Digital Edge

October 2022

Forward Looking:
An Evolution of our history

Table Of Content

CWG AT 30

I am delighted to be introducing you to our 30th year anniversary and revamped digital magazine version for this year.

As you read through the pages, you will discover, that our central mood here at CWG is celebratory, to this end it gives me great pleasure to walk you through this momentous and reflective event which we have aptly themed "***Forward Looking: An evolution of our history'.***

CWG started life through our founder Mr. Austin Okere in 1992, relatively unknown with normal challenges typical with new business. 30 years later, CWG is listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange, operational in about 17 countries of the world, and has witnessed the emergence of 2 non-founder CEOs.

As we reflect our history, showcase our humble beginnings, victories, losses and above all, learning as a knowledge-driven organisation. These experiences have produced the opportunity to refine our corporate strategy and values, eventually birthing our CWG.2.0 roadmap, establishing our training academy, cementing learning as an integral part of our ethos and culture.

In three decades, we have taken advantage of openings in the technology industry in Africa by leveraging the power of collaborative thinking to build strategic partnerships, encourage co-creation, develop our in-house capabilities as well as give back to communities where we operate and serve.

As I look back on the covid 19 pandemic through the lens of our company, I am mindful of the pivotal role our people, products and services played in enabling families to access funds through our platforms. I remain proud of our ability to contribute to the well-being of our people, customers, end users and nation in such a profound way. We anticipate that as we evolve and move on from such a dynamic period of change, a few questions will come to mind.

What remains fundamentally crucial for us is our commitment to our shareholders and investors, attracting the right partnerships and value creation in various communities. Therefore, I recognize that in this era of economic crisis and challenging business environments, the ability to solve problems with the right people, has become a focal point for us as a business.

Consequently at CWG, we prioritised investing and reinvesting in our people, ensuring they are trained to industry-level standards, creating a fun and enabling environment encouraging creativity and innovation.

In the near term, we are in the process of creating our own IPs in response to tackling some of the challenges that come with off-the-shelf solutions for the local markets. We remain committed to serving our customers, deepening our relationships with our partners and stakeholders and keeping our board informed at every point.

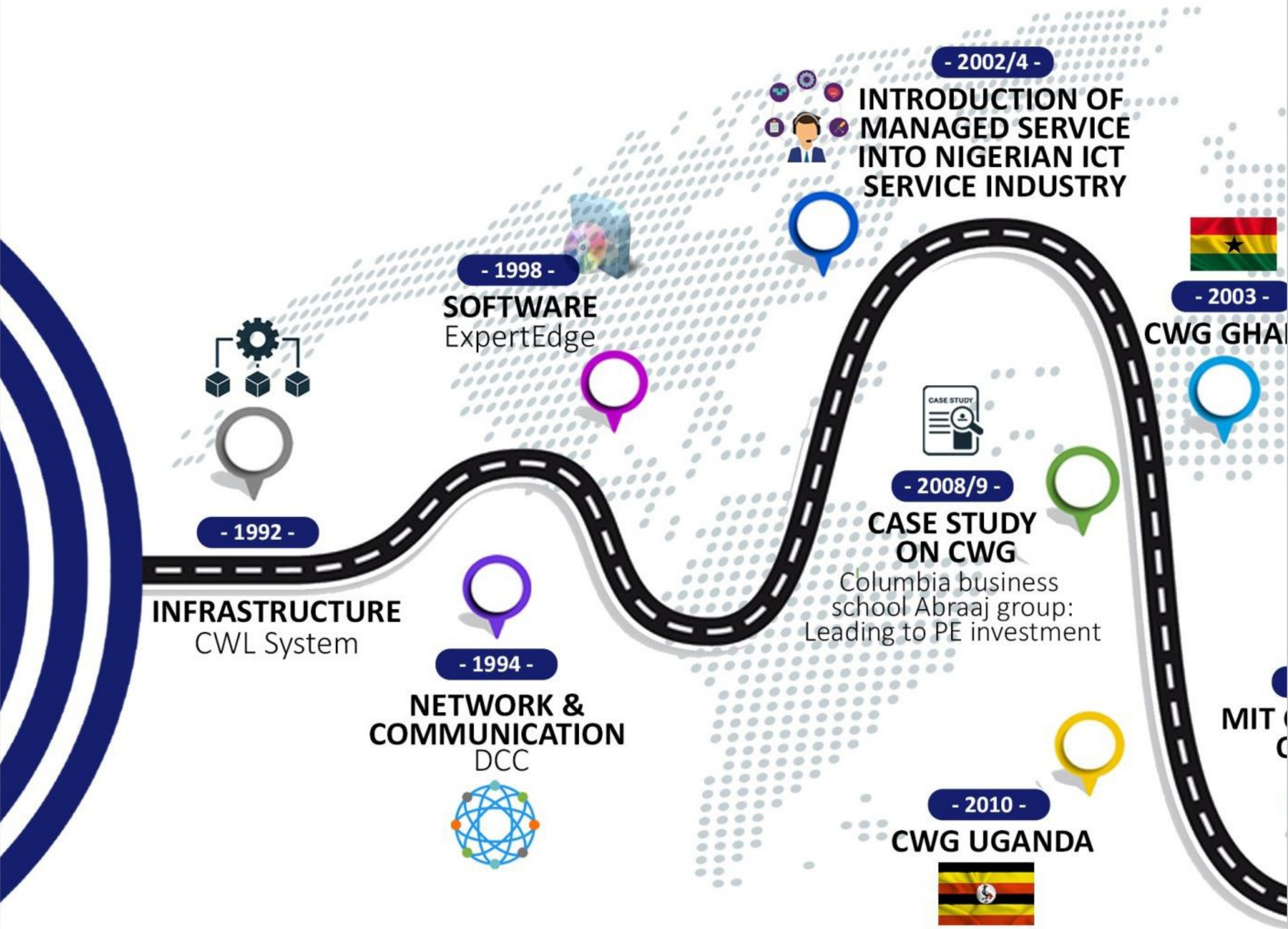
As we look back on how far we have come and the many great memories, and to the future, I have no doubt that the next 30 years will see us living out and transcending our version of a truly great and exceptional organisation with a great team.

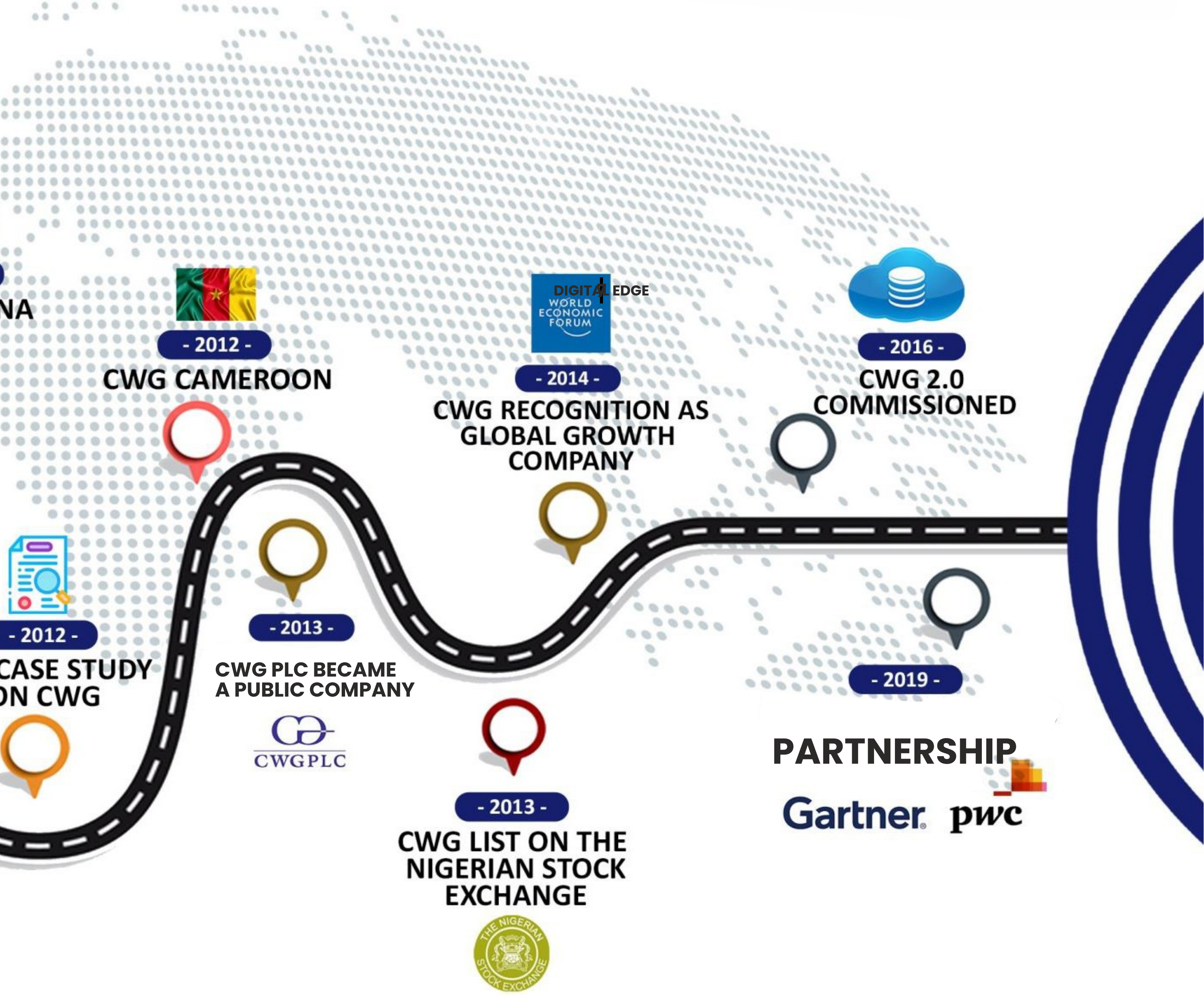
I look to the future with anticipation, and it gives me great pleasure to invite you on this journey of greatness with us.

Thank you.

THE ROADMAP

30 YEARS OF POSITIONING AFRICA TO MAXIMISE THE FUTURE

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- 2012 -
CWG CAMEROON
DIGITAL EDGE
WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
- 2014 -
CWG RECOGNITION AS GLOBAL GROWTH COMPANY
- 2016 -
CWG 2.0 COMMISSIONED
- 2012 -
CASE STUDY
ON CWG
- 2013 -
CWG PLC BECAME A PUBLIC COMPANY
CWGPLC
- 2013 -
CWG LIST ON THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE
THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE
- 2019 -
PARTNERSHIP
Gartner
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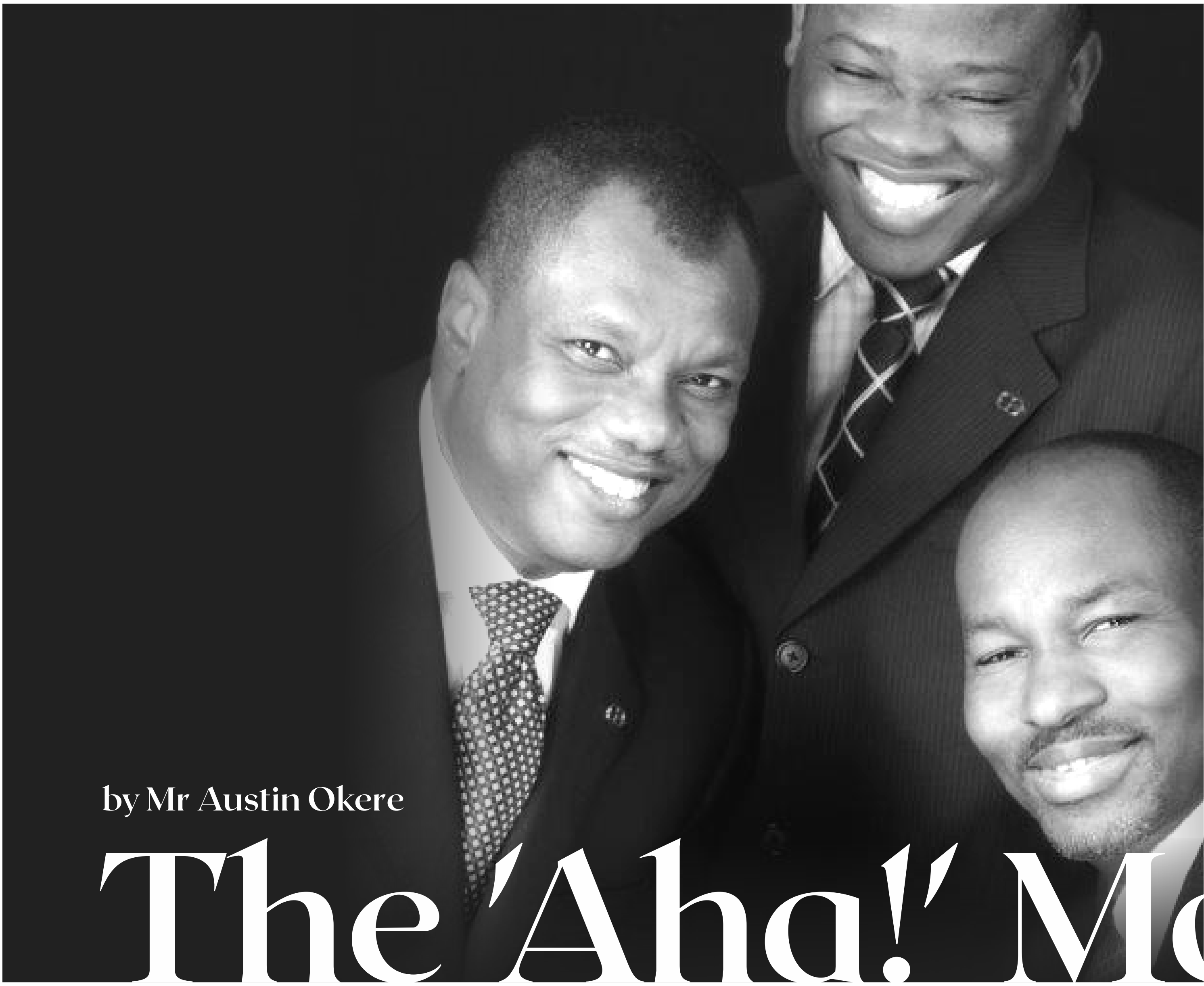
In The Beginning...



by Mr Austin Okere

The 'Aha!' Mo

Austin Okere is the Founder of Computer Warehouse Group (CWG) Plc and Entrepreneur in Residence, Columbia Business School, New York and Ausso Leadership Academy.

At the University of Ghana in Legon and the University of Lagos in Akoka, Mr. Austin Okere studied computer science. Before starting CWG, he spent four years and six months working for Inlaks Computers.

CWG Plc, was listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange in 2013.

Through the Platform of the Ausso Leadership Academy, which he launched in 2018, he now spends his time fostering business leaders and entrepreneurs and optimising their companies for geometric growth.

Austin talks about his Aha! Moment and the motivation behind starting CWG.

Interviewer: We know from history you left your job at your former company motivated by a strong sense of purpose and founded Computer Warehouse at the time against a backdrop of high inflation in double-digits in 1992[44.8%] and amidst a very difficult economic climate. How did you articulate and essentially translate this inner desire into building a company like CWG?

Austine Okere: Perhaps the most difficult transition I had to make in my life was leaving the comfort of my job to start the Computer Warehouse Group, which is now CWG Plc. I was perceived as one of the upwardly mobile executives in my former company. The company was doing very well. I was well paid and had ample commission from sale. My life was on a roll! Yet I knew that I had not wholly tapped into my full potential.

You are right about the harsh economic climate around the time we started CWG in 1992. Things got worse in 1993 when the June 12th election, adjudged to be the fairest in Nigeria, was cancelled. We went into a long period of military rule which had a huge negative impact on our national perception and attendant hardship on the business environment. Despite the harsh environment, I believe that every challenge presents an opportunity.

In founding CWG, we saw a problem calling for a unique solution. The answer was a complete change of mindset in how we perceived the customer and the total value we could give, beyond just our profit aspiration.

One of the most important attributes in any relationship is trust. In an environment where the rule of law is weak, trust becomes a clear differentiation strategy. Once trust is developed, accompanied with consistent performance, the customer opens arms to embrace you as a partner.

This was also the period when the ICT sector was a "Sellers' Market". Customers would sometimes deposit as much as 80% on an order and wait as long as six months to receive their kit. To complicate the matter, many of the IT projects were not properly implemented leading to painful failures and costly write-offs. The ICT industry had a relatively bad reputation.

"I wanted to make an impact beyond my immediate family, and beyond my immediate environment. I wanted to do something significant. I wanted to leave my footprints in the sands of time."

*- **Austin Okere***

Our business model was therefore built on trust; This meant building a team where the values of the company attracted the right people, and they were motivated to consistently live the behaviours that exhibited those values. In other words, we hired for character and trained for competence. We made everybody see themself as owners of the company. They took responsibility and held themselves accountable for the delivery of the set objectives. We ensured that the system was very transparent. We commended efforts and rewarded success. People became super committed because they knew what was in it for them. They could tie their rewards directly to performance, and they saw their progress in the company based on the competence they acquired. When such a team is led by a courageous leader, the sky is the limit.

Interviewer: We understand that when Computer Warehouse Group started, there were few indigenous players with dominance from international brands like IBM in the market. How did that affect or shape the philosophy of CWG at that time?

Austin Okere: What we realised very early was that while competitors could copy your strategy, they could not copy your culture. Trust is the currency of any brand, and culture eats strategy for breakfast. In the face of the onslaught of staff poaching by international original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), we leveraged the culture and the strong brand we had built. Our staff were compensated on a fixed and variable pay model, meaning that they could aspire to earn as much as they desired by selling more to increase their commissions. More importantly, they saw themselves as part of something much bigger than themselves and they could clearly see their part in the vision.

They understood what they had to do and why and loved the freedom to figure out how to achieve their objectives. The environment challenged them to be creative, innovative and learn in an agile manner. They were proud of the impact the company was having in the market and were deeply connected to the purpose of shouldering the customers' technology requirements so they could focus on their core businesses. This philosophy was so strong that the few that left for the OEMs came back to CWG for better job satisfaction.

In addition, we took other steps to remain proactive. One of them was the CWG Academy, where we trained over 120 interns per annum from which we ensure a sustainable supply of skills.

Interviewer: What if you had to compare raising capital for the business as a hardware manufacturer with Services and most especially SLA management for your customers? Was it easy to raise funds at the time? What would be your advice to younger companies?

Austin Okere: It is never easy to raise funds, but I believe it has gotten significantly easier. I see a lot of young people start a company and immediately rush out to raise funds. Raising funds is about scaling a proven concept. It is imperative to wait for the inflection point and reap your fruits, than to eat your seed.

I think fundraising should not be an end in itself, it should be a means to an end. It is the fulfilment of the purpose for which the funds are raised that ought to be celebrated.

The venture capital (VC) or private equity (PE) companies that are giving you money are astute business people who are not happy with the normal rate of returns on their funds. That is why they go into riskier investments such as funding startups for better returns.

As a rule of thumb, the expectation is a return of three times what was invested within five years. If they give you a million dollars today, in five years they will want 3 million dollars back, no stories.

It is important to study the term sheet carefully and look at the things that may be pitfalls. One of the contentious clauses is the "golden share", where no matter the size of their equity every Board decision is vetted by them.

Here is where it gets tricky. Let's say that I took out a loan of a million dollars in 2015 from a bank. At that time, the FX rate was 200 naira to $1. That 1 million dollars would be N200m. At the interest rate of 20% then, my total interest liability after five years in 2020 would be N200m. the total repayment to the bank would be N400m, let us keep that figure aside. Now let's look at the same scenario with a VC or PE Fund. If we took $1m, they want $3m back in 2020. This comes to N1.2b at the exchange rate of N440 to 1 USD in 2020.

The entrepreneur that went to a local bank would be returning N400m and the entrepreneur that took money from the VC or PE Fund would be returning N1.2bn (about 3

times the former). If your business hasn't reached an inflection point, I don't think VC or PE money is right for you.

What do I mean by inflection point? This is a point where your business has assimilated all the cost of building the product. Any additional customer you get after this is a pure profit contribution margin. After you reach this point, you can bring in investors that will help you to scale fast and capture a dominant market share. In this case you will not be significantly diluted.

The CWG Example:

In our case, CWG raised 10 million dollars in 2009 from a Private Equity (PE) firm. This is investing in cloud computing and platform solutions under our CWG 2.0 strategy. We listed on the stock exchange market after 4 years in 2013, providing an exit to the PE firm through this liquidity event. That freed us from the term sheet since the golden share clause fell off and all shares became equal. This was one of the good stories, but I know some other stories where the owners of the companies painfully ceded over 70% equity to the PE or the VC because they couldn't multiply the amount in 5 years.

Interviewer: We read a recent tweet from you on the issue of team culture and individual brilliance. Have you ever had to make a similar call at CWG and what were the learning points? For a company like CWG, I imagine culture will play a great role, how did you go about shaping and sustaining this as the company grew?

Austine Okere: Two possible cultures become dominant in an organisation; the hero culture and the collaborative culture. The hero culture is dominant in organisations that have not managed to grow beyond their entrepreneurial roots. Everything seems to rest on the shoulders of the one man who is all-knowing and all-powerful. Such a person becomes the centre of gravity of the company or the key man at risk. The company is acutely at risk if something happens to him. As the organisation grows into an institution, it is instructive to grow from the hero culture to a culture of collaboration, where the staff are aligned with the vision of the company and know their part in the plan. They know what they must do and why. They lean on their creativity to figure out how to get it done. I believe a lot of companies in Nigeria get stuck in the hero culture, and that explains why the companies struggle and sometimes become extinct when the owners bow out. In an organisation with a collaborative culture, there is no key-man risk. Everybody moves at pace as one high-performing team. High Performing Teams move at the pace of the fastest member, unlock the potential of their product and each other, champion change and consistently exceed expectations. This is one of the key success factors for the sustainability of CWG.

Interviewer: What were the learnings and what would you avoid now with hindsight? And what was the sort of resistance of trade-off that you needed to make it?

Austin Okere: The things we fear most in life are not necessarily our adversities but the fear of our anxieties and about what others might think. Reflecting on what I could have done differently, I believe I should have been more decisive in tackling the major issue that nearly derailed our culture. Due to our rapid growth, we embarked on a massive recruitment drive in a relatively short period of time. Unfortunately, not all the people that came in had the desired character nor bought into our values. Many that went into key positions were out for themselves and were exhibiting behaviours that were not consistent with our culture. We hesitated in taking decisive action because of the key competencies they brought to the table. My advice is that whatever requires the sacrifice of any part of your culture is not worth it. Even though we eventually cured the malaise at the pain of a slowdown in our growth, it did significantly dent morale. I take full responsibility for it. It is crucial to always ensure that we have the right people on the bus and the right person on the right seat.

The trade-offs I made were:

- Exchanging Affirmation for Accomplishment
- Exchanging security for significance
- Trading Immediate Victory for Long Term Sustainability.

The 3 W's that sustained me were:

- Way Power – this speaks to aptitude. Learning as much about our field as possible to provide the best value to our customers
- Will Power – this speaks to attitude. Having a can-do spirit. Achieving in spite of the odds and always willing to go the extra mile
- Wait Power – this speaks to patience. Giving sufficient time and care for the seeds we plant to yield their fruits before seeking to harvest. Shortcuts will not lead you to anywhere worth going.

Interviewer: The African tech ecosystem is rapidly expanding and continues to be a destination for foreign direct investment, one of the accelerators of this growth is not only the innovative products and services tailored exclusively for the market, but the tech talent as well. How do you see CWG's position in attracting and retaining the right talent at the nascent stage of technology in Africa?

Austin Okere: The ubiquity of broadband and the pervasiveness of mobile phones, along with breakthrough technology such as Artificial intelligence, Big Data and Blockchain are expanding the frontiers for entrepreneurship in ways that were hitherto not possible and levelling the playing field in the process. Fintech companies are now challenging banks for turf. I am pleased to note that Emerging Markets, and indeed Africa are leading the charge on this score. Nigeria is one of the world's fastest-growing technology markets, the country attracted more than 216 million USD in the first quarter of 2021 alone. Fintech companies such as Interswitch, Flutterwave, Paystack and indeed CWG are poster boys for the sector. The big social gain is Financial Inclusion.

While we have less than 40% banking penetration, we have over 98% mobile penetration, making it possible to leapfrog with Mobile Banking. By 2025, there will be over six billion unique mobile subscribers. People at the bottom of the pyramid, typically, artisans and market women who are excluded from banking are not poor; they just do not have the time to waste queuing at banking halls, so we need to bring the bank to them on their phones. Money services are today contributing 6.7% of Africa's GDP. Nigeria is among the leaders in the pack. For instance, Diamond bank a popular bank with only 7m accounts after 23 years in operation was able to add a significant 6m new accounts in just one year after the launch of a major initiative in collaboration with CWG and a top Telecommunications company. CWG has launched other key platform solutions including SMERP, BillsnPay, FinEdge, and Smart metering for ease of customer transactions on a subscription basis.

Interviewer: Would you describe CWG as a "thinking Company" or a hybrid consulting company because of its portfolio of curated partnerships over the years and its closeness to your presence on its board given your work in academia, especially in the area of entrepreneurship with some of the most prestigious universities in the world?

Austin Okere: CWG does not fit into a simple classification. It is an agile company that adapts to the needs of the market and its customers. After being selected as Entrepreneur of the year by EY in 2013, CWG was presented with the Award of Global Growth Company by the World Economic Forum, which resulted in my membership of the Global Agenda Council on Innovation and Intrapreneurship and being appointed as an Entrepreneur in Residence at Columbia Business School. I have now been appointed to the GBSN and the AACSB. The learnings from these international experiences have been invaluable for CWG. We have transformed from a hardware and maintenance company to a services and systems integrations company adding Networking and Software along the line.

Today CWG is mainly a Platforms and subscription business providing value-added services through the cloud to enterprise businesses and retail customers. The company is also a leader in the Banking and Telecoms sectors in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Cameroon. The history between me and CWG has been a chain of a virtuous cycle.

Interviewer: What informed CWG's trajectory as a listed company? And what informed the merger with the other companies who now make up CWG today?

Austin Okere: Listing on the Stock Exchange ensures deep compliance, deepens sustainability, and engenders organisation trust. Moreso, the stock exchange provides the most likely place for your shares to be liquid. It ensures that you provide exit opportunities to your investors.

The noteworthy milestone on our journey to listing was the spectacular returns to our investors. CWG's returns on investments from inception in 1992 to 2013 when we listed was 2500-fold. Contextually, if you had invested just $10 with us in 1992, it would have been worth $25,000 in 2013. If you had invested $1000 your investment would have been worth $2,500,000 by 2013 when we listed. This is an achievement of which we remain deeply proud.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the next 30 years of CWG?

Austin Okere: CWG will continue to transform to meet the market requirements. As Andy Groove of Intel said, 'only the paranoid survives'. It is imperative to continuously reimagine and rediscover your space through adoption, agility, focus, and relentless execution. This makes

transformation journeys part and parcel of successful and sustainable companies.

At every point in time, we have to pay close attention to the Austin's Five forces Model for Transformation, namely, Vision, Team, Time, Resources, and Resolve. Once we become adept at this, we can always replicate the model to remain a trusted partner to our customers and our communities.

CWG Plc is today listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. We have always dreamt of listing our shares on the NASDAQ. We believe that this will eventually be achieved, if not in our time, then by those coming after us.

As always, our best is yet to come.

EXAMINATION OF CURRENT GLOBAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF RAPID DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CURRENT TALENT SHORTAGES. WHAT IS AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO THESE TRENDS AND WHAT CAN BUSINESSES DO TO MITIGATE THIS RISK AMIDST GROWING CUSTOMER DEMAND?

TREND REPORT – GLOBAL DEMAND FOR TECH TALENT AND THE PRESSURE ON LOCAL AFRICAN FIRMS ON HOW TO MITIGATE READINESS FOR MITIGATING THE RISKS AND MANAGE SKILLS SHORTAGE

By Afolabi Sobande (Chief Operating Officer,CWG)

Technology start-ups in Africa received $4.77 billion of investments, with the emergence of at least 5 new tech-unicorns (start-ups valued at $1 billion). Examination of Current Global Business Landscape Against the Backdrop of Rapid Digital Transformation and Current Talent Shortages. What is Africa's Response to these Trends and What Can Business Do to Mitigate this Risk Amidst Growing Customer Demand?

In 2007, Vodafone in partnership with Safaricom launched a mobile phone-enabled money transfer service called MPESA. As of March 2020, MPESA has expanded into several countries in Africa, processes transaction volumes of at least US$20.5 billion monthly across their international markets

Africa leapfrogged her way into technology with the MPESA story but has since been replicated many times over, with the continent now home to some of the most recognised brands in technology. Digital innovators, collaborators have created business models around localised solutions which have scaled successfully.

In Nigeria, companies like Paga, Interswitch, Flutterwave, Paystack and many more have helped in promoting Africa as an attractive investment destination. For example, Iroko TV, a Video on Demand service and content provider, sold its production arm, ROK Studios to Canal, a French company, in 2019.

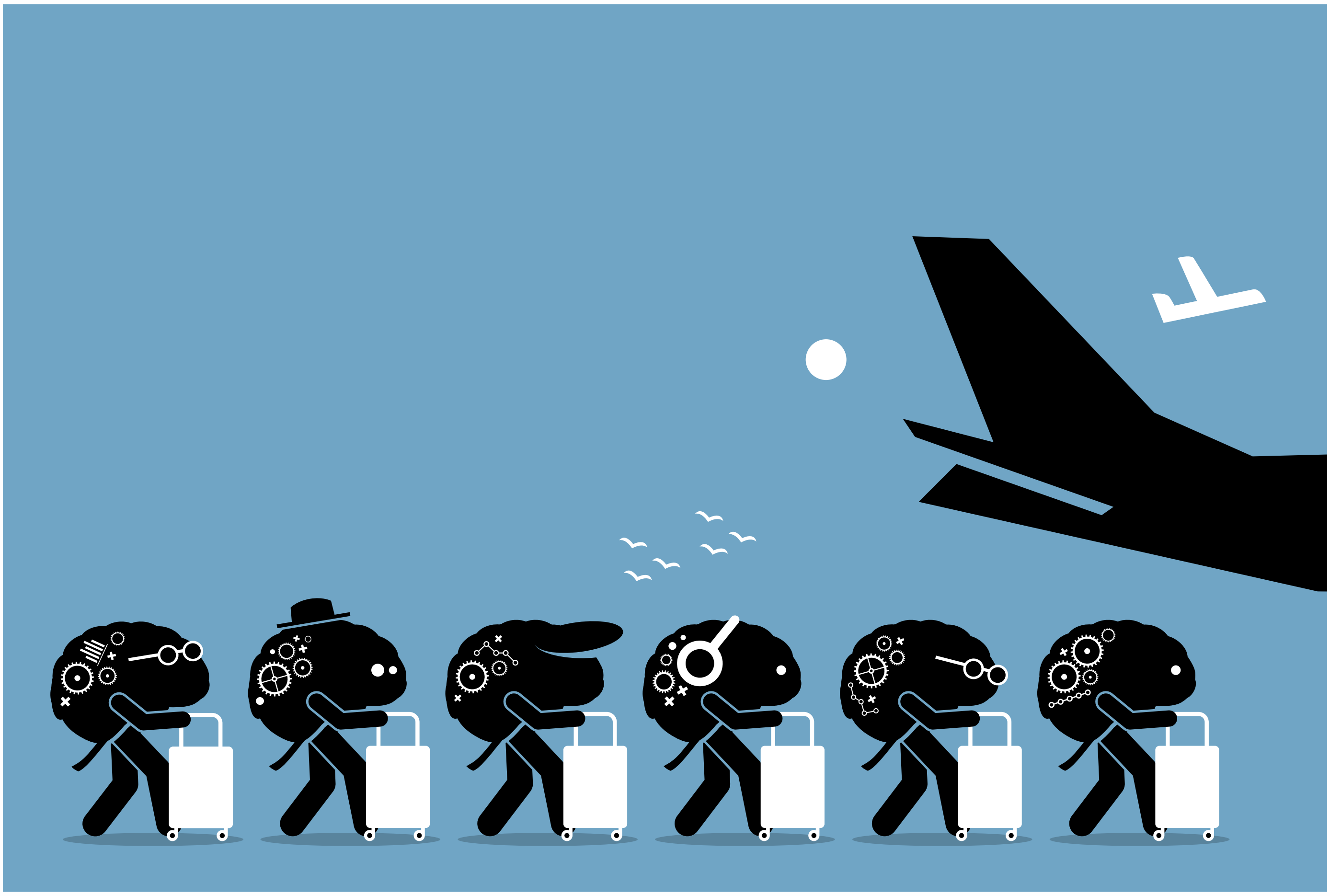
Growth has been mixed. Intentional and organic.

Africa Union and its members agreed several policy reforms and restructuring, plus a collaborative approach of working with stakeholders from the private sector to harness value creation within the ecosystems. The Nigerian government recently announced plans to establish an Artificial Intelligence and Robotics centre to facilitate emerging technologies such as ICT security and networking.

Africa also has the youngest continent in the world, with 60% of the population under the age of 25. With the Proliferation of mobile telephony, in 2017, SSA had 420 million mobile subscribers and grew to over 660 million subscribers by 2020, with Nigeria accounting for at least 25% of overall subscribers.

Technology consumption is advancing with demand for IT products and services beyond the first-generation products, web 3.0 and block chain technologies, and cloud services on demand.

However, despite the overall bullishness on the market, concerted efforts to eradicate the issues of infrastructural deficiency



and a lack of coordinated regulatory framework on technology innovations and allied services on the continent are ongoing. On the demand side, consumers in the rural areas and those predominantly at the bottom of the pyramid, are yet to make the switch from ultra-low-cost handsets to smart devices.

At the height of its success and boom is a looming crisis, that of a global shortage of tech talent., whilst global firms are positioning to competitively attract some of the best STEM brains in the world, Africa must navigate this brain drain challenge.

For instance, "a report from the IFC and Google last year estimated that there are currently some 700,000 professional developers across Africa, with just over 50% concentrated in Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa. Compare that to just the state of California, which has an estimated 630,000 developers".

Why is Africa on the receiving end?

The continent has been steadily losing its brains to more attractive markets. In this year alone, a significant number of Africa's professionals have left in search of greener pastures.

So what is a brain drain? The concept of Brain drain refers to a heavy depletion of a nation's professionals, mostly knowledgeable, well-educated, from their home country to another country. Not only is the continent losing the best of her human capital, it is often at its own expense. The United Nations Commission for Trade and Development estimates that for each African professional lost to other countries represents a loss of $184,000 to Africa.

From a supply side, these developers are often trained locally with local resources, however, increased demand for skills has created a significant shortfall required by the industry to drive digital transformation.

Competition for STEM skills globally has placed pressure

on local companies to retain their workers, after all, they were often trained with local resources.

Global technology firms have started to create dedicated business units for their customers in Africa. Amazon will be launching their operations in South Africa next year while Google has announced over a billion-dollar investment in the continent. Covid 19 had a catalytic effect on the acceleration and creation of remote work opportunities, there the opportunity on the one hand and scarcity of talent for local firms on the other, for the growing developer community in Africa.

According to the Gartner survey, businesses believe a shortage of talent to be the biggest obstacle standing in the way of 64% of new tech they'd like to adopt - a Significant shortfall in talent retention required to drive digital transformation, which has driven up competition for roles

What should Africa's Technology firms do?

Bulking the trend requires collaboration and creative thinking with a more comprehensive plan of action on designing the right amount of incentives as part of the 'push back' strategy.

A quick examination of some other strategies that have worked in various climes presents some options on not only attracting but retaining talents.

Firstly, traditionally, well-known brands have grown a culture of developing and building alumni communities. There are big advantages of using this approach, these organisations have benefitted from their institutional knowledge, in group referrals, and also built the strongest database of skills to support ongoing growth.

Secondly, expanding the scope of remote working on the continent, without having to grapple with the issue of regional divergence on immigration. After the pandemic, African employers became more receptive to the idea of working remotely rather than in the traditional in-person style. According to the World Economic Forum, at least "42% of African employees now work remotely at least once every week"

Thirdly, another approach will be to take a more long-term view, designing either in-house intensive apprenticeship programs or developing strategic partnerships with training organisations, offering robust talent pipelines. Even if impact is delayed, it helps to engage potential talent at the critical stages of their career decisions., which also helps to address the on-going skills gap that is so predominant at the moment.

Fourthly, traditional HR management for talent acquisition and retention. Consider the following strategies for finding and retaining talent:

- Match the competition and increase salary and other benefits
- Look for ways to create opportunities for growth
- Cultivate a positive company culture,
- Take feedback more seriously

And finally, building a compelling and emotive story based on patriotism and national pride. Typically, two broad reasons for brain drain: economic and political, the first has been adequately considered with mitigating strategies to minimise losses. The latter is usually a bit trickier due to its regulatory effect, aptly classified as the 'push factors' presenting either as; war or conflict, health risks, and or political instability. These push factors are often the *raison d'etre* for human capital flight on the continent.

Consequently, the approach to Designing presents a conundrum for both Governments and private firms on framing best-fit incentives and motivation to pivot behavioural shift to return to their home countries. Here are a couple of successful models from China, Israel and the United Kingdom.

The Chinese method: China has been successful in reversing the talent drip by using a more targeted incentive mechanism to pull back talent. The Chinese government views the brain drain as a strategic weakness in its strategy to improve its technology capabilities and has thus begun directing billions of dollars in funding to attract and retain talent. This

ecosystem integration approach has typically taken the form of an integration between academia, state-owned enterprises, and the military. China's technology-led reforms provided the needed boost in attracting returnees between 2016 and 2019, however the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic has been a major push back.

The Israeli Approach: The right policy thrust remains a classic answer to dealing with brain drain. The economic crisis of the 1980s led to a severe loss of human capital, which led to state intervention in the form of the Yoma Fund. The fund focused on investment in Israeli and Israeli-linked companies which helped kick-start the country's venture capital ecosystem, invariably creating the right pull factors for Israeli technology talent.

Tech Aviv is a founders' network of angel investors whose mission statement is to actively invest in Israeli owned technology businesses. The industry that has grown around it is highly focused on playing 'brain drain' to Israel's advantage. There are around 60,000 to 100,000 Israelis are living in Silicon Valley and more than 100 Israeli-run start-ups in the area, and a whole host of organisations have been set up to draw Israeli tech talent to the US and match firms with American investors. "We don't have a local market to sell into," explains Yaron Samid, founder of TechAviv,. "So once an Israeli tech company gets to a certain stage it will look to build a front office in the market it is servicing – which is usually the US – but will leave their engineering teams in Israel. These offices then directly learn the latest and greatest techniques coming out of the Valley. The intentionality of both the Israeli Government and private sector led economic activism from the likes of Tech Aviv have helped to recalibrate and position Israel as one of the most technology-led nations today.

UK AI Fund: The UK government has been keen to seize, what it calls, the 232bn opportunity. As a result, it has developed a 'National AI Strategy launched last year with a strong talent development and acquisition strategy embedded as one of its core focus;

'Alongside measures to develop the next generation of AI talent through continued support for postgraduate learning, retraining, and making sure children from wide backgrounds can access specialist courses, the strategy will position the UK as a global leader in raising the standards around the use of the technology while building the case for deeper investor confidence'

This includes amongst others a pledge to invest 17 million to fund AI development in British universities.

A final point and on a lighter note, there are strong indicators to support the concept of a reverse brain drain! In the interim how is your firm dealing with this issue?

Please send your comments to **brandcommunications@cwg-plc.com.**

Blast From The Past

A conversation with Rasheed Salawu

Having worked in banking, project management, and company development for about 22 years, Rasheed Salawu is an entrepreneurial and solution-driven professional with years of cognitive experience in consulting, business development, and project management. He graduated from the Business School of the Netherlands. Mr. Rasheed Salawu is currently the Chief Operating Officer at Longbridge Technologies, a software company that operates mostly within the financial services sector.

Rasheed worked for 15 years at CWG Plc as a Business Director till December 2017, he talks about his time and the experiences that shaped him at CWG.

Interviewer: What are your earliest memories of working at CWG?

Rasheed Salawu: Interestingly. I started my career early, and when I started, I wanted an environment where I could learn very fast and be able to do so many things. Unfortunately, I started working somewhere else that was not IT-related and I got bored because the job was repetitive and not what I bargained for. I tried to look for other options, places where I could harness my potential and CWG came as a good option. When I joined CWG, I realised it was a good platform to acquire knowledge and be able to do so many things at the same time. It was a good place to work.

“If you have worked in a company for 15 years, that's your family. I miss the people and the culture. The culture was fantastic. We realised early enough that we were providing services. And so we saw ourselves as caregivers. This realisation made us ensure that everything we did was centred on the customer”

When I joined, I immediately went through a baptism of fire. It was more challenging than I expected but with the help of the processes that were put in place, the training I received and being surrounded by a lot of smart people, you find yourself in an environment where you could learn from your colleagues. people really contributed. I was working with a supervisor that made everything cool for me. I won't forget his name–Dele Fasuyi. He saw me early enough to help me calm down and I was able to find myself among the other people. I worked in CWG for about 15 years, and working in a company for 15 years means it had a stable environment. Within those years, I had a lot of people that I worked with that shaped me into who I am today. I worked with the software service arm. I recall working for James Agada.

James Agada believed that nothing was impossible, you probably just hadn't figured it out. His belief meant that you had to at least try to figure it out before you go to him. It motivated you to do your homework before going to him for a solution.

I was privileged enough to work with Phillip Obioha at a later part of my work at CWG, and Phillip was a very compassionate leader. He was ready to listen to whatever challenges you have and those are the kind of people that motivate you.

I was also privileged to work with Austin Okere, a great life coach, mentor, and visionary. These people would motivate and influence you to be better. It is, indeed, a very interesting and good place to work.

Interviewer: What was your proudest moment working at the company?

Rasheed Salawu: There were so many interesting times because, in CWG, we all worked as a family so you are proud to go to work every day. There are many pivotal moments but one of them that I remember clearly was about two years after I had joined. I was handed over a big migration project that I had never done before. I was to be the Project Manager and the subject Matter Expert for migration, it was a very challenging project but I had the support of the team. My team members and I eventually executed the project.

The most memorable thing about it was that it was the same year I became a father. So it felt like I was handling multiple projects together, and everything was successful! That was a moment I will never forget because it was so challenging on both the homefront and at the office. With the tenacity of the team, we were able to walk through with the processeses that had been set in place and the project became successful.

Interviewer: What were some of the most significant changes you witnessed during your time at CWG?

Rasheed Salawu: There were so many changes. We got listed and that, indeed, was one of the most remarkable changes. However, I will argue that, because I came from the software arm, the introduction of the Finacle application into the market was a pivotal moment. Oh! It changed a lot of things about the way we do business. At the time when there were other applications in the market, we brought Finacle and we were able to implement Finacle successfully. The customer base grew from 1 bank to 2 banks and so on. We were able to transform the commercial banking industry in Nigeria. So I will argue that it was a very significant moment. It changed a lot of things about CWG.

Interviewer: How was your experience at CWG instrumental in your future exploits?

Rasheed Salawu: I worked at CWG for 15 years–which is a whole lot of time. It was my dream ambition from the beginning. During my time there, I was able to work in different units and sections of the business. I started as a software engineer, then I moved into product management. I also worked in the support department at a later time, then I moved into Project Management. I did Business sales and I became a Business Director at one point. You could see that I practically moved almost everywhere and with experience, I was exposed to every area of the business–everything you can think of. That is what has built me for the role I am playing today. I am a Chief Operating Officer, and with the experience I was able to garner and with the kind of people that I worked with, I was moulded into who I am today.

Interviewer: What was your motivation for joining the company? And did you ever think that it will grow this big company that is listed on the NSE?

Rasheed Salawu: There was no iota of doubt! When you join CWG, and you see the calibre of people who run the company–the fathers of the company and the vision that they had–you don't have any doubt in your mind that the company will grow to become one of the biggest IT companies in Nigeria and Africa at large. A truly Pan African company.

Interviewer: So what was the one thing that you personally felt could be better and how did that change over the years?

Rasheed Salawu: CWG has contributed a lot to the development in Nigeria. One important thing is to have more local solutions because of the Nigerian environment. And I think they have improved a lot on that. They have built many solutions that are locally developed and are now being used by local customers–Nigerian customers. And are also being exported to African countries.

Interviewer: So the Company is celebrating its 30th year, how does that make you feel about being a part of its success?

Rasheed Salawu: CWG has contributed a lot to the Nigerian economy, especially in the financial services sector where I worked when I was there. The impact they've had over the last 30 years is enormous. Today they supply digital applications to 33% of Nigerian banks. They support a backend application that is processing about 55% of customer transactions in the Nigerian commercial bank. They have made a huge impact in the communications sector. They are also playing a key role in the power sector.

They've been able to move to other African markets and are truly a Pan -African company. There is no doubt that you will be very happy being a part of that success story. There is no way that you will write the story of Nigerian banking system or

the story of IT companies in Nigeria, and not write about CWG. The employment opportunities that they've created–both direct and indirect have created a huge impact.

I am happy, I am very delighted to celebrate 30 years now, and I pray the next 30 years will be more fruitful, and more impactful.

Interviewer: What's the one thing you miss about CWG?

Rasheed Salawu: There are so many things that I miss about CWG. II miss the people and the culture. The culture was fantastic. We realised early enough that we were providing services and saw ourselves as caregivers. As caregivers, everything we did centred on the customer. We were customer obsessed, and it was a motivational factor for us in every other thing we did. And of course, beyond that we had a backbone of good processes, procedures and a very good management team. You would miss that kind of environment–the culture and the people.

Interviewer: What are three words you would use to describe CWG?

Rasheed Salawu: CWG is phenomenal, as well as one of the best IT companies in Africa. CWG has made a tremendous impact on the Nigerian economy. They have been consistently impactful for 30 years, which means they are doing something right. If I could say one word, I would say it's phenomenal, and I give kudos to the founding fathers for having the foresight to

The Daily News

Lagos, Saturday, March 19, 1994.

Humpty Dumpty Years

- Wading Into The Torrent.

CWG kept evolving from just selling, to providing services. We engaged with one of the largest telecommunications companies in Africa also from the desktop and laptop angle and evolved until we became a major service provider for the company.

We became such a critical component that the company had to start doing audits on our ... and corporate governance, to ensure that they were not putting their fate into the wrong hands.

We moved–not overnight–to becoming a full-service provider and our Finacle partnership ensure that we were providing the right services in Nigeria.

Now we have more than 50 engineers or more supporting Finacle. Even during the

Lessons from Regulatory Environment

"Nigeria is a good example of the tensions between innovation and regulation. Its tech start-ups face a number of regulatory obstacles, ranging from the Central Bank of Nigeria's ban on cryptocurrency trading to the Security and Exchange Commission's restrictions on technology platforms that allow individuals to purchase shares in foreign companies. These obstacles have stifled entrepreneurial activity in Nigeria's tech sector"

- Phillip Obioha

In talking about the regulatory environment, Mr Phillip Obioha points out obstacles that have stifled entrepreneurial activity in Nigeria's tech sector.

Interviewer: How do you think regulators can disrupt the industry given CWG's previous experience? Would you advocate for a sort of regulatory readiness index as a more forward-looking approach?

Phillip Obioha: Regulators tend to act either as sources of support or headwinds against progress. If societies are to prosper, regulators should not constrict the pursuit of opportunity or act in a way that entrenches protectionism. The relationship between platforms and regulation has been thorny right from the start.

In the face of the pervasiveness of Online Platforms, there is a need for regulation to keep pace with innovation by seeking better understanding of the sector by setting up Sandboxes for experimentation and allowing roll out to the broad society after successful stress testing in the sandbox. To fill the regulatory gaps in the digital economy, the platform providers have resorted to what could be referred to as spontaneous deregulation. This is where the

players ignore laws and regulations that appear to preclude their business model. Believing in the efficacy of their utility model and its appeal to a pent-up global demand, these disruptors see many rules and regulations as belonging to the past and impractical for today's innovative climate. They therefore simply ignore them, opting for their own version of self-regulation, usually based on a mutual rating system between service providers and consumers. These disruptors make the rules for themselves as they go along, because in fairness to them, as their platforms reshape markets, the scope of activity subject to regulation tends to decrease, and various forms of protection disappear.

These companies operate in interstitial areas of the law because they present new and fundamentally different issues that were not foreseen when the governing statutes and regulations were enacted. As explained by Airbnb co-founder Brian Chesky, “There were laws created for businesses, and there were laws for people. What the sharing economy did was create a third category: people as businesses,” to which the application of existing laws is often unclear. These new business models raise complex questions that have not yet been addressed by either legislatures or courts. Emerging technologies like cognitive computing and other forms of machine learning can help narrow the gap between regulation and innovation.

Nigeria is a good example of the tensions between innovation and regulation. Its tech start-ups face a number of regulatory obstacles, ranging from the Central Bank of Nigeria's ban on cryptocurrency trading to the Security and Exchange Commission's restrictions on technology platforms that allow individuals to purchase shares in foreign companies. These obstacles have stifled entrepreneurial activity in Nigeria's tech sector.

Coming Of Age

- The Expansion Years

"My ambition then was to be the Bill Gates of Nigeria, to build disruptive software solutions."

James Agada, the former CEO of CWG shares his experience and learnings, evolving from being a project partner with the then-known Computer Warehouse Group to the eventual merger in 1997 of the three companies that make up CWG today.

Before joining CWG, Mr. Agada had created Expert Edge and would usually collaborate with Computer Warehouse Group as they were known to take up more complex jobs requiring a more niche technical expertise. It was in the course of such partnership with the that the conversation of a potential merger with Computer Warehouse Group was born.

"So I dedicated time and all my energy because it was imperative for me that CWG does well, survives no matter what, purely because all my life is bound in it. So that was the spirit with which I took on the role of CEO at CWG."

Interviewer: Tell us about yourself.

James Agada: My name is James Okwudili, Agada. I am a retired executive. I retired as the CEO of CWG plc, and before then I worked with CWG for 20 years.

Interviewer: What was it like before CWG?

James Agada: Before CWG, I was a founder and CEO of ExpertEdge Software, a company I started in 1994, and in 1997 we merged with CWG.

Interviewer: Interesting trajectory. How did the merger happen?

James Agada: When I started Expert Edge we had an ongoing partnership and took some technically challenging innovative projects with Computer Warehouse Limited because they went early into hardware. We did a few things together in training, system installations and more.

Eventually, Computer Warehouse made an offer to acquire Expertedge

Mr. Okere gave me a significant push to start Expert Edge Software. When the proposal came, we negotiated and reached an agreement. Not everyone in our respective companies believed the merger was a good idea. On our side (Expert Edge), we had workers and shareholders who were not happy, on his side, I am sure he had people who were not totally in agreement, but, we pushed it through eventually. What we brought into the merger significantly changed the trajectory of Computer Warehouse Limited.

Interviewer: Seeing that CWG was moving into hardware sales and bringing in a partner, it was a very significant part of CWG's trajectory. So can you give us a mental image of the organisation after the merger? How was the transition and how did you work with your team to drive it?

James Agada: It was quite interesting. My ambition then was to be the Bill Gates of Nigeria–to build disruptive software solutions. So we were building a lot of software solutions, but when we merged with CWG, integration was not much of an issue. We weren't a big organisation. There were probably only three of us that moved and CWG was a significantly bigger organisation.

We built different solutions and sold them to many banks. This was the era when the Internet wasn't popular in this part of the world, so we would build the software, install it on a PC, and connect to the bank. What you would do today with web banking.

But there was also a culture difference, the culture difference was mainly in terms of the feeling of 'let's build something' versus 'let's sell something'. How do you remunerate a 'person who builds things' versus a 'person who sells things' ? The overall picture for the organisation which contributed a lot to the growth of Computer Warehouse was that sales was paramount as it should be, and with remuneration based on commission.

The software we were building was not sold for a large sum of money, so while you might have a 100% margin, the value was small and the commission was even smaller.

We had one salesman, who joined us to promote our software solution, and then disappeared one day. He just disappeared, and we did not have mobile phones so we couldn't contact him. But one day I found him working with a computer firm. He stated that had gone for a sales call when it was time to negotiate and close the deal from One Million to two million, he still couldn't it because somebody offered 100,000. He did a mental calculation–if I sold at 100,000 how much would my commission be?

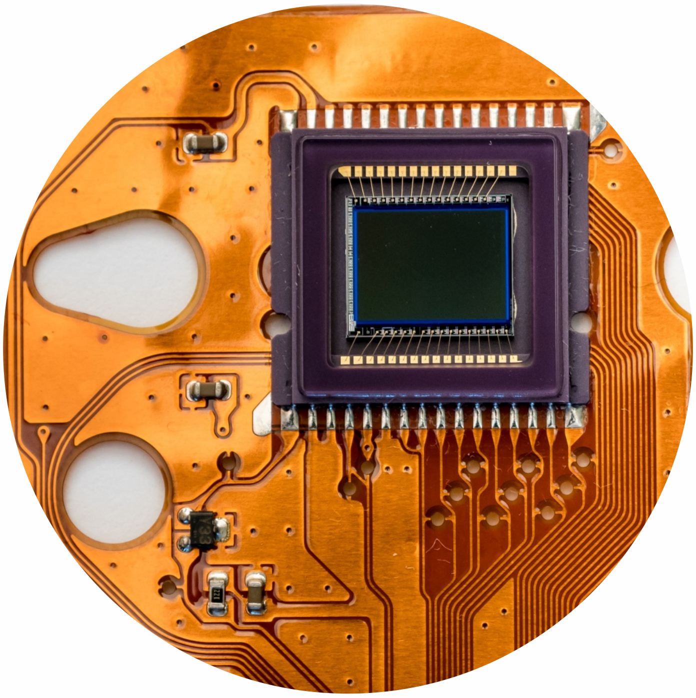
After he figured out how small his commission was going to be, he didn't come back to the office, he just took off never to return.

We were struggling with sales. Then Mr. Okere came in one day and said we had to look at the strategy, "It's fine, we can build the software", he said. I don't think anybody can argue with you that you can build the software–you can. The question is what software are you going to build that we can sell"

We figured that if we had a banking software we could sell it for a million dollars. Yes, our margin might be 10% but that's $100,000. We decided to sell the banking software, make some money and use it to build new ones.

He gave me the responsibility to find software we can sell, and primarily to start with the banks. I started looking and luckily we had a little bit of Internet–just a dial-up. I approached a company in Croatia that served the banks; we reached an agreement to start selling their software in Nigeria in line with our outlined requirements.

A week to the day of the announcement in Nigeria, the team called me to share some news. The good news was that they just sold out to the biggest bank in Croatia. The bad news was the



same bank had also bought the company and had halted taking on new partners, so our deal was off.

At the same time, I also got in touch with a company in India, called Infosys, who were popular for their transformative software solutions. I was confident that the solutions met our requirments. They however had two clause; they usually partnered with bigger companies and CWG at the time was a smaller company. They also mentioned that they were not interested in investing in the African market. I disregarded the laid down conditions and persistently contacted them. Finally, somebody reached out to me from Infosys and said that they were sending a representative to Nigeria.

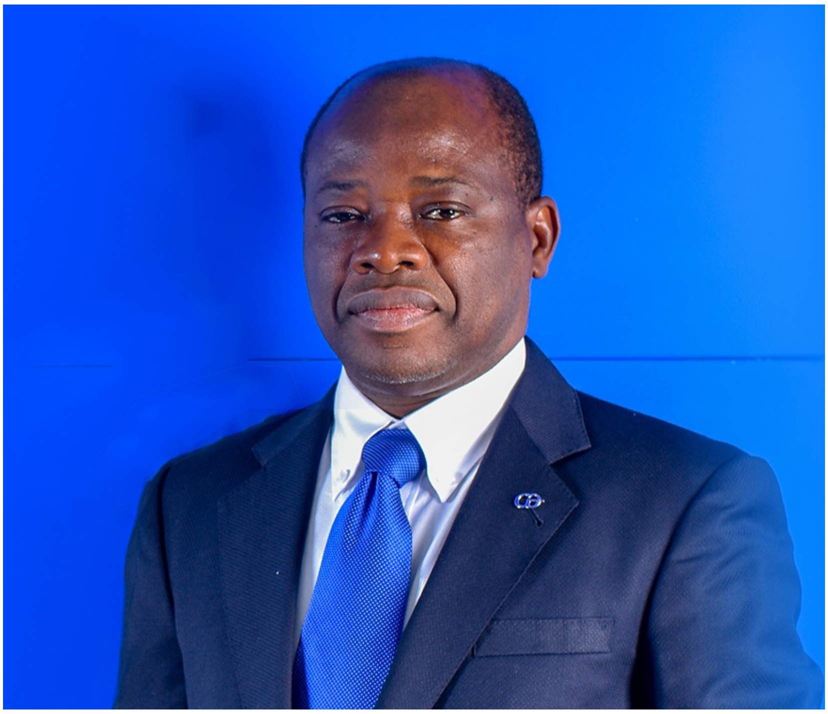
When he arrived, I was his chauffeur and everwhere we visited, we were told that the solution was dead on arrival as all there was already existing software solutions in Nigeria. On his last day, I decided to make my pitch. I made a pitch, telling him about CWG's strengths and why we think there was an opportunity for banking applications. Mr. Okere had sold one of the very first banking applications in Nigeria, so we had an idea of what worked and what didn't.

He came back to me after a week or two saying he had gotten approval to proceed with Computer Warehouse as an Infosys' partner to sell their banking product. That was a major change in the history of CWG. Mr. Okere and I visited Infosys, signed agreements, and in quick succession, we had signed on. We were doing the three projects at the same time. We were hiring people on the go. There were people we hired that never showed up in the office. We hired them and put them on a plane straight to India for training. We had 35 people training in India to work at one time.

Interviewer: What were some of the most significant changes you witnessed in the company? You already mentioned the software part, can you remember any other significant changes if any at any point in time?

James Agada: I spent 20 years in CWG and I'm sure you would know that there have been so many changes. One of the critical survival characteristics of CWG, especially if you compare it with other companies, has been that continuous change. At the time CWG introduced software solutions to its business model, it also introduced Networking services. They were able to offer different solutions that evolved into something big.

When we started deploying the Finacle solution, we realised it required very big servers to run. Sometimes the actual cost of servers was more than the cost of the software. Guess what we did next? We moved from



just selling laptops and desktops, to selling big servers. We partnered with IBM. We moved from selling laptops and desktops PC services, to selling enterprise servers. I can tell you it was a major change and a major shift; the shift also came with building support services.

CWG kept evolving from just selling, to providing services. We engaged with one of the largest telecommunications companies in Africa also from the desktop and laptop angle and evolved until we became a major service provider for the company.

We became such a critical component that the company had to start doing audits on our corporate structure and corporate governance, to ensure that they were not putting their fate into the wrong hands.

We moved–not overnight–to becoming a full-service provider and our Finacle partnership ensure that we were providing the right services in Nigeria.

Now we have more than 50 engineers or more supporting Finacle. Even during the pandemic and many of the disruptions that happened, the banks that were supported by CWG didn't bat an eye, because CWG was equipped with all the expertise locally.

A look at our output throughout the pandemic period will show that we weren't affected by the impact of the pandemic, because a large percentage of our businesses, mostly recurrent services – were not affected.

I witnessed the transition from the founding CEO to a non-founding CEO – and the transition from me to another non-founding CEO. These are notable because many peers at CWG did not survive the exit of the founder. I witnessed taking on a foreign investor–which helped us institute corporate governance and go public. We went to the stock exchange and rang the bell. We are still a public company. So I have witnessed a lot in 20 years.

Interviewer: What were some of the critical things you set out to achieve?

James Agada: Let me tell you the story of how I became CEO to give you context. Mr. Okere, our founder had given a deadline, that he was going to leave on a certain day and the company needed to find a CEO. I was involved in looking for a new CEO. There was a Nigerian, in South Africa that I believed he had a wide range of experiences because he had worked with many international companies. I had already forwarded his name to Mr. Okere as one of my nominees for the position of CEO.

One day, I went to the office, and Mr. Okere called me for a conversation alongside the chairman. I went to see him, and they said that they had decided to nominate me to take on the position of CEO. I refused immediately. He asked me to come to his house, but I went with my wife. He gave me no choice. He said I needed to take it on and I convinced myself that I could do it. It was at that point that I said I will do it.

As CEO, the most critical thing was CWG 2.0; to move away from being a reseller to selling our intellectual property. Those were my clear objectives. Additionally, as a shareholder, I wanted to see dividends. I dedicated time and all my energy, it was imperative for me that CWG does well. With that spirit, I took on the role of CEO at CWG.

There were a lot of internal organisational challenges. One of our biggest challenges was from 2015 to 2016; the Naira crashed. When it crashed, it crashed big time. We had significant liabilities priced in dollars. Our customers had paid us in Naira and we were in a situation where there were no dollars even if you were ready to pay for it. We also needed to clean up our books, 2016 was a different year. And the knock-on effects continued till early to mid-2018 before we could extricate ourselves from some of the difficult contracts that we had. As these things were happening, we had to abandon some partnerships with OEMs, and close down some lines of business. We closed down our Cisco business and closed down our IBM support. We tried to streamline ourselves and at the same time build new business lines, and you couldn't just build one you would have to try several so that you see how they eventually come up.

Interviewer: What do you think has made CWG stand the test of time?

James Agada: I usually tell people that first of all, it is God's will. Secondly, it was an aspiration for a bigger future. Before we went public in Nigeria our goal was to be listed on NASDAQ and we dreamt of being large enough to get listed on NASDAQ.

The third part, in various degrees, was a willingness to let go. I won't say it is perfect, but it did help a lot. There was also the willingness to trust people.

In most cases, you will see a generation of people–some who have spent almost 20 years in CWG–who are doing well. They are not occupying seats; they are still as active as they were before.

Interviewer: You spoke about how one of your teams was more effective than the partner, so how crucial was human capacity development in CWG?

James Agada: The major thing that separated CWG from her peers was the investment in human capital development. When we started with Finacle, we sent as many as 35 people off to India for training. And that investment was not only for Finacle, it was for all our other services. We didn't shy away from training our people. People left. I have an experience where I trained four people. I brought in a consultant from Canada to train them on software development methodology. After the training, they took an international certification test, and they all passed. The Canadian told me he had never seen., anywhere in the world that [he is a worldwide consultant] where he had been able to train people, who were ready to work. One month after, they left. The consultant had sent their CV's to consulting firms.

We trained 20 HR specialists, we trained quality assurance specialists, and we trained project managers. One of our project managers also relocated from Nigeria. She got two job offers, one in the US and one in Canada that gave her the benefit of relocating her family. She was one of the few black belts Sigma certified people in the world and the training was done by CWG, while she was working with us. That had been the mainstay, up to the point where CWG established its training school, which is still in existence today.

Interviewer: Any comments on the future of CWG?

James Agada: There are a lot of young bright energetic men running CWG. So the future, the way I see it, is in many parts–the technology and our competition–is continuously evolving. CWG has always shown that it will evolve. As I would always say, there are so many opportunities in Nigeria for a company that is willing to invest in the people and create solutions. CWG has shown that it is willing to do that and as it gets more established, I presume that it will continue. With the young men there, I think the only thing that can be a limit is their ambition, the rest of us are retired.

For a company that is established and now on its 2nd non-founder CEO–who is a young man with energy–I am sure that the future is bright, as bright as it possibly can be.

The Leap

By Adewale Adeyipo (Group Chief Executive Officer, CWG)

"Getting into the fabric of the organisation to understand the fundamentals, the business drivers and how every technology investment will contribute to the success of the organisation."

- Adewale Adeyipo

Adewale is a proficient technology enthusiast and business executive with extensive experience in Strategy, Management, and Leadership. He currently serves as the Group CEO of CWG Plc-A leading ICT conglomerate, listed on the Nigeria Stock Exchange, with Headquarters in Lagos and operations in four (4) countries.

Before his current appointment, he was the Executive Director for Sales and Marketing, overseeing all responsibilities of Sales, Marketing, Product Management, and Market Penetration within the CWG Plc Group. Wale has consulted and worked very closely with industry leaders and promoters of new financial institutions in setting up banks and creating a plan to power their growth aspirations. He has consulted for several organizations, given my diverse experience and the application of technology, as an enabler for business success and expansion.

"And even when things don't go as anticipated, you make sure that you protect the end user, which is your customer. Over the years, we've been able to build that trust level with over 150 organisations that we serve today. Our reports show that over 70% of the businesses we serve currently are repeat businesses from existing customers."

- ***Adewale Adeyipo***

In 2014, He led the CWG PAN Africa Initiatives (PAI). The PAI was a brainchild that produced CWG's strategic delivery partnerships and business expansion in 23 African operations.

Wale holds a BSc in Computer Science from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He has a specialization certificate in innovation and entrepreneurship from Harvard Business School and is an alumnus of Lagos Business School, Business School Netherlands, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

He possesses extensive study in Entrepreneurship-Valuation and Funding, Dynamic System Thinking, Digital, and ITO Transformation from Harvard and London Business School. He is a member of the Forbes Business Council (an Invitation-Only Community for Successful Business Owners and Leaders) and a certified AFN CEO Panelist.

Wale is a member and fellow of several other organizations, including the Institute of Directors, Nigeria Computer Society, Nigeria Institute of Management, Institute of Credit Administration, and Institute of Management Consultant.

Adewale talks about the current drivers and disruptors for business in Africa and the current role of CWG in the technological scape.

Interviewer: What informed CWG's strategy as a listed company and what informed the merger with

other companies which now make up CWG?

Adewale Adeyipo: The listing on the Nigerian Stock Exchange had been a major goal for the organisation right from inception. When we got that, it was one very major milestone for the organisation that was celebrated. Today there are plans also to be listed in other regions. A lot of that will be made public at the right time, but that has always been the plan since its inception for this organisation, from the founding team to the current team.

So that means there has been a change of pattern from the first to the second to the third. And there's a clear plan on how we do this transition. That can only come because there's a high level of corporate governance. I'm sure that has helped the organisation to get to where we are today, and it's been quite instrumental to a lot of the good things that we've done.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the next 30 years of CWG Plc?

Adewale Adeyipo: What I could tell is the 60th anniversary of CWG will be massive. Wherever you are at the time, I'm sure you will see it. And I'm very confident to say this because I have inside information on what is to come in this organisation.

It's one part that gets us very excited, and we look forward to that.

30 years is good, but beyond the destination, will be the journey itself. We're enjoying every part of this journey. I look forward to the 10th, 20th, and 30th year. We will not give away anything in the process of achieving success in the everyday activities and tiny milestones that we hit.

As much as we are excited about what will come in those years, we take a lot of pleasure and fun in the everyday achievement and the people that we've been able to carry along, the community that we serve, the customers whose faces we've been able to bring smiles to.

To us, we take more pride in that, even as we get onto the journey of another 30 years.

Interviewer: What keeps you up at night?

Adewale Adeyipo: A lot.

Firstly, if one said that they fully understand the dynamics of the world economy, then I would question it. We have so many more unknowns now than the known, and depending on who you're speaking to, every fraction will tell you where they think the entire world economy is leading to.

We've seen the emergence of so many other things that weren't predicted before now. We've seen so many policy formations that turned favourable, and we've seen so many that have outrightly frustrated and killed businesses. We've seen regulators come with very strict measures. We've seen a lot of fiscal and monetary policies that have propelled businesses to thrive, and we've seen a lot of them also that have killed many initiatives. We've seen how regulators are responding to the new trend in technology. We're seeing how they are reacting to some of these changes.

It's enough to worry because nobody has that crystal ball on where the next two, three, or four years will hold. But in all this, we still find technology as a very important piece of whatever the future holds.

So the world economy is something that keeps me up. The challenges Nigerians face today keep me up.

The human capital flights that we currently suffer also in Nigeria today, is something to be worried about. The consequences of paying little attention to it might not seem so vivid now, but I'm extremely worried about what the next four or five years will look like. With the rate of human capital flight we're experiencing in Sub-Saharan Africa right now, I wonder how this will have an impact on talents in this region.

Of course, the world has become one small village where talent can be acquired anywhere. But I'm still asking what will be the impact of that on our home country's economy today?

Interviewer: What books are you currently reading?

Adewale Adeyipo: I have a few, but I think one interesting one is Think Again by Adam Grant. Human beings, by nature, will think by patterns; based on things and happenings that we've experienced before now. Especially when believing those things have produced the results that we anticipated. There's a tendency that you might want to repeat the things the same way you've done them to generate a similar result. The dynamics we see now are completely different. If there's a time that executives are to think again, if there's a time that individuals are to rethink everything they thought they knew, that time is now.

So I find the book very interesting. I read it once and now I'm going through it again. I recommend it to every executive driving change in whatever sector.

Interviewer: What do you think is the pulse of CWG in Nigeria and

Africa at large?

Adewale Adeyipo: Beyond the pulse of CWG will be the role of technology in major economies and major industries around the world, even beyond Sub-Saharan Africa and Africa. What CWG has been able to successfully do is build a credible brand, beyond just the technology that we're delivering. It takes a lot of years before you can sustain some level of credibility.

And even when things don't go as anticipated, you make sure that you protect the end user, which is your customer. Over the years, we've been able to build that trust level with over 150 organisations that we serve today. Our reports show that over 70% of the businesses we serve currently are repeat businesses from existing customers. This is the same thing that we've extended to different regions like Ghana, Cameroon, and Uganda today. It has worked for the organisation. And we don't take that for granted.

Interviewer: Do you think Africa has benefited from some of the success stories the region has recorded in the last five years?

Adewale Adeyipo: Nigeria has benefited, and Africa has. We see a similar trend also happening in Egypt. We see a similar trend happening in Kenya, which even started earlier than Nigeria did. A similar trend also exists in South Africa, where technology companies are taking leadership roles and leading major conversations with global entities and global establishments. We're seeing the inflow of investors into this region largely because they understand the assets that we have here in terms of human capacity assets. The population also has been on our side; it has helped to propel a lot of the businesses that you see today. And lately, investors are not sentimental about where they put their funds. The variables must be correct.

What we're seeing in Africa is a new level of consciousness–the new level of awareness for the young Africans on how they could use technology to change the narrative of the continent.

And it has been a very welcomed development; it has fostered a lot of global partnerships that I think Nigeria and Africa are benefiting from today. It is best to watch because we are just at the foundation of what we are experiencing right now. The growth we're expecting in this space is not something that we've anticipated. It is coming very soon.

Interviewer: How do you see the role of CWG in shaping this new journey?

Adewale Adeyipo: CWG has always played a very fundamental role, and we have a lot of milestones and traction to show for it. A lot of our customers will agree with me on how we've been able to bridge the gap between the international organisations and the ability for them to be able to find an indigenous, highly competent organisation that could be the conduit for their products and solutions. And create usable products or use cases to solve challenges that are peculiar to us in this region. That has been one major role that I think CWG has played in the last 20 to 25 years.

We are now focusing on creating our IPS that addresses some of these known challenges that we've seen. Of course, the partnership will always continue. We're seeing the emergence of organisations that are building some terrific solutions. The global narratives are beginning to change in favour of the African technology space.

Interviewer: Industry watchers have identified COVID as one of the biggest disruptors in the last 100 years. Do you agree and how has it shaped business as usual in CWG?

Adewale Adeyipo: We could debate that and it's completely relative. But the COVID situation changed a lot of things, not just in Nigeria, but globally. We suddenly realised that a lot of the investment that has gone into technology before that period couldn't deliver the right value the organisations were seeking to have.

Everybody went back to the drawing board to understand what we call “The Value Realisation for Digital Transformation”, not so much about the service of time or the system of the time. Organisations were more concerned about what that meant in terms of customer experience, and by extension, customer loyalty. If that brings about an increase in the bottom line or an increase in terms of brand equity, we must be able to measure that and set up a system. A lot of the engagement we had during and after the Pandemic resulted in value realisation for the organisation.

Getting into the fabric of the organisation to understand the fundamentals, the business drivers, and how every technology investment will contribute to the success of the organisation was a major game changer. Organisations are still feeling the effects of the pandemic. Some have been able to find their place, clearly understanding how they need to play. But I quite agree that it is one piece of history that we cannot write off, even if, only for the impact it made on the world economy at large.

Interviewer: How would that affect the type of talent you attract at CWG?

Adewale Adeyipo: We clearly understand the kind of organisation we want to be and we know the kind of organisation we don't want to be. If I clearly understand where I'm going, then it's easy for me to know the people that I'm going with and the people that can help propel my journey to that place that I'm getting into. So there's a robust talent management and talent acquisition plan in CWG, largely in line with the direction that we've set up to go.

But every other time we put our finger on the pulse of the industries that we play, we make adjustments as we find necessary.

Interviewer: Do you think there is an inherent bias in the tech industry against women and what is CWG doing to change that narrative?

Adewale Adeyipo: I have had several interesting conversations about the role of women in technology and how women should be better empowered. But recent conversations have completely overtaken that debate. Because the class of people you're referring to are not waiting to be called to the table now. They are demanding for what is theirs. They are taking their place, their rightful place in the room when it comes to technology.

The best way to test this is to go to most organisations providing technological services or telling the stories of technology in Africa, and take a survey to understand the ratio of men to women in these organisations. Then you can tell that a lot has changed. The awareness and the desire of the girl child to embrace and understand technology, use and deliver technology, especially in the software development space, has experienced a major increase in the last three years, which is why we have more women in tech than we used to.

I**nterviewer:** What are your expectations for the next ten years in terms of expansion for CWG?

Adewale Adeyipo: Every day in CWG is another interesting day. Tomorrow is another interesting one to look forward to.

So as much as I'm excited about ten years, I'm excited about 20 years to come in CWG. I can tell you also that I'm excited about tomorrow morning. What is more important to us here is the understanding of what we want to be and the excitement every other time we hit a milestone.

Interviewer: CWG is charting the path in making technology available and affordable to the SME sector with one of its products SMERP, how would you rank its success?

Adewale Adeyipo: In the next ten years, SMEs will be considered one of the major builders of the economy. We do not have any big players in the world today that has not leveraged strength and investment in SMEs for nation-building.

I can go extensively to tell you about the development of China and the role of SMEs in that space is similar to other

Western countries that might be of interest to you.

At CWG also, we see that for any meaningful change to happen in this part of the world, there must be some very deliberate policies and enablement that will support the SMEs. We have relevant laws in this country that are enough for us to get somewhere. I clearly understand the role of government in policy formation to encourage these SMEs, but we're paying less attention to the role of private organisations and the place of public-private partnerships to be able to support these SMEs to be viable.

The ERP platform that we have today is one of those initiatives that will strongly help the SME industry. To clearly understand the drivers of their business, clearly understand what an investor might be seeking to have in their business, and the ability for them to be able to document the way that it's presentable to an investor.

The SMERP platform, one huge investment that we've made is in terms of development, market penetration, and partnership with clusters and organisations that we are sure can take to the market with us. If you think the work has ended, I can assure you that we have more coming.

Interviewer: What is your message to the 700 staff, and what can they expect from management going forward?

Adewale Adeyipo: We try to make the organisation very exciting and fun. We've created an environment that we consider to be employee friendly, where people can increase their level of creativity and where they can drive as an organisation.

We have a fully open policy in CWG where ideas from an employee that resumed today are as critical as an employee that has been here for ten years. There have been a lot of the changes that we've made in terms of our employee engagement and advancement in terms of our talent acquisition came from the people at CWG. So it's one interesting journey.


CWG
Product & Services
MacBook Pro

Cloud:

Adopting Digital Channels In Cooperative Societies In Africa

The pandemic has fuelled the migration of group interactions to online channels. Virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meets have become an essential element of modern culture, enabling family members, professional colleagues, and other people groups to interact safely amid the outbreak of the highly contagious disease. Furthermore, there is a growing appetite for virtual channels for investments, commerce, and recreation.

As a voluntary association of individuals with economic and social interests, cooperative societies in Africa should adopt the trend and take conscious steps to migrate their operations to digital channels. The cloud and connected technology are an opportunity for cooperative societies to improve the user's experience of the members and ease administration to deliver more services efficiently.

The adoption of digital technology holds the key for cooperatives in Africa to fulfil their potential as agents of economic development. Technology has played a vital role in organising the activities of cooperatives in nations where they are making a substantial economic impact.

Cloud computing is a technology that is very appropriate to cooperatives today. It directs the delivery of computing services such as servers, storage, databases, networking, software, and analytics over the internet to deliver faster and more flexible services to different users. Service providers create cloud computing systems to help business or research needs.

These solutions are designed to support large customer or user numbers and are an ideal solution for cooperative societies that seek to operate more efficiently. Adopters commonly pay only for the cloud services used and can lower their operating costs, enhance security, run infrastructure more efficiently, and scale operations. A way to achieve this cost efficiency is by partnering with digital solutions companies.

By adopting cloud technology, cooperatives can revolutionise their operations in several ways. The collection and organisation of members' data on a cloud platform allows cooperatives to create financial accounts efficiently. It endears the cooperative to financial service companies, making them keener to offer loans and other services to cooperatives.

Sadly, cooperatives in Africa struggle to provide financial accounts and data on members' contributions. As a result, they are unable to take advantage of financing opportunities such as the loans currently being offered by the various governments in these countries through various intervention schemes.

Technology is also changing how members relate to each other. Participation at meetings, voting, and notifications are virtual, saving time, and resources, increasing participation and making engagement more convenient for members. Also, the adoption of digital technology opens a new approach to customer service and customer experience. Members can access information about their contributions and receive personalised services on their own time.

The use of digital methods to organise the operations of cooperative societies also enables a range of prescriptive and predictive analyses that are otherwise not possible without data. Managers of cooperatives can analyse the membership and peculiar needs and circumstances of members on a platform made possible by cloud computing technology.

For example, data mining: cooperative societies can more accurately ascertain the products and services that could interest

their members. Also, through the processing of data and the creation of appropriate algorithms, the cooperative is more likely to improve member satisfaction by anticipating their needs and product preferences.

Data processing can also be a valuable tool in risk management concerning designing rules about the loans/credit provisions to members. The power of data can just be released today when organisations adopt digital methods, their services provisions, and the management of their operations.

The application of digital technology to drive innovation in the activities of cooperatives is a growing trend across the world. Digital technology does not only support the efficient issuance of loans to credit union members but enables peer-to-peer rental of farming and other equipment in most countries.

Another reason cooperatives should adopt digital technology is the danger of potential upheaval of their businesses from an outsider. Cooperatives in Africa must wake up to the peril of technology in their business and embrace it before advancements in technology cause them irrelevance in the future. An example of a cooperative platform is the UCP cooperative platform which will help simplify, improve, automate and digitise all your cooperative operations and cooperative needs on a single platform.

The pandemic created uncertainties across economies around the globe. Yet, this dire outlook develops new opportunities to do things differently and harness new development

Experience Is Redefining The Future Of Business

Customer experience is the most critical driver of brand equity today as we live in an omnichannel world and how people experience digital content-to-commerce channels defines their impression of a brand. Consumers are looking to build relationships and experiences rather than just products and businesses need to think about how they can create seamless experiences across all their touchpoints.

Businesses need to ensure seamless transitions and customer experience, and this is becoming critical for business success, especially when organisations are increasingly competing on a whole new scale for market share. Customers need to be front and centre.

A great way to create a connection and build a lasting relationship with the customer is for them to see themselves as part of your story. If you want to add value to an experience, your customer must feel part of the bigger brand story, whether that is about your business sustainability, origin, or future.

The most crucial point is that the customer experience must speak transparency and trust and must have the same look and feel. This means building trust and transparency, which will eventually mean that customers will be more likely to proactively share their data with the brand.

Businesses must realise that digital commerce is becoming more nuanced. Knowing their customers will be vital as they build out seamless experiences across all customer touchpoints and work out what those touchpoints should be.

With Finacle, customers can seamlessly make and receive evidence of transactions, enjoy the convenience of online banking, maintain data security, and receive well-tailored and peculiar services.

FinEdge is proven to help banks and other financial organisations enhance agility and efficiency of operations, while significantly improving customer experience and returns.

SMERP is a software platform for time-consuming routine tasks. This software can quickly automate inventory, accounting, and even marketing data, freeing up resources for small businesses to focus on other areas of their operations.

Receiving and paying bills can be a time-consuming process and can affect customer experience. BillsnPay is a mobile and web application that assists customers in making quick, easy, and convenient payments.

UCP ensures your members enjoy a seamless cooperative experience from contribution to loan management, to accounting.

How To Turn A Supply Chain Platform Into An Innovation

Many companies are concerned about keeping a steady supply of inventory rather than having a better understanding of the flow of demand and production process.

With the right platform, organisations can ensure that their product or service is not only available when the customer wants it, but also at the right time, at the right price, and in the right amount giving the organisation a competitive advantage.

According to Geodis (2019), 57% of companies believe that supply chain management gives them a competitive edge that enables them to grow and to further develop their business. Efficient supply chain management can help businesses to be more aggressive against competitors. With the advancement of technology, the advent of data analytics and automation can now be integrated into supply chain processes making the process to become more streamlined than ever.

With the integration of technology, supply chain management has become faster and efficient than ever before and has completely changed the structure in which businesses operate.

Seamless business processing is a major challenge for SMEs globally. Because it involves the integrated planning and implementation of procedures required to manage the movement of materials, information, and financial capital in activities that broadly include demand planning, sourcing, production, inventory management and storage, logistics, and returns, it relies on both organisational strategy, specialised software, and collaboration.

It is quite an extensive and complex undertaking, each must communicate and work together to create efficiencies, manage risk and adapt quickly to change. This is such a huge challenge for SMEs globally.

SMERP provides SMEs with a 360-view of production and an effective supply chain management, allowing you to identify bottlenecks quickly and easily and sort out issues from raw materials to delivery of products.

Visit **www.smerp.ng** to get started.

UNIFIED cooperative platform

Fast and Reliable Processing of Information

Can Traditional Banks Compete Against An Army Of Fintech Start-Ups?

By Moradeke Akintola
(Business Director, Platforms and Product Development, CWG)

The financial service industry in Nigeria remains a growing sector, with over $9 billion in value pools, but despite high levels of competition, lack of access to services, especially in rural areas, issues of affordability, and poor user experience leave most consumers underserved.

However, with the increase in smartphone penetration and a drive to increase financial inclusion and cashless payments, Nigeria is now home to over 200 fintech standalone companies, plus several fintech solutions offered by banks and mobile network operators as part of their product portfolio.

Between 2014 and 2019, Nigeria's fintech space raised more than $600 million in funding, attracting 25 percent ($122 million) of the $491.6 million raised by African tech start-ups in 2019 alone. This is second to Kenya, which attracted $149 million.

In line with the evolution of fintech in other markets, payment solutions currently represent around 15 percent of banking revenue pools in the country and continue to grow. With these statistics, would one define the relationship between fintech and traditional banks as a symbiotic or a parasitic one?

The shift from traditional to digital banking, which has been gradual and continuously on the rise, is constituted by varying degrees of banking service digitization. Fintech provides users with the ability to access financial data through desktop, mobile, and ATM services. It involves the digitization of all traditional banking products, procedures, and processes to serve customers through online channels.

Today, it is crucial that financial institutions of all types and sizes realise how critical it has become to quickly adapt to the recent volatile changes in how different financial products and services are delivered and consumed on a digital space, especially considering all the new innovative Fintech exploding worldwide with innovative financial services that are affordable and easy to access regardless of their location.

Finacle is a core banking solution that enables all kinds of banks with digital banking functionalities. It helps traditional and emerging financial institutions drive truly digital transformation to achieve frictionless customer experiences, larger ecosystem play, insights-driven interactions, and ubiquitous automation. It provides banks with the needed infrastructure to take new banking products to market as swiftly as possible.

Visit www.cwg-plc.com to find out more.

Partnership and Talent Selection:

How FinTech Companies Can Build A Viable Value Assessment Framework

By Adewale Adeyipo (Group Chief Executive Officer, CWG)

Talent sourcing, selection and development are the looping human resource challenges for Financial Technology companies, not only in Nigeria but across the West Africa. To develop a viable solution for these challenges, the collaboration of components within the digital technology ecosystem involving different institutions in their variant capacities is vital. For FinTech companies, a viable and sustainable talent selection process will include the identification of value gaps within the company, development of work processes to satiate the gaps, sourcing of talents who meet and possess the capabilities to manage the processes and selecting talents with associated interests in the mission and vision of the company.

However, it is important to see through the rise of financial technology business in Nigeria and the challenge of talent selection within the digital industry. As it is, one of the industries in Nigeria that have witnessed tremendous changes within the financial service sector is digital financial services. This transformation is the result of the continuous improvement in technology and the rise in technology uptake among Nigerians. From the start, banks in Nigeria started the implementation of technology at the back-end and front-end of their operations with the use of telephones and desktop computers. This changed when the Central Bank of Nigeria in March 2007 introduced the Payment System Vision 2020, a cashless policy aiming to develop and modernise Nigeria financial sector; proposing that Nigeria would be among the top 20 economies in the world by 2020. The resultant effects of the policy can be seen through the rise of companies like Interswitch, SystemSpecs, and Etranzact in Nigeria. The policy document has been updated with the publication of version 2.0 in 2013 and serving as a stimulant for FinTech start-up activities in Nigeria. Prominent of these impacts can be seen in mobile money and payment services, financial inclusion, sector-based innovation, and improvement in regulatory policy and framework. At the same time, the industrial evidence includes the rise in innovative companies, with over 210 – 250 FinTech companies in Nigeria.

The advancement of Financial Technology has morphed into other sectors such as e-commerce, health, agriculture with consistent increments being witnessed in the adoption of blockchain and other cryptocurrencies. The replicability of FinTech success in arguably every sector of Nigeria economy has made feasible the propensity for continuous progress in the development of financial technology in terms of policy, regulations and innovations.

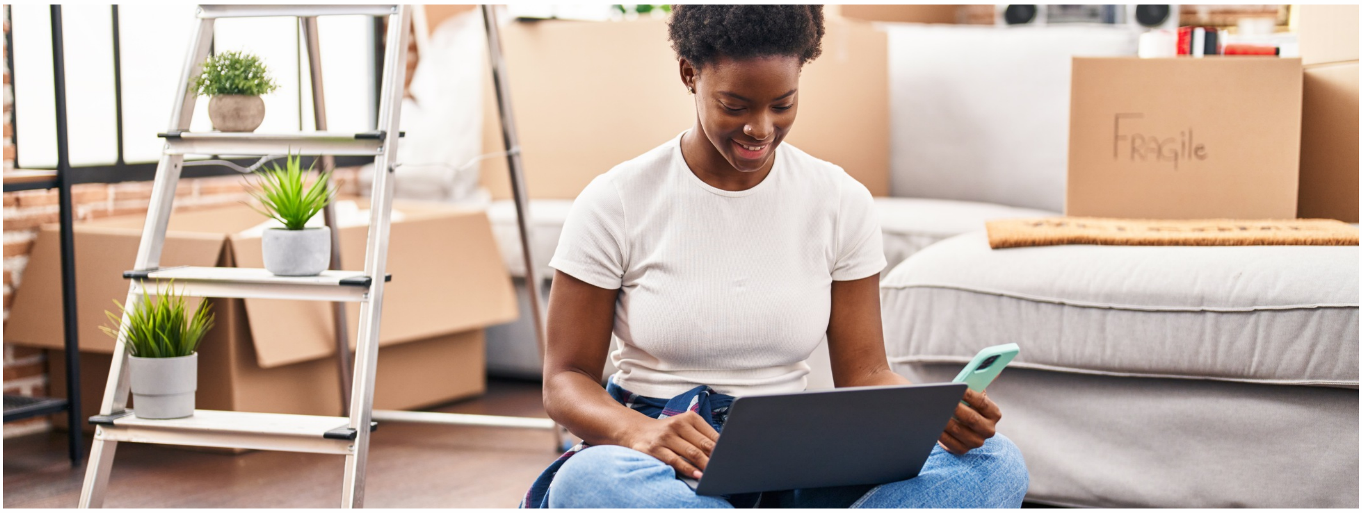
The receptivity of the advancement in financial technology among Nigerians has shown in the continuous increase in electronic transactions. The Central Bank of Nigeria, as of 2019, reported that over 3.2 trillion naira were

transacted through the Point of Sale (POS) machines, about 480 billion naira transactions were made on the web, and over 5 trillion naira were transacted using mobile money. The beam of cashless financial transactions and other FinTech services continue to soar even with the effect of COVID-19 pandemic, thwarting business operations across the country. As at May 2020, there have been over 450 billion naira volume of POS transactions, a significant spike when compared with the volume of POS transactions in the first and second quarters of 2019 as reported in the Nigerian Inter-Bank Settlement System report (NIBSS), revealing continuous awareness of financial technology and the impacts of an increase in mobile usage and internet penetration. This increment mounts pressure on FinTech companies to develop infrastructures and set up teams of talented individuals who have the required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs). However, what is now known as a challenge is that the assessment and selection of these human resources often become an unresolved puzzle in the game of financial technology management.

The Challenges of Talent Scarcity

Every FinTech company needs personnel with a blend of soft skills and hard skills, incorporating technical knowledge, customer-focus thinking, innovation, and financial service knowledge. FinTech businesses need financial services specialists who understand the markets, customer needs, business models, and can manage the relevant compliance requirements. Aside from these, softer skills such as business development, business analyst, project management are required to support innovations. All these are important in interacting with clients, understand customer's needs, and develop required solutions. The business of FinTech is a customer-centric model with expected outcomes similar to traditional financial services.

Attracting tech talents is a challenge for most FinTech companies as the technical skills required vary based on the products and services involved. For instance, a FinTech company building its products around big data and artificial intelligence would need people with skills in data engineering, data science, statistical analysis, coding, cybersecurity, and blockchain technology.



In Nigeria, just like other parts of the world there is a talent shortage for skilled personnel in machine learning and data engineering. This scarcity may be compounded as talented and skilled individuals have shown little interest in working in the financial services organisations but in organisations where their impacts will be known. The consequences of this talent scarcity among FinTech companies are impactful especially during fundraising as investors are likely to show interest in companies who already have skilled staff in place. This can birth a cumulative impact on the FinTech companies as talented and skilled individuals may only join the company if funding is already in place. Notably, the annual Global CEO Survey provided by PwC reported that majority of organisation leaders are concerned about the shortage of talent, which may affect the growth of their companies.

In Nigeria, what has increased the shortage of talents can be attributed to the lack of a local educational system to provide skill acquisition opportunities for students and acquire applicable knowledge within tech-driven industries. A co-founder of one of the prominent FinTech companies in Nigeria once asserted that access to phenomenal talent is the most important and constraining factor for their business as success requires having domain experts in numerous fields. The growth of FinTech companies will be a function of talent recruitment. However, it was not until 2019 that the said company was able to increase the number of talents within their domain, and this came after they have been able to raise more funds.

The Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

FinTech in Nigeria has evolved from being a mere support system to the traditional banking functions to supporting its incremental functions exacerbated by the advancement in technology. With the availability of massive amounts of data on the demographic and customer behaviour, including the reduction in the price of data storage, the human resources requirement of FinTech has evolved from merely coding and accounting to include statistics and data analysis.

Looking at the educational trends in Nigeria and the capacity to acquire knowledge, build skills and develop abilities, the human resources gap will linger for a long time. Aside from coding, accounting, and statistics skills, essential business knowledge is highly needed in the operations of FinTech business to ensure a sustainable revenue generation and profitability.

Coding has become a saturated skill while other abilities and knowledge become a conundrum for FinTech in Nigeria, exacerbated by the new wave of focus on product development, management, marketing, and branding. A Head of Growth in one of the FinTech companies in Nigeria was quoted in a 2020 intelligence report stating that within their company, there is a challenge of recruiting marketing expert who is articulate enough to bring a product to the market, create strong customer engagement and retainment. The report documents major trends in the FinTech sector in Nigeria and assesses both industry drivers and impediments to further growth.

The knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) gap in FinTech companies is evident and has become a conundrum, especially in the process of identifying the best talents suitable for a position.

What has been the contributory factor widening the KSA gap is the brain drain. In everyday news, we hear of Nigeria tech experts in different positions leaving for opportunities in developed countries. Yet, FinTech companies hardly put in place a replacement strategy to augment the loss of the essential instruments of their companies. As employees continue to seek change in terms of opportunities, strategy and control, the lifecycle of talent engagement in the digital financial service sector will continue to reduce.

Talent Sourcing

Evolving technology continues to shape the financial services industry in an unprecedented way starting from the development and implementation of advanced technological tools such as blockchain, multiple automation technologies, and artificial intelligence to solve complex financial issues in banking, business and management. FinTech companies have continued to investigate the potential applications of these technologies to create their niche within the industry. These technological potentials make talents accessibility becomes imperative in driving innovations.

The current trend in FinTech is driven majorly by technology, however, continuous growth cannot be achieved with technical competencies alone. FinTech business is not limited to software engineers and accountants; marketers, brand strategists, human resources managers, legal advisors, risk managers, among others are relevant for the companies to make greater inroads into the financial services industry. Limiting hiring to technical skills alone is detrimental to the overall progress and development of FinTech companies. Therefore, selecting and developing top talents with applicable and adaptable knowledge, skills and abilities are essential when competing with the giant of the financial services sector.

The relevance of human resources management in talent sourcing, selection and management should not be ostracized. As reported in a 2016 PwC report on redefining the roles of human resources management across the financial services industry, the management of human resources has a pivotal role in delivering organisation strategies through effective sourcing and acquisition of right strategic talents. The technical and none technical skill set requirement for execution of FinTech strategies should be hinged as a priority for human resources management.

The process of talent selection is tedious but crucial for growth and innovation. FinTech companies should select talent with adaptable knowledge, skills, and abilities to understand customer desires through data and contextualize customers' experiences through interactions. Companies should identify data scientists and psychologists who can provide insight into the customer mindset. However, the challenge of identifying talents and innovate has led some organizations to create innovation labs, accelerators and incubators located in trendier areas with budding and skilled people who seek an environment and freedom to cultivate their skills and innovate. The beauty of all the innovation labs is that it provides the opportunity for talents to address challenges and solve problems. Investments in these facilities enable talents to fuel the innovation pipeline and encourage creativity in every area of the organization.

Within the frame of the FinTech ecosystem in Nigeria, there are self-organising networks and organisations whose objective is to build, nurture, and connect talents with promising companies. In this regard, we have tech incubators and accelerators in several states. Government, both at the federal and state levels, have stepped up their roles from being ordinary regulators to enablers who foster growth within the ecosystem. Evidence is the fact that Lagos State Government has made continuous efforts to foster a community of tech start-ups in Yaba, while the Federal Government has promised to establish innovation hubs across the country, including in Lagos and Abuja.

This collaboration of players within the ecosystem will lead to an increase in talents for FinTech. Meanwhile, challenges are expected in terms of talent experience. The knowledge, skills, and abilities of talents will be applied to see if they meet the expectations. However, this experience gap can be filled with freelancing.

Innovative FinTech companies can attract valuable talents with very different career aspirations, necessitating a change in the way the companies interact with talents, not only by offering incentives and redesigning career paths but more of outsourcing work to freelancers. With freelancing, we can imagine a work environment with no boundaries, no barriers in terms of language and nationality, talents of unlimited amount of skills whose goal is to help the operations of the business organisation.

To source for talent, FinTech companies can tap into talent around the globe and outsource jobs for prices that are reasonable and attainable. This cloud of freelancers can be accessed, aside from the online freelancing platforms, in accelerators and innovation labs, where talent can bid on projects and connect with employers who need their skills. The solution this provides is to resolve the headache FinTech managers face when they lose their top talent to brain drain.

The Universities and Innovation Labs

Attracting talents to FinTech companies can be considered another challenge due to its requirement for specialised knowledge, skills, and abilities. However, the challenge can be surmounted through partnership with educational institutes who have the infrastructures such as coding bootcamps, talent networks, and entrepreneurial programs exposing the younger people to the right education and the career opportunities available in FinTech start-up. The partnership can help to discover talents with applicable KSAs who can occupy roles in the FinTech companies. Innovation labs are useful because they can provide training, networks, and other resources to help talents upscale their skills and knowledge.

Talent Selection Through University

Digital financial services companies need talents and can be created through a committed effort on the path of the FinTech companies and universities to produce and develop young talents. The importance of young talents cannot be overstated as they provide opportunities for FinTech companies to develop a team that will fit into the company culture and also brings fresh perspectives to solve problems, approach and promote ideas for brand development and marketing.

Talents are the lifeblood of FinTech and the backbone of the emerging industry. The shortage of skilled, FinTech employees would impact their capacity for innovation and significantly affect the remarkable and consistent growth we have seen in Nigeria so far.

The approach to talent sourcing through the universities is for FinTech to make themselves visible to students through partnership and sponsorship. On the part of the universities, course modules in FinTech should be offered to pique the students' interests, especially

those who are not familiar with the field and industry. With this, students can take Financial Technology modules as part of their wider degree. Business schools would typically offer these modules; however, there could be a useful integration within the computer science and engineering departments. FinTech talent selection and development are achievable when there is a strong collaboration with the universities with the right infrastructures and systems.

Talent Selection Through Innovation Labs

Innovations labs are semi-autonomous units strategically established to develop talents, accelerate innovation, incorporate new technologies, and skillsets development. These labs provide the avenue for creative think-tanks to nurture the future of financial technology companies. Most innovation labs are home to a host of incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces. All these have been established not only to grow and innovate but to create skilled talent pools that align with required KSAs demand of a FinTech company and serve as the avenue for talent development programs.

The opportunities that come with innovation labs are humongous, first is the employment and experimentation of different tools and methods to develop solutions; second is the application of methodologies such as design thinking, human-centric design, idea management processes, and open innovation, which have been used to create ideas and develop prototypes; third is that labs create talents with refined skills adaptable to the business of FinTech.

Leveraging Offshore Talent Pools

FinTech has two major human resources need: software development and finance management; however, there are other resources require but they are standing on the foundation of these two resources. These resources are not location sensitive and any job that is not confined to a certain location has the potential to be globally resourced and executed from any location in the world. When a task requires no physical or complex interaction, for instance between the customers and employee and demand little or no local knowledge, they can be performed wherever the organisation finds the best talents.

Task assignment and remote work have been possible due to advancement in information and communication technologies, as organisation can now disaggregate the value chain of their operational process and outsource either entire processes or a segment another people or company within the same country or outside the country. Some companies provide services such as software development, technology support, transactions management and processing finance and accounting management, and other tasks.

There are established reasons that make offshore outsourcing possible, one is to increase the possibility of working with talents with require capabilities to meet expectations, other reasons can be economical as outsourcing to lower-wage countries – especially countries in developing economies can have a ripple financial advantage for the organisation, shortage of local talents and the improvement in information technology. Leveraging on offshore talent sourcing has its existential advantages. For instance, validate a proposed FinTech product idea without huge investment into infrastructure, it can be advantageous to source for a team of FinTech developers offshore to help through user research, prototyping and MVP development to ascertain the proof-of-concept. When the proposed idea becomes feasible, these offshore developers can be temporarily acquired to help mentor and develop the new FinTech by nurturing its internal talents.

Talent Selection Framework with the KSAs

While it has been stated that universities and innovation labs are the institutes for talent development and that through a partnership with these institutes, FinTech companies can become visible to top talents and invest their objectives into the talents' minds. It is however imperative to discuss that talent selection can become a new challenge. In today's world, organisations in diverse sectors have spent millions of dollars on recruitment, especially in the aspect of developing assessment tools to attract, select, train, promote, and develop their employees.

The consequences are often fatal when wrong talents are employed in the right position or when the right talents are employed in the wrong positions. For instance, a fatal flaw during the hiring process for a marketing strategist can result in low customer awareness and low market penetration. The importance of value assessment during the process of talent selection must be recognised. For FinTech companies, the objective of talent values assessment is to increase the probability of hiring not only top talents but the best candidates who understand the roles, responsibilities, along with the capabilities to execute organisational plans and deliver objectives.

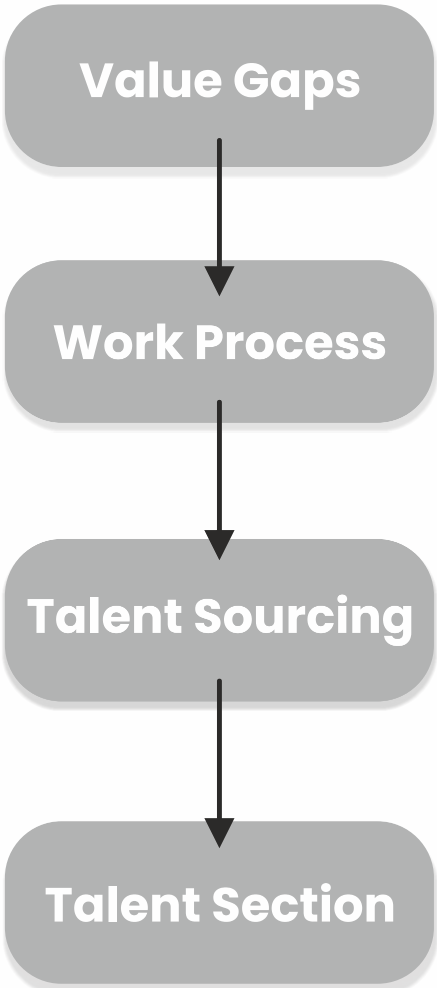
The innovative journey of FinTech in Nigeria, like the rest of the world, is like riding on a bus. Jim Collins' metaphor about having the right people on the bus speaks volumes. Jim, who authored *Good to Great,* believes traveling with the right people is more important to the developmental journey of an organisation than where the company is heading.

The Value Assessment Framework

Figure 1.0 provides the structured process of talent value assessment that FinTech companies can adopt. A viable talent values assessment for FinTech companies must start within the organisation.

First, is to identify the *Value Gaps* by focusing on what the company seeks to achieve and what is missing. The value gap shows the resources lacking in the current organisational process against the vision the organisation set to attain. Here, FinTech companies will need to review their existing talent resources and their productivity rates in comparison with the organisation's missions and expectations. These value gaps will further reveal the suboptimal or missing skills, resources, strategies, capabilities, structures, knowledge, processes, abilities, practices and technologies. Identification of these value gaps has two major functions, first is to help FinTech companies to compare the state of their current resources with their expectations within and without the financial technology industry, and second is to aid the development of work processes. All these will contribute to determining the quality and quantity of talents required to work on to make their performance and improve their

Figure 1.0: A Proposed Talent Value Assessment Framework



organisational values in the FinTech market.

Second, is to develop an achievable *Work Process* to bridge the gaps. The work process is a structure designed to regulate and manage organisational resources in creating value and achieving organisational objectives. Here, after assessing the value gaps, the next priority is to fill the gaps with the development of structural steps in terms of roles and responsibilities, which will eventually guide the process of talent sourcing and acquisition. In a simple form, work process is somewhat similar to job description, detailing the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) need from a talent to fill the vacant values within the organisation.

Third is *Talent Sourcing*. Attracting and competing for talents can be particularly difficult, in the sense of talent quality, they will seek for a work environment with educational and capacity building opportunities. Also, people who are proficient in both finance and technologies can be insufficient to meet the resource demand of the existing FinTech companies. The fundamental human resources management of FinTech companies, amidst other organisations is to align talent's potential and capabilities with the structural plan the organisations are aiming to achieve. However, the avenues for sourcing talents are, but not limited to, higher educational institutes and innovation labs. To build and grow FinTech talents, involve sourcing for prospective FinTech software development specialists, along with accounting and finance specialists, ideally at a university or any other educational institutes with the right infrastructures. However, the mere interest and commitment on the part of FinTech companies are not enough. The interest and vision of these young enthusiasts specialists should also be for the development of FinTech. The advancement in information technology has made talent source an offshore possibility.

Talent Selection, a process of identifying and selecting the right talents who are capable of executing the established work process to bridge the value gaps within the organisation. This Talent Selection can be broken down into three segments: Profile development, Frame of Selection, and Flow.

Profile Development is the creation of an accurate profile that aligns with the Work Process by specifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are important to the missing values. In developing these, it is important to understand the mission of the organization and its relationship with the missing values. The Frame of Selection is about making hiring decisions, which requires data profiling the depth of knowledge, applicability of skills, and the abilities to bridge the values gaps. The frame of selection is the tool for the collection of data. FinTech management can decide to develop their assessment tools or consult a competent vendor. The flow is to ensure that organizational resources are effectively and efficiently utilised.

Conclusion

Talents are human resources require to meet the need of any FinTech companies' expectations and achieve their objectives. Sourcing these talents in a way that help fill the value gaps and meet the work processes can be challenging, especially for FinTech companies managing customers funds; they have their reputations to protect while keeping the core values that attract customers to their business. All these can be achieved with the blessing of a carefully selected talented team with required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). We proposed a talent value assessment model that can be adapted into human resources acquisition, especially for FinTech companies. Starting with the identification of the missing values in an organisation, development of work processes to cover the identified value gaps, sourcing of talents who have the requires knowledge, skills and abilities to fill the value gaps and selecting the right talents with enthusiastic spirits, alignment of values and capacity to help achieve the organisation operational demand.

How Business Messaging Can Enhance Customer Experience

HOW BUSINESS MESSAGING CAN ENHANCE CUSTOMER EXPERIANCE

Consumer demand for personalised experiences is at an all-time high. Big data, marketing automation, and other technologies make it easy for companies to track their customers' behaviours and preferences. Organisations that provide specialised, personalised experiences see more than just a boost in consumer satisfaction and a glimpse of significant growth in their lowest line.

When it comes to customer communication, customers want to choose how they communicate with you. Conventional marketing channels are slowly becoming less effective and even damaging. Businesses either must invest in expensive marketing initiatives or find new ways to connect and engage with customers.

Business messaging gives companies a way to improve the customer experience at scale. With business messaging, companies can communicate with customers on their preferred channel to deliver a great customer experience and help consumers interact with companies for pre- and post-sales activities. Organisations use business instant messaging software for more direct and group conversations between employees and customers. These tools also enable rapid communication among team members.

What is business messaging?

Business messaging allows companies to connect with consumers on their preferred messaging channels. It's a powerful strategy for building strong customer relationships and driving profitable business outcomes.

Companies use business messaging to provide a great customer experience, improve their marketing and sales efforts, and drive revenue growth by creating stronger brand loyalty among the consumer base.

Business messaging, also known as synchronous messaging, is no longer a new concept. With the advent of messaging apps, changing buyer behaviour and expectations, and increased competition, businesses use communication channels to connect with customers.

Short messaging service (SMS), or text messaging, is the most used messaging medium. Have all received shipping notifications, advertising offers, promotional campaigns, and reminders from companies. These are the types of interactions we often associate with business messaging. But business messaging isn't just one-sided, not restricted to texting. Business communications can happen on any digital platform where your consumers already spend their time, and it's expected that such practices enable two-way conversational interaction.

Businesses have found that the success they need to engage their customers using smartphones and other messaging-enabled devices. Consumer preferences have forced companies to make essential changes that affect which channels they use for customer engagement. Companies now deliver a personalised experience through real-time communications channels like instant messaging (IM) and social media messaging. Customers engage with companies using instant messaging applications such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat, and LINE.

Here are a few ways businesses communicate with their customers in real-time:

Direct messages are exchanged via social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Kik to provide personalised customer support.

A merchant communicates delivery information to customers via text messages to avert inbound phone calls. AI-sales assistant solutions provide customers with more personalised product recommendations and guided selling. A website visitor who requires assistance utilises an online chat feature for support.

Examples of business messaging channels

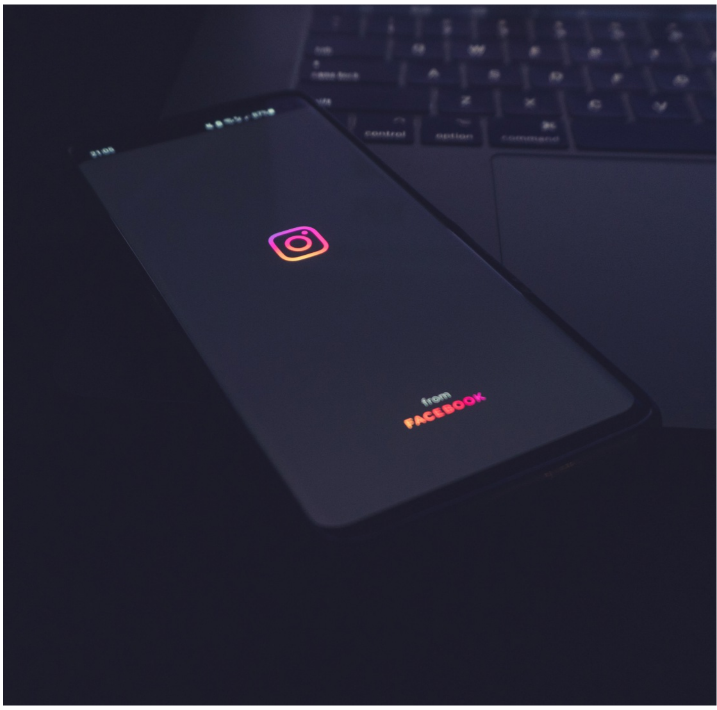
There are many businesses messaging platforms, including:

- Facebook Messenger
- Twitter
- Microsoft Teams
- SMS
- Apple iMessage
- WeChat
- Google Hangouts
- WhatsApp
- Weibo
- KakoTalk
- Viber
- Instagram

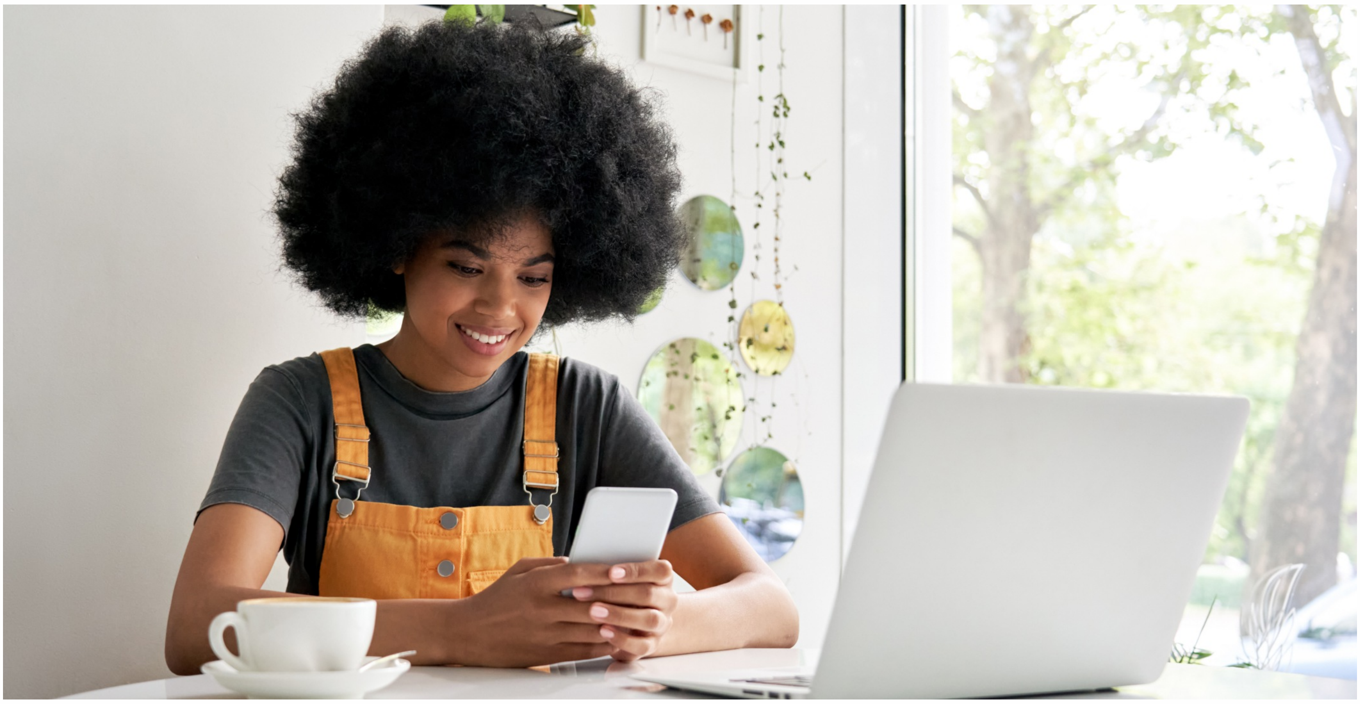
Why is messaging important for businesses?

From social networking sites to SMS, messaging has become an essential component of daily life and has significantly altered how we connect with others. But it's hard to overlook the reality that, when utilised appropriately, these chatty channels offer enhanced engagement and competitive differentiation for consumer-facing businesses. Communication itself, not the medium, is valued in conversational messaging.

Each user journey starts with discovering a new product that satisfies that need. Addressing product inquiries, clarifying features, or responding to customer issues allows companies to convince buyers that they're making the right decision. Business messaging provides a quick, easy, and seamless way for customers to communicate with brands, regardless of their stage in the customer journey. It also enables organisations to shift from one-way to a two-way dialogue with buyers. Allowing users to interact in a two-way discussion using a platform they're most comfortable with increases engagement and improves the experience.



Time is every customer's most important asset, not being



placed in a queue and waiting on the phone to talk with an agent unless these hurdles are eliminated with the business messaging. Using messaging in conjunction with existing channels reduces the incoming and outbound engagements and allows customers to interact with the brand from anywhere at any time. Whether at home or halfway around the world, customers can interact instantly and get the solutions they need in real-time.

Most companies have similar priorities: stay available to consumers on their chosen channels to enhance quality service, promote brand engagement, improve customer experience, and relieve the burden on customer care agents.

Companies can achieve these objectives by communicating with consumers through multiple channels. Adopting an omnichannel messaging approach helps companies achieve their goals and boost potential savings.

The purpose of omnichannel messaging is straightforward: to keep the dialogue going even when the customer switches platforms.

Unlike traditional business communication, omnichannel messaging allows users to choose which channel to communicate with, giving them more choice during the interaction. For example, customers are sent to a web page by SMS, or an interactive voice response (IVR) can route them to a WhatsApp Chat. While business messaging has become a crucial component of most consumer marketing strategies, it isn't always an exact mode of communication. There are several platforms, countless rules, and numerous variations amongst them.

Live chat, often known as web chat, integrates a chat function directly onto your website. Customers often visit your website for one of two reasons: to buy something or receive an answer to a question. They should be able to accomplish both with live chat support. Live chat is often deployed as a widget in the bottom corner of a website and triggers when visitors click on it. Alternatively, a pop-up window can urge users to start a discussion. Businesses employ live chat software to manage web chats for the company site.

Companies can use live chat solutions for various reasons, including customer service, technical assistance, sales, and marketing used to generate leads. Although live chat windows are available on a website 24 hours a day, this doesn't imply that agents must be ready to answer inquiries at all times. Offline modes allow website users to submit queries or concerns handled by a chatbot or an agent during business hours.

Business text messaging has grown in popularity in communicating with consumers. Unlike other messaging applications, text messaging does not require an internet connection. Anyone with a phone plan can receive text messages, making it a readily accessible alternative for your customers. Businesses also choose SMS marketing because these campaigns have far higher open rates than email marketing.

Text messaging requires a cellular network to deliver texts, including SMS, Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), and text messages. SMS marketing software enables companies to interact with their buyers via text messages. Businesses also use SMS marketing to deliver bulk SMS campaigns and participate in two-way discussions with customers.

Email is still one of the most successful ways businesses connect with buyers. It's also one of the most widely employed digital channels for customer care.

Personalising your content is critical for increasing client engagement via email. It instructs to maintain an accurate audience segmentation based on demographic profiles and behavioural insights gathered from past interactions. The major disadvantage of email is its popularity. Every day, our inboxes are inundated with emails because they are overused, and people entirely default to them, even when there are better communication channels for particular situations. Email marketing software helps businesses send commercial messages to groups of people via email.

Social customer support is successful because it allows consumers to reach out to your organisation on their most-used channels. Using social media to answer customer issues or complaints is known as social media customer service.

Businesses use conversational marketing software to engage potential customers with personalised, one-on-one conversations that route to specific product recommendations, offers, or customer service requests. In conversational marketing, the software helps businesses discover potential buyers on social networking sites, respond to concerns or queries, determine the most suitable products, and send consumers to payment gateways or sales representatives to complete transactions.

Offering omnichannel services via social media is difficult for large and small companies. Smaller businesses struggle to keep up with consumer requests due to a lack of personnel. Large companies with high levels of engagement find it challenging to connect with every user.

Features of business messaging tools

All business messaging systems have some features in common. As the market becomes more competitive, some vendors add extra communication and productivity capabilities to help differentiate their products. Some of these features are:

- **Instant messaging:** The primary feature of most messaging software is instant, direct messaging. Users can instantly send direct or group messages.
- **Group chat:** Messaging apps allow multiple users to participate in a private and secure online conversation. Group chat boosts communication and productivity between teams.
- **Conferencing:** Many companies want integrated audio and video conferencing capabilities in business messengers. Support teams can quickly address problems and resolve queries more effectively when they

- can quickly switch between text-based and audio-based discussions.

  - **Emojis:** usually included in business messaging services. Some apps even let users design their emojis.
  - **File sharing:** The ability to share files and documents rapidly & easily is one of the main advantages of such communication channels. Users can share links to cloud-hosted files or attach files stored on their desktops.

Choosing the most dependable business messaging platform is the first step toward effective marketing. Here are some essential things to consider while selecting a good platform for your business.

  - **Pricing:** Choose a business messaging vendor that charges you based on the services you need. Verify for hidden fees and API limits that can increase your total cost.
  - **Features:** Depending on the use case, organisations should look at the platform's messaging features that will help them accomplish business objectives.
  - **API access:** Select a messaging tool that provides application programming interface (API) access. APIs offer unique solutions for improving user experiences and integrating the platform into existing business processes.

Business messaging enables efficient and simplified interactions. As a result, introducing a business messaging platform opens up new communication channels for consumers wherever and whenever needed.

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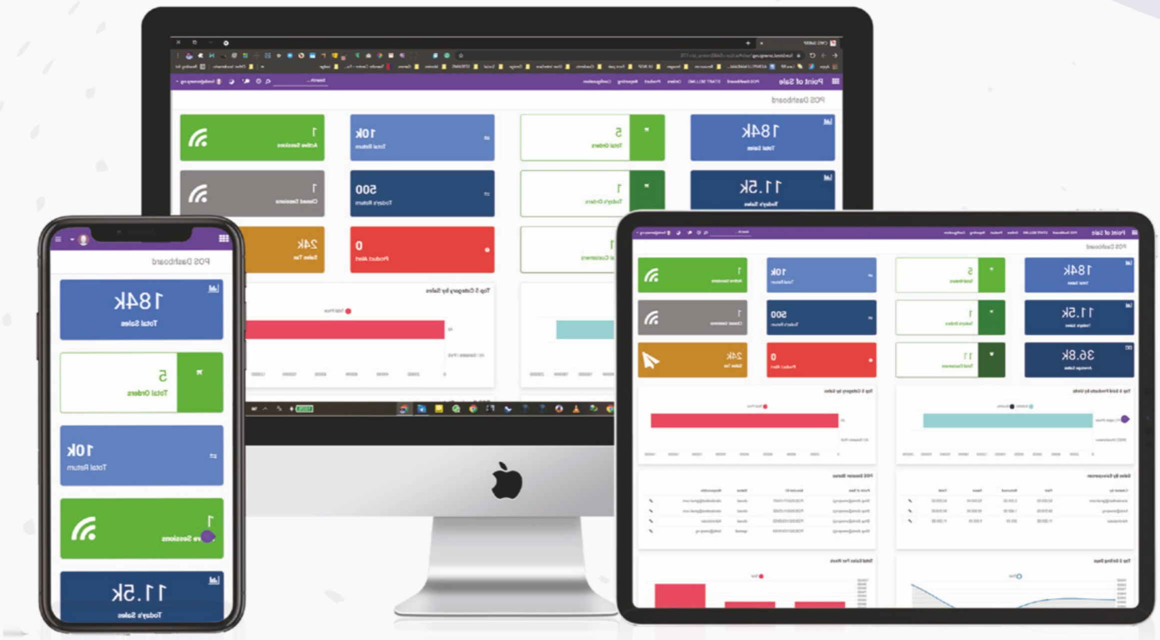

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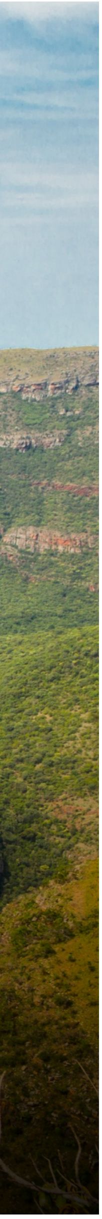
"My major task during my first year was to turn the business around and then break even at the end of the financial year. It wasn't easy from the beginning, but I was quite focused and through it all, I was able to overcome it. In the first year, I did not just break even, but we returned profit in 10 years of operations in Ghana"

- Harriet Attram Yartey

Harriet Yartey is the Group Vice President in charge of the CWG Regional subsidiaries in Uganda and Cameroon. She is also the Managing Director of CWG Ghana. On the board of directors for the Ghana office, she serves as an executive director as well. Harriet has played a key role in successfully expanding and growing CWG's companies throughout Africa. Her extensive professional background spans more than 17 years, including the six years she has spent with CWG Plc.

She holds a BA Hons from the University of Ghana and an Executive MBA from GIMPA. Yartey who, prior to joining CWG Plc was the General Manager at Channel IT–an IT Distribution company and a Key Account Executive at Vodafone Ghana–talks about her journey so far at CWG.

Interviewer: Can you tell us when you joined CWG? How did



that happen? And was it by chance? Were you looking for a career change?

Harriet Attram Yartey: I joined CWG in June 2013, so I am celebrating my 9th year in the company this month. I was looking for a career change and I think it was by chance that a colleague still working here by the name, Femi Adeosun reached out to me that they were looking to fill in the position of country manager at the time.

I took advantage because I wanted a fresh spice in my career path at the time, so I applied, went through the process and I was finally selected to lead CWG Ghana at the time.

Interestingly, I worked with CWG in my former life when they first came to Ghana and partnered with a software company I was working for back then called Soft Tribe. I was part of the joint sales executives for Soft Tribe, at the time, and so it wasn't new to me. When the opportunity came, I was also looking for a new challenge and I took advantage and I grabbed the opportunity.

Interviewer: Can you describe your journey so far? Have there been any challenges? If there is any memorable one, how did you address it?

Harriet Attram Yartey: It has been quite an interesting journey, when I joined CWG from the sales side, I happened to be the only female, in a male-dominated environment, yet it wasn't intimidating at all. I had a quite supportive team.

My major task during my first year was to turn the business around and then break even at the end of the financial year. It wasn't easy from the beginning, but I was quite focused and through it all, I was able to overcome it. In the first year, I did not just break even, but we returned profit in 10 years of operations in Ghana.

Interviewer: So what are the main changes you have witnessed in the past decade? We all know that technology has evolved over the past decade. How has CWG adapted to these changes and what role have you played in this change?

Harriet Attram Yartey: Right. When I joined CWG, it was a Computer Warehouse group with three subsidiaries: DCC, CWG & Expert Edge. Over the period it was subsequently merged into one company under the name CWG PLC in 2005.

But we overcame it, we knew the stakes were high as a listed company, so we started looking at doing things differently, looking at areas where we can focus on for sustainable growth. And today we are still on the Stock Exchange, and we are doing quite well.

Interviewer: So what are the main changes you have witnessed in the past decade? We all know that technology has evolved over the past decade. How has CWG adapted to these changes and what role have you played in this change?

Harriet Attram Yartey: Two things come to mind immediately when we had to list on the Stock Exchange being a company with three subsidiaries and eventually, merging into one under CWG and listed on the Stock Exchange in 2013. There was a lot of uncertainty around it at the time, whether we were ready and whether it would be a sustainable thing to do. But as a company, my team and I played our roles quite well. We focused on areas that were going to bring sustainable growth and today we are still listed on the Stock Exchange.

Secondly, COVID-19 came a few years ago, nobody was prepared globally, and it came with a tripping effect. But I believe that the timely business continuity plans that we put in place really helped CWG well and then post covid , we are doing quite well.

Interviewer: What do you think has made CWG stand the test of time? What has been the driving force over the years?

Harriet Attram Yartey: I think it's a combination of all of these, CWG has always enjoyed good leadership and the vision is clearly spelt out to you from on set when you join the organisation. You are quite clear on what the direction of the company is. I believe I also have created team spirit and an innovative and creative mindset. We have also contributed to bringing CWG this far.

Interviewer: How has CWG's regional business grown over the years? Being a leader, how do you think the Ghanian market has received CWG? What do you think has been its milestone and unique value proposition?

Harriet Attram Yartey: The Ghanian market has been quite receptive towards CWG, especially since the era when the leadership was taken over by Ghanaians, has grown quite well over the years. The market sees the organisation as a local company because it is being managed by the indigenes of the country. We have moved away from moving boxes, so we have grown from the period of moving boxes, to becoming an enterprise solutions provider and over the years one of the key things that have stood us out is our ability to offer quality service delivery to all our customers. For instance, in the past 15 years, our managed services has been growing year on year, having consistent customers who we are supporting, from various sectors of the economy.

Over the period, also one of the key things, that has become our unique advantage over competitors, is the fact that when you work with CWG, you have the peace of mind to focus on the non-core areas which are your technology bit of the business and you focus on your core, bringing you the peace of mind, you require for your business successes.

Interviewer: What are the opportunities that abound in the future for CWG? What are the ways CWG is looking ahead for the next decade?

Harriet Attram Yartey: It is even more obvious that the world is a global village since the inception of the Covid pandemic. People are now looking into the cloud as a service, a concept that was difficult to sell or adopt in the last few years. CWG is also poised with innovative solutions in the cloud. As it stands today, if you are looking to focus on on- premises services you will be in the dark. Most organisations are seeking ways to move their on- premises services into the cloud without much hassle. CWG also has all the competence to help organisations who are looking to move away from on premises solutions to cloud.

Interviewer: What is the motivation for you as you enter into the future with CWG?

Harriet Attram Yartey: My motivation is to be able to satisfy my key stakeholders who happen to be my internal and external stakeholders, my board, management staff alike; external stakeholders like revenue authorities, and regulatory authorities. Once I'm able to bring joy to meeting their needs, I feel fulfilled, and I feel motivated.

Interviewer: How does it feel to work in a company that seeks to reach Africans?

Harriet Attram Yartey: So the company is an African company, with a Pan-African structure, seeking to reach out to Africans, and it's an exciting time to work in an organisation that gives opportunity to everyone in the organisation. As a woman, I hold one of the key positions in the organisation, managing Ghana and then our businesses in other regions outside of Nigeria. I believe the opportunity the company gives to its staff to develop and grow their career is a fantastic thing. What a time to be in CWG.

CWG Dubai: The Case For An Ecosystem Expansion

By Afolabi Sobande (Group Chief Operating Officer, CWG)

As evidenced by its breathtaking skyscrapers that seem to have come straight out of a science fiction film, splendid historical buildings that highlight a long-standing culture, its year-round comfortable summer climate, and access to some of the world's largest desert areas, beaches, and stunning beaches, United Arab Emirate (UAE) is one exotic location that skillfully blends tradition and ambition for individuals and businesses alike.

The UAE is remarkable for even much more than its scenic reputation.

The first quarter of 2022's real GDP statistics for the emirate was released by the Dubai Statistics Centre in late June, showing a 5.9% increase from January to March over the same period last year. Strong economic development in the UAE will be supported by several factors, including the effect of high global oil prices on regional liquidity, the resumption of international travel after the coronavirus epidemic, and steps to promote the private sector and encourage foreign investment.

Despite increasing input costs and other global obstacles, it is predicted that the business sector will keep expanding in 2022–2023. Since mid-2021, when internal COVID19 pandemic limitations started to be eased, the Dubai economy has been expanding at a pace of around 6.3%. The Dubai economy, however, is predicted to reach its pre-pandemic level until the last quarter of 2022. In 2020, Dubai's service-based economy shrank by 11.8%, compared to 4.8% for the UAE as a whole, as a result of the pandemic's worst effects. During the epidemic, the government at the federal and emirate levels implemented benevolent fiscal and monetary policies, and Abu Dhabi's GDP, which is mostly driven by oil, shrank more subtly than the nation's GDP. These encouraging policies, the resultant recovery in important industries, like travel and construction in Dubai, and efficient pandemic management–quick vaccination–have aided the recovery of the economy.

Even though the economic effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict are reducing worldwide demand, the UAE is still able to benefit from this due to the rise in global oil prices. Due to the lack of sanctions on Russia, the UAE has become a popular business and vacation destination for Russians who are unable to go to Europe and the US. As OPEC+ quota restrictions are eased and the UAE continues to make significant investments in expanding capacity, it is predicted that global oil prices will remain high, averaging over $100 per barrel in 2022–2033. Petroleum exports are also anticipated to increase significantly in 2022–2033.

Increased government consumption as a result of these oil sector advancements will lessen worries about the local cost of living. The improved regional liquidity will support investment and business possibilities across industries.

There are several potential opportunities for foreign digital and ICT businesses in Dubai, the UAE's largest city.

The UAE—the Middle East and North Africa **(MENA)** region's primary hub for international commerce and business—is a fiercely competitive market for the information and communication technology (ICT) sector. Initiatives by the UAE government seek to create a robust knowledge - based economy and a free, effective, efficient, and internationally linked business environment to lessen reliance on oil income and expand the private sector. To promote the growth of the knowledge-based economy, the UAE government is implementing several actions.

The UAE government has developed a variety of free trade zones, including Dubai Silicon Oasis and Dubai Internet City, which are enterprise hubs for advanced innovation in the ICT sector. The UAE, and Dubai in particular, are attractive sites for enterprises serving the whole MENA region due to the low trade barriers, which also increase the consumption for IT products and services in the UAE.

Industries including healthcare, space, aviation, aerospace, military, transportation, retail, financial services, hospitality, and those connected to the UAE's economic diversification objectives, investment also increases demand for ICT goods and services. To cater to foreign businesses and build up human resources.

It would interest you to know that the UAE is still expanding. By implementing cutting-edge solutions, actors in the public and private sectors are attempting to modernise themselves and ride along with the larger transnational generation of innovators focusing on data usage, digital transformation, and technical improvement. The government has set aside significant portions of the budget to realise the ambitious objectives and plans, which are being driven by the UAE's aim to create and diversify the knowledge-based economy and open up new opportunities. Players in the tech industry continue to find opportunities in the UAE to expand their businesses.

According to Business Monitor International (BMI), the software and services sectors have witnessed tremendous investment in fields including cloud computing, smart services, and cybersecurity (BMI). In the UAE, spending on IT is

anticipated to rise 6.5% between 2020 and 2023, totaling $8.2 billion. Medium-term growth in IT expenditure will be driven by increased demand for products and services, particularly from major enterprises looking for solutions in the areas of cloud computing, data analytics, cybersecurity, and IoT. The need for enterprise management software is also anticipated to rise. Process management, inventory, and finance are important sectors. As the industry gets more end users as well as enterprise demands, an opportunity presents itself for market penetration for foreign companies. The hardware retail segment will also experience solid growth.

The next steps will involve increasing the use of IT among small and medium-sized firms and bringing existing, more traditional private sector businesses the benefits already enjoyed by bigger organisations and governmental institutions. This is gaining speed, and in the next few years, it is expected that the ICT industry will become an even more integral element of everyday activities in the emirate.

As a result of the acceleration of technological change organisations from Africa are finding it less and less challenging to compete on the global level.

CWG has an eye for growth.

An organisation's ability to position the corporate portfolio ahead of these trends may very well determine how well your firm performs in the future as accelerating trends set the tone for the survival and thriving of companies. To achieve this, one strategy is to diversify your business. But how do you decide how far and in what direction to stray from your main line of business?

As plants follow the sunlight, CWG as an organisation by default recognizes and reaches for growth opportunities.

CWG's next phase ambition is to expand into the UAE, creating an ecosystem that would drive the next phase of development by providing solutions to the challenges of e-commerce and future businesses.

Industry Impact

By Afolabi Sobande (Group Chief Operating Officer, CWG)

Trends And Challenge
The Financial Services

For too long, banks and other financial services providers have operated within the whims of their horizons. With the constantly evolving world of technology, the players in the financial services sector will need to synchronise their approaches to meet the new technological trends. First by understanding the change in digital orientation and its transformational consequences and second, by architecting their banking and services experiences to meet the novel expectations of their customers. These changes, powered by technology, are redefining the future of financial services provisioning from traditional engagement to digitalising customers' experiences at different demographic levels.

Let's explore the current trends in the financial services sector as the business model must be adapted to the emerging technology and customer's novel expectations.

The future of the financial services industry will look very different from today, with the constant change in consumer expectations, the Introduction of new technologies, and re- adoption of business models. The industry has now adopted an agile approach by re-thinking and re-strategizing it's products and service development model in addressing customer needs.

Adoption of digital technology

In the not too-distant past, the typical customer will have to make an in-person appearance at the bank branch to conduct a banking transaction. This has changed significantly with the rapid adoption of Automated Tellers Machines (ATMs). The entry of ATMs in 1989, by the then Société Générale Bank of Nigeria (SGBN) into the mix quickly opened up the opportunity for cooperation amongst banks with the joint ownership of Nigeria Inter-Bank

Settlement System Plc (NIBSS), including the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN.). NIBSS has since championed issues like interbank settlements including interoperability boosting the banking ecosystem in Nigeria.

Now, in-person visits at bank branches have almost become a thing of the past, as the financial landscape in Nigeria has fully embraced digital transformation. Ever since then, it has been a case of innovative solutions, for example, USSD, Online/Web payments, Mobile Money, and then the most disruptive form of banking – Digital Banking.

Both retail banks and fintech firms are aggressively leveraging the different channels including mobile bank transfers, USSD, mobile money, and PoS terminals

Notwithstanding the banking and financial services industry is focusing on innovation to prepare for a future driven by technology. The growth of technology and its application in the financial services industry has made customers realise that a physical bank presence is neither necessary nor a requirement. A seamless transaction can be run through the internet-enabled mobile phone; customers can lodge complaints and have their items attended to without delay.

The facts speak for themselves, for instance, according to data provided by NIBSS as of 2021, the value of point-of-sale (POS) transactions has more than tripled to N699.7 billion from N167.5 billion in 2017. In the first quarter of 2022, Nigeria recorded Mobile money transactions valued at N4.86tn while the total real time transactions in the country were 3.7 billion, making Nigeria the 6th in world's most developed real-time payments markets.

The buoyancy of the market has been driven by the willingness of the banks to invest in technology. According to audited reports, 40% of the banks made an aggregate investment of N120 billion in software

acquisition and upgrades as far back as 2018. Additionally, a younger generation, who are early adopters of technology products and services as well as overall mobile and internet penetration.

And the trend has only just begun, as social distancing and other health concerns brought on by the coronavirus push Nigerians to adopt digital banking in increasing numbers. Despite the bullishness of the markets, they are still major challenges the trends have not been able to address.

Supply-side issues

The benefits of digital banking have been limited to a select few creating a digital divide and excluding over 38 millions from any form of banking system. As of 2021 NIBSS says there are a total of 976,898 POS machines in Nigeria but only 167,000 are active. It's a similar story for ATMs, and bank branches, there are 30,000 Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and over 6,000 bank branches. Nigeria also has 25 licensed mobile money operators (10 are bank-led and 15 non-banks-led) catering for 15.3 million customers as of December 2019.

There are also infrastructural challenges, mostly network and connectivity issues as well as issues of cybercrimes and frauds which have grown in tandem with digital banking adoption.

How must financial service providers respond to these challenges?

Embrace a culture of customer obsessiveness. This means banks need to demonstrate a willingness to understand customers' goals, their goals and preferences at every stage of their engagement. The right mix of value delivery, ease of use and user-friendliness should be factored into their product development cycle.

For a financial service provider, the limited availability of skills is a threat to growth. Digital transformation requires the application of new skills such as software development and management skills, user experience, data analytics, cloud storage, and iteration. These require a significant change in the personnel financial services providers need and how they attract, engage, deploy, and develop them. The adaptability of skills has also made talent retention a new challenge. So financial services providers must adapt their human resources strategy to reflect the skills and employment structures best for retaining talents.

The threat to cybersecurity as hackers exploits the vulnerabilities of the computer systems to carry out cybercrime. Cyber-attacks cost Nigerian businesses about $649 Million annually, and there were other alleged bank hack cases. There have been trends of chatbot hacking, spear-phishing, insider threat, malware, and other threats within the industry. Companies, especially FinTech, create awareness by sharing information with their customers on protecting their account details and using two-factor authentication.

Regulations in the financial service industry continue to increase. Players in the financial services sector spend a large part of their revenue on making sure they are compliant. They make sure there are systems to keep up with ever-changing regulations and industry standards. Traditional banks have to constantly evaluate and improve their operations to keep up with fast-changing consumer and shareholder expectations, technology, and industry regulations.

With the proper regulatory settings, financial services providers can tap into emerging technologies, providing innovative businesses with the social licence to operate and protect the consumers and their community. The advantage of regulation is to promote consumer confidence and position the companies to pursue best practices.

Digital transformation in the space of financial services provisioning allows customers to be fluid in their loyalty. A simple dissatisfaction in customer service engagement can make a customer of Bank A move their assets to Bank B with a simple and few clicks on their mobile phone. Today's customers are more aware of their power and increasingly expect companies to provide them with personalised and meaningful experiences through intuitive and simple interfaces irrespective of the devices they use. Also, the rise in competition is challenging companies to build on customer loyalty to achieve feasible and consistent turnover.

In summary, the banking industry will continue to reconfigure itself and the markets they serve. The ability to adopt an agile and customer-centric approach in a shifting landscape, will make them more competitive and appealing to their customers.

CWG, A Friend Of The Banks

How IT Started

By Ireti Yusuf (Group Chief Technology Officer, CWG)

Everyone who knows CWG will very quickly associate the brand with Finacle, a core banking solution. No one can deny the influence of CWG in the financial services sector of Nigeria and some other parts of Africa.

CWG started its operations in Lagos in 1992 as a distributor for Dell Partner with initial customer base in the manufacturing and FMCG sector, counting brands like Ashaka Cements and NAFDAC as their first signings earlier on in their corporate life.

Technology was introduced into the Nigerian banking sector as far back as the 1970s. However, massive adoption only started to gain ground in the early 2000s.

The alliance with the banks started with the introduction of CWG's in-house web banking software. CWG as a software house was developing these bespoke solutions for banks against a backdrop where few banks had adopted the Local Area Network [LAN] connecting bank branches, while the more technology savvy banks had invested in the WAN infrastructure which helped in connecting branches within different cities.

CWG designed and deployed a web-enabled platform for banking customers which they aptly named: telephone banking and PC banking. As was the practice, bank customers would typically resort to making phone calls to their bank branches to ascertain bank balances before writing out cheque mandates for withdrawals. CWG's solution was to connect the customers to authenticated telephone lines to expedite the process of bank balance inquiries and to limit unlawful withdrawals.

CWG evolved alongside the slow adoption of technology in the industry, signing an exclusive regional partnership deal with Infosys to install and provide its core banking application, Finacle in the year 2000. The uptake was slow but the potential for the market was evident, considering that in 2002, the Central Bank wanted to assess the penetration of technology in the Nigerian banks. Conducted a survey of all 89 banks in operations at the time, with findings that: only 17 offered internet banking services, 24 others provided basic telephone banking, only 7 offered ATM services and about 13 others had other electronic banking services.

By 2004, about ten(10) of those banks had upscaled and signed up for the Finacle solution, providing both the banks and the customers a more robust and centralised

system across branches and cities, in a seamless fashion. Coincidentally, in the same year, In mid-2004 the CBN instituted a banking sector reform law, mandating an increase of the minimum capital requirement from 2 billion naira to 25 billion naira (US $193.8 million at the time).

The consolidation encouraged several mergers and acquisitions deals which drastically shrunk the number of operating banks to 25. The resultant effect on the other hand was the spike in demand for superior technology to manage its transactions as well as create the needed efficiency that will help the banks to scale. CWG was on hand to help manage this period of expansion for the banks, and provide all-round integrated IT solutions and other ancillary services. This singular event cemented CWG's ongoing relationship and influence with the financial services sector.

CWG's continued entrenchment in the industry is built on their own unique blend of customer service, in that their service does not end with installation, after implantation they would often encourage the banks to send their team to Infosys in India for more training to enable customisation of the product to suit their own needs. In other words, they also indirectly supported adequate knowledge transfer and flexibility.

In addition to deploying global solutions, CWG has also been involved in designing and implementing local solutions for banks. Before its acquisition by another bank, CWG in partnership with a telephone company helped to create a product, called the Diamond Yellow Account (DYA), which on deployment was so successful that it increased the bank's customers from 2 million to 6 million customers. CWG has not only partnered with the big banks, but they have also partnered with other players in the microfinance banks to varying degrees.

There is a saying that you get to know your true friends in your time of crisis. During the pandemic, CWG proved to be a friend indeed, working with its banking clients at the backend to ensure zero disruptions to its services and full compliance with its business continuity plans.

More than 2 decades later, and with her involvement in almost 70% of all banking transactions in Nigeria, CWG remains a trusted ally and partner to the banks.

Coffee With The CEOs

Coffee Conversation With

Mr. Paul Onwuanibe,

Managing Director
Landmark Africa

Paul Onwuanibe, the Managing Director of Landmark Africa, has a formal education in architecture, real estate development, and construction management. Paul is also a London Business School MBA alumni, with a distinction in Value Engineering. Paul started his work in the Built Environment.

He has over 20 years of experience in the field of professional real estate, including project design and execution (Africa, USA, Europe). He worked with UK-based home builder Beacon Housing as the Development Director.

During the company's years of fast expansion, Paul served as the Executive in charge of the Property and Logistics team, which was in charge of overseeing the opening of 190 business centres across the world. He oversaw Landmark's expansion into America, Europe, and Africa and has extensive experience of workplace management and commercial real estate. Paul is incredibly passionate about real estate.

Interviewer: What are some of the key lessons you have learned as Managing Director of Landmark Africa?

Paul Onwuanibe: First, doing business in Nigeria requires a lot of patience, it is a difficult environment and business terrain albeit with lots of opportunity. Secondly, whatever you're doing, do it well, because great things are a series of small things done extraordinarily well.

Interviewer: What do you think new businesses should focus on for the first five years of operations?

Paul Onwuanibe: New businesses need to focus on the vision. Map out sound plans and efficient processes that would yield consistent results in the coming years. Establish a solid resourceful network within your field and get the right people to execute the vision. Have a financial roadmap or plan. There is a need to strategically define income and expenditure habits. There's also the product quality and customer satisfaction.

Interviewer: How much technology do you use in your operations? Would you consider technology an enabler or a constraint?

Paul Onwuanibe: For our various business areas, we have made extensive use of technology to simplify and improve the workflow. The world is developing rapidly, and technology has turned it into a connected global village characterised by rapid urbanisation, an increasing youthful population, and a need for simpler, quicker procedures.

In order for businesses to keep up and stay ahead of the curve and avoid obsolescence, technology needs to be incorporated in a customer-centric manner, which is the way we have tried to approach the digitization of our business processes and systems.

Interviewer: How have you used technology as a competitive advantage?

Paul Onwuanibe: For increased effectiveness and lower utility costs, our building model uses smart systems and technologically enhanced security throughout the ecosystem for effective surveillance. As we expand the business's global reach and accessibility of our services, we also use digital media and marketing campaigns. We unify the lifestyle offerings and ensure better user experience and service through our mobile application,

Interviewer: What was the most challenging season for you and how did you keep yourself and the staff motivated?

Paul Onwuanibe: Every season of growth is challenging, as expected and we are constantly growing.

Most Challenging season would be during the Covid-19 lockdown when a lot of businesses including ours suffered an uncertain standstill. Our Survival as a business was hinged on the resilience of staff and loyalty of our partners in those trying times. We also found purpose taking up some community responsibility, by building the covid isolation centre within the Landmark Ecosystem.

I believe that our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

Interviewer: What is your advice on work life balance?

Paul Onwuanibe: The motto at Landmark is "Live. Work, Play". Embedded in the core of our development is the value of work-life balance. Everyone needs a place to unwind, and here at Landmark we have created a family-friendly serene atmosphere providing leisure & hospitality services that cater to a wide category of clients at different price points. Within Our one-stop destination is also a medical centre, beach, hotel and resort, pharmacy, spa, gym and other amenities to enhance an individual's healthy and balanced living. The peculiarity of our ecosystem synergy allows for staff of all businesses within Landmark to access the beach after long working hours for some necessary relaxation and mental rejuvenation.

No one on his deathbed ever said "I wish I had spent more time at the office".

Interviewer: What are the key milestones you have achieved since doing business in Africa?

Paul Onwuanibe: From a helicopter trip across Lagos in 2007 discovering this empty stretch of promising land to developer and now experience provider with a valuation of over $300m, it has been an eventful journey to excellence. We opened 4 offices across Africa's 4 regions, completed the Landmark Towers–our signature mixed-use development, opened the best beach in Lagos, built West Africa's largest urban retail strip, and we are currently constructing the 28-floor residential development, The Landmark Waterview Apartments–one of the tallest residential building in Nigeria.

The road to great success is always under construction.

Interviewer: How do you advise we carry the next generation along?

Paul Onwuanibe: For me, it's always People, Planet and Profit.

We need to establish the value of positive learning and personal development, Invest in building & harnessing the local skillset and providing an enabling business environment growth through Mentorship & funding programs (like the *Lion's Den* platform). We must establish policies that encourage positive innovation and the emergence of new ideas while exemplifying and magnifying the gospel of sustainability. Governmental reformation is also necessary for a more enabling society to curtail the defection of local talent to the foreign community.

Currently Landmark incorporates internships and mentorship programs too. We also have a partnership with the Nigerian University of Technology and Management, a postgraduate scholarship program within the Landmark Ecosystem focused on grooming the brightest minds in Africa.

Interviewer: What have you learnt in your many years of doing business in Nigeria? Can technology help to eliminate some of the loopholes you mentioned?

Paul Onwuanibe: There are many problems and therefore broad opportunities within the real estate sector for which technological solutions would be beneficial. These include

A. Advanced technologically controlled construction methods for faster turnover and better quality of projects.

B. A standardised digital database which could help avert widespread insecurities by improving profile checks, reducing trade bureaucracies and costs by elimination of middleman roles.

C. Technology will also provide more options to explore alternative power sources.

Interviewer: Please share your 3 key tips for success?

Paul Onwuanibe: Solvability, scalability and sustainability. You must be solving a problem that is specific to the common people. Your business model needs to be well structured to accommodate growth and you need to operate with the mindset of positive impact for the greater good of the planet and its future generations. You can be anything you want to become in life if you will help others get and become what they want to be.

Interviewer: What is the future like for you?

Paul Onwuanibe: As the saying goes, The best way to predict the future is to help create it, which is why we are focused on creating premium mixed-use destinations, first in Lagos, Nigeria and then replicating that model across Africa. We also have a lot of exciting revolutionary projects coming up like, the Waterview Apartments, Landmark Dream theatre, Upside down house, Landmark Lakes to mention a few.

The future is Bright for us and those who say it can't be done should not interrupt those doing it.

Coffee Conversation With

Mr. Yusuf Kazaure

Director of Galaxy Backbone

With more than 30 years of combined working experience in the fields of architecture, construction, banking, government, and information technology, Yusuf Kazaure is an experienced professional. Prior to entering the banking industry, where he spent 10 years, he began his career as an architect in the Kano State Ministry of Works and Housing. In addition, he briefly practised architecture before starting and running his own firm. After democracy was restored in 1999, he relocated to the Jigawa State Government, where he held positions as the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Urban & Regional Planning, and the Director General in charge of International and Intergovernmental Affairs in the Executive Governor's Office.

As the first Managing Director/CEO of Galaxy Information Technology and Telecommunication Ltd, a Jigawa State-owned ICT corporation, he was appointed in 2002. He was in charge of organising, establishing, and maintaining the Jigawa Broadband Network, which was recognized nationally and internationally, particularly for its use of ICT for development (ICT4D). Mr. Kazaure was a significant contributor to the first core team of Galaxy Backbone Ltd in 2006 as a result of his passion for advancing the role of ICTs for effective government and national development.

In the period he has been with Galaxy Backbone, the company has laid the foundation for e-Government by creating an enabling platform that currently connects over 700 Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in over 4,000 locations across the country as well as providing data centre facilities to support a one government approach.

He shares some lessons on leadership as he talks about his journey so far.

Interviewer: What was it like being the MD/CEO of a government parastatal like Galaxy Backbone [GBB]?

Yusuf Kazaure: Being the MD of silver government parastatal especially, the one I happened to have worked with being Galaxy backbone was quite complex in itself. This is because the Galaxy backbone was conceived to be a government owned organisation, operating like a

private sector and a for profit organisation. So you had this dual personality that you had to contend with in almost every step within the operations of the company. This was further. intensified because, we were working on the IT space which of itself, required a lot of dynamism and did not fully align with the more bureaucratic nature of o government operations.

So there was a lot of improvisation to be able to ensure that, we were able to align ourselves with the realities of the customer space, what was expected of us, at the same time being able to operate within the confines of being a government agency that was centred primarily to provide services to other government agencies. So, that ambivalence I think was the greatest challenge and overcoming it. Developing procedures, standard operating procedures that could be able to achieve objectives within that context, I think was the greatest challenge in my view.

Interview: How would you describe your first few months at Galaxy Backbone (GBB) and how did this experience shape our digital transformation across the public sector?

Yusuf Kazaure: The first few months with Galaxy backbone, was more or less a learning, alignment and realignment type of situation in the sense that, one, there was learnings, a lot more about what the customers unique customer requirements were and then building up the systems from scratch to be able to meet those requirements.

To this end, the first few months really focused on the discovery phase. More or less are trying to understand the environment end to end, the ecosystem end to end and trying to understand what is in place and what is lacking in doing gap analysis to be able to determine how to close those gaps in a structured manner. And so, it was essentially more or less like a discovery and the planning phase that happened within the first few months.

Interviewer: You played a major role in getting the government backing for Nigeria's E-government Master plan under the '1-GOV.ng Collaboration Model' framework. Can you share the learnings from the collaborative effort with NITDA and the other stakeholders? How did you manage sustained engagement of all stakeholders from design to approval phase?

Yusuf Kazaure: The. The E-government master plan came, should I say, a little later in the journey. The challenge that was handed over to Galaxy Backbone then was to be able to set-up the whole of the Government infrastructure & platform that will be able to serve all of the government's MDAs irrespective of location and so on.

So for us to be able to achieve that, I think we developed what we call the 1- Gov Dot Ng platform, which was a precursor to some of the discussions led primarily by NITDA to be able to create some level of interoperability between the different Government applications and processes in the different MDAs. Those conversations eventually led to the development of an E-government masterplan, which provided the capability to create seamless transitioning of service requests between various government MDAs.

So irrespective of the number of MDAs you have to get a service across, the objective was for the client or the citizen who is onboarded on the platform not to notice that. The expected outcome for the citizen was the view presented as a result of his query. Primarily, Galaxy was involved in building the platforms, the technology to enable that while a lot of the policy and regulatory aspects of the development was led by NITDA.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on progress in terms of execution of the plan? Do you think that infusion of ICT into government operations has changed their service models?

Yusuf Kazaure: A lot has happened beyond that, and by this I meant that, in between one of the key developments that happened under the current dispensation, the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Professor Ali Pantami, was able re-invest the e-government Masterplan from its

previous version, within the context of the ministry itself, by adding the extra responsibility of building a digital economy.

So in context, I believe the e-government master plan was transformed to have a more holistic view of what the government's role is as an enabler within the overall economy in all sectors.

This latest development was launched earlier this year by the Presidential Committee on the masterplan.

We are now at that phase of its current deployment with a marked departure from the initial conception having to infuse so many changes, to reflect our current realities in the light of the recent Covid 19 pandemic.

The impact of which heightened a sense of urgency from the government , in being able to match the private sector in the provision of different digital solutions and so this version of the masterplan has been designed to be agile and more responsive in my opinion.

Interviewer:. How did you manage the risks of potential threats of cyber-attacks against Galaxy Black Bone's infrastructure?

Yusuf Kazaure: Cyber threats were a reality so if there was anything that kept us awake at night. It was the fear of potential cyber threats disrupting our services. To always pay key attention to the risk of cyber security and as a key component from the design phase. We designed with security in mind which I think helped us a lot in terms of anticipating that even if things were to go wrong, we had disaster recovery plans in place.

We also created a massive awareness campaign internally, externally and within the government itself on the threats of social engineering. We understood that the weakest link in any system, including cyber security strengths, was first the human being.

Consequently, in consuming these services one of the key value propositions of Galaxy has to be that the MDAs rightly assumed that Galaxy was providing embedded Security as a service, as part of that service model and so to a large extent I think that. So our posturing of this assumption that security was at the core of everything we did, helped to a large extent to protect the system.

Interviewer: Can you share an experience that you will describe as a turning point in your career?

Yusuf Kazaure: I think for me one of the key turning points of recent that I can remember has a lot to do with the Covid pandemic season. During that season, I had left Galaxy, but I was still working within the ecosystem as the Chairman of Nigerian Satellite Communications. There were lots of conversations around whether satellites would still be relevant in the near future, considering the increasing speed of fibre and terrestrial networks, growth and adoption which is in astronomical terms and the latency that was associated with satellite systems, you know, had Its own issues. With the Covid pandemic, every source of connectivity became critical, across the world, it brought in a new reality.

We had to come from a scenario which Indicated that we had to rethink our business model and come up with something different, to a reality. The urgency to have everybody connected became so obvious with that, so for me the realisation that things can change, with the flick of a finger. I think it was quite inspiring.

Interviewer: What would be your advice on maintaining a work life balance?

Yusuf Kazaure: That is so critical for me.

I'm a true believer in maintaining a healthy work life balance. Again I will come back to the recent events over the past three years and the pandemic, and things like the ability to be able to work remotely and round the clock at your convenience, has shifted the focus now on results and output rather than physical presence. In my opinion, a mixture of outputs and physical presence. This split presents a good opportunity to create a sort of work life balance that would ensure a healthy population.

The resulting effect is that people are more productive. In that scenario, a healthy work life balance benefits the individual as well as the organisation, with less burn out with productivity and innovation stimulated. My advice is that organisations should fully embrace the opportunity to work remotely, putting in systems that will support collaboration, enable the sharing of documents, and work flows regardless of staff location.

Interviewer: What approach do you think organisational leadership should adopt to mentor/motivate the next generation of the labour force?

Yusuf Kazaure: That's a big one because I think there's a significant amount of differences between the next generation regarding expectations and the current generation or the past generations.

There is a lot of conversation around managing millennials and as they come into the workforce, unless now means leading, beginning to leave the workforce. I think this is a huge paradigm shift. As you know this is a generation that has grown up with technology who are technology natives. Whilst the older generation believes in waiting out the process, this generation is more real time result oriented.

They believe everything is a click of a button away which is the mindset they bring into an organisation where problem solving is impact assessed over a longer period of time.

I particularly noticed that mentoring, the younger generation, requires that organisations find ways to create the alignment between what the organisation practises while there is a transition to meeting these defined expectations.

The influence of social media in shaping those expectations cannot be downplayed. As this reflects well in the workplace. The millennials typically expect recognition instantaneously and the inability to comprehend, time difference between actions and rewards, in this scenario recognition and expect for organisations to become more responsive.

Creating that alignment between the two systems as organisations will have to transition overtime using technology to become more responsive and, in a way, and manner use these tools as the basis, to design systems to accommodate some of these differences. Overall, mentoring is key but, understanding this segment as the next generation of the workforce is a key challenge.

But overtime and with the introduction of technology, what you have are digitised processes mixed to digitised processes, the alignment issue begins to self-regulate.

Interviewer: What principles have you learnt in your years of public service in Nigeria with managing organisational change? What would be your preferred approach 'partnership' or 'collaboration' given your previous experience?

Yusuf Kazaure: I think it's on a case-by-case basis and so therefore there are no absolutes. In my view the learning is in keeping the vision fresh.

This means having a vision of where you want to be, what you want to achieve for the organisation and keeping that vision as your guiding principle no matter what happens.

My advice is that in keeping the vision and core values through which your organisation has approached the marketplace, everything you do should ensure that promises made by that organisation to its customers, is kept consistently.

Interviewer: Please share your 3 key tips for success.

Yusuf Kazaure: To quote Stephen Covey who said to "begin with the end in mind". So having a clear vision and having a clear picture of what a successful outcome would look like, and then working towards that based on values that you have defined and exposed as in making those things sacrosanct. Even though you may have to continuously change your plans to be able to achieve that, being consistent in identifying your "North Star" moving towards it in a consistent manner, is the key tip I would say.

I truly believe these are the key elements that one must imbibe as a culture to be able to attempt anything. Within the context of either personal or official projects, those basic elements will always guarantee success.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Coffee Conversation With

Mr. Ademola Ade-Ojo,

Managing Director of Elizade JAC Autoland Limited

"People are truly your greatest assets. It is a true statement. I think of employees how a farmer would think of soil and seeds. If you plant a seed in good soil, the fruit may turn out good. So employees as greatest assets in organisations are like the soil. ".

– Ade-Ojo

Ademola Ade-Ojo is a Business Administrator and Financial Expert. Ademola–who received his degree in business administration from the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida, in the United States and graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, with a Master of Business Administration–is a Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer at Elizade Jac Autoland Limited. He talks about his leadership experience and lessons he has learnt over the years.

Interviewer: Is JAC a subsidiary of Elizade?

Ade-Ojo: Elizade Autoland which trades in full as Elizade JAC Autoland is different from Elizade Nigeria Limited. Elizade Nigeria Limited has been in business for 5 decades. Elizade JAC Autoland Limited has officially been in business since 2017. Elizade JAC is a subsidiary of Elizade Nigeria Limited but it is a different company and it is separate from Elizade Nigeria Limited.

Interviewer: What do you think new businesses should focus on for the first five years of operations? What's responsible for the success and longevity of the company? By extension, how does that interface with JAC?

Ade-Ojo: The key strength for our success in the market, firstly, is the fact that when we started the business people were yearning for a value-based brand. My father saw this opportunity and he started the business and he positioned the vehicle as a value-based brand.

There were other brands like that in the market like Volvo and American brands like GM. Toyota was hardly well-known in the 70s but, then, people still wanted value at that time and the vehicle performed. Toyota was relatively not well-known as an automobile manufacturer in the 70s however, they earned the reputation of making small vehicles. And people liked how small their vehicles were and how they consumed less fuel.

The Europeans and Americans typically made bigger vehicles but the Japanese came with smaller vehicles

, they saw that the vehicles were of great quality, so Toyota grew in reputation to become the household name that it is now.

Such also is the story of JAC. We started JAC in 2013 and tested for 4 years before we launched in 2017. By this time Toyota had become a premium product in the market and people now, even more than before, wanted value. And so we embarked upon our partnership with JAC to introduce affordable vehicles of good value. This combination of good quality and the affordable product cost earned us the reputation.

The second thing that earned our reputation is that we did business with integrity. In a place like Nigeria where a lot of people sometimes fall short in doing business ethically, the Elizade name became synonymous with such words like integrity and peace of mind.

The third reason we became successful is that we reinvested in the business. When a lot of people started the auto business, it was very common not to really reinvest in the business. Dealers and distributors didn't invest so much in after sales. We did the opposite. We created a lot of service centres, trained our technicians, and made sure the ownership experience of people was pleasant.

We ensured that we had an adequate stock of spare parts that were reasonably priced. Today, people love to drive Toyota because they feel Toyota parts are available everywhere.

All we learnt in Toyota, we are applying in JAC as well. For instance, we quickly knew it was important that integrity is part of the business's DNA. So I believe these are things that have really helped us be successful in the market.

Interviewer: Share some of your key learnings as the Managing Director of the Elizade Autoland Limited?

Ade-Ojo: People truly are your greatest assets. It is a true statement. I think of employees how a farmer would think of soil and seeds. If you plant a seed in a good soil, the fruit may turn out good. So employees as the greatest assets in organisations, are like soil.

As the Managing Director, I have a seed(a vision and a mission) to cultivate. If I plant that seed in good soil, bearing in mind that people are truly the greatest assets, the work will produce fruits and flourish. It is the first key learning.

One must be quick to settle disputes with customers. I say this because I have seen that not settling disputes with customers quickly will cost the business more and it also brings about reputational damage. And, of course, reputation is something we seek to protect at all cost in Elizade. Reputation for integrity, reputation for excellent customer experience, and reputation for being a good partner with our customers. These are not things that we joke with.

Develop key relationships with customers who will give you the most opportunities to do business and to grow your business. This is called the 80/20 rule. The rule states that 80% of your revenue is generated from 20% of your customers. Knowing who those key customers are and designing programs to ensure you hold on to them is a very key.

Positive customer experience is truly the back bone of growing your business over the long top. We measure our net promoter's score–how many people are promoting us, how many people are indifferent, and how many people are our detractors. We take great pains to ensure that we have a high net promoter's score because this is important for growing your business over time. You have to always be ready to re-strategize if your goals and objectives are not being met. Recognizing that you need to do a lot of trial and error to see which strategy ultimately works. Finding out why things are not working, even on a granular level, to quickly re-strategize ensures your goals are being met.

Interviewer: What do you think new businesses should focus on for the

first five years of operations?

Ade-Ojo: Understand what is going on. I think everything starts with understanding. You must seek to understand the market, you must seek to understand how the market is segmented, you must seek to understand your competition and then you must have a playbook. A playbook is so critical because a playbook means you're not just going to sell your products, but in fact, you will strategize how to navigate the nuances of the market.

You must move quickly to stabilise sales so that it becomes predictable. There is nothing worse than doing business with unpredictable sales. When it becomes predictable, then you can learn to add 10%, 20%, and 30% growth.

You must quickly set out to know the team you can win with. You can't win with everybody and not everybody deserves to be on your team. You need to, as a matter of priority. get rid of those who are not in alignment with your vision. You have to know and work with people who support your vision, have positive energy and reflect it in their performance and commitments to the business.

You must be conscious about putting the right culture in place. Culture is something that impacts productivity, performance, and the general well-being of staff. There should be no room for a toxic culture at work.

Lastly, you must understand the relationship between your revenue, your expenses and how your business is being funded. Understand your financial mechanisms and relationships to ensure a positive cash flow at all times.

Interviewer: How have you used technology as a competitive advantage?

Ade-Ojo: I have used it as a competitive advantage more internally than externally. Having that deep understanding of the interaction between my sales team and customers to measure productivity and performances, it is inevitable that technology is required. All of these things are predictable now, but in the past, we didn't have these tools. Technology helps me have all of the information that I need to predict if I am going to achieve my goals and take corrective actions even on the granular level to achieve our target.

I have also used it to understand the dynamics and differences between various sectors and industries in terms of business needs, behaviours, purchase patterns etc. For example, I know, on average, how long it will take me to close a deal in the pharmaceutical industry or the banking industry. All of those little things are important. How long does it take a typical bank from start to finish to process the procurement of vehicles? Or how long does it take the procurement team in the pharmaceutical industry to go through the process of procuring vehicles? When you can have such information, you begin to align your business and make decisions that are good for your business needs.

Interviewer: What are the key milestones you have achieved since doing business in Nigeria and by extension across Africa as a whole?

Ade-Ojo: I did a significant amount of work in professionalising the business and building systems. Building systems is so important because I consider myself a system builder and I experience joy in building systems. I built a system in Elizade Nigeria Limited and also I am building a system in Elizade JAC as well.

I also did with JAC what my father did with Toyota in the 70s. I introduced it to a market that is very sceptical of products made in certain places.

I also founded a Fintech company. It wasn't my space, but I saw the opportunity in the Fintech space. We would eventually acquire a Microfinance bank.

Interviewer: What have you learnt in your many years of doing business in Nigeria? Can technology help to eliminate some of the loopholes you mentioned. If there are any

Answer: Nigeria itself is still lacking adequate infrastructures and key basic services that one would not have to deal with in other parts of the world.

The economy, for one, is something you have to study. There are many things that can go wrong with this economy because the economy is not stable. Our economy is susceptible to anything going on around the world, so our economy is still very fragile. And, as a business, I have had to learn how to put buffers in place and buffers help me to manage those shocks.

Interviewer: What are your 3 key tips for success?

Ade-Ojo: Don't quit. Things get hard but never ever think about quitting. Building systems too.

Interviewer: What is the future like for Elizade Autoland Limited?

Ade-Ojo: I will answer from the perspective of Elizade JAC. We see our brand doing very well in our present economic situation. There's also the global phenomenon of clean energy vehicles–of which our OEM, JAC international, is in partnership with (VW) Volkswagen.

VW has bought over 55% of JAC and they are partnering with JAC in improving their petrol vehicles and in producing clean energy vehicles. With this partnership, we are definitely at a competitive advantage. I see the JAC brand ultimately being in the top 3 top brands in Nigeria.

The 10 Most Innovative Augmented Reality And Virtual Reality Companies Of 2022

The selected firms are making ample impact on their initiatives across the categories, including the most innovative artificial intelligence, design, and security companies. Last year, much better look at mixed-reality products that could play in post-pandemic life. Mixed reality (XR) in its various forms includes virtual reality and augmented reality which seemed like the answer to attaining some level of togetherness at work now that spending much more of our time working from home. People began using XR for everything from collaborative design sessions to department meetings to informal hangouts.

It started with the Metaverse; mixed reality technology expected to be the way of accessing that all-purpose virtual space in the XR space. Companies like Meta promote a vision of the technology well before delivering the actual tech to make those experiences real.

While most Big Tech XR remains rumour and hype, smaller companies have made ample impact on innovative strides toward useful and enjoyable spatial computing. AppliedVR and others are developing VR experiences that have the exact positive effects on several mental health issues. Companies such as Google, Niantic, and SightCall are fine-tuning AR apps that work on technology we already have such as phones and tablets. Snap continues to modify its

Spectacles glasses, a work in advancement edging nearer to being a wearable social AR device that people will feel comfortable wearing in public. Startups such as Avegant and Lumus are developing advanced in-lens displays.

Accumulatively, this industry made vital strides toward the vision of wearing personal computing devices on our faces, with the world in front of becoming part of the UX. These are the most vital contributions to the growth of technology.

SNAP

For advancing practical uses of AR.

Snap continues to introduce hundreds of millions of people into augmented reality, bit by bit rather than all at once. Snap elevated its try-on tech this year to allow for more accurate fits in eyeglasses. Utilise gesture-recognition tech so that Snapchat users can signal to the Snap camera when they want to see another handbag or view it in another colour. Farfetch uses Snap's new voice controls to allow users to try new styles in conversation with the app. Snap is supplying the glasses to developers to help them begin building more immersive AR experiences.

NVIDIA

Creating an Omniverse for developers.

Tech companies talked about consumer experiences in the metaverse. Nvidia's new innovative Omniverse platform allows developers from different companies using different tools to quickly share and sync 3D graphics using a Pixar-developed open standard called Universal Scene Description (USD). Enterprises have already seized on Omniverse to develop digital twins of their facilities or service areas. Ericsson, for example, is using Omniverse to build digital twins of cities to help it understand how 5G wireless signal propagates. Siemens uses the platform to create digital versions of the devices that can run simulations and predict when parts of the facility will need replacement. These applications are for single companies, but Omniverse is an open platform on which creators using many different tools could agree (on a practical, technical level) on the physics and function of a single, fluid metaverse.

AVEGANT

For making a giant tech leap toward miniaturising smart glasses.

Augmented reality glasses face some significant technical hurdles. So, no tech company has managed to fit the displays, sensors, processors, and battery into a form factor small enough and light enough to be worn for extended periods. The company says its innovative AG-50L light engines, which it launched in September, are no thicker than a pencil and weigh about as much as a paper clip. They use eye-tracking sensors to project light just where the user is looking. The company intends to sell its light engines to tech companies that are now trying to overcome the R&D challenges of developing AR glasses that look reasonably similar in size and weight to regular glasses.

HTC VIVE

For creating a VR headset immersive enough for enterprise use.

The Vive Focus 3 is HTCs third try at a stand-alone virtual reality headset, and the company nailed it. The innovative headsets in 5K high-resolution graphics, tight head tracking and 120-degree field of view make them easily superior to the consumer VR headsets currently on the market. HTC gave the headset a unique active cooling system (a fan), which allows it to push the processor hard enough to create more compelling and immersive augmented reality content. But the Focus 3 is not a consumer product (sorry, gamers). Many companies already hold remote meetings with faraway partners to work through design issues using virtual 3D models in VR, rather than bearing the high expense (and uncertainty) of sending people to meet in person. For example, Avatar, which counts Meta and NTT Docomo as customers, intends to use Focus 3 to help its government and enterprise clients with remote collaboration and site inspections. Corporations also routinely turn to VR to train employees, especially on more complex jobs that require refined skills. VRMADA, for example, will use Focus 3 to deliver the VR training simulations it creates for its clients, including Cisco and British Airways.

3DAR

Letting viewers unlock new ways to experience VR in film.

The virtual reality production studio 3dar has become known for pushing the boundaries of VR as a storytelling tool. In 2021, it followed up its impressive Gloomy Eyes short, which won best VR piece at South by Southwest in 2019, with an even more groundbreaking animation called Paper Birds. In part one of the 30-minute interactive VR story, the main character, a young musician named Toto, grows from childhood through adulthood as he navigates life and wrestles with the mysteries of inspiration. Visually, the creators cast luminous little scenes and animations in great gulfs of dark space. The animated characters, voiced by Ed Norton, Joss Stone, and Archie Yates and designed by illustrator Oscar Ramos, are adorable and highly controversial. But the groundbreaking aspect of Paper Birds is in its interactivity. You are to use the hand tracking in the Oculus Quest headset to paint brushstrokes of stars in the void of space, conduct music, and unlock portals. Paper Birds premiered at Tribeca Film Festival 2021. The Academy of International Extended Reality (AIXR) gave Paper Birds the award VR Film of the Year at its fifth annual VR Awards in December.

RESOLUTION GAMES

For taking the VR gaming throne with Demeo.

Resolution Games bet on virtual reality gaming earlier than most developers. A Swedish company released its most innovative and compelling game yet, Demeo. Though Resolution Games could have easily used VR to make Demeo an action role-playing game, it chose the slower pace of a board game genre that recalls physical games like Dungeons & Dragons. One of the experiences in the game involves a storyline where the sewers under the city of Sunderhaven have a rat problem, and players must descend into the smelly darkness below and work as a team to defeat the Rat King and his loyal minions. The avatars float over a dungeon floor that doubles as a game board, where they advance by picking up cards and game tokens using the trigger on the hand controller. One of the reasons for the success is that it pulled people together (either in person or virtually) to play Demeo and socialise.

TeXcellence Conference:
A gathering for the Forward-Thinking Generation

The digital world is changing, and moreso, the business landscape in Africa is evolving towards a more digitised landscape. A vast percentage of consumers perform internet research prior to making a purchase, and this results in a big chunk of the buyer's journey being complete before they even contact a sales representative from an organisation.

It will be simpler for businesses and organisations to increase brand awareness, provide cost savings, and ultimately drive revenue if they choose to engage consumers and prospects with a thoughtful digital strategy and roadmap. Because of this, CWG knew it was imperative to organise 'The TeXcellence Conference' an intimate conference designed for C-suite executives and key players in Africa using the most of digital technology.

The TeXcellence Conference was an indispensable opportunity for a much needed conversation on the state of Technological Transformation for businesses and organisations in Africa.

Industry leaders such as Philip Obioha, Austin Okere, Oluwaseun Solanke, Mallam Kashifuwa Inuwa Abdullahi, Adewale Adeyipo shared valuable lessons on utilising technology to position Africa for excellence.

Two panel sessions themed "Winning Through Digital Transformation" and "Delivering Exceptional Digital Experiences" delivered key digital transformation strategy insights from successful industry players like MTN, PWC, Google, UCC, Clydestone, Ecobank, Access Bank, Keystone Bank, First bank, Keystone Banks, First City Monument Bank, Infosys, on strategies for championing a forward-think Africa through digital technological transformation.

Austin Okere, Founder and Non-Executive Director of CWG, delivers his keynote address themed "A Radical Paradigm Shift: Embracing Digital: The CWG Story".

"In a culture where integrity is weak, trust is the currency of successful brands"

" With digitisation, the fundamental model of value creation has changed. There's the Revolution of Demand, Revolution of Supply and Revolution of Context"

"The Path to Tech Excellence" Femi Madariola, Advisory Leader, PWC

The first plenary session was themed "Winning through digital transformation: Lessons from MTN, PWC, Google, UCC, Clydestone".

Dr. Bongo Adi (Faculty, Lagos Business School) is currently in conversation with Speakers: Shodunke Shoyinka (Chief Information Officer, MTN), Femi Madariola (Advisory Leader, PWC), Felicia Otolorin (Industry Manager, Google Nigeria), Michael Bamwesigye (Head Information Technology and Security - Uganda Communications Commission) and Paul Jacquaye (Group Chief Executive Officer, Clydestone)

Unveiling the FifthLab, a fintech company that would drive the next phase of development by providing solutions to the challenges of e-commerce and future businesses.

Adewale Adeyipo (Chief Executive Officer, CWG) presenting an Award of Excellence to the FifthLab team for their commitment to a job well done.

The second plenary session for the Texcellence Conference. Rachel Adeshina (Chief Information Officer, Firstbank) was in conversation with

Dr. Tomisin Fashina (Group Executive, Operations and Technology, Ecobank) Ade Bajomo (Executive Director, IT Operations, Access Bank), Yemi Odusanya (Executive Director, Corporate Banking and South, Keystone Bank), Gbolahan Joshua (Chief Operations Officer, First City Monument Bank) and Majo Mathew (Client Engagement Director - Africa, Infosys Finacle) as they share insights on their delivery of exceptional digital experiences to users over the years.

As we drew the curtains on the TeXcellence Conference, Mrs. Taba Adela Peterside, Independent Non-Executive Director at CWG, gave the closing remarks.


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Our People

Life Outside Work

Offering complete healthcare coverage used to be the definition of staff wellness. However, when it comes to promoting staff well-being, healthcare is now just the tip of the iceberg. There's more to it!

Nowadays, a lot of staff wellness initiatives take a more sophisticated approach to wellbeing. Now, in addition to supporting physical health, work-life balance also contributes to staff wellness. Productivity is not just a result of hard work, it is equally the outcome of rest and positive relationships and leisure. You know what happens when we are all work and no play.

We spoke to some cool people to see how they balance out all the hard work they do to keep the ball rolling at CWG, and to give us a glimpse into what they get up to outside of work.

Seun Koshoedo

I think that marketing communications is a great field as it enables me to explore many things to get my creative juices flowing.

One thing that interests me is exploring different restaurants and different kinds of dishes these restaurants have. It makes me happy. When I am out touring restaurants, I am in my creative zone– I can come up with just about any brief or campaign.

I also love salsa. When I am dancing salsa, I am at my happiest. There is something exciting and refreshing about it. For some of us that don't enjoy going to the gym, we can do salsa.

I have a dream that someday, I will apply for *So You Think You Can Dance,* and don't be shocked if you see me dancing salsa on the show–I'm just saying!

Every Saturday, catch me at one Salsa hotspot or another dancing my feet out on the dance floor. I never miss it.

Seun Koshoedo is a Senior Brand Strategist leading the brand and marketing communications department of CWG Plc.

Simi Ogundipe

I like spending quality time with my partner–it's very important for me.

We usually have a couple of activities lined up for the weekend. We could go out to see friends we've not seen in a while. We could go out to restaurants or recreational spots and chat about our week and our journey so far.

I like those bonding moments because, as professionals in the corporate world, we spend a lot of the weekdays either working or thinking about work and barely have time to bond, so I like spending quality time on the weekends.

I also love playing video games a lot–I'm crazy about video games. To relax, I would watch skits–just to get a good laugh. And I rest a lot too. I like to give my body a lot of rest.

Simi Ogundipe is a Human Resources Executive at CWG Plc.

Tochukwu Mgbemena

My life outside work is pretty simple.

I don't go out a lot. I find fun, instead, in indoor activities like watching youtube videos.

If you typically want to get me in my best moment, find me when I'm seeing a video by Marques Brownlee or watching *Unbox Therapy*.

I love tech reviews and unboxing videos for phones, laptops, tabs, tvs and other gadgets. I also love watching reviews for Tesla cars.

I also enjoy researching new digital products from across sectors like fintech, healthtech, and others. I usually download these apps, test them out and review them. Doing this helps me because I am able to translate all that research into building seamless apps in my work as a product manager.

I also enjoy driving, it helps me relax my mind. I seldomly ever see films on netflix.

Tochukwu Mgbemena provides product development and management services as a Product Manager at CWG plc.

Vivian Okpala

My life outside work evolves quite nicely. It's always changing. When I discover something more adventurous or exciting, I move.

Currently, I am obsessed with Law series like *The Justice Court* and *The Hot Bench*. I find that as crazy as these law stories can sometimes be, they have a lot of interesting insights to be gleaned from them.

Our daily interactions with people and some of the things we often tend to overlook sometimes have far reaching implications. These shows also help me see the world through diverse perspectives and worldviews. Although I am not a lawyer, I have always been interested in the law and legal perspectives.

Apart from food, hanging out with friends and family, the best thing that has happened to me lately has been sitting on my couch, pop corn in hand and reality TV court on the television. You should try it!

Vivian Okpala leads the Procurement and Supply Chain unit at CWG Plc.

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