Christopher Lao-Thiane

Fractional CMO, Pan-Africa

20+ YEARS · 15+ MARKETS
CITIZENSHIPS: FRENCH AND BRITISH
LINKEDIN · LAOTHIANE.COM

SUMMARY

Fractional Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) working across Africa with founders and leadership teams who want marketing that drives revenue. 20+ years, 15+ markets: agency co-managing director (Saatchi & Saatchi), performance operator (2M+ leads for Canal+), group marketing lead (Bboxx, 10 countries), World Bank/IFC-XSML consultant. I build marketing systems that move revenue, then hand them over.

KEY NUMBERS

×3.3 Conversion multiplied by 3.3, from 5.05% to 16.61%, in Ghana in five months (Bboxx, 2023)

÷2.8 Cost per sale divided by 2.8, from $9.58 to $3.47, in Ghana in five months (Bboxx, 2023)

+58.4% Revenue up 58.4% from 2022 to 2024 (World Bank/IFC-XSML portfolio company)

EXPERIENCE

Fractional Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) | Pan-Africa

COB EDITIONS · SEP 2024 - TODAY

Fractional CMO for a portfolio of companies across East and Central Africa. Positioning, acquisition, team building, commercial frameworks. Embedded with founders and C-suite. Active portfolio:

- **Beauty & haircare group | DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and a European e-commerce market**
  Premium salon network, nine locations across three countries at its 2024 peak. Group marketing lead: rebrand and internationalisation under way, European e-commerce channel live, and a group-wide reporting system built and running the network's weekly decisions.
- **Digital market infrastructure (regulated extractives) | Pan-Africa**
  B2B technology company in mineral traceability. Built the company's institutional voice on LinkedIn: data-backed content system, C-suite distribution, measurable reach growth.
- **Pan-African institutional communications | multi-market**
  Brand architecture and editorial strategy across 3 countries, at institutional level.
- **Field brand programme | mining cooperative**
  Delivered a full brand identity on a four-figure envelope. Premium standards hold under hard constraints.

Senior Sales & Marketing Consultant | The World Bank (IFC-XSML)

APR 2024 - APR 2025

Sole external consultant to a World Bank/IFC-XSML portfolio company (beauty retail, Africa + Europe), deployed on the company's full marketing, sales and communication framework.

- Designed and installed the framework end to end: positioning, commercial processes, CRM and measurement. Revenue rose 58.4% from 2022 to 2024 over the company as a whole.
- Created the company's entire marketing and commercial organisation, which did not exist on the 2023 org chart, across three operating countries and a European e-commerce market, with a documented system transferred to the internal team.
- Launched the e-commerce channel, including paid acquisition and logistics setup.
- Delivered twelve weighted workstreams, from segmentation and loyalty design to NPS implementation and agency tender, reaching 84% of the agreed scope.

Group Head of Marketing & Communications | Energy & E-mobility, 10 African Markets

BBOXX · MAR 2022 - SEP 2024

Bboxx: a leader in renewable energy and e-mobility, serving off-grid communities in 10 African countries (Rwanda, Kenya, DRC, Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria). Group marketing lead: a fifteen-role marketing organisation designed, staffed and run functionally across the ten markets, nine subsidiaries under remit.

- Multiplied conversion by 3.3, from 5.05% to 16.61%, and divided cost per sale by 2.8, from $9.58 to $3.47, in Ghana in five months, with a digital and telesales strategy.
- Governed an annual six-figure group budget and nine country budgets: the group budget held line by line, the country budgets consolidated and arbitrated on a group template (target volume × average contract value × a rate from 2% to 10% by market maturity), with one B2C and B2B allocation grid, monthly follow-up, freezes and reallocations.
- Rebuilt the digital funnel end to end across the ten markets: low-bandwidth creative, retargeting driven by behavioural signals, community ambassadors turning trust built in person into tracked digital sales.
- Cut cost per lead in Ghana from $0.48 to $0.24 between May 2023 and May 2024 by segmenting audiences on energy needs rather than geography.
- Ran the nine subsidiaries functionally, with one shared management ritual, centralised real-time dashboards and local execution autonomy.

Founder & Performance Marketing Consultant

COB EDITIONS · 2013 - 2021

Cob Editions: my own practice, which I ran as managing director, with a monthly profit and loss account. Performance marketing at industrial scale for media and consumer brands, across Europe.

- Kept a monthly P&L from May 2013 to September 2019, 77 months of actuals, with cost of acquisition, conversion rate, unit value and margin on the same sheet: 28.1% gross margin in 2018, two loss-making years accepted at the start, gross margin multiplied by 2.9 between 2015 and 2018.
- Designed and deployed a proprietary Real-Time Bidding and Machine Learning platform to generate qualified leads, with 200,000+ campaigns managed (CRM, retargeting, email, CRO, SXO).
- Generated 2M+ B2B and B2C leads, 2,402,428 cumulative from 2013 to 2019, on 2.19M euros of cumulative media spend across Meta, Google and LinkedIn.
- Sustained 1,000+ sales per month, 1,063 excluding duplicates over the September to November reference window, through cascading offers and continuous A/B testing.
- Marketed an inventory app for small businesses around the customer problem rather than the technology.
- Industrialised creative production: 12,000+ landing pages, 50,000 campaigns, 200K ads, 12M keywords and placements bid daily.

Main clients: Canal+, Saatchi & Saatchi.

Head of Digital, then Co-Managing Director

SAATCHI & SAATCHI (MASTER GROUP) · OCT 2011 - OCT 2017

Head of digital, then co-managing director of Saatchi & Saatchi's agency within Master Group (Publicis network), leading its digital transformation across the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean: Reunion, Mauritius, Mayotte, Madagascar, South Africa, Martinique, Guadeloupe.

- Answered for the agency's gross margin and its new business: 51% of the 2013 gross margin came from accounts I had won, against a volume of lost business fifteen times smaller.
- Built the agency's digital division from scratch, three direct reports and a twelve-person team across seven markets, for global brands.
- Created and hosted the agency's regional digital conference series, including a session delivered to MEDEF, France's main employers' federation.
- Speaker on the online reputation of public institutions, at a conference built for public bodies and chambers of commerce.
- Won 4 creative awards (2013-2015), including 1st prize corporate film and digital design awards.
- Board member of Digital Reunion (President, Software Publishers Committee, 2014-2016) and AACC member (2012-2016).

Main clients: Orange, Coca-Cola, BMW, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Toyota, Heineken, Orangina, Total, Leroy Merlin, Nivea, Unilever, plus banks and insurers and institutional players (Réunion Tourism Board, city councils).

Account Director

WUNDERMAN (WPP NETWORK), REUNION · 2010 - 2011

Account Director at Wunderman (WPP network), driving data-led communication for consumer brands in Reunion Island.

- Ran an inbound marketing strategy for a telco.
- Grew reach, engagement and in-store traffic for an automotive brand through a dedicated social media strategy.
- Managed a client portfolio on traffic-driving strategy (inbound and outbound), with budgets and delivery held on time and on scope.

Main clients: Red by SFR, NRJ Mobile, Ford.

Project Director

NEXTEDIA (LAGARDÈRE ACTIVE GROUP), PARIS · SEP 2009 - SEP 2010

Nextedia (Lagardère Active group): a 250-person digital agency serving major international brands in France and Europe.

- Launched an e-commerce website for a global sports brand.
- Integrated social media, email marketing and display advertising for a major national gaming operator.
- Ran the full project lifecycle, from scoping (brief, needs analysis, benchmark, strategic recommendations) to delivery, managing project teams: e-commerce sites, magazine portals, viral and social mechanisms, interactive video, innovative display campaigns, newsletters, CRM programmes.

Main clients: Bang & Olufsen, Essilor, Groupe BEL, La Française des Jeux, Levi's, Nivea, Sony, TimeSport, TotalGaz, Unilever.

Project Delivery Manager

NEXTEDIA · OCT 2005 - SEP 2009

- UX design (site architecture, wireframes), functional specifications, coordination of creative and technical contributors, testing and QA.
- Delivered digital marketing projects for a range of clients, on time, on budget and to quality standards.
- Built campaigns across social media, email and search engine marketing, and trained clients to run their own.
- Helped shape the agency's internal project management processes and best practices.

Customer Relationship Management Manager

ROGUELINK · 2004 - 2005 · OREGON, USA

RogueLink: an Internet Service Provider in Oregon, offering broadband, email hosting, web design and e-commerce solutions.

- Set up a customer feedback programme and a dedicated retention strategy.
- Built and ran multi-channel acquisition campaigns for the California and Oregon markets, and set up the CRM processes: onboarding, retention, engagement.

MANDATES, LANGUAGES, EDUCATION

Board member, Digital Reunion (President, Software Publishers Committee, 2014-2016) · AACC member (2012-2016)

Recognition: Intratag, winner of Start-Up Weekend Réunion 2012

Languages: English, French

Education: Master of Science, Marketing & IT