

# Simon James Prior

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## Profile

I have spent 15+ years doing one thing with genuine passion: making quality matter. Not as a gate at the end of delivery, but as a discipline that sits at the heart of how great engineering teams work. Across Cybersecurity, Aviation, Gambling, and Productivity Software, I have built QE functions from scratch, transformed inherited ones, and led organisations of up to 120 professionals through the kind of change that actually sticks.

Recognised as European Testing Manager of the Year (2021) and Global QA Leader of the Year (2025), I bring deep technical credibility alongside the leadership instincts to bring people with me. I care about building teams that grow, cultures that own quality, and practices that outlast my tenure. AI is not a buzzword in my work: I have been designing agent-based QE workflows and building with the Anthropic API, and I believe we are at a genuinely exciting inflection point for the discipline.

Outside of the day job, I co-host the Testing Peers podcast, organise PeersCon, and write and speak about the future of quality engineering. Community is not an add-on for me: it is part of how I think about the profession and my responsibility to it.

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## Core Skills & Expertise

<b>AI &amp; Automation</b>	AI agent workflow design for QE; tools: Claude API (agent building and personal app development), Gemini, Notion AI, Atlassian Rovo; LLM-assisted test strategy, defect analysis and documentation; personal projects built on React, Supabase, Vercel and Anthropic API
<b>Leadership</b>	QE organisation design, Director-level stakeholder management, team scaling, budget ownership (up to £10m), supplier/vendor management
<b>Strategy</b>	Shift-left transformation, AI-augmented QE workflows, automation strategy, risk-based testing, quality governance
<b>Technical</b>	Playwright, XCUITest, CI/CD integration, SDET practices, test environment management, performance & security testing
<b>Frameworks</b>	Agile / Scrum, ITIL 4, ISTQB Advanced Test Manager, risk-based testing, OKRs
<b>Community</b>	International keynote speaker, podcast host (70k+ downloads), conference organiser, mentoring & coaching
<b>Certifications</b>	ITIL 4 Foundation   ISTQB Advanced Test Manager   Diploma in Project Management   BSc (Hons) Computer Science

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## Employment History

### Goodnotes

Jul 2025 – Mar 2026

#### **Head of Quality Engineering**

Goodnotes was a genuine 0-to-1 challenge: I joined as the company's first ever Head of Quality Engineering, tasked with building a modern QE function inside one of the world's most popular productivity apps (30M+ users). With a fully remote team of 22 QEs spread across 18 product teams in Hong Kong, Europe and the UK, plus third-party QEs in Vietnam, the mandate was clear: remove the bottlenecks, shift quality left, and make every engineer feel ownership of it.

- Restructured and scaled the QE function: hired and onboarded new QEs, defined team standards, and created clear lead pathways to retain top talent
- Designed and implemented a Shift-Left QE strategy, embedding QEs earlier in sprint planning and product design cycles to catch defects upstream and reduce late-stage bug costs
- Introduced AI agents to remove manual testing bottlenecks, replacing high-friction repetitive steps with intelligent automation across the QE workflow

- Led migration of legacy test suites to a modern automation framework (XCUITest, Playwright), covering iOS, Android and web surfaces across the full product
- Integrated automated test pipelines into CI/CD, enabling faster, more confident releases and contributing to a measurable reduction in production incidents
- Built QE frameworks for scale: providing engineering teams with tooling, patterns, and documentation to write and own their own tests, shifting quality ownership closer to development
- Partnered with Engineering leadership to elevate QE from a gating function to a strategic discipline, influencing quality at the architecture and planning level
- Commissioned and led a cross-functional Quality Audit (QE, Product and Engineering) across iOS, Android and Web: presented a prioritised improvement roadmap covering functional gaps, performance bottlenecks, accessibility shortfalls, and UX concerns directly to the C-suite
- Mentored and upskilled engineers across seniority levels, creating pathways to QE lead roles and fostering a culture of quality ownership across cross-functional teams

## **easyJet**

Jan 2020 – Mar 2025

### ***Head of Technology – Quality Engineering***

Jan 2022 – Mar 2025

Five years at easyJet, and the scale of this role was unlike anything I had tackled before: 120 testing professionals, a £10m budget, and quality coverage across every corner of a major airline's technology estate, from customer-facing digital products to operational systems that keep aircraft flying. My focus was always on building something sustainable: a QE organisation with genuine capability, clear principles, and the culture to keep improving without needing me in the room.

- Member of the Technology Leadership Team, reporting to the Director of Technology and shaping direction for the wider IT organisation
- Owned a £10m annual budget covering permanent staff, training, supplier resourcing, and tools/licensing
- Led a £2m+ RFP process to onboard a new Quality Engineering partner, focused on Automation, Test Environments and Test Architecture
- Authored and published easyJet's Quality Engineering Principles, underpinning all QE activity across the organisation
- Line managed the Senior QE Leadership team of 6 Senior QE Managers and the Lead QE Architect
- Established a Quality Engineering Transformation Group introducing new roles: QE Architects, Test Environment Managers, and SDETs
- Led the rebranding from Quality Assurance to Quality Engineering, including a company-wide education and awareness programme
- Managed strategic supplier relationships across onshore, nearshore and offshore testing services
- Served on the IT Crisis Management Team (rotating on-call), coordinating IT response to operational incidents, cyber events and infrastructure failures
- Co-chaired the Disability Empowerment Network: a DEI employee community supporting colleagues with all disabilities across the business

### ***Senior Test Manager (Digital)***

Apr 2021 – Jan 2022

Stepped into a broader remit following the pandemic restructure, leading testing across easyJet's entire digital estate: Web, Mobile, Customer Contact Centre and supporting back-end systems, alongside end-to-end project test coordination across all technology functions.

- Led a team of 30+ testers, test managers, and test architects (permanent and third-party)
- Built a modern QE strategy for all digital testing, shifting left on Performance, Security, and all forms of Test Automation
- Introduced Requirement Testability Assessments and Risk-Based Testing across the function
- Founded and ran the internal Test Guild: a community of practice for improving testing practices across easyJet

### ***Test Manager (Core QA)***

Jan 2020 – Mar 2021

Hired to establish a centralised QA function supporting all platform teams: from Digital (Web and Mobile) through to Airline Operations, HR and Payroll systems.

- Defined test strategy for the centralised function and created reusable templates across testing teams
- Built an Automation Strategy to complement manual testing with targeted automation investment

- Managed offshore team for end-to-end regression; introduced shift-left practices to involve QA earlier in delivery

## **Camelot UK Lotteries**

Nov 2018 – Dec 2019

### ***QA Programme Manager***

Led the Projects team within a centralised QA organisation, providing system integration testing assurance for all Gaming, Digital and Corporate systems delivered by third parties.

- Line managed one Test Manager and an overall test team of 12 permanent staff and 8 contractors
- Rewrote and implemented the overall Test Strategy for the QA function; defined new quality metrics using a Risk-Based Testing approach
- Implemented Testability Assessments on requirements and designs to shift QA effort left
- Organised internal QA conference with external experts; built a collaborative knowledge-sharing culture across the function
- Served as Mental Health First Aider for the IT department

## **McAfee Inc**

Mar 2007 – Nov 2018

### ***Software QA Engineering Manager – Production Operations & Web Security***

May 2017 – Nov 2018

After a decade of growing from graduate developer into QA Lead, I moved into my first management role at McAfee, looking after QA teams across two product lines in Aylesbury (UK) and Cork (Ireland). This is where I learnt what it really means to lead people through quality: setting the bar, coaching to it, and making sure engineers on both sides of the QA boundary understood why it mattered.

- Line managed two QA teams including hiring, performance reviews, and coaching on QA best practices
- Defined test strategies and quality metrics for production releases; established combinatorial test environment modelling to optimise coverage
- Collaborated with Content Release Operations to ensure daily content shipped at high quality
- Acted as QA stakeholder for all projects, embedding quality requirements from project inception

### ***Software QA Lead – Production Operations***

Jun 2014 – May 2017

Led QA activities for the Production Operations team: defining testing approaches, coordinating releases, and coaching junior testers.

### ***Software QA Lead – Anti-Virus Engine***

Dec 2010 – Jun 2014

Led QA for McAfee's core Anti-Virus Engine team, defining test strategies for complex security software and working closely with engineering.

### ***Software Development Engineer & Scrum Master***

Mar 2007 – Nov 2010

Started career as a C++ software developer before moving into QA. Held Scrum Master responsibilities across a 4-year period, facilitating Agile delivery practices across engineering teams.

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## **Industry Recognition & Community Leadership**

- European Testing Manager of the Year 2021 (European Software Testing Awards): recognised for People Leadership, Quality evangelism, and contributions to the wider testing community
  - Practitest Global QA Leader of the Year 2025: international recognition for leadership and impact across the QA profession
  - International keynote speaker: TestBash 2022, National Software Testing Conference, ConTest NYC, and multiple UK and international events
  - Co-host of Testing Peers podcast: 140+ episodes, 70,000+ downloads; one of the most listened-to shows in the software testing community ([testingpeers.com](https://testingpeers.com))
  - Co-organiser of Testing Peers Conference: now in its third year; most recent edition March 2026 with 250+ attendees ([testingpeerscon.com](https://testingpeerscon.com))
  - Founder of Lead Test Include: personal mentoring practice and blog covering software testing and engineering leadership ([leadtestinclude.com](https://leadtestinclude.com))
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## Education

**BSc (Hons) Computer Science, 2:1** : University of Hull, 2006

Wisbech Grammar School: A Levels: Computing (C), Maths (B), Physics (C) | 9 GCSEs grades A & B including Maths and English