

# Alan Cox

## address

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## Profile

Experienced leader searching for opportunities in senior management positions in a web application development shop. Demonstrated ability to build great applications from product definition through to launch. Loves working in a dynamic, customer-focused, energetic team environment where people are always challenged and quality is put first.

## Experience

**iContact**, Durham NC *August 2005 to Present*

I've been with the email marketing firm iContact from early on, playing key roles as it grew from 12 to 180 employees, from 2,000 to 52,000 customers, a technical organization of 4 people to close to 50, and less than \$500,000 in annual revenue to over \$2,000,000 revenue per month. My responsibilities have evolved over time, from an individual contributor to a member of iContact's senior management team. Some of the most significant accomplishments are described below, along with the role in which the results were largely accomplished.

**Director of User Experience** *July 2008 to Present*

- Led a company-wide project to analyze customer lifetimes and retention. The results evolved the way we made **product prioritization**, evaluated the **impact of product releases**, **calculated the lifetime value** of customers, and the channels in which we **invested for customer acquisition**. The analysis has been an instrumental part of iContact's **venture-capital fund-raising negotiations**.
- Partnering with product management, engineering, and the PMO, **introduced product-based Agile teams**. The product teams **improved morale, focused ownership and accountability**, and ultimately **improved quality and customer experience**.
- Led the redesign and launch of a new Drupal-powered marketing site. In six weeks, the team was able to **turn around a project** that had been failing for the previous 18 months.
- Established a Quality Assurance team of four and integrated it into Scrum. The team **improved our uptime, decreased the number of rollbacks** due to failed deploys, and introduced **new testing strategies**. The team grew to the point that it became a peer of the UX organization.
- Led a competitive usability study, comparing iContact to two other email marketing applications. The results **significantly altered our product prioritization** and enabled designers to craft tools that our users found **more enjoyable, useful and easy to use**.
- Led team of engineers, designers, product owners and testers as they created and launched a new end-user help system. The help system had **significantly better content, better searchability and browseability, and reduced the burden on our technical support representatives**.
- With other leaders in technology department, introduced a team-based incentive compensation bonus plan. The new plan helped **change our culture** and improved our ability to **deliver high-quality software on time**.

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## Manager of User Experience *March 2007 to July 2008*

- One of two lead architects for the iContact Community, **overseeing its overall product design**, and the **development of the front-end**. I also **coordinated the Community's on-time delivery in November 2007**.
- Built a classification and regression tree system to predict whether new trial accounts were likely to be spammers. This new tool **improved the workflow of an entire team, increased our deliverability rating** and **reduced the number of fraudulent credit card transactions**.
- Under my leadership, the User Experience organization **grew from three engineers to twelve people in one year**. These twelve included engineers, information architects, interaction designers, user assistance designers, human factors specialists and a layer of management.
- **Introduced user-centered design** into iContact's design process. The goals for UCD were to ensure that iContact remained easy to use, continued to help users achieve their goals, and that users continued enjoying iContact. Specific challenges included integrating UCD into Scrum and achieving company buy-in. The first project that was handled using UCD and Scrum was a six-month redesign of iContact's subscriber model. This **redesign decreased customer support costs** and **increased customer satisfaction**, and was **delivered on time**.
- Designed and commissioned a user-testing study to assess different versions of the iContact website. Information learned from the study allowed the design team to create a new design that **significantly increased visitor conversions**.

## Manager of Software Development *December 2005 to March 2007*

- **Introduced Scrum** to iContact, allowing us to improve our ability to **deliver high-quality software to our customers on time**. I recognized our need for a formalized development process that encouraged our company to focus its priorities, and that vested important design and engineering decisions with the developers.
- Coordinated and executed regular deployments of our software with **minimal customer-facing downtime**.
- Headed up the **redesign and engineering effort behind iContact v4.0**, managing the project and team **from product definition to launch**. One unique challenge during this project was the requirement that iContact v3.5 continue to function for users who didn't want to upgrade.
- Designed and built the framework that powers the iContact application. This framework **drives the application**, enables the application to be **deployed to an arbitrary number of web servers** and **processes over 10,000,000 page requests per month**.

## Web Application Developer *August 2005 to December 2005*

- Designed and built a billing and subscription system. The billing system is still in use, and has, among other things, **processed over \$30,000,000 in credit card transactions**. The subscription system served us well until we switched from cash-based accounting.

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- Created a system to review email messages as they entered our mail queue to see if they qualified as spam. This system **increased our deliverability rates** while having negligible impact on our customers' experience and expectations.
- Partnered with other developers to build and deploy iContact's mail sending infrastructure. This infrastructure is still in use today, and is able **to scale to an arbitrary size**; currently it uses over 50 mail servers and **has sent billions emails**.
- Led a significant refactoring of the part of the application that counted the number of contacts (email addresses) in an account, **speeding up application response time by over 200%**.

## Other Experience

**Member, SecondPixel, LLC** Durham, NC *September 2006 to Present*

Founded, with two friends, a small web app shop. We've most recently built FuelFrog, a simple application that makes it easy for people to track their fuel mileage. One of the best parts is that it gives me an opportunity to keep my PHP and XHTML/CSS skills sharp.

**Lead Developer, Appalachian Technologies** Boone, NC *February 2001 to June 2002*

Led the development of custom web sites for local business in the Boone, NC area. This is where I learned to love PHP.

**Co-Op Student, Nortel Networks** RTP, NC *August 2000 to December 2000*

Worked on a team of three developing an embedded web server for the DMS-10. The DMS-10 is a telephone switch capable of handling 10,000 telephone lines.

## Skills

- I really like the following technologies: Drupal, Memcache, Apache, PHP, Lucene, MogileFS, Ajax, REST, Java, Servlets, JavaScript, R, Symfony, XML, Debian and Ubuntu Linux, and validating XHTML/CSS.
- Other tools in my arsenal are: Design Patterns, Scrum, User-Centered Design, Usability Testing, Team Building, Individual Mentoring, and asking good questions.

## Education

- North Carolina State University, **M.S. in Operations Research**, 2005  
Thesis Title: *Predicting Helicopter Faults by Analyzing the Stability of Vibration Time Series*
- Appalachian State University, **B.S. in Computer Science and Applied Mathematics**, 2002
- Graduate of the Center for Creative Leadership's **Foundations in Leadership** program, 2008.

## Memberships and Volunteer Activities

- Member of Usability Professionals Association, Society for Technical Communication, Interaction Design Association and the ACM

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- Participated in seven mission trips, including two to Belize and two to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Helped lead five of the trips.
- Three-year voting delegate to the Annual Convention for the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina.
- Member of the Youth Advisory Committee at St. Michael's Episcopal Church. Active mentor for middle school and high school youth.

## References

- References are available upon request.

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