

# Ray Blair

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## Summary

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Lead Software Engineer with 9+ years of experience turning complex technical challenges into scalable, user-focused products. I combine expertise in full-stack development, DevOps, and data-driven systems with a passion for building secure, compliant platforms that enable trust and transparency. At Wordnerds.ai, I lead cloud-native analytics initiatives that transform unstructured data into actionable insight, helping organisations make confident, auditable decisions at scale.

## Career Highlights

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- 9+ years as a Software Engineer, including 6+ years in technical leadership roles.
- Delivered a hospitality SaaS platform from concept to production in 4 months, now serving 500+ venues and 700,000+ users.
- Designed a machine learning-driven branding pipeline that saved millions in manual design time.
- Developed high-performance, SEO and accessibility-optimised UI components for enterprise-scale applications.
- Hackathon winner at EPAM Systems for contributions to an AI-powered healthcare initiative.
- Active open-source contributor and creative collaborator, with a passion for building communities as well as products.

## Work Experience

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### Wordnerds.ai

#### Lead Software Engineer

Jul 2024 – Present

At Wordnerds.ai, a platform that empowers CX and Insights professionals with advanced text analytics, I lead engineering efforts across platform, data, and DevOps domains:

- Designed and delivered tools that extract actionable insights from qualitative feedback.
- Built scalable, cloud-native pipelines to ingest and process unstructured data from multiple sources.
- Advocated for and implemented modern frontend engineering standards to improve consistency, testing, and maintainability.
- Delivered cloud-agnostic Infrastructure-as-Code solutions using industry-standard tools and patterns.
- Introduced observability practices, including cloud-based logging, monitoring, and alerting, to enhance system reliability and visibility.
- Led adoption of automation and code quality tooling across CI/CD pipelines.
- Mentored team members and helped mature engineering practices across SDLC, testing, and delivery.

My focus is on empowering teams to deliver maintainable, scalable systems while fostering a culture of technical excellence.

### EPAM Systems

#### Lead Software Engineer

Aug 2021 – Jul 2024

As a technical consultant and lead engineer, I served clients in eCommerce, financial services, and recruitment:

- Delivered technical architecture and implementation plans for scalable full-stack systems.
- Developed high-performance PHP and JavaScript applications, focused on security, accessibility, and maintainability.
- Drove performance profiling, static analysis, and quality assurance across multiple teams.
- Improved CI/CD workflows and resolved critical service support/security issues.
- Mentored client developers and led knowledge-sharing sessions on code quality and engineering best practices.

### W8R Ltd

#### Head of Software Development

Apr 2020 – Aug 2021

Directed technology strategy and software delivery for a hospitality SaaS platform:

- Architected high-performance systems to meet scaling demands and tight deadlines.
- Oversaw delivery of critical features aligned with business growth.
- Mentored engineers, enforced coding standards, and ensured milestone success.
- Elevated infrastructure, deployment pipelines, and long-term product viability.

### The Utility Supplier

#### Technical Consultant

Apr 2020 – Aug 2021

Supported and led in-house software initiatives at a commercial energy broker:

- Shaped and executed strategic development plans for scalable, secure internal platforms.
- Mentored the dev team and fostered a culture of continuous learning and high standards.

- Advised leadership on aligning tech direction with business objectives.

### Developer

Feb 2019 – Apr 2020

Owned development of internal CRM tools and led the launch of Qube Direct - a utility SaaS platform:

- Built custom APIs and integrated third-party services to streamline operations.
- Launched Qube Direct from concept to MVP, enabling sales automation and market differentiation.

### Codeplayground.io

#### Lead Developer

Sept 2019 – Apr 2020

#### Developer

Jul 2017 – Sept 2019

Delivered digital solutions for SMEs, primarily using Laravel and VueJS. Later merged into W8R Ltd.

- Developed custom web apps, mobile apps (Cordova), and VoIP integrations using FreePBX.
- Helped clients modernise their digital presence and improve customer engagement.

## Education

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### **BSc (Honours) Computing and IT, The Open University**

2015 – Present

- Part-time study alongside full-time career. Currently on sabbatical to focus on professional growth.

## Certifications

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### **Certified ScrumMaster® (CSM-1)**

#### Scrum Alliance

Valid: Apr 2025 – Apr 2027

### **Professional Scrum Master™ I (PSM I)**

#### Scrum.org

Earned: Apr 2025 (No Expiry)

## Key Projects

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### **Qube Direct** – Utility SaaS platform

Led design and development of a pricing and electronic agreement tool that helped differentiate the company in a crowded market. Delivered MVP within 3 months.

### **AI Branding Pipeline** – Client @ EPAM Systems

Partnered with a large eCommerce client to deliver a machine learning solution for automating brand asset generation, reducing lead time by 80% and saving millions in manual effort.

### **Hospitality App Platform** – W8R Ltd

Led engineering of a multi-tenant mobile ordering solution, scaling to 700,000+ users across 500+ venues. Going from concept to launch within 4 months during Covid-19.

## Tech Leadership

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- Reformed startup Agile/Scrum practices to improve delivery and team alignment.
- Delivered talks and workshops to both internal teams and clients at EPAM on topics including: design patterns in PHP/JavaScript, dependency injection, composition over inheritance, the testing pyramid, and scalable frontend/backend architecture.
- Regularly mentor junior developers on architecture, coding best practices and DevOps principles.
- Contributed to internal hiring frameworks and tech interview processes. 100+ interviews.

## Skills

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**Languages & Tools:** PHP, Javascript, C, Python, HTML, CSS, Bash, SQL, Git, Composer, NPM, Yarn, pip, Webpack, Vite, ChatGPT, CapacitorJS, Cordova, FreePBX.

**Frameworks & Libraries:** Laravel, Symfony, SlimPHP, Vue.js, Vue Router, React.js, Next.js, Nuxt.js, Solid.js, Bootstrap, Tailwind CSS, jQuery, Express.js.

**Data & Analytics:** Algolia, Elasticsearch, Kibana, Grafana, Google BigQuery, MariaDB, MongoDB, MySQL, Postgres, Redis, VectorDB, Datadog.

**DevOps & Infrastructure:** AWS, GCP, Azure, Docker, Terraform, Serverless, Monoliths, Microservices, DigitalOcean, Vagrant, Azure DevOps, GitHub Actions, Jenkins, Linux, SSH, Raspberry Pi, Ubuntu, MacOS, Microsoft Windows.

**Soft Skills:** Agile, Scrum, Project Management, Leadership, Mentoring, Test-Driven Development (TDD), Domain-Driven Design (DDD), Software Architecture, Security, Event Sourcing, Event-Driven Architecture, Design Patterns, Artificial Intelligence.