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# Charles Wilkinson

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## Intro

Ground-up development and consultancy background with broad consultancy experience leading many omnichannel implementations with exposure to an array of verticals including retail, telco, travel, groceries and FMCG.

Specialist in enterprise and solution architecture with wide experience of business domains and large-scale systems. Track record of technology transformation with deep exposure to modern practices including microservices and Serverless architecture.

Significant practical experience in all parts of IT delivery from requirements elicitation through to operational support, bringing this experience to bear in order to earn trust and change minds at all levels, but especially at board level.

A strong proponent of effective Agile and product team culture, enjoying the challenge of reconciling these ideas with traditional corporate values and objectives.

Passionate about reimagining enterprise architecture and injecting start-up culture to create a lean, minimum responsible governance framework for supporting innovation.

Mission statement: **Use great architecture to drive business agility** - If achieved, one no longer needs the traditional safety net of Gartner/Forrester report waving and the 5-year feature roadmap. Agility **IS** the goal.

An excitable speaker at events, enjoying sharing knowledge and pushing our industry forward with robust dialogue. Not afraid to be wrong.

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## Press

### [London AWS Summit 2018](#)

Speaking about serverless architecture deployed at River Island Clothing



### [AWS re:Invent 2018](#)

Speaking about next-generation architectures with a focus on digital commerce



### [Article: The Enterprise Architect is Dead](#)

Discussing the shifting role of enterprise architects



## Tech Q&A

Discussing my career and industry observations



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## Notable Deliveries

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### Product Lifecycle Management & Single View of Product - River Island Clothing

Ground-up, bespoke implementation of a product lifecycle management platform with two key components:

- A modern, React-based, product data & lifecycle management tool for use by all design, buying and merchandising staff.
- A product data 'backbone' microservice, to act as the single source from which all product data will be federated.

Benefits included:

- Multi-tenancy built-in allows for test/training data sets without new infrastructure.
- Multi-tenancy also provides the opportunity to white-label the service and sell it in the future without additional infrastructure.
- Product development moved from a paper-based process to a digital record of products from their inception.
- Enabled analysis of product development process efficiency & effectiveness, identifying massive cost-saving opportunities.
- Opened opportunity to decouple from legacy estate and re-factor product data model to unlock SKU based pricing, colour variants and other decades-old business challenges.

### VEO B2B Sales Platform - British American Tobacco

A Hybris B2B implementation, integrated with a global SAP deployment that was running in parallel. This platform was to provide product catalogue browsing and rich training content as well as handle all purchases for **all** BAT customers. Included the build and integration of a bespoke pricing engine. Handled circa **£5Bn revenue** & delivered massive savings in the first two years of operation with global rollout continuing.

### Single View of Transactions & Payment decoupling - River Island Clothing

Transformed processing for **all B2C transactions** (including refunds, short-ship etc) from a tightly-coupled, batch driven, PLSQL based approach to a **real-time, Serverless, event-driven** architecture handling circa **£1Bn per year** sales. Additional scope included decoupling payment capture, refund and multi-channel gift card handling into a discrete set of payment microservices.

Benefits included:

- Massively improved resilience & data security.
- Changes & new event producers & consumers can be added without expensive full regression testing.
- Enabled the swift introduction of entirely new payment methods.
- Provided a real-time, searchable front-end for browsing & managing transactions across all channels.
- Real-time APIs offering the same functionality.
- All transaction data events now stream in real-time into the data lake for consumption, federation and analysis.

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## Skills Summary

- Practical technology thought leadership & strategy
- Cloud architectures, including serverless & microservices
- Engineering practice development
- Event-driven architecture
- Agile & product teams
- Solution architecture
- Digital transformation
- Agile practice & delivery
- Enterprise systems design & development
- DevOps practice development

### Though not a practitioner in all, a wide range of technical knowledge including:

- Java incl. Spring & Spring boot
- Node
- Containers & container orchestration
- HTML, CSS, JS
- Bash
- Unix systems administration
- SQL
- Various CI/CD tools
- Various testing frameworks & tools
- Terraform
- Various AWS services

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## Experience

### River Island Clothing - Head of Technology: Architecture & Engineering

February 2019 - Present | London, UK

Took broader accountability across Engineering in addition to Architecture with financial accountability for both.

Focused on continuing the organisational transformation work and a desire to implement product-centric ways of working. The exam question: How does one actually build product teams properly?

Over a number of months of research, taking inspiration from Spotify, ThoughtWorks and others, we redesigned and transformed the entire IT department from being just good at Agile delivery, to a world-class product-team based organisation.

We frankly all learned enough to fill a book, but are all extremely proud of what we built: an extremely powerful, value-driven, end-to-end delivery capability able to elicit, refine, design, deliver and maintain transformative business capabilities.

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### River Island Clothing - Head of Architecture

January 2017 - February 2019 | London, UK

After great success experimenting with microservices technology and patterns as a consultant at River Island (see **Kedos Consulting** below), converted to permanent member of staff as Head of Architecture in order to establish a new architecture practice from the ground up with some key goals:

- To focus on unpicking heritage monolithic systems and increase business agility by unlocking business events and data.
- To foster a 'start-up like' energy and low governance in order to successfully implement microservices technology and patterns to build great systems.
- To avoid the pitfalls of traditional architecture organisation by staffing it entirely with solutions architects so as to focus on practical architecture, rather than

PowerPoint and bureaucracy.

- To drive adoption of cloud-native services (not servers) and DevOps culture.

All of the goals above were met with great success. Specific achievements/deliverables include:

- Established and implemented 'data backbone' pattern as a practical response to the industry trope: 'Single view of X'.
- Developed the foundation of a data lake, along with the next-gen data and BI practices that go with it. Opened the door for the next step: True data science.
- Decoupled web order processing from heritage Oracle and batch driven systems into a fully serverless, event-driven pipeline.
- Decoupled payment services into a distinct set of microservices and business event streams, enabling several long-standing business objectives that were previously unattainable.
- Established a strong culture of product teams, who build, own and support their own infrastructure and application code.
- Founded a cloud ops team who own and operate shared cloud services and Terraform modules for use by other product teams.

### **Digital Transformation**

The above monumental architectural progress was also supported by working with the CIO and heads of delivery, engineering and service & ops in order to completely renovate the IT delivery model from the ground up:

- Implementing and iterating on Agile practice itself, figuring out appropriate role boundaries and ways of working for teams of various natures.
  - Coaching the board and wider business on Agile ways of working, specifically Portfolio prioritisation.
  - Establishing standard operating and delivery models for IT delivery.
  - Establishing a modern engineering practice able to deliver and operate cloud-native microservices solutions.
  - Building an extremely effective in house IT consultancy practice.
  - Started to work on how to ratify the benefits of organising around focused and stable product teams vs traditional business process of financing based on **projects, not products**.
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### **Kedos Consulting Ltd - Director**

January 2016 - January 2017 | London, UK

Working as an independent technical consultant at a number of clients including Wickes, and Telefonica helping to (successfully) deliver Hybris implementations.

Worked for some months at River Island helping to deliver several programmes, including:

- Establishing modern engineering practice - CI/CD, automated testing, BDD etc.
  - Evaluating microservices technology and architecture and its relevance to the organisation.
  - Managing the technical/architecture side of delivering a replacement Point Of Sale system in all stores.
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### **Portaltech Reply - Architecture Principal & Head of Service/Ops**

Sept 2005 - Sept 2015 | London, UK

**As architecture lead:**

- Principal architect on major programmes across various verticals.

- As the most senior technical resources at the company, I consulted on almost all programmes undertaken and guided technical practice and decision-making.
- Coaching technical resources from interns all the way up to those on the architecture track.
- Championing development best practice by introducing development and deployment standards as well as introducing and maintaining tooling such as Sonar.
- Consulting on pre-sales engagements, attending pitches & workshops as well as working with the sales director on responses to RFPs.
- Leading the technical track of the discovery process for new programmes with new customers.

#### **As head of service & operations:**

At the end of 2014 volunteered to take ownership of the Portaltech Reply services business unit, comprising of the operations and application support functions. This role taken on in addition to my existing role as architecture lead.

Self-imposed objectives were:

- To return the business unit to profitability.
- To significantly reduce the number of critical issues and outages occurring.
- To improve the satisfaction of customers with the service being offered.

In addition to achieving all of the above, also managed to mature the practices in order to achieve **PCI DSS 3.0 compliance** for both the operations and development practices in around 10 weeks. This was no mean feat.

Responsibilities included:

- Ensuring profitability. Managing contracts with customers balanced against resourcing and other costs.
- Coaching the operations lead and his team on standardising and improving practices, simplifying processes and organising a heavy and unpredictable workload.
- Bridging the gap between the delivery teams developing applications and the operations team who then have to host those applications. This involved implementing complementary new practices on both sides.
- Acting as an escalation point for customers and consequently resolving issues when they occurred.
- Coaching the 3rd line development team on diagnosing and resolving issues.
- Managing the PCI DSS 3.0 compliance programme of change as well as the audit itself.

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## **Education**

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### **Manchester University - BSc, Computing for Business Applications**

This was a computer science degree but with a significant focus on the business applications of technology. The course included a year in industry after the second year.

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## **Awards**

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### **British Computing Society - Developer of the year 2010**