

Chris Connar

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SUMMARY

Engineering manager with 20+ years in regulated financial services — underwriting, claims, account opening and advisory workflow — and seven years leading engineers across consulting and product. Deep BPM and decision-automation experience (Flowable, IBM ODM, Visual Rules, LiquidOffice, Drools) with hands-on modernization: mission-critical services migrated to Java 17, Spring Boot 3 and Kotlin on CaaS CI/CD. Applying generative AI to decisioning. FINRA Series 7/66 registered during tenure at Robert W. Baird.

CORE COMPETENCIES

BPM & Decision Automation - Flowable, IBM ODM, Drools, ACTICO/Bosch Visual Rules, OpenText LiquidOffice, BPMN

Languages - Java, Kotlin, JavaScript/TypeScript

Frameworks - Spring Boot, Spring Core, React

AI - Generative AI (LLMs), prompt engineering, agentic coding

DevOps & Tooling - GitLab CI, CaaS CI/CD, Docker, Gradle, Maven, Jenkins, nginx, GitHub Actions

Data - Oracle, MS SQL Server, PostgreSQL, MySQL

Cloud - AWS, Google Cloud Platform, Vercel, Supabase

EXPERIENCE

Northwestern Mutual

Software Engineering Manager

Mar 2022 – Apr 2026

- Led backend Java and frontend React teams of seven engineers and QA delivering digital application and payment experiences for life insurance.
- Stabilized a team that had cycled through four managers in twelve months, restoring consistent leadership, delivery cadence, and retention.
- Modernized mission-critical services to Java 17, Spring Boot 3, and Kotlin and introduced CaaS CI/CD pipelines, reducing release friction and retiring end-of-life runtime risk.
- Directed delivery of real-time Java ETL connecting digital application front ends to backend underwriting systems.
- Managed performance across the full range — coaching, formal improvement plans, and exits — partnering with HR where behavior rather than capability was the issue.

Senior Full Stack Engineer

Dec 2019 – Mar 2022

- Architected rules and workflow for life insurance underwriting on Flowable and Spring Boot.
- Led backend development for the expansion of digital application product offerings, and prototyped custom Flowable APIs for process tracking and observability, presented at an internal hackathon.
- Migrated business rules from IBM Process Server to Flowable, eliminating commercial licensing cost; trained consultants and mentored engineers through the transition.
- Ran hiring for senior engineer backfills on the underwriting team — interviewed a dozen candidates and made two hires, both still with the firm.

Robert W. Baird & Company — return engagement via Codeworks, Inc.

Business Process Consultant

Feb 2019 – Dec 2019

- Recruited back by Baird four years after departing, to extend the advisory and operations platform originally built in-house.
- Replaced custom JSP development with a lightweight, **business-user-editable** rules engine architected within OpenText LiquidOffice — configurable decisioning without a commercial BRMS, and an in-house forerunner to feature flagging.

- Added compliance and regulatory flows to existing straight-through processes across advisory and client operations.

APEX Systems (Northwestern Mutual)

Senior Consultant

Aug 2018 – Jan 2019

- Led Java EE 8 integration and ETL for an automated Disability Claims pilot using Spring Boot, Gradle, Docker, and nginx.
- Consulted and trained on business rule development in IBM Operational Decision Management.
- Administered the virtualized Linux environment and established DevOps practices; tuned and stabilized a Dockerized WebSphere Liberty application server.
- Migrated the pilot environment from cloud to on-premises to meet platform constraints.

ACTICO Corp. (formerly Bosch Software Innovations)

Senior Consultant

Jun 2015 – Aug 2018

- Coordinated a team of developers as project manager on large tier-one banking rules refactoring programs.
- Consulted and trained Fortune 100 firms on BPM/BRM practice and Bosch Visual Rules implementation.
- Designed business rules and Java solutions for tier-one banks, aerospace navigation, pharmaceutical distribution, and manufacturing clients.
- Built client platform customizations in Java EE 8 and Spring Core (Maven, Jenkins) across WebLogic, JBoss, Tomcat, and Jetty, and administered Linux and Oracle DB infrastructure including AWS EC2 for high-availability production.

Robert W. Baird & Company — 2003 – 2015

Assistant Vice President, Business Process Engineer

2013 – May 2015

- Re-architected the LiquidOffice Advisory Workflow platform after accumulated defect and support load had stalled feature delivery — made the business case for the work and reduced both.
- Delivered Advisory Workflow's integration with Envestnet, building a reusable Java REST client library for LiquidOffice applications rather than a point-to-point integration.

Business Process Analyst — the firm's first

May 2009 – 2013

- Built straight-through processing for client account opening, check requests, and wire transfers on OpenText LiquidOffice — **still running in production today**.
- Architected automated business processes from client specifications using Java, JavaScript, MSSQL, and XML.
- Designed firm-wide web forms on OpenText LiquidOffice and built Java SOAP service proxies transmitting confidential client data.
- Maintained processes compliant with FINRA regulation and supported external SAS 70 (now SOC 1) audit of business automation systems.

Business Process Intern — Baird's first long-term intern

Aug 2003 – May 2009

- Architected business process flows and led development on them while working part-time and remotely through university; converted to full time on graduation.

EDUCATION

B.B.A., Information Technology Infrastructure

University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, May 2009

Emphases: Finance, Accounting

CERTIFICATIONS

- Business Process Management Certification, Villanova University (2014)
- Oracle Java SE 7 Programmer Certificate (2013)
- Java Programming Certificate, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (2013)
- FINRA Series 7 and Series 66 (2011, inactive)