical Specialist – Yahoo! Europe. Client Engineering support and consultancy.

Following the acquisition of Inktomi Corporation by Yahoo! I transitioned to Senior Support/Pre-sales specialist for the Yahoo Search Technology (nee Inktomi Websearch) product. This role involved pre-sales technical consultancy and sales-engineer/support work, assisting design and development of portal front-ends using the Inktomi (now "Yahoo YST") product, and post-sales engineering assistance.
I managed the technical relationship with high-profile "tier 1" customer accounts such as BBC, AOL, Web.de, FT, Lycos Europe, Toshiba, and many others across Europe and Asia.
I provided input into the selection and sales process of many of these tier 1 customers, and my support, assistance, dedication, and reputation were repeatedly cited by customers as significant factors in their selection of "YST" as a Websearch service. Responsibilities and tasks at this time included all of those performed at Inktomi, but added pre-sales technical and account-management work – including the development and presentation of sales pitches and lead analysis.

1999-2003
Inktomi Corporation
 2002-2003 Lead Technical Specialist for Asia and Europe.

The .com bubble burst, resulting significant reductions in force at Inkomi and significant cuts across all teams. With this reduced organisation size there was no longer a requirement for a local team manager, and I elected to move back into the Websearch area – taking on additional responsibilities as worldwide Technical specialist and support lead, and absorbing direct responsibilities for the Asian market. During this time, I was the focal contact for all customer development work and problem diagnosis for tier 1 and 2 customers across Asia and Europe, including; Mitsubishi, NTTx/Goo, Daum, AOL, MSN, BBC and many others.

2001-2002 European Technical Support Manager

With team growth came the requirement for local management. I was responsible for managing the day-to-day needs of the team, developing their career paths, and growing the team. I was directly responsible for obtaining hiring requisitions, setting salary levels and designing job descriptions, recruiting, interviewing, and hiring candidates.

1999-2001. Technical Support Engineer

 Inktomi provided white-label web search and web directory services to a large number of web portals such as MSN and AOL. I joined as first European hire in the Websearch sales, support, and development team and during this time we grew the European customer count from 2 to over 20. I had sole responsibility for this entire customer base until an additional business manager was hired in late 2001, at which point I remained the sole technical resource. My role spanned the whole sphere of pre and post-sales customer support and management, including; advising on portal applications design and Websearch service integration, development of custom tools, web applications, and scripts - to allow for customised reporting and ad-hoc facilities required by customers, attendance at sales conferences and trade shows, and authoring and performing technical sales presentations. I was available to customers across Europe and Asia around the clock and worked with them to ensure success, frequently using my system and network design and configuration skills to help customers with problems or issues outside of their integrations with our service.

1999

Freelance – IT Consultant

Performing work for customers in a wide range of areas, including; online application development, device driver development, system configuration and deployment, and infrastructure design.

1989-1999

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ("RBKC")

 1996-1999 - Internet design, implementation, and support

I took charge of the deployment of Open Systems platforms and protocols, bringing the corporate networks into the Internet age. This included the design and implementation of Internet email across the networks, building email servers/gateways, creating email servers/routers on platforms which did not currently have them, e.g. IBM's VM. I also deployed Intranet servers, designed and implemented links from the corporate networks to the Internet (including suitable security products), and acted as the corporation's focal point for Internet and Open Systems application/protocol deployment

 1993-1996 - Unix/IP network design, development, and support specialist.

Responsibility for the management of all Unix and Windows NT machines in use by the borough. This included IBM RS/6000's, SCO Unix and Linux PCs, and a UTS/370 (Mainframe Unix) system, and Windows NT servers. This included system installations, upgrades and daily system administration tasks as well as problem resolution, software installation and upgrades, and the development of scripts and programs to aid end users and other IT staff.

 1990-1992 - Systems developer, creating extensions to IBM's CICS, VTAM and VM operating systems.

During this time period I focused on the creation of OS patches, modifications and extensions, system-level applications such as SNA/VTAM terminal services, and singly-handled migrated all of the borough's CICS system applications from 24 to 32 bit architecture, simultaneously migrating them from their older CICS Macro level unsupported code to rewritten code using fully supported APIs. I then designed a full replacement for the borough's in-house CICS and transaction security system, and wrote the entire codebase for it – this continued to be used by the RBKC through 2006 and included transaction and user authorisation, automated

security monitoring (including intrusion detection with terminal/user lockout), and user menu routing.
 1989-1990 - Systems administrator and Systems programmer
My role included the installation, customisation, and management of the Royal Borough's mainframe system and related infrastructure such as SNA/SDLC networks. Having had no mainframe background previously, I rapidly learned the IBM hardware and software and took on primary responsibility for customising the systems, developing new system utilities and security utilities, and ensuring that the mainframe infrastructure was upgraded as new OS releases and hardware devices were added.

1988-1989
Freelance - IT/development work.