

# Adam Harper

Engineering Leadership · Scaling Teams · AI/ML Delivery · Platform Modernisation

hire@adam-harper.com · [in](#) aharper45 · +44 (0) 7597 265740 · UK

## Profile

Engineering leader with a 20+ year progression from hands-on developer to executive leadership across SaaS, PaaS, ML, and AI/LLM systems.

Proven track record of scaling engineering organisations, modernising infrastructure, and delivering measurable improvements in throughput, reliability, and cost efficiency across SaaS, PaaS, ML, and AI/LLM systems.

Combines deep technical literacy—backend, frontend, cloud, CI/CD, ML pipelines—with strong organisational leadership. Able to translate strategy into technical execution and engineering realities into informed decision-making for senior executives.

## Leadership Approach

I build teams and systems that scale sustainably.

My leadership philosophy centres on clarity of direction, structured development, and processes that enable high autonomy without sacrificing alignment. I operate as a natural bridge between technical teams and business leadership, ensuring strategic intent and engineering execution reinforce each other.

My goal is to create conditions where teams deliver reliably and confidently, without relying on top-down intervention.

## Experience

### Head of Engineering

2023 – Present

Cambridge University Press and Assessment

£2.5m budget · 30 engineers · 6 teams · Partners: Head of Exam Solutions, Head of Data & Integration

Team building & leadership development

- Expanded engineering headcount by **50%**, creating three new teams; established job descriptions, structured scoring, interview frameworks, and bias-mitigated hiring processes.
- Introduced formal team lead roles, enabling senior engineers to step into leadership positions and improving delivery ownership.
- Delivered structured career progression across all levels: career-changers, mid-levels, seniors, and first-time managers.

Delivery & process excellence

- Increased deployment frequency by **30%** by restructuring ownership boundaries and improving service accountability.
- Introduced DORA metrics as the primary engineering effectiveness framework — later adopted **company-wide**.
- Championed automated quality controls, feature flags, and CD practices enabling safe, high-frequency production releases.
- Modernised DevOps platform, reducing operational costs by **70%** and lead time by **40%**

## AI/ML delivery

- Built and led an offshore ML engineering team (Philippines); delivered an ML auto-marking proof-of-concept in **3 months**, enabling real-time marking for four exam papers — projected to reduce marking costs by **80%** and cut turnaround from weeks to hours.
- Scaled an existing ML-based assessment API from fixed pipelines to a dynamic workflow engine — expanding client base from a handful to nearly a dozen and reducing onboarding from **3–6 months to 2 weeks**.
- Transitioned an externally developed ML prototype to an internal team with **zero loss of delivery cadence**.

## Compliance, culture & communication

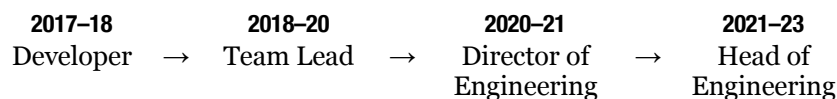
- Achieved Cyber Essentials certification in **3 months** — the organisation's first — through strategic scoping and system isolation.
- Transformed documentation into a first-class engineering practice: teams now design, collaborate, and maintain through written artefacts across the full SDLC.
- Planned and keynoted division-wide technical strategy events; presentations consistently rated **most valuable session** in post-event surveys.

## Developer → Head Of Engineering

2017 – 2023

Yapster · messaging & communication platform (Caffè Nero, Next, BrewDog, Vision Express)

£1.25m budget · 8 engineers + 3 customer success · Partners: CEO and CTO



### As Head of Engineering (2021–2023)

- Played a central role in acquisition by Sona (Google Ventures-backed) — prepared technical due diligence materials and led engineering engagements with bidders.
- Transformed a feature factory into a product-led organisation; delivered a new supplementary product in **3 months** while maintaining release cadence — contributing **25–50% of new MRR** and a **5–10% customer revenue uplift**.
- Reduced support response times by **50%** using team KPIs and improved processes — without increasing headcount.
- Implemented EOS/Traction to align the entire organisation around Weekly Active Users as the central metric.
- Introduced structured performance reviews with evidence-based PIPs — adopted company-wide.

### As Director of Engineering (2020–2021)

- Tripled the development team with **100% retention** using a values-based hiring framework.
- Led **ISO 27001 certification** for engineering, enabling enterprise contracts and major brand partnerships.
- Delivered partner integrations generating **£100,000 ARR**.
- Established async-first remote operations using Asana and Notion, centralising collaboration and reducing silos.

As Team Lead & Senior Developer (2018–2020)

- Re-architected core message-routing and newsfeed systems based on UX research and customer insights.
- Introduced PR/review workflow and documentation standards; mentored junior Clojure developers.

## IT Technician → Business Systems Development Manager 2001 – 2017

Lymington Precision Engineers · Subcontract engineering firm serving nuclear, space, telecoms, and automotive industries

Progressed over 16 years from IT Technician to Business Systems Development Manager, leading implementation of a modern ERP system and building internal software capability from the ground up. Key contributions included a 10% reduction in production lead times, real-time factory floor dashboards, a finite scheduling and quotation system, and full automation of complex multi-hundred-line customer orders. Sourced, hired, and trained the IT team; delivered all technical aspects of the ERP rollout to schedule.

### Core Competencies

---

Leadership & Organisation	Technology Strategy	Delivery & Operations	Business & Commercial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Team scaling</li><li>• Hiring &amp; talent development</li><li>• Performance systems</li><li>• Culture change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AI/ML &amp; LLM systems</li><li>• Cloud platforms</li><li>• Paas/SaaS architecture</li><li>• Security &amp; compliance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DevOps</li><li>• DORA metrics</li><li>• Cost optimisation</li><li>• Stakeholder communication</li><li>• Continuous Delivery</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• M&amp;A technical due diligence</li><li>• Cross-functional leadership</li></ul>

### Technical Leadership Domains

---

AI/ML & LLM systems · Cloud & DevOps platforms · Distributed & event-driven systems · Microservices · ISO 27001 · Cyber Essentials · CI/CD (GitHub Actions) · Engineering productivity · Documentation & knowledge systems

### Education & References

---

Education, certifications, and references available on request.