

# Brian Lai

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Experienced backend engineer with over 9 years of technical leadership across startups and scaled environments. Proven track record in building distributed systems, leading high-impact teams, and shipping production-grade services in advertising, machine learning, and payments. Passionate about building scalable systems, solving ambiguous problems, and mentoring engineers.

## EXPERIENCE

### Senior Software Engineer | Justworks Labs – New York, NY | Mar 2024 – Present

Lead engineer across fraud, financial services, and analytics platforms; own delivery across backend, infrastructure, and production operations.

- **Run the team's day-to-day** execution, including sprint planning, task assignment, cross-functional coordination with product, delivery tracking, and scope negotiation when timelines shift.
- Built a **real-time reporting & analytics platform** in Go with **<50ms p99 latency** via streaming ingestion and scalable pipelines.
- Operate services across **Kubernetes, CI/CD, observability, and incident response**, improving reliability and performance.
- Decomposed a legacy Rails monolith into **independently deployable services**, increasing release velocity.
- Built an **AI-powered payroll ingestion workflow**, reducing onboarding from **4 days → ~15 minutes**.
- **Authored design docs, led architecture reviews, and mentored engineers** on distributed systems best practices.

### Founder / Tech Lead | LevilUp – New York, NY | Oct 2023 – Feb 2024

Founded and launched a sports-coaching marketplace; owned product strategy, customer development, and business execution.

- Led **customer discovery, market validation, and roadmap prioritization** using retention and engagement metrics.
- Built early-coach partnerships and shaped **onboarding, expectations, and success criteria** for both sides of the marketplace.
- Designed experiments across **pricing, onboarding, and engagement** and iterated using qualitative + quantitative feedback.
- Managed **go-to-market, operations, and customer communications**, growing to **300+ active users in six months**.
- *(Technical summary: built the mobile app & backend; deployed on Kubernetes.)\**

### Software Development Manager | Juno Diagnostics – Remote | Nov 2022 – Sep 2023

- Managed a **distributed team of 4 engineers**; provided technical guidance and roadmap alignment.
- Led **event-driven microservices** in Java Spring and AWS Lambda (Python/Java).
- Worked with product and operations to **translate business needs into scalable systems**.

### Head of Engineering | Phosphorus – NYC | Feb 2020 – Nov 2022

Owned architecture, reliability, and infrastructure strategy while leading an **8-engineer team**.

- Built and scaled **data-pipeline infrastructure** with containerized Python workflows and automated orchestration.
- Owned **DevOps, deployments, observability, and CI/CD**, improving stability and developer productivity.
- Defined **foundational platform architecture** for service isolation, configuration, and secure cloud operations.
- Led development of a **multi-tenant SaaS platform** evolved from an internal LIMS and aligned with core pipeline systems.

## Earlier Experience

Senior Software Engineer – Phosphorus | 2018–2020 – Built and scaled a multi-tenant LIMS SaaS platform.

Software Engineer – SocialFlow | 2016–2018 – Built analytics and pacing systems for large-scale ad operations.

Software Developer – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | 2014–2016 – Built Python-based GIS modeling tools.

## EDUCATION:

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
BS Biological Engineering '14

## TECHNICAL:

**Languages:** Go, Python, Java, Ruby, JavaScript/TypeScript  
**Systems:** Kubernetes, Docker, AWS (EC2, S3, Lambda), PostgreSQL, MongoDB

## Projects/Writing:

PARA-Programming (<https://brian-lai.github.io/ PARA-Programming/>)  
Slate AI (<https://app.buildslate.dev>)

## ACHIEVEMENTS:

[Guinness World Record](#) for building the world's highest altitude wind turbine in Pastoruri, Peru