Colin M Strickland – Software Lead   cms@beatworm.co.uk

Profile

I am a pragmatic fixer, trouble-shooter, and engineering leader with over 25 years of experience solving technical challenges across internet, cloud, and software sectors. Track record of untangling complex problems and delivering solutions that unlock business growth. My journey takes me all the way from hands-on developer to strategic technical leadership. I've maintained strong engineering roots, kept pace with the always evolving technical environment, and I've lead and built high-performing teams.

Impact Areas & Key Achievements

Technical Problem Solving

At Wonderbly, my team scaled output from hundreds up to millions of personalized illustrated books. I implemented a cloud typesetting and compositing platform, removing critical production bottlenecks while meeting strict print quality requirements and publication deadlines.

At Platform.sh, developed fixed-overhead solutions for content delivery and database management that significantly improved cloud service reliability and usablility.

At Amtivo Group, hand built a RAG-pipeline to build an AI-powered asssitant that suggests answers to survey questions based on similarity to previously completed documents.

Infrastructure & Systems

Led Last.fm's database infrastructure during rapid growth, handling millions of daily music streams and user interactions. Redesigned the authentication system after a security incident, maintaining service continuity throughout the transition.

At Platform.sh, evolved the cloud orchestration system to support enterprise-scale operations, focusing on performance optimization and reliability.

At IMDb pushed web application and database servers to the limits of scalability during the first phases of web hyper-growth.

Innovation & Architecture

Creating and scaling IMDb's message board system, one of the early Internet's largest-scale community platforms.

Inventing custom prepress rendering engines for on-demand digital publishing, including a GPU-less GL cloud render pipeline

I built a real-time, event driven websocket protocol to integrate into Ruby on Rails for data streaming reports to many concurrent user sessions.

Leadership & Team Development

Guided Platform.sh's engineering organization through significant growth, establishing new divisions for tooling and engineering excellence.

Focused on developing teams that combine technical depth with practical problem-solving skills. Built engineering cultures that encourage innovation while maintaining operational stability.

Mentored and guided engineering reports for career growth, and provided coaching for engineering leads and managers.

Technical Skills

Focus Areas

Systems Architecture & Performance Optimization
Cloud Infrastructure & Deployment Systems
Database Scaling & Management
Graphics Rendering & Digital Typography
Team Development & Technical Leadership
CI & Tooling
Platform building & Service Architecture
Production monitoring & measuring

Core Technologies

Languages: Go, Scala, Python, Java, C/C++, Ruby, Common Lisp, Perl
Infrastructure: Cloud Platforms, LXD, Kubernetes, Docker, Linux/UNIX
Databases: PostgreSQL specialization, KV stores, Redis cache
Web Technologies: JavaScript, Typescript, HTTP front-edge, Rails, Django, Varnish, Apache, nginx, mod_perl
Graphics: OpenGL, PDF Generation, TrueType

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Experience

Amtivo Group

2024-2025 — Principal Engineer(AI)
Identifying areas for business efficiency that can leverage LLM/machine learning tech, and prototyping and implementing human support tooling using these techniques
Stack: `Azure AWS LLM Python SQLite TypeScript bunJS MS Teams n8n podman`

Finxone Ltd

2024 — Principal Engineer
Entire stack, primarily infra/ build/ deployments in the operations team of a novel fintech platform startup. Deployment automation, reduced application deployment from hours to seconds. Built automatic discovery for monitoring endpoints on custom services.
Stack: `Azure Kubernetes helm go Postgresql TypeScript node docker`

Platform.sh

2023-2024 — VP Tooling & Imaging
Created new division for support engineering with a focus on tools build automation and containers. Ownership of git and CI platforms.
2022- 2023 — VP Engineering Excellence
Ran new engineering division focused on craft, quality, culture, practices. Ran weekly engineering all hands (including composing and the theme music), management and leadership coaching.
2021-2022 — Director Ops & Eng. EMEA
Running a regional core engineering zone, line manager for engineers, both operational and development (including managers and leads).
2020-2022 — Director of Engineering, core
First specialist engineering manager role in the organisation, as we scaled up. 1:1s, goal setting, and performance management, personal developer mentoring and coaching. Continued to contribute to core software components, including platform auth service, and the next iteration of the HA container environment.
2018-2020 — Cloud Engineer, core team
Developer on cloud orchestration system. Built performant, fixed-overhead decoding for front edge WAF. Fixed-overhead in-situ upgrades for our managed Postgresql service.
Stack: `Go Python Java Postgresql LXC linux lisp`

Synthace Ltd.

2018 — Senior Software Engineer
Worked on UI features for biology lab automation: in-browser IDE, custom query engine web service for data, and data export and import from wet-lab robots Mentoring junior team members
Stack: `Go Docker Kubernetes Redux Polymer.js Chrome Windows linux Python antha`

Wonderbly.com (lostmyname ltd.)

2016-2017 — Principal Engineer
Built compositing pre-press and web renderer for personalised printing and integrated it into cloud platform. Designed an OpenGL image service to run in the cloud without GPU hardware. Delivered services to challenging fixed publication deadlines, with far lower overheads than prior generation tech. Coaching and mentoring other developers.
Stack: `Go Scala Java PDF C++ OpenFrameworks TrueType`

Makeshift.io/Wrangler.io

2014-2015 — Tech lead
Technology lead for startup, software and infrastructure. Built a novel concurrent asynch query engine as Rails middle ware, a client/server protocol and a Heroku plugin. Ran the tech team.
Stack: `Heroku Ruby Rails JavaScript ansible C go Postgresql lisp vagrant`

Last.fm

2010-2013 — Database architect
Main data and scaling infrastructure at Last.fm, the awesome scrobbling social music streaming site. Ops lead for databases. Lead team to redesign authentication back-end after legacy system suffered a password breach. Migrated database replication systems to a new architecture. Migrated HTTP front edge to varnish cache. Developed parallel data load pipeline mechanism for high volume catalogue updates.
Stack: `Postgresql Varnish C linux memcached PHP`

Logical Bee

2007-2010 — Director of everything
Logical Bee was my own tech company building audio recording software for Mac platforms.
Stack: `OS X MIDI CoreAudio/AU Objective-C lisp`

Future Publishing Ltd.

2007-2010 — consultant developer
Worked on the in-house publishing and asset management systems. Bespoke desktop layout application and large binary object management. Invented http proxy to dynamically inject legacy Apple desktop file type information into raw assets on download.
Stack: `Java perl Solaris/Oracle C PHP linux`

Amazon.com

2002-2006 — SDE
IMDb team. I invented and ran the imdb message boards. Part of the team that launched IMDb Pro. Also other parts of core web platform such as search. DBA.
Stack: `apache mod_perl C Postgresql Unix linux`

Sift plc.

1999-2001 — Developer
Startup, web platform. Ported RDBMS to Postgresql. Wrote cache-warming DNS resolver. Redesigned persistence layer for in-house CMS. Designed and built community comment system. Built email-managed micro-site management system. Built document publishing system that delivered annual ACCA accountancy exam results online to thousands of simultaneous remote candidates.
Stack: perl, mod_perl, Postgresql, PHP, linux

ADSW plc.

1997-1999 — Applications Developer
MIS/Data for windows desktops, client/server.
Stack: `Windows Oracle Gupta C Java linux`

Mountfield Software Ltd

1995-1997 — Analyst Programmer
corporate desktop data entry/ analytics software.
Stack: `Windows Unix C Gupta informix oracle`

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