

# Nathan Atherton

Staff Software Engineer · UK / Remote

nathanatherton2@gmail.com · nathanatherton.com · linkedin.com/in/nathan-atherton · github.com/nathanavie

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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 with ~1.4M registered users, ~3K daily active, across 11K+ Discord servers.

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).

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## 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** · Sep 2024 to Jan 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 Cursor-CLI-orchestrated bot that fans out to sub-agents across selected repos to answer engineering questions in Slack. Served **600+ questions in 3 months**, unlocking significant engineering time previously lost to ad-hoc Q&A.
- **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.

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## SKILLS

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**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)

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## SIDE PROJECTS

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**RL Track** · rltrack.netlify.app · Discord bot serving live Rocket League rank cards via a server-rendered canvas pipeline. **~1.4M registered users, ~3K daily active, across 11K+ Discord servers** since 2021.

**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.

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## WRITING

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Recent posts at [nathanatherton.com/blog](https://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

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

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