



Connectivity and Beyond ~ Stories from CEIBS Africa AMP/ODP Shanghai Module

By Kate Jiang

Fourteen students, a mixture of senior executives from Ghana, Nigeria and Benin, travelled to Shanghai in late September, the first ever CEIBS Africa participants in the Owner Director (ODP) and Advanced Management (AMP) programmes. This was the Shanghai module of a journey that began seven months ago with classes in Accra, Lagos and Casablanca and will culminate with a graduation ceremony in Accra in January, 2019.

The five-day Shanghai module that ended on September 30 was a mixture of classroom lectures, company visits, and excursions tailored to their quest for a more comprehensive understanding of the China market

and industries. The module included classes on China's unique business environment where they sought answers to questions such as how to engage consumers through a well-grounded customer service and marketing strategy and how to navigate and upgrade the surging collaboration between China and Africa. It also looked at managing skills across cultures and developing flexible perspectives to rethink the key challenges they are facing and lay a solid foundation for scaling their business growth in a dynamic business landscape. There were visits to industry giants Sany and Fosun, a panel on how to do business in China, and an eye-

opening visit to the Bund.

Read on and meet two of the students, both successful businessmen who have a keen interest in the China market.

Kofi Owusu-Nhyira

Nationality: Ghana

Company: Nsano

Position: Chief Executive Officer



“[Our company’s name, Nsano] is a word in the *twi* dialect in Ghana which means ‘fingertips’. We want our service to be on everyone’s fingertips and used with ease,” explains Chief Executive Officer Kofi Owusu-Nhyira who founded Nsano in 2013. As a fully Ghanaian owned start-up providing custom applications and telecoms software, Nsano now leads in the provision of mobile financial services in the country and surrounding regions. Kofi and his team of entrepreneurs with significant years of experience in mobile financial services walked the company through hard times in its early stages of development to its position today: a fully-fledged, diversified industry leader in the fintech field. “We have some of Africa’s finest experts in this field, who through a unique vision of the financial technology landscape, have given the company an edge over its competitors,” Kofi says. “We differentiated ourselves as an early beginner in the provision of B2B solutions and have, over the years, created customised payment services for merchants, institutions, and mobile financial operators in Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, Zambia, and Rwanda.”

Given Africa’s relatively immature industrial and legal framework for financial technology, the company has no shortage of challenges – but there are also opportunities. Kofi positions Nsano as the converging point between business experimentation and legal regulation, between Africa and China. He sees the CEIBS AMP as a way to stay ahead of the competition. “The programme substantially broadens

my perspective of doing business,” he says. “The case studies offer concrete scenarios, both positive and negative, of directing the company, and it helps in anticipating the first wave of the fintech industry before being swallowed by the swirl.”

Prior to starting Nsano, Kofi consulted for several international electronic payments organisations, building on several years of practicing law. He is a member of the Ghana Bar Association. “I think I’m a risk-averse person; probably a ‘misfit’ in the fintech field,” he says with a chuckle. “But one of the keys of my business is how to harness risk and translate it into value for our customers.”

Carl Aniambossou

Nationality: Benin

Company: TRINET SA

Position: Founder & CEO



Carl Aniambossou’s journey as co-founder of TRINET SA, a telecommunications provider in Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso and Nigeria began as many entrepreneurial ventures do – by offering a solution to a problem. “There are connectivity gaps and severe downtimes on French West African coast countries that could even last for over two weeks,” he explained.

This makes service either unavailable or very expensive. Carl decided to do something about it. “My team and I decided to build cross country connectivity by land from Nigeria to Benin down to Togo, using terrestrial radio links, and this proved to be a great and rather interesting experience,” he said. Now he has even bigger plans.

“Thanks to CEIBS, I’m growing the vision bigger. Before, I was just looking into connectivity, but the real picture is connectivity for something else. So my idea is to use connectivity as a rallying point for solutions to various needs. We are providing software as a service-based solution to multiple other segments such as hospitality and transportation with a completely new business model,” he explains. Faced with intense competition for what can be a very lucrative market, Carl credits his inspiration to classes taken during the CEIBS ODP. “It helped me think outside of the box. I realised that instead of selling just internet services, we should provide services adapted to diverse needs,” he says. He has now positioned himself as a bridge between multiple stakeholders, an interface for French West Africa. “My multilingual and multicultural background gives me a privilege to connect people on both sides, and close the demand-supply loop,” he explains. But what gets him most excited is the idea of doing business in China. “It keeps me awake at night,” he says.