

# Richard Parkins

## Head of IT Engineering

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### *Personal Profile*

I hold a 1st class honours degree in Electronic & Electrical Engineering, where my fascination with software development emerged despite the technical depth of my studies. Upon graduation, I swiftly immersed myself in the dynamic realm of embedded programming, evolving from a junior developer to embracing languages such as Java, C#, and more recently, NodeJS, as the internet landscape unfolded.

Transitioning into a Solutions Architect role at CompareTheMarket allowed me to further cultivate my passion for building robust systems. My journey continued when Talent Consulting entrusted me with leading their IT team, concurrently engaging in architecting projects within the public sector, predominantly in Azure, with additional expertise in AWS.

Having traversed diverse sectors like education, retail, and insurance, I've donned various hats—from Senior Software Engineer to Head of Architecture. Two driving passions define my professional ethos: crafting straightforward solutions to address customer challenges and steering initiatives towards seamless transitions from on-premise to cloud, especially in the realm of greenfield cloud solutions.

In my current capacity, I engage in a dynamic blend of 70% hands-on project work, contributing to the delivery of solution and infrastructure projects in the cloud. The remaining 30% is dedicated to leadership responsibilities, where I actively nurture and build a permanent team. My focus extends beyond project execution; I am committed to instilling a culture of community practice, refining work methodologies, and implementing best practices for delivering innovative solutions to our public sector clients.

My rich experience has underscored a fundamental truth—teams don't organically form; they require the right individuals exhibiting the right behaviors. Coupled with clear direction and a well-defined career path, this combination cultivates a sense of ownership and community—hallmarks of success in thriving organizations.

### *Key Skills*

- Expertise in forming high-performing teams and acquiring the right talent
- Effective career and line management to retain and develop individual developers,

- ensuring alignment with their career goals
- o Proficient in managing architectural transitions, specifically from on-premise to cloud environments
- o Demonstrated leadership and communication skills, adept at guiding teams in alignment with a shared vision
- o In-depth knowledge of cloud architecture and development, spanning PaaS, IaaS, and SaaS
- o Specialized in designing and implementing micro-service architectures
- o Proficient in Cloud PaaS and SaaS offerings on AWS and Azure for network, storage and compute
- o Security practices around cloud platforms, PIM, OpenIdConnect, Cyber, OWASP, WAF
- o CI/CD: Azure devops, github actions, Teamcity
- o Database tech: MongoDB, SQL Server, postgres, MySQL
- o Messaging platforms: Kafka, ServiceBus, EventGrid, RabbitMQ
- o Proficient in REST, Swagger/OpenAPI, and HATEOS principles
- o Monitoring: GDS Agile process, Technology codes of practice on GOV uk
- o Thorough understanding of Agile principles, Lean development, and collaborative practices like pairing and mobbing
- o Skilled in utilizing various monitoring tools including Splunk, Grafana, Prometheus, ELK, Azure App Insights, and Log Analytics
- o Expertise in NetCore and NodeJS development and POC's

## Work

### Head of IT Engineering

*Talent Consulting (2021 - present)*

As the Head of Engineering at Talent Consulting, I've played a pivotal role in building a robust permanent team, ensuring the retention of valuable knowledge while our consultants engage in public sector contracts. The team has grown from its inception to a core unit of 20 professionals, spanning various disciplines, including architects, developers, dev-ops, and testing. Additionally, I collaborated in establishing the business side, comprising Delivery Managers, Business Analysts, and Product Owners, working closely with our Head of Delivery.

Balancing team responsibilities at Talent, I am concurrently engaged as a Principal Architect at the Department for Education (DfE). Leading multiple projects within the Vulnerable Children and Families portfolio, I am actively involved in DD level reviews, show and tells, and the complete GDS agile process, presenting progress, ideas, and potential risks to the client.

As a key member of the leadership team at Talent, I contribute to winning new business by creating presentations and responses to tenders. To date, my efforts have contributed to securing £30M of new business at the DfE, MOJ, and ESFA.

#### **Team Management**

A significant part of my role involves building a business plan for department growth, addressing specific milestones aligned with board-defined objectives. Solutions for

challenges in team expansion include line management strategies, collaboration sessions, ceremonies, and a focus on employee well-being and DE&I. I presented the plan to the board, securing approval and subsequently bringing in a permanent delivery manager to assist with plan execution.

Regular collaboration meet-ups and monthly Talent days are essential for monitoring progress on our core product, the Talent Suite. This agile process-driven product facilitates customer engagement, generates weekly reports, aids in bid management, and offers transparency to our permanent staff across our portfolio. Our team benefits from an Azure platform subscription, encouraging exploration and learning, complemented by tools like Pluralsight and GitHub Co-pilot.

Actively leading and organizing quarterly meetups, I foster collaboration on Talent's growth, emphasizing client relationships, business development, and creating enjoyable in-person interactions.

#### **Architecture & Technical (Principal Architect)**

Overseeing all services on Azure platforms within the DfE, I adhere to design guidelines to ensure secure, stable, and scalable architecture. My responsibilities encompass the entire technical architecture, with a focus on clear communication and peer review by the DfE architecture review board. I produce comprehensive High & Low-Level Documentation, covering all functional and non-functional requirements.

Leading multiple teams on cloud projects at the DfE, I have been involved in integration projects and solution architecture for new platforms related to the Families and Vulnerable Children portfolio. These projects, predominantly hosted on Azure, undergo rigorous review, IT health checks, and WACG AA testing from external agencies.

A significant achievement involved reviewing Identity and Access Management for a public sector department, focusing on seven Azure cloud tenancies. I presented a strategic roadmap, outlining a three-year plan to consolidate into a single tenancy, streamlining network, access control, and generating annual savings exceeding £1M.

Within Talent, I led our team in developing a core product to automate various aspects of our business. This includes project reporting with RAG status, prioritizing bid management, and implementing AI to enhance our responses to tenders, ultimately reducing documentation preparation time.

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## **Applications Architect**

*CompareTheMarket (2017 - 2021)*

As the Technical Product Owner and Lead Architect for the Pricing platform and Partner Risk Mapping service at CompareTheMarket, I played a pivotal role in overseeing these systems, regarded as the cornerstone of our business and hosted on AWS. I managed a team of 3 tech leads and a diverse group of around 20 individuals, spanning both development and business roles.

My responsibilities included crafting the architectural vision for the new Pricing Platform, focusing on enhancing scalability, stability, and security while prioritizing customer-centric design principles.

Serving as the lead developer, I spearheaded the migration of the pricing platform to a micro-service architecture over a two-year period. This transformation resulted in a shift from intra-month deployments to daily real-time deployments, significantly improving scalability and reducing customer downtime by 30%. Additionally, our remediation times saw notable enhancements through the implementation of more effective common monitoring dashboards.

I architected and developed a new real-time quotability system, complete with Grafana dashboards, enabling swift issue detection and resolution at our providers. This initiative substantially reduced our time-to-fix from hours/days to minutes, leading to a tangible increase in revenue on a month-to-month basis.

In the role of Chair of the Technical Forum and leader of various working groups, I contributed to the conceptualization and implementation of common initiatives across the department. The introduction of contract testing on a department-wide scale proved instrumental in reducing incidents on deployment by enabling testing against a specific set of contract tests.

Pioneering the concept of a service catalogue, I empowered teams to automate catalogue population. This initiative not only facilitated documentation generation but also played a crucial role in reducing the mean time to failure during incidents. Furthermore, it enabled the automation of various immunization reporting tasks.

The introduction of automation for specific immunization tasks, hosted on our dedicated AWS GitHub Action runner and scheduled via cron timers, streamlined the scanning of each microservice repository through tools like SonarQube, Checkmarx, and OWASP Zap.

My active participation in numerous tech leadership, speaking, and influencing workshops contributed valuable insights that were effectively implemented in real-world scenarios, fostering growth and innovation at CompareTheMarket.

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## Technical Lead Developer / Architect

*CompareTheMarket (2016 - 2017)*

Leading a dedicated team, I conceptualized, developed, and maintained the innovative Pricing Platform at CompareTheMarket. Prioritizing security, scalability, and diagnostic capabilities from the outset, our approach aimed for a robust and future-proof system.

Our system effectively supported up to 10 journey and retrieval transactions per second, hosted on AWS and utilizing technologies such as EC2, Lambda, S3, and CodeDeploy.

The architecture included Swagger specifications defining REST endpoints, ensuring secure communication through bearer token authentication via OAuth.

In addition to technical leadership, a significant aspect of my role involved mentoring and guiding the career paths of the developers within the team, fostering their professional growth.

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## Consultant Lead Developer

*CompareTheMarket (Energy and Motor Journeys 2013 - 2016)*

Collaborating with the team, I played a key role in architecting and developing a groundbreaking concept – allowing users to capture an image of their energy bill through an IOS app and receive a quote seamlessly.

Leveraging MongoDB for storage and hosting the solution on AWS, the front end was crafted using AngularJS. The accompanying administration site was developed with Bootstrap and AngularJS.

As part of the project, I also created a re-buy portal, enabling customers to effortlessly renew their services with a single click.

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## Consultant

*Easyjet (Seat purchase: Consultant (2012 - 2013)*

Contributed to the development team that pioneered one of the aviation industry's initial seat selection services. Utilized an MVC and KnockoutJS solution hosted on Microsoft Azure.

Engineered an Azure ServiceBus solution facilitating a 3rd-party provider's access to a Restful API for real-time validation of pluscard data during bookings.

Implemented a PHP client to enable the 3rd party's interaction with the Windows Azure ServiceBus.

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## Consultant

*Tesco Entertainment (2011 - 2012)*

Contributed to a collaborative team tasked with enhancing functionality on the [www.tescoentertainment.com](http://www.tescoentertainment.com) website and its supporting applications. Employed Agile (SCRUM) methodologies for planning and presenting on bi-weekly sprints.

Spearheaded the development of a conceptual Android application using Java, facilitating the purchase and download of MP3 tracks within the allocated time and budget. This project was seamlessly integrated alongside the ongoing dot net development responsibilities.

Played a key role in maintaining and advancing features on the Endeca search service utilized by the primary entertainment site.

Successfully developed and implemented the price cross-out feature (was/now/save) for all 400,000 products, contributing to the live deployment of this enhancement.

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## Consultant

*Cambridge University (OCR) (2008 - 2011)*

Played a pivotal role in a collaborative team dedicated to enhancing functionality for the primary OCR Examination portal at Cambridge University. This site caters to 35,000 different centers worldwide, overseeing candidate entries and results through a unified platform. The development process followed Agile (SCRUM) methodologies, organized into bi-weekly sprints, and incorporated a new MVC design pattern.

Led the development as the key contributor to upgrading existing disconnected entry sites, consolidating them into a single platform. This streamlined user management of GCSE and Vocational Qualification data in one centralized area, significantly improving efficiency during candidate entry processes.

Took charge of introducing code review and implementing new unit testing methods within the department, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Innovated the process of silent deploys, reducing site downtime in numerous cases and enhancing the overall deployment efficiency.

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## Director

*TouchScreenData (Director 2004 - 2008)*

Established a company dedicated to developing online management systems, primarily written in C# .NET 2.0/3.5, with occasional small-scale sites developed in LAMP.

Led the tendering process and effectively presented our solutions, demonstrating strong communication skills and the ability to articulate technical solutions to a diverse audience.

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## Other

*1994 - 2004*

### **Thompson Reuters**

Contributed as a developer in writing financial applications for the city. Engaged in the development of Merrill Lynch WAP site using PHP and Windows-based apps written in .NET 1.0. Implemented a world cup SMS messaging service with the Tib Rendezvous messaging platform.

Maintained and developed new pager systems on both the front and back ends, utilizing Java and Websphere, with Apache Tomcat serving as the hosting platform.

### **ICS Triplex**

Involved in the development of safety-critical systems for the Oil and Nuclear industry. Engaged in embedded software development with external company audits.

### **Emerson Liebert**

Contributed to the development of 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)