

alex corkin

technology and product leadership

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statement

I solve your product and technology problems. I build strategy, build culture and build software - daily. I've helped teams adopt local models, build agent context and infrastructure and have repeatedly done months of engineering work in a day. One of them cost about \$150 in tokens. I've spent over ten years working in management and IC roles, and that means that the vague, unspecified problems that stymie specialists end up on my desk.

I've delivered cultural and technological change both ways: big bang greenfield builds and gradual, continuous improvement. I know when a business needs which.

I have found through practice that the happiness of your users rarely diverges from the happiness of your technical staff.

career

Smartly & Datapay (Datacom Group)

2023 -

General Manager, Platforms & Architecture 2026 - HEAD smartly

I was promoted from Datapay into Smartly's most senior technical role, reporting to the CEO. I am accountable for target architecture, engineering standards, platform-as-a-product and cross-entity architectural alignment with Datacom Group. Smartly is SME payroll. We pay 200,000+ people across 20,000+ companies. Smartly's constraints are very different in comparison with Datapay; a smaller engineering team, pre-existing sprawl, less capital and a market that rewards simplicity.

- **Rebuilt the team:** hired a platform team of eight back after the restructure that created my role, and set its ways of working: async-remote first, write things down, agent-native engineering.
- **Made the platform's state falsifiable:** baselined the platform in my first quarter and published the headline measures the SLT now tracks, from architecture footprint consolidation to reliability and DORA measures. The business need can be met by something much smaller than the architecture that sprawled, so we measure the sprawl and reduce it: we're running payroll for 200,000 kiwis on less code each month! I actively told my finance people "No! Don't trust me! I don't want the full modernisation budget. Let's start with \$20k for continuous delivery automation and see how that shifts our DORA metrics. Based on that, we can unlock more, or we can move on!"

stack React, React Native, .NET Framework 4 to 8, Microsoft SQL, T-SQL, SSIS, IdentityServer, Temporal, n8n, Fabric, Azure, Bicep, Datacom on-prem

Principal Architect 2023 - 2026 datapay

Datapay is payroll software that pays one in seven Kiwis, over 250k payees across Australia and New Zealand. Datapay had the engineering team, the capital, and a board committed to a ten-year agentic payroll platform rebuild for all of Oceania. I was hired to ensure the technical success of that new platform. When I joined, my colleagues knew what the product needed to do but had no idea how to build it. An exhilarating challenge!

- **Designed and built Pacific, potentially the first agents-at-core payroll platform in Oceania:** In 30 months, on time and on budget, validated in a parallel production run, the Pacific Platform ran seven customers' live payrolls processed alongside the incumbent system with cross-checking. The pay packets matched for all the functionality we built for beta. We plotted "Percentage of pay packets correct to the cent" to create a view of "when are we done". Pacific was shelved when Datacom Group's investment priorities changed.
- **Got hands on to earn the mandate:** built sample code projects proving key concepts and technical feasibility to the Datacom C-Suite. That trust is what brought the money early.
- **Deployed an additional \$1m of capital:** the board asked if we could deploy it into our greenfields build in the last half of the financial year. We scaled product and engineering from 15 to 40, and I designed the organisation for fast flow so the new teams would produce the architecture we needed. Onboarding at that pace was disruptive. Fortunately I was able to retune the architecture and processes needed to support such a large number of new starters in that period of time. Fortunately, the existing team topology based approach I took to org structure and architecture was easily extensible - delivery quality and volume rose markedly.
- **Delivered business value within six weeks of day one,** via a rapidly deployed architecture process and principles.

stack Legacy: fat client, WCF, .NET Framework, custom ORM, Microsoft SQL, in-house identity provider
Pacific: React, Flutter, .NET, CQRS, hexagonal architecture, event sourcing, KurrentDB, Postgres, Apache AGE, Marten, Auth0, Terraform, Azure, Datacom on-prem

FarmIQ

2021 – 2023

Acting Head of Engineering + Lead Architect 2022 **farmiq**

While the Head of Engineering was on leave, I acted in their stead: line management for ~10 engineers, refreshed personal development goals and plans for every engineer, and training, mentoring and sponsorship for the same.

Lead Architect 2021 – 2023 **farmiq**

FarmIQ is farm management software. My business was strategy: developing, communicating and implementing both technology and business strategy.

- **Created the first holistic business and technology strategy FarmIQ has ever had:** built in an open, collaborative process on top of the product vision, pulling in data from across the business and the broader industry. A regular delivery cadence, a shared language for engineering effectiveness, product and technology observability and far better management of technical debt all derived directly from it.
- **Reshaped software teams around cognitive load:** teams work more independently and engage each other more effectively when needed; employee satisfaction and software quality rose with delivery pace.
- **Introduced measurement of outcomes:** started the conversation about what we ought to measure and why, and pushed it into the executive management team, who carried it forward.

stack React, React Native, Java, Postgres, Microsoft SQL, SSIS, Auth0, AWS

Livestock Improvement Corporation

2019 – 2021

Platform Architect 2021 **lic**

I was promoted into a newly created role as the first hire of the organisational structure I designed: a fusion of product management and architecture, focused on the API platform we build our products on top of.

- **Launched a first-of-its-kind-for-NZ smart animal wearables integration:** 10 weeks from a day-one team of ~4 engineers plus one sales and marketing colleague, with a database table as a queue; live two weeks ahead of schedule and profitable two weeks before launch. Won an industry award. My main error was not documenting why we made those tradeoffs: the engineer who inherited the codebase could reverse-engineer the how, but never the why. My fault, not his.
- **Introduced the product owner role and software product management thinking** into the technology group.

Solution Architect 2019 – 2021 **lic**

I was hired into the strategy and architecture team to consolidate the stack while moving the older epochs into modern paradigms: three epochs of architecture across 20+ production systems covering dairy herd management, genetics platform and first-mover IoT integrations.

- **Re-architected a critical animal genetic analysis system:** from COBOL-based batch to a serverless, real-time, event-driven approach. Enabled business partnerships through clean interfaces, improved performance and lowered the running cost.
- **Stayed in the code:** peer and mob programming, whiteboarding designs, algorithms and API contracts with the teams.

stack React, React Native, .NET Framework, Python, Bash, event-driven architecture, scientific computing, Azure, AWS

Bank of New Zealand

2018

Digital Experience Product Owner 2018 **bnz**

My product was bnz.co.nz. I left BNZ because the behaviours and priorities expected of me by the bank are incompatible with my own beliefs and values.

Healthlink

2015 – 2018

Product Manager 2016 – 2018 **healthlink**

I was promoted from engineering, and took on the challenge of moving Healthlink from a forms software provider to an ecosystem provider.

- **From seven words to a product line:** the combined knowledge the business had around what they wanted me to deliver was seven words. The first cab off the rank, a provider directory with search integrations, launched six months later: six enterprise customers covering ~80% of the Australian market and 100% of the New Zealand market, ~500k in project costs over 4 months, subscription revenue model post launch.

Software Engineer 2015 – 2016 **healthlink**

HMS is the software that your e.g. radiologist uses to collaborate with your GP on that nasty broken arm you got while wind surfing.

- **Built the prototype continuous delivery pipeline**, with a colleague, later adopted business-wide: worst-case deployment went from 3+ months to 2 minutes; 60+ automated deployments in a busy week, tooling upgrades reaching 40+ developers and testers.

stack Angular, Java, Elasticsearch, Solr, Lucene, Microsoft SQL

Spark Ventures

2014 – 2015

Software Engineer 2014 – 2015 **spark**

I started as an intern; converted to full time within months. I shipped on Morepork (IoT home security: too early to the market, in my opinion), Bigpipe (the ISP for techies and gamers; proud to remain a customer) and Lightbox (a homegrown Netflix competitor, sold to Sky TV).

stack Angular, Java, AWS

NZ Army

2009 – 2014

Intelligence Operator (Returned), NZ Intelligence Corps 2009 – 2014 **nz-army**

Nine months in Afghanistan on Operation Ariki, across TU Crib 18 and 19. Postings to 1 NZ Military Intelligence Company, 1 NZ SAS Regiment and 3 Signal Squadron (Electronic Warfare). Operational service medals. Self-taught networking and systems administration, then built a sandboxed network of computers that formed a deployable secured GIS cell. I had to learn things quickly. There was no training.

industry contributions

recognition

Emerging ICT Leader, CIO Awards, 2023.

writing and speaking

The Helpful Web (2025) · Architecture is gardening (2024) · A framework for creating strategy (2022) · The Role of a Software Developer (2022) · Implementing a team topology (2021).