

GISLI OLAFSSON

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Leirdalur 18, 260 Reykjanesbaer, Iceland

KEY COMPETENCIES

Leadership	Diplomacy	Strong presentation skills	Team leadership
Crisis Response	Negotiations	Resource Mobilization	C-level Roles (CEO, 2x CTO)
Digital Transformation	Business development	Operations management	NATO/EU Security Clearance

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

PRINCIPAL & FOUNDER

FEB 2026 -

Gridland Consulting - Reykjavik, Iceland

Executive level AI advisor

- Wrote two books on the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in organizations and nations
- Created a proprietary set of AI Assessment Tools for organizations and individuals
- Created and sold over 50 AI agents for professionals
- Advisor to governments and heads of state

SECRETARY GENERAL

FEB 2025 - FEB 2026

Icelandic Red Cross - Reykjavik, Iceland

Secretary General (CEO) of the Icelandic Red Cross national society.

- Oversaw the daily management of nationwide Red Cross activities with 105 staff and 2500 volunteers.
- Responsible for ensuring the financial sustainability of the organization.
- Responsible for revamping the fundraising operations of the organization.
- Responsible for driving digital transformation activities.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

SEP 2021 - NOV 2024

Althingi - Reykjavik, Iceland

Elected Member of Parliament in my native country of Iceland, serving the Southwestern constituency area around Reykjavik.

- Served as deputy speaker of parliament, deputy chair of the Industries Committee, deputy chair of the Economic Affairs and Trade Committee, and deputy member of the Foreign Affairs Committee - overseeing foreign affairs, development & defense.
- Established a reputation as a consensus-builder, fostering collaboration across political factions.

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

SEP 2019 - JUN 2021

One Acre Fund - Kigali, Rwanda

Led the digital transformation of a decade old pan-African non-profit organization that has helped 1.2 million smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa escape extreme poverty.

- Built and led a diverse team of over 83 professionals spanning Development, Product Management, Business Intelligence, Enterprise Services, IT Operations, and Information Security.
- Oversaw the organization's migration from legacy solutions to data-driven systems, empowering farmers and field-based staff with timely, actionable insights.

SENIOR HUMANITARIAN ADVISOR**JAN 2019 - AUG 2019****NetHope - Reykjavik, Iceland (Remote)**

Provided expert consultancy to a global consortium of 65 leading NGOs, focusing on resource mobilization, program design, and data strategy. Strengthened capacity-building initiatives worldwide and supported emergency operations.

- Advised senior leadership team on designing and scaling field operations, enhancing overall humanitarian impact.
- Advised on data-driven decision-making, leading to more targeted and efficient humanitarian interventions.
- Conducted capacity-building sessions across regions, empowering local teams to leverage digital tools effectively.
- Offered strategic counsel during emergencies, helping optimize resource deployment and crisis response.

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER / CEO U.S. OPERATIONS**OCT 2015 - DEC 2018****Beringer Finance - Palo Alto, CA, USA**

Established the Silicon Valley presence for a century-old, technology-focused Nordic investment bank. Led the digital transformation of worldwide operations.

- Modernized the bank's technology infrastructure, introducing data-driven solutions to streamline operations.
- Worked with startups and established firms from the Nordic region on fundraising and M&A while engaging with global accelerator programs to share industry insights.
- Represented the firm at global events, highlighting emerging opportunities in the Nordics.
- Led the adoption of Salesforce as a CRM platform.
- Responsible for overall U.S. operations, budget, finances, human resources, and financial planning.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE DIRECTOR / HUMANITARIAN DIRECTOR**OCT 2010 - OCT 2015****NetHope - Geneva, Switzerland / Seattle, WA, USA (Remote)**

Built and led a global emergency response program for a consortium of 65 major NGOs. Coordinated field operations in more than 20 disasters worldwide, while also shaping high-level policies on technology use within the humanitarian sector.

- Deployed to frontline disaster zones, coordinating emergency telecommunication and information management efforts for field operations, and participated in and led the inter-agency collaboration on telecommunication.
- Forged strong partnerships with leading UN agencies and large tech companies, aligning resources for rapid humanitarian relief.
- Championed open data sharing and policy design, ensuring more efficient communication and coordination on the ground.
- Secured extensive public-private partnerships, attracting repeat support from major technology founders and foundations, enabling NetHope to sustain critical relief projects.
- Global NGO representative in the Global Emergency Telecommunication Cluster.
- Deployed internet connections in over 300 locations in West Africa during the 2014-2015 Ebola Outbreak, enabling radically improved information sharing that enhanced the response efforts.

TRUSTED ADVISOR / DISASTER RESPONSE FIELD LEAD**JUL 2007 - OCT 2010****Microsoft Corporation - Reykjavik, Iceland (Remote)**

Served as a trusted advisor to international organizations and governments on digital transformation for disaster preparedness and response. Helped form Microsoft's Disaster Response Team and led field operations during major global disasters, coordinating with United Nations agencies and partner NGOs.

- Guided CIOs of national governments and international organizations in developing ICT strategies that enhanced disaster readiness and response capabilities.
- Spearheaded the distributed development of a UN coordination platform for multinational humanitarian operations, deployed and used by UN OCHA during the Myanmar Cyclone response in 2008 and the Haiti Earthquake in 2010.
- Led the creation of a platform for sharing climate information collected by UNEP.
- Facilitated the establishment of a number of public-private partnerships in the crisis response and environmental space.
- Served as an on-site trusted advisor to the World Health Organization during the 2009 Swine Flu pandemic.
- Connected Microsoft's engineering and CSR efforts, ensuring real-world impact through technology deployment.

PARTNER GROUP MANAGER / ACTING COUNTRY DIRECTOR**JUN 2003 - JUN 2007****Microsoft Iceland - Reykjavik, Iceland**

Part of the leadership team that formed Microsoft's Icelandic subsidiary, growing the office from two employees to 20 and revenue from \$2M to \$20M. Managed the partner channel's sales and marketing functions while consistently exceeding targets. Advised top Icelandic corporations on digital transformation strategy and innovation.

- Rebuilt the local partner channel, elevating sales performance and market penetration.
- Delivered technology-focused guidance to C-level executives in multiple industries, driving widespread IT adoption.
- Led technical evangelism initiatives, hosting developer events and conferences across Iceland and Europe.
- Served as Acting Country Manager in 2006, overseeing financial planning, human resources, and operational management.

CEO & FOUNDER**FEB 2002 - MAY 2003****Gridland - Reykjavik, Iceland**

Launched an IT consulting and software development startup focused on civil protection solutions. Provided technical due diligence for all Icelandic startups reviewed by the country's only venture capital fund. Developed and sold a search-and-rescue and disaster management coordination application.

- Created a niche software solution tailored to emergency coordination, improving operational effectiveness for civil protection agencies.
- Advised investors and founders on technology viability, influencing funding decisions within Iceland's early startup ecosystem.

SENIOR IT CONSULTANT**JAN 2001 - JAN 2002****IMG Capacent - Reykjavik, Iceland**

Pioneered a dedicated IT consulting arm within Iceland's largest consulting firm. Offered strategic guidance to major Icelandic enterprises, aligning technology investments with overarching business goals.

- Established IT as a core service area, expanding the firm's consulting portfolio.
- Delivered strategic roadmaps to clients in diverse sectors, enhancing ROI on technology initiatives.
- Collaborated with the client's executive teams to fine-tune digital transformation strategies, optimizing internal processes.

LEAD PROGRAM MANAGER**JUL 1998 - JAN 2001****Microsoft Corporation - Redmond, WA, USA**

Oversaw the development of Digital Dashboard (predecessor to SharePoint Portal Server) and Microsoft Repository/SQL Server Metadata Services. Successfully integrated new features into major Microsoft product releases on time and at scale.

- Managed a team of three program managers, 20 developers, and 10 testers.
- Coordinated cross-departmental collaboration, delivering multiple Resource Kits within tight timelines.
- Shipped technologies across SQL Server and Visual Studio, reinforcing Microsoft's market leadership.
- Regularly presented at Microsoft conferences worldwide, showcasing groundbreaking solutions to diverse audiences.

PROGRAM MANAGER**MAY 1996 - JUN 1998****Medtronic Corporation - Stockholm, Sweden**

Led software development and testing for medical diagnostics at a major healthcare technology firm. Managed a 17-person team and secured CE/FDA certification for processes, ensuring regulatory compliance and product safety.

- Directed a cross-functional engineering group that consistently met stringent medical device standards.
- Streamlined development workflows to uphold rigorous compliance requirements while advancing product innovation.
- Oversaw documentation and testing procedures that met CE/FDA benchmarks, supporting market expansion.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

SEP 1994 - MAY 1996

Nervus - Reykjavik, Iceland

Developed software solutions for neurological diagnostics, specializing in embedded digital signal processing. Contributed to both the low-level chip programming and the overarching business-layer architecture of the product suite.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

SEP 1993 - AUG 1994

Rank Xerox - Welwyn G.C., UK

Designed and tested device drivers for color laser printers, leading proofs-of-concept for potential patent filings. Helped enhance printing accuracy and performance to meet evolving market demands.

DEVELOPER

JAN 1986 - AUG 1991

Axel Software - Reykjavik, Iceland

Developed administrative software for secondary schools, managing grade, attendance, and progress tracking while still attending secondary school. Gained early programming experience and contributed to the digitization of school management systems.

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Master of Arts in Development Studies (2024)

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Chemistry (1994)

OTHER ROLES

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

Ushahidi (2024-), Icelandic Red Cross (2018-2020), WeRobotics (2016-2020), ISCRAM (2013-2016)

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Hafnarfjordur Rescue Team (1994-), King Country EOC Support Team (1998-2001 & 2012-2014), Capitol Area SAR Incident Management Team (2001-2019), Nation SAR Command (2005-2009), ICE-SAR USAR Team Lead (2005-2010), UNDAC Team Member (2005-2012), Iceland Host Nation Support Team (2024-)

PUBLICATIONS

- [The AI Fluent Nation](#) - Non-fiction book on how nations adapt to AI - Self-Published on Amazon - 2026
- [The AI Fluent Leader](#) - Non-fiction book on how AI affects leadership - Self-Published on Amazon - 2026
- [The Motivated Leader](#) - Non-fiction book on motivating teams - Self-published on Amazon - 2026
- [The Role of Technology in Humanitarian Assistance: Opportunities and Challenges](#) - Master Thesis - 2024
- [The Guide to Usefulness of Existing AI Solutions in Nonprofit Organizations - Part 1 - Humanitarian AI](#) - Published by NetHope in 2024
- [A People & Purpose Approach to Humanitarian Data Information Security and Privacy](#) - Published by Procedia Engineering - 2016
- [The Crisis Leader](#) - Non-fiction book on leadership in times of crisis - Self-published on Amazon - 2014 & 2025
- [World Disaster Report 2013](#) - Published by the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent
- [Vision for the Future - Position Paper](#) - Published as part of Wilson Center for International Scholars 2012 Policy Roundtable on Connecting Grassroots to Government for Disaster Management
- [Humanitarian Response in the Age of Mass Collaboration and Networked Intelligence](#) - Published as part of ISCRAM 2012 conference proceedings.
- [Information and Communication Technology Usage in the 2010 Pakistan Floods](#) - Case study published by NetHope in 2011.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Fall 2022 - Bifröst University - Applied Crisis Response - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2022 - University of Iceland - Coping With Disasters - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2021 - Bifröst University - Applied Crisis Response - Teacher
- Fall 2021 - University of Iceland - Coping With Disasters - Teacher
- Fall 2021 - University of Michigan - Crisis Informatics - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2020 - University of Michigan - Crisis Informatics - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2019 - University of Michigan - Crisis Informatics - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2018 - University of Michigan - Crisis Informatics - Guest lecturer
- Summer 2018 - NetHope - Emergency Response Training Course - Lead trainer
- Winter 2018 - Reykjavik University - Master in Project Management - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2017 - University of Michigan - Crisis Informatics - Guest lecturer
- Spring 2017 - Georgetown University - Emergency and Disaster Management Program - Guest lecturer
- Summer 2014 - University of Washington - Emergency Management - Guest lecturer
- Spring 2014 - Reykjavik University - Master in Project Management - Guest lecturer
- Fall 2013 - Tulane University - Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy - Guest lecturer
- Spring 2013 - World Food Program - OpEx Bravo Training - Facilitator
- Fall 2011 - Penn State - Crisis Informatics - Guest lecturer
- Spring 2011 - EU ECHO - Information Management Course - Trainer
- Fall 2010 - Tulane University - Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy - Guest lecturer & Researcher
- Fall 2010 - EU ECHO - Information Management Course - Trainer
- Fall 2009 - IFRC - Disaster Management Induction Course - Trainer
- Summer 2009 - UN OCHA - Information Management Course - Trainer
- Fall 2004 - Reykjavik University - .net and Web Services - Teacher
- Spring 2004 - Reykjavik University - .net and Web Services - Teacher
- Fall 2003 - Reykjavik University - .net and Web Services - Teacher
- Spring 2003 - Reykjavik University - .net and Web Services - Teacher
- Fall 2002 - Reykjavik University - .net and Web Services - Teacher

DISASTER DEPLOYMENTS

- 2025 - Grindavik Eruption, Iceland - National EOC
- 2024 - Grindavik Eruption, Iceland - National EOC, Regional EOC
- 2023 - Grindavik Eruption, Iceland - National EOC, Regional EOC
- 2019 - Cyclone Idai, Mozambique - NetHope Coordination
- 2017 - Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico - NetHope Coordination
- 2015 - European Refugee Crisis - NetHope Coordination
- 2015 - Earthquake, Nepal - NetHope Coordination & NGO ETC Coordinator
- 2015 - Cyclone, Vanuatu - NetHope Coordination
- 2014-2015 - West Africa Ebola Outbreak - NetHope Coordination
- 2014 - Holuhraun Eruption, Iceland - National EOC
- 2013 - Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines - NetHope Coordination & NGO ETC Coordinator
- 2012 - Typhoon Pablo, Philippines - NetHope Coordination
- 2011 - Horn of Africa Famine - NetHope Coordination
- 2011 - Earthquake & Tsunami, Japan - NetHope Coordination
- 2010 - Eyjafjallajökull Eruption, Iceland - National EOC
- 2010 - Earthquake, Haiti - ICE-SAR Team Leader & Microsoft Disaster Response Team Lead
- 2009 - West Sumatra Earthquake, Indonesia - UNDAC
- 2009 - H1N1 Outbreak - Microsoft Disaster Response Team Lead
- 2008 - Sichuan Earthquake, China - Microsoft Disaster Response Team Lead
- 2008 - Cyclone Nargis, Myanmar - Microsoft Disaster Response Team Lead
- 2008 - Hurricane Ike, USA - Microsoft Disaster Response Team
- 2007 - Floods, Ghana - UNDAC
- 2004 - SE Asia Tsunami, Iceland - ICE-SAR
- 1999 - WTO Riots, USA - County EOC