DESIRE KALEBA

Senior Full-Stack & AI Engineer

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SUMMARY

Full-stack engineer with 7 years in production. I built two products alone: **PageVow**, an AI page builder with paying customers and zero marketing spend, and **VelaBid**, a real-time car-auction marketplace. At **StartupBlink** I lead seven engineers on a platform 40+ governments rely on, serving ~18M requests a month at a ~70% cache-hit rate. I work AI-first, and I review and own everything that ships.

EXPERIENCE

StartupBlink · Lead Full-Stack Engineer

Oct 2023 – Present

Remote · Full-Stack Engineer, Oct 2022 – Sep 2023 · desirekaleba.github.io/work/startupblink

- Lead seven engineers on a startup-ecosystem intelligence platform that ranks 300,000+ startups across 2,000+ cities in 118 countries and is relied on by 40+ government clients.
- Run a Cloudflare-fronted, Redis-cached platform serving 37K+ unique visitors a day and ~18M requests a month at a ~70% cache-hit rate.
- Led an end-to-end platform refactor that raised user engagement 35% in 5 months.
- Migrated legacy JavaScript into a TypeScript Turborepo of 10+ packages and apps (Node.js, tRPC, Prisma, MySQL, Redis, Next.js); its shared services are reused across 5+ apps.
- Reworked CI/CD for 2+ production deploys a week and cut deployment time by 50%.
- Brought structured AI-assisted engineering to the team: coding agents, MCP integrations, custom skills and multi-agent workflows, with human review on everything that ships.

PRODUCTS I BUILT ALONE

PageVow · Founder and solo engineer

Mar 2026 – Present

pagevow.com · case study: desirekaleba.github.io/work/pagevow

- AI page builder for birthdays, proposals, graduations and weddings: letters, albums and invitations in five languages. 123 people have made 600+ pages and sent 79 requests for team-made pages, with zero marketing spend; first $200 in organic revenue.
- Charged from day one: a hardened Paystack boundary with signed checkout tokens, idempotent and replay-fingerprinted webhooks, server-enforced amounts and a persistent security audit trail.
- AI pages are written only from the customer’s own notes, then validated and optionally reviewed by a person; unchecked model output is never published.
- TypeScript Turborepo (Next.js, NestJS, Drizzle, PostgreSQL, Cloudflare R2): 640+ commits and 373 test files, from unit tests to API integration tests on a real Postgres and 52 Playwright journeys.

VelaBid · Founder and solo engineer

Oct 2025 – Present

velabid.com · invite-only beta · case study: desirekaleba.github.io/work/velabid

- Real-time collector-car auctions: server-validated bids placed with optimistic locking and atomic Redis steps, a soft close that stops sniping, reserve prices and buy-now.
- Escrowed Stripe payments with automated settlement and payouts, modelled as recoverable state transitions; KYC checkpoints, dispute handling and a full audit log.
- Event-driven NestJS backend with BullMQ workers, Next.js frontend, Drizzle on PostgreSQL (RDS), S3/CloudFront media and OpenTelemetry + Prometheus. Built in about three months (176 commits), with integration tests for bids, the soft close and settlement.

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

Entendre Finance · Software Engineer (Contract) Sep 2022 – May 2023

Remote (New York) · acquired by MoonPay

- Built serverless backend infrastructure (Node.js, AWS Lambda, MongoDB) in an Nx/Lerna monorepo, powering automated crypto accounting across millions of on-chain transactions.
- Integrated 5+ blockchain networks, including Solana, Arbitrum and Optimism; shared modules cut the effort to onboard each new chain.

Side Hustle · Node.js Mentor & Curriculum Developer Feb 2022 – Dec 2022

- Mentored 1,800+ developers in backend engineering and system design; wrote the Node.js curriculum and produced 50+ training videos.

Manaknight Digital · Senior Backend / Full-Stack Engineer May 2021 – Jul 2022

Remote (Toronto)

- Built backend services and APIs for 5 client products and e-commerce platforms (Node.js, PHP, AWS, MongoDB, OAuth2), including a Go service for a client integration and custom Shopify integrations.
- Cut latency 67% through backend architecture and query optimization; reduced production incidents by introducing automated testing and structured code review.

FastoServices · Software Engineer (Backend / Cloud) Oct 2019 – May 2021

Kampala, Uganda

- Deployed cloud-native services on AWS (Fargate, SNS, SQS) with Docker, Terraform and Ansible; instrumented Datadog observability across client engagements.

Fulusi · Full-Stack Engineer Aug 2019 – Oct 2019

Kampala, Uganda · React, Redux, Django

SKILLS

Languages	TypeScript, JavaScript, Go, Python, SQL
Backend	Node.js, NestJS, tRPC, REST, GraphQL, WebSockets (Socket.IO), BullMQ, event-driven and serverless systems
Frontend	React, Next.js
Data	PostgreSQL, MySQL, MongoDB, Redis, Prisma, Drizzle
Cloud	AWS (Lambda, ECS/Fargate, RDS, S3, SQS, SNS), Cloudflare, Docker, Kubernetes, Terraform, CI/CD
Quality	Playwright, Jest, Cypress, Supertest, Datadog, OpenTelemetry, Prometheus
Payments	Stripe, Paystack
AI	OpenAI and Claude APIs, coding agents, MCP, custom skills, multi-agent workflows, RAG, structured outputs

EDUCATION

BSc Computer Science · International University of East Africa, Kampala

AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner · Advanced React (Triplebyte) · English and French (professional), Swahili (native)