Justin Smestad

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An engineering leader with 10-years of remote leadership experience and taken multiple companies from pre-seed investment through acquisition. A proven track record of hiring, inspiring and leading high-performing engineering teams. Does not shy away from a challenge and is driven to do what it takes to drive successful company outcomes.

Projects

[Warden Authentication](#) - co-author of the open-source Ruby-based authentication library. It is the standard in Ruby on Rails authentication, with more than 125 million downloads. It is used to authenticate millions of users every day.

[Heads Down](#) - A SaaS platform that manages workplace interruptions from Slack and allows users to focus on the task at hand and communicate response-times with co-workers when they are busy. Developed native client applications using Swift (iOS), Flutter/Kotlin (Android) and Elixir + LiveView.

Experience

Principal Software Engineer - [Red Canary](#)
Building tooling to serve our managed detection and response platform. Our platform reliably processes almost a petabyte of data per day, allowing customers to detect and combat threats against their systems in real-time.

- Founded two teams: Application Security and Developer Tools.
- Revised engineering architecture and processes to accommodate growing the engineering team as the company went from 180 to 400 people in a year.
- Reduced time to deploy from 35 minutes to 3 minutes.
- Started continuing-education programs to improve engineering quality and retention.
- Drove adoption of coding standards and pull request review processes.

Principal Software Engineer - [Enzyme](#) (YCombinator)
Built a regulatory and compliance system for the pharmaceutical and medical device industries to streamline FDA approval.

- Built a new backend system in Elixir using CQRS and Event Sourcing to meet compliance requirements and eliminating tracing issues with the existing system.
- Coordinated with a globally-distributed engineering team to prioritize work.
- Implemented an engineering process to replace a broken Agile system that better aligned with the founder's delivery goals.

Senior Software Architect - Keyp GmbH
Designed a system that lowered the cost of identity verification in the EU by 80% while also negating any security risk from storing identity-related information on company systems.

- Moved to Munich, Germany to work closer with the founding team.
- Advised the founders on startup growth, scaling, fund-raising and ways to explore opportunities in the North American markets.
- Guided the company through some staffing and employee-structure hurdles.
- Implemented various application MVPs using Ruby, Elixir, and Elm when the company was running into traction and funding issues.

Data Team Lead - Homebot

Homebot processed 30 years of public records to build custom estimation models, allowing homeowners to maximize the wealth in their homes without giving away any personal information to private companies.

- Hired by founders to lead and scale the engineering team.
- Managed the hiring process for the engineering and design positions. Retained 100% of hires and brought in 6 employees from my personal network.
- Architected a zero-downtime migration from Node.JS to Rails to achieve better system stability and performance. Ruby was better aligned with technology goals and growth strategy of the founders.
- Built ETL pipelines using Go and Spark for analysis of real estate records.
- Drove adoption of better coding practices and rolling out various tools for code analysis and syntax checking.
- Promoted to Data Team lead after 8 months to handle all data ingestion and data analysis aspects of the business.

VP of Engineering - AgilData

At AgilData, I took over a struggling 8-year-old startup that was pivoting their product to compete in the Big Data sector against technologies like Apache Spark and Hadoop using an in-house Java-based SQL data store.

- Overhauled the engineering practices with a system that aligned with the new CEO's goals.
- Built a system for customers to view their feature requests on our product roadmap.
- Responsible for all people management inside of Engineering.
- Rolled out an HR & Payroll system allowing us to build a remote-only company.

Technical Director – NCC Group

Designed an engineering organization and architecture to meet the ICANN compliance requirements to run the .secure domain. Every domain was scanned in real-time for any security vulnerabilities and would be locked down within seconds, preventing an attacker from deploying an attack against our customer's systems.

- Hired by Alex Stamos to build the engineering team at Artemis. This spanned several areas including software architecture, project management and recruiting.
- Promoted to Technical Director after one year.
- Managed 8 direct reports and provided technical direction for 16.
- Created a hybrid engineering team consisting of 3 offices and numerous full-time remote employees.
- Built a domain registrar, registry, certificate issuer systems utilizing Ruby and Golang.
- Created a system architecture that would be resilient to attacks by foreign actors and mitigate the potential for zero-day exploits.
- Reported engineering metrics and delivery goals to upper management.

Founder – Mongo Machine

Built a SaaS business specializing in customized HA deployments of MongoDB. As a solo-founder, the company was bootstrapped to profitability and was acquired by Compose in 2011 to expand their product-line with a custom-deployment option. This boost in profitability led them to being acquired by IBM.

Education & References

Computer Science, B.S. University of Iowa

References available upon request and also are available online.