Dragan Basta

ENGINEERING LEADER · PRODUCT, GROWTH & AI

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SUMMARY

Fourteen years in software, eight of them building the teams that write it. I've led at every level: coaching engineers one-to-one, managing managers in a 30-person org, running technology as CTO, and leading a company I co-founded through an acquisition. Most of that work sits where engineering meets growth: getting people to their first win, to paying, and to staying. At PeakNick I grew engineering from zero to thirty people; at Gripbeats I grew a team of hardware and software engineers from three to twenty-five, across three continents. I still write code every week, and today that includes building with AI: clear rules, small batches, tests, and a person who signs off.

CORE STRENGTHS

- Engineering leadership, coaching & one-to-ones
- Managing managers & org design
- Hiring across time zones
- Remote, written-first teams
- Activation & onboarding
- Working with Product, Design, CEO & investors
- AI-assisted engineering: agents, evals
- Computer vision & AI/ML
- Cloud (AWS), mobile, embedded
- Health tech compliance (HIPAA/GDPR)

EXPERIENCE

AI Engineering Advisor & Fractional CTO

2025 – Present

Independent

- Help small and medium-sized companies, about a dozen so far and mostly in health tech, build with AI: agent workflows, integrations between their tools with checks that catch human errors, and evals. The result is fewer bugs and fewer meetings, because the work is written down.
- Set up daily business and financial reports for a winemaking company, so everyone knows where things stand.
- Technical advisor to NaraAI's two founders (part-time, 2026 –), and the only technical person on their team. The product writes patient safety narratives from clinical-trial data. The model writes the prose and deterministic code owns every fact; a 14-check verifier and evals gate every release.
- Maintain TValuer and Staze Srbije. Side projects: Basta Crystal (15 users, 5 companies run their invoicing on it), PixelTest QA and Basta Jumper.

Chief Technology Officer

2022 – 2025

Gripbeats

Full-time from 2022. An AI bracelet that turns movement and touch into music.

- Built a fully remote team of hardware and software engineers from 3 to 25 across three continents and four teams; managed 2–3 engineering managers leading embedded, mobile, cloud and AI/ML.
- Cut time-to-hire from 90 to about 50 days, with a 70% offer acceptance rate for specialized roles and 80% engineering retention. Same steps for every candidate: a screening call, then a take-home task or a one-to-one problem-solving interview, with no live coding.
- Led the technology from firmware to cloud (BLE, sensor fusion, embedded, AWS, mobile, AI/ML) through 10,000+ units in customers' hands, making the first minute work every time: put it on, pair it, move your hand, hear music.
- Owned vendor and stakeholder relationships and reported to the CEO and investors.

Co-Founder & Chief Technology Officer

2020 – 2025

Ball Skiller / SwishGuru

Investor-backed. A basketball shooting coach in your phone: film your shot, and the app tracks your form in 73 points, detects mistakes and builds a training program around them.

- Cut the wait for the first shot analysis from about 5 minutes to under 2 by moving the pose model from CPU to GPU on AWS and making the algorithm close to 60% faster.

- Made one moment the activation goal: seeing your own shot analysed, with no sign-up before it.
- Built with PeakNick's engineering team; led the platform through the August 2024 acquisition and the transition after it.

Co-Founder & Head of Engineering

2018 – Aug 2024

PeakNick

- Built a 30-person engineering org from zero, with 2–3 engineering managers reporting to me. Grew revenue from $0 to $1.2M a year, with $180K ARR, and kept 80% engineering retention.
- Split engineering by platform so each manager led the stack they knew best, which removed most cross-team meetings about everyday questions.
- Handed day-to-day engineering to the managers in 2022, on going full-time at Gripbeats, and moved into a director role: high-level decisions, budget, and advice on hard technical calls.
- Led the company through its acquisition in August 2024, from technical due diligence to integration.

Fractional Chief Technology Officer

2019 – 2020

PatchAI

Part-time, alongside PeakNick.

- Led two distributed vendor teams building a clinical-trial platform; owned technical scope, vendor coordination and delivery against milestones.
- Delivered the MVP on time ahead of Series A validation and migrated the platform from IBM Cloud to AWS. Advised the CEO and COO on technical strategy, the AI/ML roadmap and HIPAA/GDPR. The platform was later acquired by an American health company.

Engineering Manager

Mar 2020 – Jun 2022

Hacking COVID Community (volunteer)

- Led a volunteer team of 9 engineers developing a smart air sterilizer for surgical-room use and iOS/Android contact-tracing applications.
- Mentored 5 developers and 1 QA while coordinating rapid MVP delivery across hardware and software workstreams during the COVID response.

Earlier Experience

Technical Lead (iOS), The Local Europe (2018–2019) • AR/Computer-Vision iOS Developer, Wolf3D (2017–2018) • Software Engineer, Nordeus • Teaching Assistant, University of Belgrade School of Electrical Engineering

EDUCATION

MSc, Computer Software Engineering, University of Belgrade, School of Electrical Engineering (2013–2015)
BSc, Computer Software Engineering, University of Belgrade, School of Electrical Engineering (2009–2013)

LANGUAGES

English (full professional) · Serbian (native)

WHO AM I?

I'm a hands-on maker outside software. I enjoy machining metal, crafting wooden toys, building bikes and model planes with my kids, and prototyping practical machines and 3D-printed gadgets. Some projects end in creative wreckage, but I love the cycle of building, testing, breaking, and improving. When I'm away from the workshop, you'll usually find me sailing or skiing.