STEVEN SAXON

SOFTWARE ENGINEERING LEADER

ACHIEVEMENTS

Leading a major center of innovation within the QuickBooks org around a modern event-driven architecture

Created Azure Communication Services for developers to add real-time communications to their apps

Invented the term "skills" for voice applications on Alexa

Created and led implementation of Alexa Presentation Language (APL)

Led re-architecture of Amazon Appstore, turning it into a key center of innovation

Chief architect for one of the US state Affordable Care Act exchanges

PATENTS & PUBLICATIONS

US Patent 10,474,512
Inter-process intra-application communications

US Patent 10,672,286
Cloud based test environment

US Patent 6,748,569
XML Server Pages Language

US Patent 6,763,343
Prevent duplication of data in reference resource for XML page generation

Multiple patents pending

Microsoft Teams Architecture session
Microsoft Ignite conference (2018)

steve@ruxp.net

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

I am the Chief Architect for Commerce in the QuickBooks product at Intuit. Since joining the team, I have been driving a pivot from the original QuickBooks Commerce product to a new initiative around integrating Commerce features directly into QuickBooks, enabling product-based businesses to synchronize their product catalogs, orders, payouts, and inventory from Amazon, Shopify or eBay directly into their books.

I was previously the Chief Architect for the Intelligent Communications (IC3) team at Microsoft, which provides the chat, calling and meetings infrastructure for Teams, Skype, and Azure Communication Services (ACS). I wrote the original product pitch for Azure Communication Services, and led the development effort prior until I got promoted into the Chief Architect role for the entire IC3 team.

Prior to Microsoft I was the Principal Engineer for Amazon's Alexa Voice Service, where I created APL (Alexa Presentation Language), an Alexa-wide initiative to support visuals on Alexa-enabled 1P and 3P devices. Prior to Alexa, I was the Principal Engineer for Amazon Appstore, and led the re-architecture of Appstore's key building blocks, creating a digital store platform still being used by teams across Amazon.

Prior to joining Amazon, I was a Distinguished Engineer at Neudesic, a Microsoft Gold Managed Partner. Before that I was the Lead Architect for Dell.com for 7 years, leading the site from classic ASP to a single .NET-based codebase for 85 countries in 25 languages, which powered Dell.com for the next 14 years.

EXPERIENCE

Distinguished Engineer and Chief Architect, QuickBooks Commerce
Intuit Inc. / September 2021 – Present

The Commerce team within QuickBooks provides a bridge for product-based businesses to integrate their QuickBooks accounts with their storefronts on Amazon, Shopify, and eBay, enabling them to sync their product catalog, inventory, orders and payouts directly with their books.
- Responsible for driving the overall architecture of Commerce in QuickBooks. Commerce is now leading the charge within QuickBooks as the whole org pivots to a modern event-driven architecture.
- Engaged in broad initiatives, including how we should be integrate the acquisition of Mailchimp into QuickBooks. For example, I have been working on using GraphQL to make contact data traversable.
- Acting as champion for Commerce across all of Intuit.

Chief Architect, Intelligent Communications and Collaboration Cloud (IC3)
Microsoft Corp. / April 2018 – September 2021

The IC3 team provides the real-time communications infrastructure (chat, calling, meeting, PSTN and SMS) for Microsoft Teams, Skype, and Azure Communication Services.
- Responsible for driving the architecture for IC3's core services as part of the IC3 Leadership Team, ensuring we are building our services the right way, and keeping ahead of the massive growth we are seeing in Microsoft Teams, particularly in light of the shift to hybrid work with COVID-19.
- Led and drove the creation of Azure Communication Services from writing the initial "working-backwards document", getting buy-in from Rajesh Jha (EVP for the E+D division) and Scott Guthrie (EVP for the Cloud+AI division), and securing funding from Satya Nadella and Amy Hood. Led initial engineering efforts for the core services and SDKs, and growing the team from 4 people to 250+.

EXPERIENCE continued

Principal Engineer, Alexa Voice Service (AVS)

Amazon.com / November 2016 – March 2018

The Alexa Voice Service team works with third party OEMs integrating Alexa into their 3P products.

- Created the Alexa Presentation Language (APL), enabling skill developers to present rich voice-driven visuals on 1P and 3P Alexa visual devices(such as Amazon's own Echo Show, and 3P products such as televisions). Led the initiative from concept and early prototypes, getting SVP buy-in, and driving delivery on both 1P and 3P Alexa devices, and in the Alexa Skills Kit team to enable developers to use APL in their skills.
- As one of a handful of Alexa API Bar Raisers, I was responsible for approving new APIs within Alexa, ensuring that changes met our high design bar, and worked to close the 1P/3P parity gap over time.
- Worked closely with key AVS partners to help them onboard their products onto Alexa. For example, I designed the interface for enabling Alexa to tell Sonos speakers to move the currently playing music from one room to another using voice commands.

Principal Engineer, Amazon Appstore

Amazon.com / February 2014 – November 2016

- Led a program of 14 projects that completely reimagined how Appstore systems were implemented. This program greatly simplified Appstore's system, allowing our teams to become more productive, creating more robust systems, and having significant positive impact on employee satisfaction and retention. This effort accelerated our engineers so much, we had to double our Product Management staff to be able to keep up.
- Worked with the Alexa team to imagine how to provide an Appstore-like experience to enable voice-enabled apps on Alexa. This led to me first suggesting the term "skills", which the marketing teamed loved, and which became the industry-standard term for "apps" in voice assistants.
- Designed and led the implementation of the rendering platform for the Appstore UX on Fire Tablets and third-party Android devices. Initially built for web delivery, Amazon's $50 Fire tablet led me to create a native client that fed the same layout and data into completely native user experience, enabling the native UI to progressively render as the data was received from the server, all through a single streaming JSON connection.

Distinguished Engineer

Neudesic / January 2006 – February 2014

Responsibilities

- Founder of Neudesic's Mobility Practice, providing sales support, staffing and support of the technical delivery on all of our Mobility projects nationwide. Also responsible for helping to drive awareness of the Mobility Practice through web casts, presenting at technical conferences and through engagement in programs such as Windows Phone design reviews.
- Involved in projects from the initial client visit (pre-sales) through to go-live in an Architect / Lead role.
- Deeply involved in understanding client needs – to act as one of their team, and be a trusted advisor.

Major Projects

- **Nevada Health Link**: Chief Architect for the Nevada Affordable Care Act Exchange, with a development team of around 150 developers.
- **Kelley Blue Book**: As part of KBB's "tablet first" strategy, developed extremely rich mobile web application for new car discovery and pricing.
- **Microsoft**: Acted as Solutions Architect, developing services using Neudesic's Neuron ESB to support the integration of front-of-store to back-of-store, and the rollout of the first two Microsoft retail stores in malls in Scottsdale, AZ and Mission Viejo, CA.
- **Realtor.com**: Acted as Lead Architect for this client's "Zillow killer" website. Created the outline architecture and drove development of foundational and high impact areas such as Virtual Earth mapping and content management.

Lead Architect, Dell Online

Dell.com / August 1998 – January 2006

- Led Dell's global transition from static HTML-based web site to a dynamic ASP.NET based site built on the fly from XML content, using a single code-base in 80+ countries and 25 languages. This system was so successful, it continued to drive the website and all business-driven content editing across all Dell.com sites for 10 years after I left the company (~14 years in total).
- Led the delivery of the last major site redesign in 2003, an 18 month project involving 50 development staff and 150 business customers across all of our global regions. Drove the technical approach and the low level implementation.