CHRISTOPHER VAN BLERK

Data, Customer Intelligence & Applied AI

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Based in the Cape Winelands · Open to on site, hybrid and remote roles

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I turn business data into decisions that people act on. I have spent more than ten years building the data, reporting and systems behind sales, collections and customer operations: seven years as the embedded solutions lead for The Lewis Group's call centres and head office departments, two as co-founder and director of a software company that produced the group CEO's daily operations report, and now as Growth Manager at Food Sock, where I built the company's data platform from scratch, found and corrected the reporting errors that were misleading leadership, and used cohort and behavioural analysis to explain why customers were leaving. I design customer intelligence around the right channel and timing, build automation and AI workflows with the Anthropic and OpenAI APIs, and write the policy that governs how AI is used. My training in applied psychology means I start with why customers behave as they do, and I work best as the bridge between executive objectives, technical teams and the customer.

SELECTED RESULTS

- Audited Food Sock's reporting and found active resellers overstated by about a third and month to date revenue overstated nearly fourfold, partly through more than 600 internal admin orders counted as sales. Rebuilt the metric definitions and established one trusted source of truth for leadership decisions.
- Ran the customer intelligence work that reset the company's growth plan: cohort retention and segmentation showed two thirds of churn happening inside 30 days, day 60 as the decisive point and pack size as irrelevant. Redesigned onboarding and lifecycle triggers around those findings.
- Designed and built the company's Insights Dashboard end to end (Node/TypeScript, PostgreSQL on a self managed server), integrating WooCommerce, Shopify and Metorik data into one view of revenue, partner activity and cohort retention.
- At The Lewis Group, delivered data and systems across four business units (a 100 seat sales call centre, two collections floors, HR and Procurement) on one platform, with live wallboards and agent metrics, and rolled them out through daily sessions with the executive team.
- Caught a R1.4 million batch of orders that a vendor's overnight deployment had wrongly forced to completed status, by recognising at 6am that the number could not be real. Traced the cause and stopped dispatch while boxes were being loaded, with no loss.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Data strategy & roadmaps tied to business KPIs
- Customer intelligence, segmentation & cohorts
- Data engineering: SQL, pipelines & dashboards
- POPIA aware data handling & consent
- Software engineering (TypeScript, .NET, Python)
- Data quality, metric definitions & governance
- Lifecycle decisioning: channel, timing & triggers
- Applied AI: LLM APIs, automation & AI usage policy
- Executive reporting & stakeholder alignment
- Team leadership & external vendor management

WORK EXPERIENCE

Growth Manager (Data, CRM & Insight) | Food Sock Meals, Strand — Jun 2026 to present

Joined as Reseller Manager. Scope expanded to Head of Sales responsibilities within three months and to full growth ownership (sales, marketing, CRM, data and channel strategy) in October 2026. Report to the COO and lead a team of three. Food Sock is a South African FMCG brand selling affordable meals through a national network of 300+ independent resellers, e-commerce, retail and NGO channels, at roughly R6 million a year.

Data platform & governance

- Built and own the company's data platform: a Node/TypeScript and PostgreSQL Insights Dashboard on a server I rebuilt, plus the Metorik to Google Sheets to Looker Studio reporting pipeline used by leadership.
- Set the metric definitions for active resellers, revenue and retention after finding the existing figures materially overstated, and excluded internal admin orders from all commercial reporting.
- Technical liaison to the external BI consultancy, defining requirements and checking their outputs against source data.

Customer intelligence & decisioning

- Cohort retention curves, activity segmentation and revenue concentration analysis (roughly half of resellers produce 80% of revenue). Mapped the acquisition funnel from 10,000 visits to 300 calls to 14 signups and fixed the three biggest leaks.
- Translated the findings into decision rules: the First 90 Days programme, with touchpoints timed to the points where churn risk peaks, delivered across phone, WhatsApp, email and a weekly live community session.
- Built the 12 month growth plan with revenue modelling and a hiring business case, and presented it to the CEO and COO.

AI, automation & CRM

- Administer the CRM (GoHighLevel) and the n8n automations behind lead routing, follow up and reporting, and lead the migration to a new CRM platform. Set up WhatsApp Business API messaging with consent compliance.
- Wrote and enforce the company's AI content approval policy, and lead AI assisted creative production for product, training and marketing content.

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

- Build AI and automation solutions for small business clients with n8n and the Anthropic and OpenAI APIs, including Procurement Pulse, an automation that uses an LLM to match supplier PDF documents against a procurement register (presented at RAY Demo Day).
- Operations and procurement support for a precision CNC manufacturing start up in Hamburg, including a 200 line item procurement tracker and bilingual documentation. Produce AI assisted educational explainer content, including a piece on AI data safety and POPIA.

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

- Platform delivery for US clients in an Agile scrum team: requirements, implementation, data configuration, QA and release, with stakeholder support through Jira, Rocketlane and Freshdesk.

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

- Co-founded and directed a software company, responsible for strategy, budget, client relationships and technical direction. Met almost daily with the executive team of our principal client, The Lewis Group, and produced the CEO's daily operations report from production data.

Developer & Client Solutions Lead | Brainwave Projects, Cape Town — Jan 2015 to Jan 2022

- Seven years embedded with The Lewis Group, a JSE listed credit retailer, as solutions lead for its call centres and head office departments. Built and supported the systems, dialler integration, SQL Server reporting and live wallboards behind a 100 seat sales floor and two collections floors.
- Worked daily with the Sales Call Centre Manager to map how teams worked, define the metrics that mattered and redesign the flow, then extended the platform to HR, Sales, Collections and Procurement. .NET, SQL Server and JavaScript.

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

- Diploma in Counselling and Communication Skills (NQF 6), major in Business Communication, South African College of Applied Psychology (SACAP), 2015
- Private Pilot Licence, Morningstar Flight Academy, 2021

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Data & engineering: SQL (PostgreSQL, SQL Server, MySQL), Python, JavaScript/TypeScript, Node.js, .NET (C#), REST APIs, ETL pipelines, Docker, Linux, Git. BI & reporting: Looker Studio, Metorik, Google Sheets modelling, custom dashboards. AI & automation: Anthropic (Claude) and OpenAI APIs, n8n, GoHighLevel CRM, WhatsApp Business API. Platforms: WooCommerce, Shopify, WordPress, Firebase, MongoDB. Delivery: Agile/Scrum, Jira, Notion.