

Vaughn Dickson

CTO for SaaS and platform companies. 25 years building software, 20 leading engineering. Currently CTO of Public Sector Network.

Summary

Hands-on executive technical leader. I have taken three products from an empty repository to platforms customers rely on, hired and led the teams that run them, and sat at the leadership table for the financials, the market and the customers, not just the infrastructure. Since 2025 I run a 105,000-line production platform as a team of one with AI tooling in the loop, with AI review of every production change written into the SDLC. Open to fractional, interim and full-time CTO roles, remote from Cape Town (UTC+2).

Selected outcomes

- 100,000+ government professionals across Australia, New Zealand and North America
- First commit in January 2022 to ISO 27001:2022 readiness
- Automated tests from 67 to about 5,250 in two years, CI on every push
- Run since 2025 as a team of one with AI tooling in the loop
- Moved a production AWS estate between regions in 2025 with separate staging and production, Multi-AZ PostgreSQL and point-in-time recovery
- Python 3.9 to 3.14, Django 4.0 to 5.2 LTS and Wagtail 6.1 to 7.4, upgraded in steps and never more than one LTS behind

Experience

2021–present	Chief Technology Officer, Public Sector Network Australia, remote from Cape Town Built the community, events, learning and marketplace platform behind a 100,000-member government-only network from the first commit, led it through an AWS region move and ISO 27001 readiness, and since 2025 have run it as a team of one with AI tooling in the loop.
2014–present	Fractional CTO, Vaughn Dickson Consulting Cape Town Fractional and interim CTO work, technical due diligence and AI strategy for SaaS and platform companies, alongside the full-time roles below.
2014–2021	Chief Technology Officer, Wizenoze Amsterdam and Cape Town Led product and engineering at an ed-tech scale-up: a web-scale crawler and search platform that classified content by reading level with machine learning, served through APIs, SDKs and classroom apps, on AWS with a full CI/CD pipeline.
2012–2014	Staff Engineer, Cognician Cape Town Took the Clojure and Datomic rewrite of a coaching platform to production within two months of joining, and automated the AWS estate.

2011–2012	Senior Developer, Fundamo, a Visa company Cape Town Integrated a mobile-money transaction engine with banking, SMS and USSD channels, built the load-testing tools that found its concurrency bugs, and trained Visa staff in Singapore to support it.
2003–2011	Chief Technology Officer, Stem Software Cape Town Built the SaaS ERP for retail and hospitality that the company is based on, alone for the first four years and then with a team I hired and trained; it is still selling.
2002–2003	Senior Developer, Pick n Pay Cape Town Stocktake software and data pipelines off legacy systems for one of South Africa's largest retailers.
2001–2002	Programmer, Obsidian Systems Cape Town A real-time freight auction platform with a custom workflow engine, and an online flight-booking framework integrated with legacy systems.

Skills

Technical strategy and architecture · engineering leadership, hiring and mentoring · AWS and Cloudflare · Python, Django and Wagtail · Java and the JVM · Rust and JavaScript · PostgreSQL and Elasticsearch · generative AI in product and in the engineering loop · ISO 27001 readiness · technical due diligence · board and investor communication.

Writing

Essays on the CTO role, hiring and AI at vaughndickson.com/writing, and open-source side projects at GitHub.