Sarah Gruneisen

Engineering Leader & Leadership Development Strategist

Hi! I'm Sarah. I was born and raised in California, USA and I've always loved psychology, science, and exploring other cultures. Shortly after graduating, I moved to Switzerland and spent most of my twenties traveling and exploring other cultures. In my thirties, I started a family and am now a mother of three living in The Netherlands. Though I'm grounded now, I'll have a forever adventurous soul!

WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT ME

I worked together with Sarah at bol.com. Sarah truly understands how genuine, honest, and sometimes even confrontational interest and coaching are essential in bringing out the best in every individual that makes up a team. And the wonder of it all, Sarah can do this at scale"

– Lean van Tegelen, Manager IT at bol.com

"She has had a profound impact on my growth, both personally and professionally. Sarah brings not only deep technical knowledge but also an exceptional approach to leadership and people management. Sarah's skill in identifying areas for development and helping others harness their strengths is remarkable. Her guidance has helped me recognize key areas to improve upon, while also showing me how to make the most of my existing strengths. Her feedback is both constructive and empowering, which has made a significant difference in my confidence and effectiveness in my role."

– Nikola Soljaga, Software Dev Manager at Albert Heijn

"Sarah is an amazing engineering manager. Her management style is characterized by creating a safe environment and truly connecting with people, establishing trust. Her way ignites and empowers others to step out of their comfort zone and take a leap, enabling growth. It was a pleasure to work with Sarah as my engineering manager"

– Christiaan van Walree, Senior Software Engineer at bol.com

"Sarah is a highly skilled scrum coach and liberation structure evangelist, knowing the Agile methodology inside out, not only the theory but especially on how to implement and change the whole organization (not just development) to become agile.

Sarah is a team leader with high empathy and is very good at managing a team with developers. She was able to change our development team, especially junior developers, into a self-steering team, that is not only able to set boundaries and continuously improve itself but also reaches out to the organization to help."

–Cor Zijlstra, CTO at Onetrail

See more testimonials on LinkedIn and here:
https://www.linkedin.com/in/sgruneisen/details/recommendations
https://www.avagasso.com/praise

VALUES

- Trust
- Autonomy
- Authenticity
- Reliability
- Appreciation

QUALIFICATIONS

- The Influential Communication Programme
- Liberating Structures Immersion Workshop
- Stretch to Fit
- Dare to Lead™
- Leaders Who Coach
- TSS Public Academy Advanced + Insights Coaching

COMPETENCIES

- Author
- Engineering Leadership
- Product Development and Centricity
- Leadership & Coaching
- Team Leadership & Building
- Courageous Conversations
- Empowerment & Liberation
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Mindful Facilitation
- Product Development
- Liberating Structures
- Holacracy
- Agile Methodologies
- Communication Skills
- Preparing Trainings
- Innovation Development
- Organizational Development
- Problem-Solving
- Community Development
- Business Development
- Software Engineer 20+ years
- Leadership 15+ years

Sarah Gruneisen

Engineering Leader & Leadership Development Strategist

20 years+ Full Stack Software Engineering & Agile Coaching Experience. Highly experienced in creating empowered engineering teams that deliver results. Successful track record of establishing Agile teams, launching products, and integrating new organizational processes. Leading teams with compassion, creativity, and authenticity. Highly organized and comfortable in dynamic, complex environments.

EDUCATION

BS in Computer Science and Engineering, 2000: University of California, Davis

LEADERSHIP EXPERTISE

Leadership & Coaching: Leadership, Leader Who Coaches, Agile Coaching, Organizational Change, Consulting

Engineering Leadership: DevOps, DevEx, Software Engineering, Integration Leadership, Design Architecture

Delivery & System Expertise: Change Management, Backend & Frontend Development, Database Development

I'm a **reformer** who focuses on guiding companies and teams during a transformative journey.

I devote my time to tackling your biggest challenges. I'm set on making the needed impact, which will remain after I complete the project scope.

When I feel I can leave without the risk of teams returning to their old ways, I know I've made the impact I wanted without making them dependent on my presence.

That's when I know I have truly succeeded as a leader!

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Leadership Coach and Facilitator | Avagasso Coaching
Jan 2022 - current (~3.5+ years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Founder of Avagasso Coaching and creator of an integrated leadership ecosystem including The Leadership Leap book, The Breath of the Dragon flipbook, Leadership Landing Program, Leadership Ignite, Team Accelerator, Dragon Exercises Workbook, and community-based leadership events and workshops. Provides leadership consulting to companies seeking high-impact transformation, psychological safety, values-driven leadership, and engineering team empowerment.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Visionary strategy, deep-coaching transformation, system-wide leadership development, human-centric organizational change.
- ***Skills:*** Leadership Coaching, Group Coaching, Leadership Consulting, Liberating Structures, Strategic Program Design, Content Creation, Organizational Coaching.

Senior Engineering Manager | Last Mile Solutions
Jul 2025 – current
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Leading the FinOps team and the Customer Profiles team, driving cross-team engineering excellence (EngEx), developer experience initiatives, and product-aligned impact.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Transformative engineering leadership, developer experience elevation, systems thinking, cross-product strategic alignment.
- ***Skills***: Engineering Management, Product Strategy, Developer Experience, Agile Leadership, Stakeholder Alignment, Leadership Coaching, Team Empowerment.

Senior Engineering Manager | Albert Heijn
June 2024 - June 2025 (1 year)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Engineering Manager for Supply Chain Store Replenishment, Mentor Program contributor, and active member of the Engineering Manager SIG.
- ***Leadership Abilities: High-performing*** team culture, Agile leadership, cross-department collaboration.
- ***Skills:*** Product Strategy, Architecture Strategy, Agile Methods, Liberating Structures, Diversity & Inclusion, Leadership Coaching.

ENGINEERING EXPERTISE

Core Engineering:
Java, C/C++, Ruby, PHP, JavaScript/TypeScript, Angular, Perl, Shell Scripting, SQL, MySQL, Oracle, PL/SQL.

Cloud & Infrastructure:
AWS (EC2, S3, Kinesis), Kubernetes, Docker, Jenkins, GitLab CI.

Architecture & Integration:
Service-Driven Architecture, Event-Driven Architecture, API design, TIBCO, RUP, Extreme Programming, Netcool/Proviso.

Automation & Configuration:
Chef (Basic–Intermediate), CI/CD pipelines, test automation frameworks.

Enterprise Systems:
SharePoint (MOSS, Server 2007), SilverStream Server, Infranet Billing Systems.

Web Development:
Front-end frameworks, web app design, CGI, accessibility-oriented design.

Formal Training:
Cloud & container fundamentals, configuration management, Java/J2EE development, Microsoft server technologies, telecom system administration, and full-stack engineering foundations.
Web Development (E-Commerce)

VOLUNTEER

Provided full-program scholarships to underrepresented individuals in every Avagasso Leadership Landing cohort, expanding access to leadership development.

Co-organizer DevOpsDays Amsterdam & Eindhoven
Jun 2018 - Jan 2022

CONTACT

Find me on LinkedIn:

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director of Engineering | Novoda
Sep 2022 - June 2024 (~2 years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Shaped engineering strategy, strengthened business growth, and co-built the company's career and performance framework.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Holacratic leadership, organizational empowerment, cross-team alignment.
- ***Skills:*** Strategic Leadership, Business Development, Holacracy, Engineering Excellence.

Senior Engineering Manager | bol.com
Jan 2021 - Aug 2022 (~1.5 years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Drove engineering innovation, Agile transformation, and diversity initiatives across multiple teams.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** High-performing team leadership, psychological safety, autonomy-building.
- ***Skills:*** Agile Methods, Liberating Structures, Diversity & Inclusion, Team Development.

R&D Team Lead / Agile Coach | Onetrail
Jan 2019 - Dec 2020 (~2 years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Led R&D initiatives, modernized internal tools, and guided the company through its Agile transformation.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Technical leadership, Agile coaching, cross-team facilitation.
- ***Skills:*** Agile Coaching, Scrum, PowerApps, Jira API, Angular.

Mission Critical Software Engineer | Schuberg Philis
Aug 2016 - Dec 2018 (~2.5 years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Engineered automation frameworks for mission-critical environments and contributed to internal engineering communities.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Technical innovation, collaborative facilitation.
- ***Skills:*** Chef, Ruby, Java, Kubernetes, SharePoint, Jenkins, Gitlab CI.

Senior Software Engineer | Woodwing Software
Oct 2015 - Jul 2016 (~9 months)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Delivered backend components for enterprise DAM systems and collaborated across product teams.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Technical problem-solving, cross-functional alignment.
- ***Skills:*** AWS, Kafka, Java, Scala, Elasticsearch, Big Data.

CEO & Software Engineer | Avagasso GmbH
Apr 2010 - Oct 2015 (~5.5 years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Founded and led a boutique software company delivering end-to-end enterprise solutions.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Entrepreneurship, strategic planning, full-cycle execution.
- ***Skills:*** SharePoint, AWS, Java, PHP, Ruby on Rails.

Head of Software Engineering | Smarcom AG
Jan 2009 - Dec 2010 (~2 years)
- ***Roles & Solutions:*** Led software engineering and modernized remote coordination frameworks across international teams.
- ***Leadership Abilities:*** Process innovation, technical leadership, cross-team collaboration.
- ***Skills:*** Java (Spring, JSP), Event-Driven Architecture, PL/SQL, MySQL.

EARLIER CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Before stepping into engineering leadership roles, I built a strong technical and product foundation through:

- *Enterprise Solution Architecture & Product Ownership:* Led SharePoint and lifecycle management initiatives (MondayCoffee, Sunrise), driving cross-functional alignment and improving customer and system performance.

- *Software Development & Systems Engineering:* Delivered mission-critical telecom and integration projects across Europe and the US (Alcatel CH & USA, Cambridge Tech Partners), gaining deep experience in Java, C/C++, Oracle, scripting, and distributed systems.

- *Foundational Roles in Web, Customer Service & Research:* Built early web systems at UC Davis and developed service, organizational, and communication skills through customer-facing and academic support roles.

I'm looking for roles where I can create strategic, human-centered, values-aligned impact; ideally in positions such as Senior Engineering Manager, Director of Engineering, Head of Engineering, or Leadership Consultant.

I'm interested in positions that are remote or offer a hybrid arrangement with periodic travel.