James Drakes

STAFF SOFTWARE ENGINEER

Professional Summary

Staff Software Engineer with 11+ years building customer-facing products and the systems behind them, across e-commerce, payments, fraud, insurance claims, real estate and AI-powered data annotation.

Employment History

Staff Software Engineer, H-E-B, Austin, TX

JUN 2025 - PRESENT

- Designed and built the Redis-backed distributed circuit breaker that keeps a failing downstream service from taking down the web or mobile apps.
- Owns H-E-B's GraphQL layer, the single entry point for every team's services.
- Runs the GraphQL layer at 80M requests a day, meeting its tier-1, 99.999% request-success SLO.
- Drove every team on the layer onto circuit-breaker protection.
- Modernized 8 services to Node 24, ESM and strict TypeScript, and migrated their build and infrastructure from AWS CodeBuild to Terraform Cloud.
- Decommissioned the legacy storefront-proxy service and its infrastructure with zero disruption to its consumers.
- Built the agentic workflows the team works through, for paying down dependency tech debt, keeping documentation current, reviewing code and verifying work against designs, with hard permission boundaries against autonomous merges, deploys and force-pushes.

Founding Engineer, TerraVerum (now DrawInsight), Austin, TX

JAN 2025 - JUN 2025

- Designed and built the platform's local-to-cloud file-sync layer on Dexie and Supabase, with resumable uploads and lazy downloads, so an annotator's progress follows them from one device to the next.
- Shipped the Vue UI for creating, tracking and downloading annotation projects.
- Built the Vue tools and panels annotators work in, so they can find, filter and act on a whole set of annotations at once instead of one shape at a time, with the lists and the canvas staying in sync.
- Managed the company's 4 contractors, 2 engineering and 2 design.
- Sole-authored the company's internal-tools infrastructure, from docker-compose orchestration to the Coder environments hosting demos.

Staff Software Engineer, Assured Claims, Remote

MAR 2024 - JAN 2025

- Improved the first-notice-of-loss pipelines claimants use to file auto claims.
- Built the rules engine for child-safety-seat replacement under each state's law, and designed its claimant workflows to cut claim abandonment.
- Worked on the React adjuster dashboard that puts every perspective on an accident in one place, so adjusters stop chasing people for details.

Engineering Consultant, TerraVerum, via Lumos, Austin, TX

MAR 2024 - JAN 2025

- Built the foundation of TerraVerum's annotation product as a part-time independent consultant alongside the Assured role, before joining full-time.
- Built the product's core differentiator, a record of everything an annotator did, down to where they looked and moved, and designed the event language that encodes it in a form an LLM can train on.
- Designed and built the replay service and the WebSocket streaming on top of it, so reviewers watch an annotator's full process, not just the final label.

Details

Austin, TX
james@jamesdrakes.com

Links

linkedin.com/in/james-drakes

Skills

TypeScript
JavaScript
Node.js
React
Vue.js
Express
GraphQL
REST
PostgreSQL
Django
Python
Event-Driven Architecture
Distributed Systems
Microservices
AWS
Docker
Kubernetes
Terraform
CI/CD
Apache Kafka
Redis
gRPC
GCP
Elixir

Hobbies

Travel
Soccer
Reading Fiction
Ultimate Frisbee
Teaching Financial Literacy

Senior Software Engineer, H-E-B, Austin, TX

JAN 2023 - MAR 2024

- Built the fraud-assessment engine behind H-E-B's authentication service to counter a rising account-takeover threat, combining in-house rules with a vendor's fraud check.
- Challenged suspect orders instead of blocking them, so legitimate checkout kept working, cutting e-commerce fraud losses by ~$500K a week.
- Built the Kafka consumer pipeline behind every customer's cashback, processing purchase-stream events so each transaction's cashback was correct.
- Wrote the Payments Vision that set the direction for moving e-commerce payments out of Oracle ATG.
- Defined the payments service boundaries with 4 partner teams and led the cross-team conversations that carried the Vision.
- Extracted payments into a dedicated service under that Vision, migrated EBT tender onto it, and designed the wallet service and its schema.
- Hardened the payments service behind every e-commerce order against upstream gateway failure modes.

Senior Software Engineer, Homeward, Austin, TX

JUN 2021 - NOV 2022

- Migrated 5 services and 5 databases, across staging and production, from Heroku to AWS, and architected the gRPC and Kinesis microservice connecting Salesforce Platform Events to the Django platform.
- Built a Django contract pre-fill workflow that pulled deal data from Salesforce into contract PDFs, so agents could offer contracts and close deals faster.

Software Engineer, Spruce, Austin, TX

JUN 2019 - JUN 2021

- Rebuilt the lead-gen ETL to ingest, dedupe and synthesize hundreds of thousands of renter records into Iterable marketing cohorts, cutting unqualified leads by 50%.
- Decomposed the PHP monolith into TypeScript microservices on Express and PostgreSQL, then moved the billing, scheduling and lead-gen jobs from cron to AWS Lambda, cutting their runtime from 20 hours to 3.

Software Engineer, IdealSpot, Austin, TX

JUN 2017 - MAY 2019

- Rebuilt the Ruby on Rails monolith behind IdealSpot's location data platform into Node/Express and Elixir microservices on PostgreSQL, cutting feature rollout from a week to a day.
- Designed an expression language and evaluator over the location data, so a new visualization template took an hour of expressions instead of 2 days of code.

Software Engineer, uStudio, Austin, TX

NOV 2016 - JUN 2017

- Migrated uStudio's video platform, a Python codebase used by Universal Music Group, Kohl's and Salesforce, from AWS to GCP on Docker and Kubernetes.

Software Engineer II, Cisco Systems, Austin, TX

JUL 2015 - SEP 2016

- Built a real-time dashboard that streamed metrics from CNC milling machines and flagged anomalies before a machine produced defective parts.

Education

B.S. in Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Texas at Austin

2015