CHRISTOPHER VAN BLERK

Client Experience & Growth Lead — Customer Insight, Journey Design, Data & Systems

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Based between Paarl and Stellenbosch · Open to Winelands and Cape Town hybrid roles

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I find out why customers and partners behave the way they do, and turn it into change that grows a business. I currently lead growth for a national FMCG brand, where I own the partner and customer journey from recruitment to retention, the research and data that explain it, and the systems that run it. Before that I spent seven years embedded in The Lewis Group, one of South Africa's largest retailers, working daily with call centre, sales, collections, HR and procurement managers to map how their teams actually worked, redesign the flows, and build the systems that carried them, ending in daily strategy sessions with the executive team. I came to this work through software development and a counselling diploma, which is why I read both the data and the person. Strongest where qualitative insight, quantitative evidence and practical delivery have to meet.

SELECTED RESULTS

- Diagnosed a year-long decline in a 300-account partner network as a first-month confidence and onboarding problem rather than a pricing problem: roughly two-thirds of churn occurred inside 30 days, day 60 was the point at which a partner either became established or quietly left, and starter-pack size had no effect on success. Redesigned onboarding as a three-cohort First 90 Days programme and rebuilt the lifecycle communications around it.
- At The Lewis Group, worked daily with the Sales Call Centre Manager for several months to map and streamline the full call-centre flow for a 100-seat sales floor and two collections floors, from workstation setup and lead generation to a bespoke dialler solution, live wallboards and call metrics; then extended the approach to HR, Sales, Collections and Procurement under one platform, ending in daily executive rollout sessions.
- Pushed for the first end-consumer research and the first exit interviews with churned partners at Food Sock, closing a data gap the business had lived with, and changed the partner engagement format after noticing that a quiet live audience engaged readily through polls and written channels.
- Found and corrected a reporting error that had overstated active partners by about a third and month-to-date revenue nearly fourfold; at Lewis, caught a R1.4 million batch of orders that a vendor deployment had forced to completed status overnight, while dispatch was already loading the boxes, and stopped the shipment before any loss.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Customer & partner insight
- Voice-of-customer research & exit interviews
- Behavioural, cohort & funnel analytics (SQL, dashboards)
- Cross-functional delivery with Tech, Data & Operations
- Commercial translation of insight (margin, retention, LTV)
- Journey mapping & service redesign
- Workshop facilitation & stakeholder alignment
- Onboarding & lifecycle programme design
- Change rollout, training & adoption
- Systems, CRM & automation

WORK EXPERIENCE

Growth Manager — Insight, Journey & Systems | Food Sock Meals, Strand, Western Cape Jun 2026 – present

Joined as Reseller Manager; scope expanded to Head-of-Sales responsibilities within three months and to full ownership of the growth function — partner and customer journey, research, lifecycle, CRM, marketing and channel strategy — in October 2026. Report to the COO; the sales team and Reseller Manager report to me. Food Sock is a South African FMCG brand selling affordable one-pot meals through a national independent reseller network (300+ accounts), direct e-commerce, retail and NGO channels.

Insight & research

- Ran the cohort, segmentation and revenue-concentration analysis on the partner base; identified the 30-day churn cliff and the day-60 retention point; surfaced that roughly half of partners produce 80% of revenue and that pack size does not predict success.
- Initiated end-consumer research (the end customer had been a data black hole) and structured exit interviews with churned partners; handle territory disputes, hardship cases and exits by understanding the person first, then solving the problem.
- Founded and host a weekly live Community Hall for partners; adapted the format to polls and written channels after observing that the audience engaged far more readily that way than on an open call.

Journey & programme design

- Designed the First 90 Days onboarding programme, the 15-chapter Partner Playbook, a three-tier offboarding and stock-buyback framework and the monthly partner newsletter; built lead capture into the first checkpoint of a five-module video course that replaced a 26-minute sales letter.
- Mapped the acquisition funnel end to end (site visits → booked calls → sign-ups), isolated three leaks — contactability, entry price, no follow-up on warm leads — and presented the fix to EXCo as a systems problem rather than a people problem.

Data, measurement & systems

- Built the Insights Dashboard from scratch (Node/TypeScript, PostgreSQL), unifying WooCommerce, Shopify and Metorik into one view of revenue, pipeline and cohort retention; own the Metorik → Sheets → Looker reporting pipeline and the data-integrity rules behind it.
- Administer the CRM and n8n automations, lead the migration to a new CRM platform, and act as technical liaison to the external BI consultancy.

Commercial & stakeholder

- Lead the sales team's operating rhythm and KPIs; restructured starter-pack tiers with verified margins; negotiate distributor and partnership deals; own campaign planning, paid media and in-house creative.

Founder & Technical Consultant (part-time) | Rolodex, Cape Town — Jan 2026 – present

- Automation and reporting for small-business clients: n8n workflows with the Anthropic and OpenAI APIs, WordPress/WooCommerce builds with CRM hand-offs and tracking.

Platform Specialist & Front-End Developer | Genius Platforms, California (remote) — Apr 2024 – Dec 2025

- Delivered client platforms in an Agile team; produced the documentation and training content that drove adoption.

Co-founder & Director | Bluelight Software, Cape Town — Feb 2022 – Mar 2024

- Co-founded and directed a software company whose principal client was The Lewis Group; continued the embedded engagement below, now with responsibility for strategy, client relationships, financial planning and delivery.
- Met with the Lewis executive team almost daily to prioritise, strategise and roll out new internal systems across departments; produced a detailed daily operations report for the CEO covering hourly call volumes, agent sales and call rates, time wastage and order flow.

Developer (Junior → Senior) & Client Solutions Lead | Brainwave Projects, Cape Town — Jan 2015 – Jan 2022

Seven years embedded with The Lewis Group, one of South Africa's largest furniture and appliance retailers, as the day-to-day solutions lead across its call centres and head-office departments.

- Worked on the floor and alongside the Sales Call Centre Manager daily for months to map and streamline the full call-centre flow for a 100-seat outbound sales operation and two debt-collections floors of 20 to 50 seats each: workstation setup, lead generation and distribution, a bespoke dialler solution, agent and campaign metrics, and live wallboards showing performance through the day.
- Assessed needs with managers in HR, Sales, Collections and Asset Management (procurement) and built bespoke solutions for each that had to work together under one umbrella platform; ran the rollout, training and adoption with each team.
- Caught a R1.4 million batch of roughly 150 pending, cancelled and abandoned orders that an e-commerce vendor's overnight deployment had forced to completed status, by noticing at 6am that the number could not be real; alerted managers and executives, traced the cause, and stopped dispatch as boxes were being loaded, with no loss.

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Research & facilitation: structured interviews, exit interviews, surveys and polls, live and written community formats. Data: SQL (PostgreSQL, MS SQL, MySQL), cohort and funnel modelling in Google Sheets, Looker Studio, Metorik, a custom Node/TypeScript dashboard. CRM & automation: GoHighLevel, n8n, Anthropic and OpenAI APIs, WhatsApp Business API. Commerce & marketing: WooCommerce, Shopify, Meta Ads Manager, Google Analytics. Engineering: Node.js, TypeScript, React, Git, Linux.

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

- Diploma in Counselling and Communication Skills (NQF 6), major in Business Communication — South African College of Applied Psychology (SACAP), 2015. The foundation of how I interview, facilitate and handle difficult conversations.
- Private Pilot Licence — Morningstar Flight Academy, 2021