

John Tolar

Software Engineering Manager

Springville, AL | Remote

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Software Engineering Manager with 25+ years of engineering experience and 5+ years leading engineering teams. Deep technical foundation in C#/.NET, Azure cloud infrastructure, and distributed systems, paired with hands-on people leadership including hiring, performance management, mentoring, and career development. Track record of delivering in regulated SaaS environments with focus on engineering standards, CI/CD, and operational excellence. Active advocate for AI-enabled development practices, including building a RAG-based developer productivity tool and coaching engineers on responsible AI adoption.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Software Engineering Manager

Metrc | Remote, US | October 2023 - March 2026

Regulatory compliance SaaS platform serving 20+ jurisdictions and 500+ third-party API integrators.

- Managed two engineering teams concurrently across Retail ID and Compliance product lines, each with its own technical lead, totaling 6-8 direct reports.
- Owned technical design across both teams; technical leads drove delivery accountability and day-to-day execution.
- Conducted formal performance reviews and growth plans for engineers and leads, promoted an engineer into a technical lead role, served as hiring manager for multiple positions, and managed performance improvement plans when standards required it.
- Owned sprint planning, backlog grooming, standup facilitation, and predictable delivery execution in Agile/Scrum.
- Tracked velocity, cycle time, and lead time through Jira dashboards to drive improvements in delivery consistency and sprint predictability.
- Designed and proposed HSM-backed JWT security architecture with Azure Key Vault integration during multi-tenant platform migration, addressing scalability, reliability, and security requirements.
- Built Graph API infrastructure that reduced regulatory data processing from 24+ hours to 2-4 hours.
- Championed adoption of RabbitMQ for event-driven messaging across platform services, improving system decoupling and reliability.
- Partnered with Product Management to align engineering execution with business outcomes, manage cross-team dependencies, and balance feature delivery against technical debt reduction.
- Co-developed a department-wide AI adoption initiative, helping shape usage guidelines with governance and security controls and coaching engineers on AI-assisted development workflows.
- Provided production support including incident response, root-cause analysis, and post-incident review.

Lead Software Engineer, Metrc Connect

Metrc | Remote, US | March 2023 - October 2023

- Led development of the public API platform used by 500+ third-party compliance integrators; defined API contracts and managed backward compatibility across versions.
- Translated business requirements into actionable technical specifications in partnership with product stakeholders.

Senior Applications Developer

High Ground Solutions / Ministry Brands | Hoover, AL | August 2018 - February 2023

- Designed and maintained high-volume communication systems processing 20M+ SMS, 5M+ emails, and 50M+ webhook callbacks per month across event-driven architectures.
- Led migration from dedicated hosting to Azure cloud infrastructure including Functions, Service Bus, Blob Storage, and SQL, designing for scalability, reliability, and cost awareness.
- Designed microservices and REST APIs; led transition of partner integrations from SOAP to RESTful services.

- Established CI/CD pipelines and deployment automation; maintained observability through application monitoring and log analytics.

Senior Software Engineer

Main Street, Inc. | Birmingham, AL | August 2016 - July 2018

- Built database-driven vendor integration platform that reduced partner onboarding from weeks to minutes, replacing developer-dependent processes with analyst-friendly workflows.
- Modernized order entry system from VB.NET Web Forms to C# MVC with AngularJS, SignalR real-time monitoring, and Bootstrap UI.

Director of Information Services and Security

Flexible Corporate Plans, Inc. | Birmingham, AL | August 2008 - September 2010

- Led engineering, infrastructure, and security functions in a financial services environment subject to regulatory compliance requirements; managed a team of 2-3 developers and contractors.
- Built ETL pipeline automating claims and benefits processing, replacing manual data handling.
- Negotiated vendor contracts, upgraded network infrastructure, and implemented VoIP migration.

EARLIER CAREER

20 years of progressive engineering roles from 1996 to 2016 across financial services (Protective Life), publishing (EBSCO Industries), energy (Southern Company), healthcare (IMS International, Benchmark Medical), and education (ECA). Includes owning and operating a Managed Service Provider. Consistent focus on enterprise application development, system modernization, and translating business needs into technical outcomes.

PROJECTS

Codebase Expert - AI-Enabled Developer Productivity Tool

- Architected and built a RAG-based codebase navigation system using C#/.NET, pgvector for vector storage, and Ollama for local embeddings with provider abstraction enabling model swapping.
- Implemented event-driven incremental indexing via GitHub webhooks with content-hash diffing and background processing.
- Built MCP server interface for IDE and tool integration, plus Confluence webhook integration for documentation indexing.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Languages and Frameworks: C#, .NET Core, .NET 8, ASP.NET MVC, ASP.NET Web API, Node.js, TypeScript, JavaScript, React, AngularJS, SQL

Cloud and Infrastructure: Azure (Functions, Service Bus, Key Vault, Blob Storage, Azure SQL, Application Insights, Log Analytics, DevOps), Docker, Kubernetes

Databases: SQL Server, PostgreSQL, pgvector, MongoDB, Azure SQL

DevOps and CI/CD: GitHub Actions, Azure DevOps Pipelines, Git, Docker Compose, Infrastructure as Code, Jira

Architecture: Microservices, REST APIs, Event-Driven Systems, RabbitMQ, Multi-Tenant SaaS, Domain-Driven Design, Legacy Modernization, MCP Server Protocol

AI and Machine Learning: RAG Architecture, pgvector, Ollama, LLM Integration, Embedding Models, AI-Enabled Development Practices

Leadership: Team Building, Performance Management, Hiring, Mentoring, Career Development, Cross-Functional Partnership, Vendor Management, Technical Design Ownership

Methodologies: Agile, Scrum, Kanban, Sprint Metrics and KPIs, Incident Management, Post-Incident Review, SRE Practices

EDUCATION

Coursework in Computer Information Systems

Jefferson State Community College, 1995 - 1996

Supplemented by 25+ years of progressive industry experience across enterprise software development and engineering leadership.