

Nathan Atherton

Staff Software Engineer · UK / Remote

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SUMMARY

Staff Software Engineer shipping AI-first products at scale, building since 2019. Day-to-day work spans agent systems in production, platform engineering, and developer experience on a learning platform serving **5M+ learners across 60+ countries**. Promoted twice in under five years at Thrive (Senior → Lead → Staff). Also ships personal products; most recently RL Track, a Discord bot in **12K+ servers reaching ~1.5M members**, with ~6K monthly active users.

I work best in small, async-friendly teams that sit close to the business. I mentor naturally and tend to be the person teammates pull in when something is on fire or when a new way of working needs to land. UK-based and fully remote by default; I've twice shipped major work while travelling across Europe (two months in 2023 and an extended stint through 2026).

EXPERIENCE

Thrive (Jun 2021 to Present)

A next-generation learning platform reaching 5M+ learners across 60+ countries.

Staff Software Engineer · Feb 2026 to Present

Lead Frontend Engineer · Aug 2024 to Feb 2026

Senior Frontend Engineer · Jun 2021 to Aug 2024

- **Kiki, the in-product AI agent:** co-built the original Kiki prototype at a Thrive hackathon with two others; shipped into main within a month and has since grown into its own dedicated team and product. Now lead engineer on it. On rejoining the team I led a focused 30-day push that shipped a major UI/UX overhaul and several new interaction modes, including a content-coaching mode and an analyst mode surfacing live Snowflake-backed analytics as inline charts. Kiki lets learners ask questions about any content, get coached on topics, and sign up to events; moving the platform toward AI-as-an-interface.
- **AI Content Creator:** shipped the AI authoring workflow now used as the primary way content is created on Thrive (text, image, quiz, rewrite, course-from-PDF). Currently extending with the Head of Engineering to generate **SCORM packages directly from AI**, a capability sales confirms no competitor ships.
- **Google social feed:** core engineer on the team that built and shipped an in-app social feed for Google, launched in Japan and then the US. Delivered in 6 months; Google's team noted prior vendors had scoped comparable work at ~3 years.
- **Trusted for high-stakes delivery crunches:** including direct CPTO-requested work and fixes during the final push that helped land the Emirates enterprise deal.
- **Internal AI Slack bot:** built a Slack-native engineering assistant orchestrating sub-agents across selected repos, with a hosted MCP server (Slack OAuth) exposing its capabilities to Claude and other AI tools org-wide. Served **600+ questions in 3 months**, unlocking significant engineering time previously lost to ad-hoc Q&A.
- **E2E platform rebuild:** took frontend E2E from unreliable to a required merge gate that **200+ PRs a month** now pass through, with AI-driven audit and auto-fix loops keeping specs healthy.
- **Kiki Live Voice:** built a working real-time voice assistant end to end across the stack (10 tools spanning RAG, events, registrations). Initiated and delivered solo.
- **On-device AI translation:** shipped zero-cost, private, instant translation of posts and comments using Chrome's built-in Translator API.
- **Recognition:** two of engineering's publicly celebrated H1 2026 wins were my work (the internal Engineering Bot and the AI-driven E2E migration), named by the Head of Software Engineering. Winner of Thrive's CTO Award.

- **CI/CD overhaul:** migrated the frontend Nx monorepo from Bitbucket to GitHub Actions, cutting the PR pipeline from **~1 hour to under 7 minutes**.
- **Build system overhaul:** replaced Webpack with Rspack across the monorepo. Local builds **4 to 5 min down to under 1 min**, CI deploys **15 min down to ~3 min**.
- **DevEx automation:** built custom GitHub Actions for Jira-readiness checks, merge gating on column state, third-party platform key validation, and AI code-review tooling, plus an interactive SCORM Git-basics course (generated end-to-end with Claude) now required before non-engineer GitHub access.
- **People & leadership** (during Lead tenure): mentored two Senior engineers who were both promoted to Lead during my time as their manager; recognised by the VP of Engineering as the most proactive manager at Thrive in that period. Stepped back to IC on Staff promotion to focus on cross-cutting product and platform work.
- **Delivery turnarounds:** brought at-risk teams back on track, repeatedly taking teams from ~2 milestones behind to on-target delivery in under a month.
- **Scaling through acquisitions:** go-to onboarding point of contact for engineers joining through multiple company acquisitions, and conducted technical interviews across frontend, full-stack and Lead roles.
- **Architectural authority & internal influence:** go-to engineer for structural decisions across the monorepo (library extraction, dependency boundaries, legacy retirement, microfrontend patterns) as one of its founding contributors. Demoed the AI-first development workflow at a company-wide AI Day; shared the setup gist that engineers across the company now use day-to-day.

Now Signage (Mar 2021 to Jun 2021)

Sole frontend engineer on a digital-signage product running across mixed hardware. React, Electron, Docker.

CDL Software (Jun 2019 to Mar 2021)

Built insurance quote journeys (house, car, pet) in agile delivery teams. React, TypeScript, Java, Cypress.

SKILLS

AI & Agents · Multi-agent orchestration, MCP (Model Context Protocol), tool use, prompt engineering, RAG, Claude Code, Claude Agent SDK, LLM integration, AI code-review patterns

Frontend · React, TypeScript, JavaScript, Next.js, Tailwind, shadcn/ui, Framer Motion, Three.js / React Three Fiber, Vite, Rspack, Apollo GraphQL, Storybook

Backend & Infrastructure · Node.js, Bun, GraphQL, PostgreSQL, SQLite, Docker, Netlify, Cloudflare Workers, GitHub Actions

Practices · System design, test-driven development, performance optimisation, observability, developer experience, technical mentoring, microfrontend architecture, monorepo tooling (Nx)

SIDE PROJECTS

RL Track · rltrack.netlify.app · Discord bot serving live Rocket League rank cards via a server-rendered canvas pipeline. **12K+ servers reaching ~1.5M members, ~6K monthly active**. Discord-verified, running since 2021 across four shards with automated failover.

nathanatherton.com · nathanatherton.com · My personal portfolio and blog. Built AI-first with multi-agent orchestration, fully prerendered, with a 3D interactive easter-egg /about experience. Hosts 20+ posts on AI-first development, side projects, and staff-level engineering.

Monitoring the Situation · A geopolitical event monitor I built mid-travel during the 2026 USA/Iran tension when the Strait of Hormuz was closing and onward flights were at risk. Polls intelligence sources on a schedule, summarises with an LLM, and pushes alerts when the situation materially changes. In daily personal use.

WRITING

Recent posts at nathanatherton.com/blog:

- *1.4 Million Users and a Raspberry Pi at My Parents' House*

- *Staff Engineering in the Age of AI: What Actually Changes*
 - *Asking Claude What's on My Driveway*
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EDUCATION & INTERESTS

Edge Hill University · Sep 2016 to Jul 2019 · 1st Class BSc (Hons) Web Design and Development

Certifications · Anthropic: Claude Code in Action (2026) · Anthropic: Introduction to Model Context Protocol (2026)

Outside work: football, video games, animals, AI tinkering, and travelling (with a laptop).