Chris Laffra

Amsterdam Area

laffra@gmail.com

linkedin.com/in/chrislaffra

Summary

I am an experienced and talented software engineering leader with a strong drive to help engineering organizations grow. My focus has always been on developer productivity, from the lowest level of programming language design all the way up to cloud-hosted development environments.

With my advanced communication skills, I am able to help engineers discover the right path for their professional and personal development. I understand complex environments quickly and can make meaningful suggestions to organizations and engineers to grow to the next level. My experience and communication skills allow me to effectively coach individual contributors and engineering leaders on developing the most effective technical solutions to business problems.

During my career across financial and tech companies, I have led teams as a manager and as an individual contributor. Regardless of my role, I always worked on making team members and larger organizations more productive. That leadership includes mentoring and growing individuals, but also optimizing SDLC processes or adopting modern (cloud) technologies for delivering value.

I learn by teaching. An example is the "Communication for Engineers" book. I also host a monthly masterclass around the topic for colleagues at work. Recently, I authored the first book written entirely using ChatGPT, on the topic of developer productivity. I am a prolific author on technical topics and developer productivity.

See chrislaffra.com for more information.

Experience

Executive Director, Technical Leadership
JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Nov 2021 - Present (1 year 2 months +)
Acting as a technical leader in the Athena platform at JP Morgan with the mission to make the four thousand users of the platform as impactful, productive, and happy as possible. Improving training, developer community, documentation, and the adoption of features available in the platform. Working with dozens of stakeholders to optimize the platform to their needs. Focusing on modernization efforts that include cloud migration, devops, and performance. Facilitating the monthly in-person Communication for Engineers masterclass with my colleagues whenever I visit a JP Morgan office across the world.

Technical Advisor
Sourcegraph
Jan 2021 - Present (2 years +)
Advising the company on technical matters related to software search technologies, developer productivity, SDLC, DevOps, development workflows, and IDE technology and integration.

Founder

Ahead In The Cloud Computing

Apr 2021 - Oct 2021 (7 months)

Publishing and facilitating workshops related to developer productivity and communication skills.

Staff Software Engineer

Uber

Jan 2018 - Mar 2021 (3 years 3 months)

Developing mobile platforms and apps, increasing developer experience, and leading the work on DevPods, Uber's approach to adopting cloud-based IDEs using Kubernetes, GCP, and VSCode in the browser, which is now used by over 60% of Uber's world-wide engineering teams.

Staff Software Engineer

Google

Mar 2014 - May 2017 (3 years 3 months)

Developing low-code cloud-based development tools. Developing Android apps for locating people, offices, and meeting rooms. Creating ML models and tools for discovering people and projects and applying those models to existing search tools and Google's internal promotion process. Developing Agile scrum board tools based on Google's Buganizer tool. Contributing to Google's internal version of Google Meet to improve video, audio, and experience of remote meetings.

Technology Enablement

Bank of America

May 2010 - Feb 2014 (3 years 10 months)

Developing the Quartz platform for real-time risk assessment of financial instruments. Contributing to various components of the project, writing the majority of the documentation and training materials. Supporting adoption of the project, from zero to many thousands of users. Developing a special hosted training environment, the Quartz Academy, which has been used to teach thousands of hands-on and interactive classes. Creating a multi-day interactive training curriculum. Building a global training team to teach the technology across various global locations.

EGL/RBD/Rich UI Architect

IBM

Nov 2006 - May 2010 (3 years 7 months)

Architecting and developing EGL Rich UI, adding rich web UIs to IBM's business development language called EGL. Developing various iPhone web apps. Leading partnership engineering efforts with IBM's value-added resellers of AS/400 and mainframe domain-specific solutions. Managing R&D, analysis, design, implementation, and marketing of numerous solutions. Architecting Rational Business Developer (RBD). Publishing patents on the technology. Presenting at various conferences. Winning the Developer Bowl contest at the SD West conference, beating the teams of Google, Intel, and CodeGear.

Performance Engineering Team Lead

IBM

Jul 2005 - Nov 2006 (1 year 5 months)

Improving the performance of network I/O, disk access, and memory of Eclipse and WebSphere applications. Collaborating with external customers to analyze, understand, and improve their cloud-based applications' startup time and memory consumption. Improving the scalability of WebSphere instances per server by 2.5X. Applying similar optimization to Eclipse applications, making startup 2X faster and reducing memory consumption by 35%. Publishing on Java performance topics at various conferences.

Senior Software Engineer
IBM

Jan 2003 - Sep 2005 (2 years 9 months)
Contributing to IBM WebSphere Studio Device Developer. Improving Eclipse to run best on J9 (IBM's Java virtual machine). Authoring the "Official Eclipse 3.0 FAQs" book. Creating tools to generate IDEs from a language grammar, leading to the Eclipse IMP project and academic research projects. Analyzing the performance of Eclipse applications by developing innovative performance analysis tools. Developing solutions to optimize Java startup and memory consumption. Negotiating the adoption of these improvements with teams inside and outside of IBM.

Technical Lab Director
OTI Amsterdam

Aug 1999 - Dec 2002 (3 years 5 months)
Acting as location director for IBM OTI in Amsterdam. Founding the site, growing, and leading the team. Developing IBM WebSphere Studio Device Developer (Eclipse-based IDE for embedded platforms such as PalmOS, J2ME, Nokia, and PocketPC). Working with customers on adopting our tools and including their SDKs in the portfolio. Contributing to the PECOS project, a European Community IST-funded research project with ABB in Germany, the University of Bern in Switzerland, and FZI in Germany. Supporting the specific domain of performance of resource-constrained embedded platforms. Representing IBM on JSR075, the Java PDA profile, as part of the open Java standardization process.

Research Staff Member
IBM

May 1997 - Aug 1999 (2 years 4 months)
Performing research on the analysis, editing, and compression of Java bytecode jars reaching up to 98% size reduction. Working with partner teams in Lotus Notes. Applying performance improvements due to peephole optimization, constant folding, class hierarchy collapsing, and method inlining. Publishing various articles and three patent applications.

IT Analyst
Morgan Stanley

May 1994 - Jul 1997 (3 years 3 months)
Analyzing emerging technologies, integrating them into Morgan Stanley's IT portfolio, and developing MSTK, a UI and data processing framework for financial applications. Publishing the fourth book on Java and developing C2J, a technology to convert C++ code to Java. Creating a portfolio management system for high-net-worth clients and institutions to run over the Internet.

Postdoc

IBM

May 1992 - May 1994 (2 years 1 month)

Developing an IDE for the Oberon language, including a parser and model, to use as an educational environment at colleges. Working on program visualization, such as Hotwire, to visualize the inner workings of Smalltalk and C++ programs. Publishing patents and papers.

Researcher

SERC

1990 - 1992 (3 years)

PhD Research on object-oriented design, UI development, and visual programming techniques.

Education

Erasmus University Rotterdam

PhD, Computer Science

Apr 1988 - Apr 1992

Designed and implemented PROCOL, a concurrent, object-oriented language with protocols, constraints, delegation, and persistence. Still way ahead of its time. Send me a note and I will send you a nicely bound copy of my thesis. I printed 500 copies at the time and still have about 100 left :-)

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam)

MsC, Computer Science

1982 - 1988

Leiden University

Leiden University

Licenses & Certifications

Managing Technical Professionals - LinkedIn

Skills

Eclipse • Software Development • Agile Methodologies • Object Oriented Design • Software Engineering • Distributed Systems • Web Applications • Software Design • Architecture • Programming