

John Kilpatrick

Director of Technology at Rapha. Engineer by background, still hands-on.

London, UK me@jjkilpatrick.ai www.linkedin.com/in/johnjameskilpatrick

Skills

Strong and hands-on

Composable and headless commerce architecture; Microservices and micro frontends; Event-driven and domain-driven design; Integration patterns (webhooks, APIs, reconciliation, idempotency, failure modes); AWS serverless (Lambda, EventBridge, SQS, IAM, CloudWatch, SSM); Cloud and DevOps (CI/CD, observability, infrastructure as code, Docker); Frontend engineering (Next.js, React, TypeScript, design systems, accessibility, performance); Node and TypeScript backend, with Python; Data platform (GCP, BigQuery, pipeline and warehouse design, reporting layers); Applied AI and agent development (Vertex AI Agent Engine, MCP servers); Security and compliance (PCI DSS, GDPR, vulnerability management, DR); Structured technology evaluation

Strong as a leader, not a day-to-day operator

Technology budget and return on investment; Vendor and contract negotiation; Architectural governance, QA and delivery; Programme management and roadmap ownership; ERP modernisation; Mobile product ownership; End-user IT

Not my background

Data science and ML modelling, as distinct from applied AI and agent work; Very large traditional enterprise IT estates

Summary

Engineer turned technology director. Sixteen years across the stack, from frontend to cloud, and now running the whole technology function at Rapha, the premium cycling apparel brand: engineering, cloud and DevOps, QA, business analysis, product, ERP and business systems, end-user IT, security, vendor management and the technology budget. I sit on the leadership side of the business, so I make the technical argument in commercial terms: cost, forecast and return are part of the case, not an appendix to it.

The remit is broad for the title, which means I prioritise hard and I am comfortable saying "good enough" is the right answer when it is. I still write and deploy production code. Leading from inside the detail is how I understand the business well enough to support it properly.

Experience

Director of Technology, Rapha (May 2025 to present)

Lead the whole technology function: engineering, cloud, product, ERP, security, IT, vendors and budget.

- Led the move to a composable, headless commerce platform, my strongest single area, and designed the event-driven architecture that sits behind it.
- Lead a multi-year programme to roll AI out across the business, built on Google Cloud. Multiple agents and workflows in production, internal and customer-facing, including fully autonomous workflows, without compromising the brand experience.
- Rolled AI into developer experience too: agent skills, tooling and new ways of working for the engineering team.
- Built the data platform the business now runs its reporting on.
- Own the technology budget and the vendor relationships, and make the trade-offs explicit so the business can choose with its eyes open.

- Own the technology roadmap, planned twelve months out and sequenced against budget and capacity, with the trade-offs made explicit.
- Still write and deploy production code and run releases. I lead from inside the detail, not above it.

Head of Engineering, Rapha (Aug 2024 to May 2025)

- Led the engineering function and set the technical strategy behind the company's growth.
- Owned the technical bar for senior hiring.
- Acted as the bridge between engineering and leadership, turning technical detail into commercial decisions.

Principal Engineer, Rapha (Dec 2021 to Aug 2024)

- Defined the roadmaps and architectural plans, and led the move from traditional architectures towards microservices and micro frontends.
- Standardised coding practice across frontend and backend on full-stack TypeScript, React, Next.js and Node.js.
- Shipped scalable serverless solutions across cloud environments while staying hands-on in code and troubleshooting.
- Led a multi-disciplinary team across DevOps, QA, frontend and cloud operations.

Lead Frontend Engineer, Rapha (Aug 2019 to Dec 2021)

- Decomposed the monolithic frontend into micro frontends, improving scalability and maintainability.
- Built an internal design system and introduced Storybook, keeping UI development consistent across teams.
- Migrated the CMS and DAM out of the monolith to headless systems, enabling content sharing across platforms and improving asset delivery speeds by up to 80%.
- Defined frontend coding standards and best practice, and mentored frontend and cloud engineers.

Senior Frontend Engineer, Rapha (Nov 2018 to Aug 2019)

Joined Rapha as a senior frontend freelancer in April 2018 to deliver the new platform, went permanent in November 2018, and moved from there into lead and leadership roles.

Earlier career

Before Rapha I was freelance and agency-side across a wide client base: automotive, financial services, consumer goods, entertainment and publishing. That range is where the breadth comes from, and why I would rather make a pragmatic call than gold-plate.

Freelance Senior Developer, JJKilpatrick Ltd (Jan 2017 to Nov 2018)

Senior frontend contractor through my own company, across agencies and brands.

- Senior frontend at Digitas UK (Jul 2017 to Apr 2018), building online car configurators for Audi and SEAT: the experience of configuring and visualising a custom vehicle.
- Senior frontend delivery for Oxygn Consulting in early 2017.
- The Rapha contract from April 2018, which became the permanent role above.

Senior Developer, Fathom London (Nov 2015 to Jan 2017)

Built and launched production financial applications for fintechs and established institutions.

- Engineered a mobile trading platform for commodity and forex trading for Goldman Sachs.
- Built a risk management platform for Access Fintech, used by banks and buy-side firms to monitor the trade lifecycle and prioritise risk.
- Developed an internal platform for Commerzbank to manage and update client terms.

Senior Creative Technologist, AnalogFolk (Aug 2014 to Oct 2015)

Led development of web applications and hardware prototypes for AkzoNobel and Lucozade.

- Built the software and hardware prototypes for Dulux MixLab, an in-store paint mixing and colour-picking device.
- Consolidated 14 AkzoNobel brand and service sites into a single optimised platform.
- Built Dulux Paint Expert, Amazing Space Paint and Dulux Kids' Rooms: interactive tools for choosing, visualising and co-designing room decoration.

Creative Technologist, Harkable (Sep 2013 to Aug 2014)

Built digital campaigns for Nike Foundation, Paramount Pictures, IGN, Warner Music and Penguin Books.

Creative Technologist, AnalogFolk (May 2010 to Aug 2013)

Early-career creative technology work: interactive web and prototype builds for agency clients.

Education

BSc (Hons) Creative Music and Sound Production, Leeds Beckett University, 2005 to 2008. BTEC Information Technology, Yorkshire Coast College, 2003 to 2005.

What I will not claim

I would rather tell you a gap than defend a claim later. I do applied AI and agent work, not data science or ML modelling. My background is not very large traditional enterprise IT. And where I am strong as a leader rather than as a day-to-day operator, such as ERP, mobile and end-user IT, I will say so.

How I work

Direct and concise, warm rather than slick. I would rather be told something is a bad idea than be agreed with. I value evidence over assertion, candour over polish, and a decision people actually adopt over one that only looks good on paper. I am happy to say "I do not know" and to name a gap.

Contact

Email me at me@jjkilpatrick.ai. It is the right channel for roles, questions and anything that needs a real answer from me. I am also on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnjameskilpatrick/>.