

Roland Abou Younes

Engineering director: leading leaders through platform transformation

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PROFILE FOR THE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING ROLE (FINTECH) · VIA COLTECH · 26 OCTOBER 2026

SUMMARY

I lead engineering organisations through change: the leaders of the teams, the platform work that runs for years, and the operating model that holds it together. Until October 2026 I was Director of Engineering for Core Operations Services and AI Enablement at Groupon. I ran Checkout and Core Operations, the transactional spine of a consumer marketplace, alongside the company's AI delivery programme, whose strategy I drafted directly with the CEO.

Payments and fintech run through much of the last decade of my work. As Group CIO of a fintech group with 800 employees, 74 engineers and 15 products in 8 countries, I set up the core team of five architects driving the migration from an on-site monolith to cloud-native, infrastructure-as-code microservices, and came through COVID-19 with almost no impact on delivery while cutting engineering cost by more than 30%. At Byjuno in Zürich I rebuilt a payment platform serving more than 100 Swiss merchants, including the Swiss Federal Railways, one microservice at a time in production. At First Data I ran two critical financial-infrastructure programmes on live transaction processing, with a \$9M budget.

I have also scaled organisations: an engineering site grown from 30 to more than 100 engineers in under two years at Visma, and a Toptal team grown past fifteen and split in two, with engineers supported into Engineering Manager roles.

THE ROLE

What the role asks for, and where I have done it

Each heading paraphrases a part of the job description.

Leading Engineering Managers and senior technology leaders

At Visma I grew the site from 30 to more than 100 engineers and built what kept that growth coherent: competence hubs for Agile, DevOps, Linux, Automation and Technology, with coaching, leadership support and competence tracking. At Sun Finance I set up a core team of five architects and aligned the development teams to their business hubs. At Toptal I wrote my engineers' Career Development Plans and supported engineers moving into Engineering Manager roles. At Byjuno I mentored the management team to adopt Agile alongside the development team.

Transforming payments and customer platforms, legacy and cloud-native

Byjuno: a payment solution for more than 100 merchants in Switzerland, rebuilt on Domain-Driven Design and asynchronous microservices with RabbitMQ, fully redundant and horizontally scaled, going live one service at a time while the rest was built in production. Sun Finance: the migration from a Zend-based on-site monolith to all-cloud, infrastructure-as-code microservices, driven by a core team of five architects. Edurio: I started the platform's move to microservices on AWS Serverless using the Strangler Fig pattern. Toptal: Billing and Finance engineering on a 500,000-line codebase. Groupon, until October 2026: Checkout and Core Operations.

Scaling the organisation through growth

Visma, 30 to more than 100 engineers in under two years. Sun Finance, 74 engineers and 15 products across 8 countries, where I cleared the recruitment bottleneck by setting up an overseas development hub. Toptal, a team grown past fifteen and split in two as the Billing scope expanded. Edurio, international recruitment for new competencies with the right character fit.

Partnering with the C-level and turning strategy into roadmaps

At Groupon I drafted the company AI strategy in direct back-and-forth with the CEO. Sometimes I followed his direction and sometimes I convinced him to change it. The mandate came from him, but I carried the plan to engineers, managers and leadership by persuasion, and it held through three vendor shifts. At First Data I ran change advisory board reporting to five international Vice Presidents. In my own practice I take on client rescues at CEO and COO level: I define the scope, agree acceptance criteria with the client and quote the work before delivering it.

Delivery, governance and compliance in regulated environments

First Data: live transaction processing, disaster recovery, business continuity, PCI processes, HSM and key custody, and a full data-centre build with physical and logical security. Atea: I built the project management office and, with the process management office and the technical teams, the ITIL service portfolio through to ISO audit certification, plus service-level agreements for major Nordic government and corporate clients. Sun Finance: full visibility of sprint deliveries and epic-level cost, engineering budget processes, and a service desk with BI tracking of service levels. Groupon: a delivery line designed for human approval of the technical design and of pull requests, with separate code-quality and security review. Cloud: AWS, including Serverless.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In their words

Three of the fifteen recommendations on my LinkedIn profile, quoted in full as written: two clients and a senior colleague at Toptal.

“When our previous development team had us in a difficult position, Roland and his Nur AI team stepped in and turned things around fast. They inherited a hostage AI project, stabilized it, and rebuilt the core AI functionality to perform as we originally envisioned, all under tight deadlines while our business couldn’t afford delays.

The team didn’t just fix what was broken. They enhanced the platform significantly, rebuilding the AI components to deliver accurate, reliable results, ramping up our BI capabilities to give us the management visibility we needed, securing the infrastructure, and tuning the system to handle substantially larger workloads than we’d originally planned for.

What impressed me most was how quickly the team got up to speed on our clinical domain and how structured their approach was. They safeguarded our investment when it was genuinely at risk, and then built on it. They combine deep AI expertise with practical delivery discipline, they understood that in healthcare, the technology has to work reliably, not just impressively.

I’d recommend Roland and his team to any organization that needs AI solutions built right, delivered on time, and built to scale.”

Dirk Perritt M.D., Chief Executive Officer at MD Health Pathways · client · 18 February 2026

“I had the absolute privilege of partnering with Roland to build out a Marketing Capabilities GenAI proprietary tool at Eagle Foods. What we embarked on was truly breakthrough and Roland eagerly tackled the unknown, as well as many obstacles thrown at us. This project wouldn’t have come to fruition without Roland. Few things set Roland apart from others and makes him a pure joy to collaborate with.

Roland is full of grit and a master problem solver with a can do attitude. He approaches every request with possible ways to solve it. There is nothing he sees as not solvable, even if he has to try a few different ways to find the right approach, he doesn't give up until there is a solution. Since what we were building was never done before, Roland's mindset helped us accomplish the seemingly (at the time) impossible.

He also has attention to detail and doesn't let anything slip through the cracks. He truly wants to understand the business need and find the right approach to deliver a truly outstanding product that exceeds expectations.

Lastly, Roland is a joy to work with personally. He has a "yes, and..." mentality that makes you eager to engage with him. He is always upbeat and listens intently so you feel heard in all interactions.

Our proprietary GenAI tool wouldn't be what it is today if it weren't for Roland. I know our project was successful due to him. I highly recommend partnering with Roland."

Holly Hirsch, COO of Eagle Foods at the time of writing · client · 2 April 2025

"Roland is an incredibly talented leader with a burning passion for technology and AI.

I remember when Roland first joined as an engineering manager. After interviewing him, I was eager to have him join one of my teams because of his positive attitude, excellent communication, and strong technical knowledge. Although he was needed more elsewhere, I was fortunate to collaborate closely with him on multiple highly successful projects.

As the engineering manager of a complex domain and a large codebase (500K+ LOC), he exceeded expectations. Not only did he successfully manage the team and scope—challenges that had proven too difficult for previous leaders—but also expanded the team to over 15+ people. Later he helped split the team with others, onboarding new Engineering and Product Managers, greatly improving future team growth and delivery efficiency. He had a solid grasp of technical aspects and consistently ensured on-track delivery. He coached and mentored his direct reports and also shared his experiences with peers, enabling both to grow and expand into existing and new roles.

Amid all these achievements, he never lost his passion for technology and being hands-on. Specifically in AI, he actively participated in hackathons and discussions, developing an open-source project Nur, a knowledge base that later became the foundation for TopAssist—a company-wide, open-source tool used at Toptal to interact with LLMs and enterprise documents. He continued proactively participating in AI discussions and roadmaps, and was the first person I went to recruit to join a newly formed AI platform team.

Roland is a special leader, and those who seek a great manager and hands-on AI expert need look no further."

Stefano Benatti, AI Innovation Leader, Toptal · senior to Roland, did not manage him directly · 16 October 2024

The other twelve are on [my LinkedIn profile](#), including the manager who led me at Toptal and eleven engineers who reported to me.

The Groupon article

My AI Environment Contributions in Groupon Beyond a Claude Code Setup

By Roland Abou Younes, Engineering Director · published by Groupon on Groupon Careers, Leadership Insights

I wrote this account of Groupon's first year of AI adoption inside the company, and Groupon published it under my name. When I joined in early 2025, a handful of engineers had personal AI subscriptions and there was no shared infrastructure, procurement framework or institutional approach. Twelve months later, most of the engineering organisation rarely wrote code by hand. The article sets out what that took: the education platform I built, the vendor relationships I managed, the AI procurement and governance frameworks I drove with two colleagues, a shared engineering setup with session memory and skills that improve from each session's lessons, and the backing of the CEO and CTO.

“What he built wasn’t a tool rollout. It was an operating system... Twelve months later, most of our engineering team rarely writes code by hand. Teams that estimated work in weeks deliver in days.”

Groupon, announcing the article on its company LinkedIn page

[Read the article](#) (Internet Archive copy of the Groupon Careers page, 17 May 2026)

EXPERIENCE

Where I have done it

Groupon · Director of Engineering, Core Operations Services & AI Enablement

Apr 2025 – Oct 2026 · Remote

I ran Checkout and Core Operations, and I led the company's AI enablement. I drafted the AI strategy with the CEO in two strands: AI that speeds up the company's own processes, and a custom GPT placing Groupon on the OpenAI marketplace. Underneath it, I built a requirements-to-reviewed-code delivery line across 600 git repositories, designed so that a stakeholder writes a requirement, the model challenges it until it is clear, a human approves the technical design, and pull requests arrive with a video of how the change was tested, reviewed separately for code quality and security. Where no product on the market did the job, I built it myself, including a mechanism that keeps AI-run testing independent of the reasoning that wrote the code.

Nur AI, my own practice · AI architect and founder

Apr 2012 – present

Two client rescues, run in parallel, for Eagle Foods and MD Health Pathways. On both I defined the scope, agreed acceptance criteria with the client, quoted the work, designed the solution, began delivery myself and recruited the delivery team from the market while delivering. Eagle Foods' marketing team now runs roughly ten times the campaign volume it could before. The MD Health Pathways clinical platform carries roughly eight times its previous service capacity. Each is now maintained by one engineer inside the client's own team.

Toptal · Engineering Manager

Mar 2022 – Oct 2024

Billing and Finance engineering: a complex domain and a 500,000-line codebase. I grew the team past fifteen, split it in two as the Billing scope expanded, and supported engineers into more senior and Engineering Manager roles. On my own initiative I built Nur, which became the foundation for TopAssist, Toptal's company-wide tool for working with LLMs and enterprise documents, and an incident-routing solution that improved response times.

Sun Finance · Head of Software Development / Group CIO

Sep 2019 – Oct 2020

Overall responsibility for engineering, from product ownership, software and infrastructure to business communication and service management, across a fintech group of 800 employees, 74 engineers and 15 products in 8 countries. I joined six months after the organisation had lost its CIO. Cloud-native migration led by a core team of five architects, a service desk with BI tracking, full cost visibility, engineering budget processes, and more than 30% off engineering cost through COVID-19 with almost no impact on delivery and service levels. I also ended a long rivalry between engineering and data science by removing its cause: procedures first, then an Oracle ODI pipeline that detected schema changes and acted on them automatically.

Byjuno AG, Zürich · Software Delivery Manager

Nov 2017 – Nov 2019

Development and support teams of 14 people behind a payment solution for more than 100 Swiss merchants, including the Swiss Federal Railways. Rebuilt on asynchronous microservices one service at a time, while moving the team's culture from cowboy to Agile and aligning the budget with the transformation.

Visma Latvia · Operations Manager

May 2016 – Nov 2017

Part of Visma's international acquisition and transformation programme, moving software development into Visma Labs. Grew the site from 30 to more than 100 engineers in under two years.

First Data Corporation · IT Project Manager

Jul 2015 – Jun 2016

Two critical financial-infrastructure programmes on live transaction processing, with a combined \$9M USD budget: a full infrastructure refresh across Latvia and Lithuania, with change advisory board reporting to five international Vice Presidents.

Atea Global Services · Head of Project Management Office

Oct 2012 – Jun 2015

Built the project management office and, with the process management office and the technical teams, the ITIL service portfolio through to ISO audit certification. Introduced Agile for new service design in an organisation running on PMI and Prince2.

Also: Head of Development, Edurio (Apr 2021 – Mar 2022). CTO, STANDOUT WEB ApS, Denmark, on contract (Aug 2020 – Aug 2021). Co-founder and part-time CTO, IOPoint.io, Dubai (Jul 2020 – Dec 2023). In Lebanon, 1997–2011: co-founded a cable-internet company at fourteen that served 8,000 households and companies, then IT Director at the American University for Humanities and IT consultancy work.

CAPABILITIES

What I bring

Engineering leadership. Organisational scaling, operating model design, developing engineers into Engineering Manager roles, international recruitment and hub builds, budget ownership and cost visibility.

Delivery and governance. PMO build, ITIL service portfolio, ISO audit certification, Agile, PMI and Prince2, SLA and contract documentation.

Platforms and architecture. AWS including Serverless, Domain-Driven Design, microservices, event storming, Strangler Fig migration, infrastructure as code, asynchronous messaging, CI/CD.

AI-era engineering. AI strategy and operating model, agent orchestration, MCP, requirements-to-reviewed-code delivery, independent AI testing, AI governance.

Education and languages. BSc Computer Science, AUL, Lebanon. Arabic and English at native level, French at professional working level, Latvian elementary.