

TOBIAS RUSSELL

Chief Technology Officer

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Executive Profile

Board-level technology leader with 25+ years' experience building, scaling and modernising engineering organisations and platforms across manufacturing, logistics, e-commerce, publishing, sports data and information services.

Co-founded Opta Sports Data as Director of Technology (business acquired by Perform Group for £40M). Seven years as a C-suite technology and digital leader at Colart, a global manufacturer operating across the UK, France, Sweden, USA and China, running a 35-person technology and digital function. Senior Director of Technology at FTSE 100 RELX. Founder of Coreware, a 17-person software consultancy serving Thomson Reuters, HSBC, Sky and Reed Business Information.

Strategic technology leadership with retained hands-on engineering fluency. Strong on architecture: translating business requirements into efficient, scalable and affordable solutions; extensive API and middleware design across enterprise integrations. Primary working stack: Vue3, JavaScript/TypeScript, Node.js, with strong Python; also fluent in PHP, C++, C and Perl. Deep working knowledge of Linux and Windows. Has led enterprise rollouts of Claude, OpenAI and Cursor across multiple businesses, transforming development teams into AI-powered delivery functions.

Headline Impact

- **Platforms & engineering:** Architected and delivered enterprise DAM (150,000 assets), Product Sustainability platform (100,000 components / 15,000 products), multi-client Warehouse Control System with Android app, PropertyLink data product at RELX, and the real-time sports data platform at Opta. Standardised Vue3/Node/Python application framework at Colart.
- **AI & cloud modernisation:** Enterprise rollouts of Claude, OpenAI and Cursor across multiple businesses, transforming engineering into AI-powered delivery. Cloud migration (AWS, Azure, GCP); 25% infrastructure cost reduction via Docker, Kubernetes and PaaS. Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.
- **Architecture & integration:** Industry 4.0 deployment across multiple manufacturing sites; ERP (Infor M3) / WMS / WCS integration; API and middleware programmes across international operations; event-driven architectures (SNS/SQS) for high-throughput data products.
- **Engineering leadership:** Reshaped a 35-person technology function into an integrated commercial business partner at Colart. Built and scaled engineering teams: 100+ staff at Opta, 50 engineers at Sports.com, 30-person team at RELX, 17-person consultancy at Coreware.
- **Entrepreneurial:** Co-founded Opta Sports Data (£40M exit); built Coreware to 17 staff with FTSE-class clients; founded ventive.ai with two delivered enterprise platforms in first year.
- **Commercial outcomes:** Double-digit margin gains via SKU and manufacturing-cost optimisation across a 15,000-SKU portfolio at Colart; £2M (33%) IT cost-base reduction while maintaining service quality; ~£500K annual savings via unified RELX website platform.

Core Expertise

- Architecture & Engineering Leadership (enterprise platforms, distributed systems, API/middleware)
- Technology Strategy & Governance
- Cloud & Platform Modernisation (AWS, Azure, Google Cloud)
- AI Adoption & LLM Engineering (enterprise rollouts of Claude/OpenAI/Cursor, RAG, agentic pilots)

- Manufacturing Systems & Industry 4.0 (ERP, MES, integrated production data)
- Logistics & 3PL Tech (WMS, WCS, multi-client warehouse operations, stock traceability)
- Data & Analytics Strategy; event-driven architectures
- Cybersecurity & Risk Management (Cyber Essentials Plus, governance, training)
- E-commerce: B2B and DTC (Shopify with logistics backends)
- Technology Function Restructuring & Talent Strategy
- Cost Optimisation, Vendor Negotiation, Tendering & SLA Management
- M&A — divestiture and integration; technical due diligence
- Board Advisory & Non-Executive Leadership

Executive Experience

CTO & Non-Executive Director

The Finishing Line (3PL Logistics), Basildon | Nov 2024 – Present

Multi-client third-party logistics provider. Brought in to mature the technology function, modernise warehouse systems, and align IT investment with growth strategy. Board-level adviser plus hands-on architecture leadership; all delivered systems run on a containerised stack.

- Established board-level technology KPIs and governance, embedding tech into the commercial planning cycle.
- Architected and delivered a new Warehouse Control System — Android application for warehouse staff plus a Node.js WCS integrated with the upstream WMS and ERP — improving stock traceability, reducing goods-in latency and supporting multi-client 3PL growth. Built end-to-end using Claude Code with one developer.
- Rolled out Claude and Cursor across the development team, establishing AI-powered delivery as the standard engineering practice.
- Architected and delivered an enterprise analytics platform: Node.js ETLs ingesting data from the ERP, Sage, WMS, HR system, CRM and service desk, surfaced through Metabase and Power BI (stack: Python, Node.js, Metabase, PostgreSQL).
- Rolled out Zoho CRM and Zoho Desk, giving the business its first integrated CRM and service desk capability.
- Led tender and transition to a new IT service provider, materially improving service quality, accountability and SLAs.
- Achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation through company-wide cybersecurity uplift covering policy, training, infrastructure and access controls.
- Restructured the development team, replacing single-person dependency with a collaborative skills-based model; recruited internal capability including an apprentice.

Founder & Managing Director

ventive.ai Ltd | Sep 2024 – Present

Technology consultancy and product venture supporting manufacturing and digital businesses. Architecture, vendor selection, data strategy, roadmap definition and delivery.

- Architected and delivered an enterprise Digital Asset Management platform (150,000 assets) with advanced search, taxonomy and workflow integration. Stack: Vue 3, Node.js, MongoDB, Elasticsearch; containerised deployment.
- Architected and delivered an enterprise Product Sustainability platform — 100,000 components and 15,000 products at component level, capturing material composition, costs and environmental impact data for compliance reporting and manufacturing decisions.
- Developing a hybrid PIM/PLM platform for manufacturing — bill-of-materials, components and chemicals at component level, with cost, sustainability and compliance computation.

Chief Digital, Development & Transformation Officer

Colart International Holdings Ltd (Global Manufacturer) | Jun 2017 – Sep 2024

C-suite technology and digital executive responsible for technology strategy, engineering, digital innovation and operational transformation across global manufacturing and distribution operations spanning the UK, France, Sweden, USA and China. Led a 35-person technology and digital function. Held additional accountability for business development, marketing/communications, and direct line ownership of a sub-brand business unit. (Originally titled Chief Digital, Development & Disruption Officer.)

Manufacturing & supply chain

- Conducted strategic SKU analysis across a 15,000-SKU portfolio, delivering double-digit margin gains via cost and manufacturing-process optimisation — directly improving EBIT and revenue growth.
- Led Industry 4.0 deployment across multiple manufacturing sites, automating production data capture, quality processes and downstream reporting.
- Integrated ERP (Infor M3) with manufacturing, distribution and customer-facing systems; standardised data flows across international operations.
- Delivered enterprise cloud migration (AWS, Azure) improving manufacturing-system resilience, scalability and DR; cut infrastructure costs by 25% via Docker, Kubernetes and PaaS adoption (RDS, Lambda).
- Reduced overall IT cost base by £2M (33%) while maintaining service quality through technology rationalisation, vendor consolidation and licensing reform.

Digital, e-commerce & data

- Architected and delivered an enterprise Digital Asset Management platform for the group (now holds 150,000 assets) — Vue 3, Node.js, MongoDB, Elasticsearch; containerised.
- Architected and delivered an enterprise Product Sustainability platform — 100,000 components and 15,000 products at component level, capturing material composition, costs and environmental impact data to support compliance reporting and manufacturing decisions.
- Oversaw and developed Shopify-based DTC websites integrated with Infor M3 ERP and logistics backends via custom API and middleware layers, accelerating launch cycles and growing e-commerce revenue.
- Built a standardised internal application development framework (Vue 3 / Node.js / Express, Python / Flask) reducing time-to-market for new web applications.
- Introduced enterprise OpenAI and local LLM use; built a business-wide web portal as the single entry point for LLM activity across the company. Ran pilot projects exploring agentic AI and RAG over centralised knowledge bases. Drove development productivity via GitLab Copilot and a structured business-user enablement programme.
- Embedded cybersecurity governance with company-wide education programme, raising security maturity from baseline to defended posture.

Organisation, commercial & board

- Held additional remit for business development, group marketing/communications, and direct line ownership of a sub-brand business unit — broadening role beyond technology into commercial line leadership.
- Reshaped the technology function into an integrated commercial business partner with self-service capability supported by central expert teams.

Senior Director of Technology

RELX (Reed Elsevier), London | May 2014 – May 2017

Directed architecture, governance and delivery across property, agriculture and science portfolios within a FTSE 100 information services group.

- Led a 30-person technology team building analytics and data collection systems covering 50% of UK agricultural activity (AngularJS, Node, MySQL, AWS, Jenkins CI/CD).
- Implemented unified global website platform across all RELX units, delivering ~£500K annual cost savings.
- Designed enterprise architecture for PropertyLink commercial property data product

(AngularJS / Node / MongoDB / SNS-SQS event bus).

- Oversaw the divestiture of New Scientist, ensuring seamless technology and team transition to new ownership.

Entrepreneurial & Earlier Leadership

Co-Founder & Director of Technology

Opta Sports Data / SportingStatz, London | 2001 – 2006

Co-founded the sports data business that became a global category leader. Defined technical strategy, architecture and product.

- Built real-time sports data collection platform supporting hundreds of live events, feeding data feeds, websites, mobile apps and print-ready content.
- Scaled organisation from start-up phase to 100+ employees and a robust portfolio of media clients.
- Played a pivotal role in the acquisition of Opta from BSkyB and integration with SportingStatz; company subsequently acquired by Perform Group for £40M.

Founder & Managing Director

Coreware Ltd, Guildford | Feb 2002 – Mar 2014

Built a 17-person software consultancy delivering enterprise platforms for Thomson Reuters, Sky, HSBC and Reed Business Information. Led management, strategic direction, architecture and customer product design.

- Built Thomson Reuters' opinion/blogging platform supporting 1,500+ journalists with 1M+ unique visitors per month (PHP).
- Created the official mobile app for the IOC's 2010 Winter Olympics, delivering live results and medal tables to 500K users.
- Engineered HSBC Canary Wharf live financial wallboards displaying pricing, news and currency rates (PHP).
- Delivered World Cup football websites for Thomson Reuters and high-traffic sports results applications for MSN and Sky.

Director of Technology

Sports.com, London | 1999 – 2002

Led technology infrastructure, support and application development under the COO.

- Managed a 50-engineer team, scaling effectively to support a rapidly expanding business.
- Engineered high-capacity websites supporting 5M concurrent users; launched a comprehensive CMS and sports data collection platform within three months of inception.
- Implemented a sports betting platform creating a multi-million-pound revenue channel.

Earlier engineering roles: Web Developer (Contract), Reuters (1994–1999, financial and news information websites in Perl/PHP, progressing to architect and team leader); Software Engineer, RMSL Traffic Systems (1993–1994, air and marine traffic-control radar systems in Visual Basic / Visual C++); Software Engineer, Racal Research (1989–1993, defence and communications R&D, embedded systems and neural network models in C/C++).

Technology & Data Capability

- **Architecture & Engineering:** Translating business requirements into efficient, scalable and affordable solutions; extensive API and middleware development across enterprise integrations.
- **AI Adoption & Rollout:** Enterprise deployment of Claude, Cursor, OpenAI and local LLMs across multiple businesses; built a company-wide LLM access portal; pilots on agentic AI and

RAG over centralised knowledge bases; transformation of development teams into AI-powered delivery functions.

- **Cloud Platforms:** AWS, Azure, Google Cloud (RDS, Lambda, EC2, EKS, S3, SNS/SQS).
- **DevOps & Automation:** Jenkins, Docker, Kubernetes, Terraform, CI/CD pipelines.
- **Operating Systems:** Deep working knowledge of Linux and Windows.
- **Programming Languages:** Vue3, JavaScript/TypeScript, Node.js; Python; PHP, C++, C, Perl.
- **Infrastructure:** Network design, scaling distributed systems, serverless architecture using Lambda.
- **Data Platforms:** MongoDB, MySQL, SQL Server; data analytics and visualisation.
- **Enterprise Systems:** Infor M3 ERP; WMS / WCS platforms; PIM and DAM platforms; Shopify.

Hands-on technical fluency retained to support architectural oversight, vendor control and credible engagement with engineering teams.

Education

BEng Electronic Engineering — University of Southampton, 1989–1992

A-Levels — Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Electronics, Woking College, 1987–1989