

BEAR McBLACK MBA (Marketing), BSc (Hons)

AI Strategy & Commercial Growth Executive

25+ Years FTSE 250 Leadership · PhD in Generative AI

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

A commercially proven growth leader with a 25-year track record delivering results inside FTSE 250 environments — now combining that operational depth with advanced doctoral research in Generative AI. My career spans commercial turnaround, £multi-million new revenue generation, and client retention transformations across waste management, B2B services, and retail. Since 2019 I have applied that commercial rigour to AI strategy and implementation, developing proprietary frameworks that bridge the gap between what AI can do and what organisations actually need it to deliver. Career built within multinational FTSE 250 environments — including subsidiaries of French-headquartered global groups (Veolia, SUEZ) — developing cross-cultural stakeholder management capability across diverse client bases spanning public sector, higher education, national retail, and industrial services.

Recognised for designing data-driven growth engines, AI-infused digital strategies, and CRM and marketing automation architectures that lift conversion, reduce manual overhead, and deliver measurable commercial ROI. Full doctoral scholarship PhD in Generative AI at the University of Hertfordshire — research that produced the Generative AI Adaptation Paradox framework, directly addressing why organisations consistently fail to realise the efficiency gains they invest in AI to produce. Focus areas: AI adoption strategy, digital transformation, and commercial growth.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ £2.1m new annualised revenue in 9 months (+112% vs prior year) — SUEZ FTSE 250, LUPC portfolio
- ▶ 80% reduction in content production costs through autonomous AI workflow deployment
- ▶ 34% client retention uplift (55% → 89%) — Biffa, highest in region via Asset-Led Value Engineering
- ▶ 15% lead-to-sale conversion uplift at flat CAC via CRM rebuild and marketing automation
- ▶ £415k new revenue in year one from zero-base territory at Veolia — no inherited pipeline
- ▶ Reversed 2-year client churn trend across 49-account distressed portfolio at Biffa — first role

CORE COMPETENCIES

AI Strategy & Adoption Frameworks	CRM Architecture & Marketing Automation	Sustainability-Led Commercial Strategy
Generative AI Implementation	Client Retention & Value Engineering	OJEU / Public Sector Procurement
Commercial Turnaround Leadership	Data Analytics & Performance Modelling	Digital Growth Strategy
Revenue Growth & Pipeline Development	B2B Stakeholder Engagement	AI Workflow Design & Deployment
Academic Research & Frameworks	Cross-Cultural Stakeholder Management	Change Management & Adoption

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Operational Turnaround	Evidence-Based AI Innovation	Digital Growth Ecosystems
Expert at stabilising distressed commercial portfolios and reversing client churn in high-	Pioneer of the Adaptive Leverage Model (ALeM) — bridging the gap between academic rigour and	Designs scalable technology architectures that unite marketing, sales, and operations.

stakes environments. Consistent track record of transforming operational deficits into profitable, scalable growth engines across FTSE 250 businesses.

practical commercial ROI. De-risks AI adoption for organisations by translating doctoral-level research into boardroom-ready execution playbooks.

Removes manual friction and unlocks human capacity for creative and strategic work — consistently delivering measurable uplift in conversion and efficiency.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Head of AI Strategy

The Thrivology Company

Nov 2019 – Present

Bedfordshire, Remote

Boutique growth consultancy specialising in AI adoption strategy and digital growth for SMEs and enterprise clients. Led AI strategy and contributed to commercial strategy and technology integration — applying doctoral research in Generative AI to deliver measurable commercial outcomes for clients.

AI Systems & Implementation

- Designed and deployed autonomous AI content agent workflows reducing content production costs by 80% while scaling organic traffic output by 3x — demonstrating the operational ROI achievable through properly integrated Generative AI rather than ad hoc tool adoption.
- Reduced manual workflow burden by 20% through systematic CRM and process tool integration, freeing resource for higher-value commercial activity.
- Led AI tool selection, governance, and implementation strategy across the full consultancy operation — encompassing content architecture, data analytics, campaign performance modelling, and marketing automation.
- Pioneered a multi-agent LLM evaluation methodology as part of doctoral research — deploying 11 frontier language models as a structured analytical panel for systematic artefact critique. A novel methodological contribution to Design Science Research, demonstrating advanced capability in designing AI-as-instrument research approaches.

Commercial Growth & Digital Strategy

- Rebuilt CRM architecture and marketing automation stack delivering a 15% uplift in lead-to-sale conversion at flat customer acquisition cost — applying commercial turnaround principles to digital revenue operations.
- Managed full digital strategy function including content architecture, campaign performance modelling, and organic growth systems for the consultancy's client-facing digital offering.

Research & Intellectual Property

- Developed the Generative AI Adaptation Paradox framework through PhD research — addressing the gap between AI investment and integration outcomes. Applied across AI adoption engagements. Published at bearmcblack.com
- Developed the ALeM Framework (Adaptive Leverage Model) — a practical AI adoption model for SME marketing contexts. Assessment → Leverage → Measure. Details at bearmcblack.com
- Built and deployed a live interactive web-based practitioner artefact for the ALeM Framework — translating academic research into a usable digital tool accessible to micro-business owner-managers. Demonstrates end-to-end capability from research design through to shipped product.

Business Improvement Manager

Biffa Waste Services Ltd (FTSE 250)

May 2018 – Nov 2019

South Midlands, St Albans

Recruited back to Biffa by senior leadership to lead a commercial turnaround in a different region from an earlier role there. Managed a 42-account portfolio including national leisure, retail, and wine sector clients.

- Achieved a 34% client retention uplift (55% → 89%) — the highest in the region — through development and deployment of the Asset-Led Value Engineering framework, shifting commercial relationships from commoditised price negotiation to partnership-driven value articulation.

- Key accounts managed: Foot Locker (national), Majestic Wines, Thorpe Park — each requiring tailored commercial frameworks beyond standard service contracts.
- Devised and implemented a new account management structure and client database, fundamentally shifting how the region managed retention and service delivery. Automated performance reporting framework provided senior leadership with real-time decision-making data.
- Redesigned operational protocols and account review processes to embed proactive retention management rather than reactive churn response.
- Trained account management team on value-engineering methodology, embedding systematic value articulation across all client interactions.

Corporate Account Manager

Jul 2015 – Apr 2018

SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK (FTSE 250)

London

Appointed to develop the LUPC (London Universities Purchasing Consortium) portfolio — a high-value, multi-stakeholder public sector client base requiring complex sustainability and procurement navigation.

- Generated £2.1m in new annualised revenue in 9 months (+112% vs prior year) through stakeholder engagement prioritising clients' sustainability goals rather than price-led pitching.
- Navigated OJEU procurement processes to position SUEZ competitively across multiple university estate contracts simultaneously.
- Led digital adoption projects that improved the customer experience journey and reduced process inefficiencies within the client portfolio — one of the first commercial managers in the organisation to systematically integrate digital tools into account management.
- Built an engagement model reframing waste management as a strategic sustainability partner function rather than a commodity service — directly informing later commercial frameworks.
- Mentored and developed account team, building capability in sustainability-led commercial positioning.
- Aligned all commercial strategies with clients' environmental sustainability goals and compliance requirements — reframing waste management as a strategic sustainability partner function rather than a commodity service. Validated by Dr. Nicola Hogan (Head of Sustainability, University of East London) as "professional and very knowledgeable about all matters relating to sustainability... invaluable when tackling complex issues of cross-contamination and stakeholder engagement."

Area Business Manager

Sep 2014 – Jul 2015

Egbert H Taylor & Co Ltd

London & South East

World-leading manufacturer of wheeled waste containers. Role covered the full B2B and public sector sales cycle across London and the South East.

- Secured Costco national account and multiple London Borough contracts through consultative sales approach, strategic tendering, and deep product knowledge.
- Managed full end-to-end sales cycle from prospecting and tendering through to contract close and account implementation. Identified and secured new business in a highly competitive market through strategic tendering and formal presentations.

Key Account Manager

Aug 2010 – Sep 2014

Biffa Waste Services Ltd (FTSE 250)

London & South East

Entrusted with a distressed 49-account portfolio that had experienced two consecutive years of client churn. Role was specifically commercial recovery — not maintenance — requiring root cause analysis of each at-risk relationship.

- Reversed the 2-year churn trend and achieved the highest retention rate in the region through systematic account recovery, process redesign, and relationship rebuilding.
- Led renegotiation of low net earning contracts and secured non-contracted revenue, directly increasing depot and account profitability.

- Bridged the gap between commercial promises and operational realities, coordinating directly with depot teams to ensure service delivery matched SLA commitments — resolving systemic service failures that were driving churn.
- Developed early version of commercial recovery protocols that would later form the foundation for the Asset-Led Value Engineering framework deployed in the second role at Biffa.

Account Manager

Mar 2004 – Aug 2010

Veolia Environmental Services UK Ltd

London & South East

Joined Veolia to develop a new commercial territory from a zero base. No inherited clients, no pipeline — a ground-up new market development role.

- Generated £415k in new revenue in the first year by identifying untapped sectors and executing targeted prospecting campaigns through cold outreach, consultative selling, and contract negotiation — with no inherited pipeline.
- Pioneered regional CRM adoption across the sales team — building the data infrastructure that underpinned account management quality and improved forecasting accuracy for the following years. Trained team members on data-driven sales protocols.
- Led compilation of complex proposals and tenders, securing long-term contracts with commercial and industrial clients through consultative selling.
- Managed a portfolio of commercial and industrial clients across London and the South East over a six-year tenure, delivering consistent retention and upsell performance.

Operations Manager

Oct 1997 – Mar 2004

Dixons Retail (Currys)

South East, England

Europe's leading specialist electrical retailer at the time of employment. Selected for Dixons' fast-track management programme and deployed as a 'parachute leader' — brought into underperforming branches to stabilise operations and rebuild commercial performance.

- Held full P&L accountability across multiple satellite store deployments — managing staff, stock, and customer experience in high-pressure turnaround environments.
- Mentored sales staff and supervisors, fostering a high-performance culture that consistently met aggressive corporate sales targets.
- Managed complex customer service escalations and post-sales disputes, protecting brand reputation and customer loyalty. Oversaw all aspects of branch operations including inventory, banking, and merchandising standards.

PROPRIETARY FRAMEWORKS & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Generative AI Adaptation Paradox (Gen-Dox)

- PhD-derived framework (University of Hertfordshire) addressing why organisations invest in AI but consistently fail to realise efficiency gains. Defines the critical post-adoption capability gap and identifies the Bootstrap Paradox — a circular trap where businesses cannot justify investing time in AI until they see value, but cannot see value without investing time. The ALeM Framework was designed to break this cycle. Applied across SME and enterprise engagements. Published at bearmcblack.com

ALeM Framework (Adaptive Leverage Model)

- PhD-derived practical AI adoption framework grounded in Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997) and Design Science Research methodology. Operationalises Sensing, Seizing, and Reconfiguring into a structured 4-phase protocol for micro-business AI adoption — from immediate quick wins through to embedded standard operating procedures. Validated by academic and industry expert panel. Delivered 15% lead-to-sale conversion uplift at flat CAC. Deployed as a live interactive web-based practitioner artefact. Details at bearmcblack.com

The Leapfrog Effect (Asset of Agility)

- PhD-derived theoretical contribution inverting the established 'Liability of Smallness' into an 'Asset of Agility' for multimodal AI adoption. Demonstrates that micro-businesses can outpace large enterprises in GenAI integration due to absence of bureaucratic inertia and compliance drag — reframing size from weakness to competitive advantage.

Asset-Led Value Engineering

- Commercial account management framework developed at Biffa (2018–2019). Shifts B2B relationships from price-led negotiation to partnership-driven value articulation. Core method: map customer assets → identify value opportunities → propose integrated partnerships. Delivered 34% retention uplift (55% → 89%). Methodology documented and delivered as team training programme.

KEY RESEARCH STATISTICS

Market evidence underpinning the commercial case for AI adoption consulting. Sourced from PhD research.

- Only 15% of UK small businesses have adopted at least one AI technology, despite making up 99.16% of the entire UK business population (British Chambers of Commerce, 2024)
- 73% of UK sole traders are using AI in a limited way (31%) or have no plans to adopt it at all (42%) (Money Penny, 2025; Money.co.uk, 2025)
- Over 5.2 million micro-businesses exist in the UK — the target market for the ALeM Framework (UK Government Statistics)
- Only 3% of small firms (approx. 49,300) are using 4–5 AI technologies simultaneously, compared to 20% of large firms (Dept. for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2022)

EDUCATION

PhD in Generative AI, University of Hertfordshire

Oct 2023 – Oct 2026

Full Doctoral Scholarship

Thesis: *"From Paradox to Practice: A Design Science Study Developing the Generative AI Adaptive Leverage Model (ALeM) to Navigate the Generative AI Adaptation Paradox (Gen-Dox) through Dynamic Capabilities in UK Micro-Businesses."*

Research focus: Efficiency gains from Generative AI adoption in business contexts — producing the Generative AI Adaptation Paradox framework. Not purely theoretical; applied science that functions as the intellectual engine behind commercial consultancy, bridging academic rigour with operational agility. Proposed the conceptual extension of Accelerated Dynamic Capabilities (ADC): compressing traditional sensing-seizing-reconfiguring cycles from annual cadences to weekly iterations for high-velocity technological environments.

MBA — Marketing | Distinction, Top of Cohort

Oct 2022 – Sep 2023

University of Bedfordshire

Cemented a formal academic foundation for two decades of practical commercial leadership. Focused on advanced financial modelling, change management, and corporate strategy — specifically analysing how digital transformation impacts traditional business models in the service sector.

BSc (Hons) Business Management | First Class Honours

Oct 2019 – Sep 2022

University of Bedfordshire

A deliberate mid-career academic pivot that established the analytical discipline required for doctoral research — moving from commercial instinct to evidence-based practice. Focused on deconstructing complex systems and applying rigorous data analysis to real business problems.

TECHNICAL SKILLS & TOOLS

Generative AI & LLMs

- Frontier LLMs: OpenAI GPT-4o/o3-mini, Anthropic Claude, Google Gemini, Perplexity, Microsoft Copilot

- Open-Source Models: Meta Llama, Mistral, DeepSeek (V3/R1) — hands-on research-level evaluation across all major architectures
- Image AI: Midjourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion
- Prompt Engineering: ASPECT Prompting Framework (proprietary, PhD-derived structured methodology), advanced multi-turn and chain-of-thought techniques
- Integration: Zapier, Make (Integromat), API integration concepts
- Frameworks: ALeM, Generative AI Adaptation Paradox, Leapfrog Effect, Ethical AI Governance

CRM & Marketing Automation

- CRM Platforms: Salesforce, HubSpot (Advanced), Microsoft Dynamics 365, NetSuite
- Marketing Automation: Marketo, Pardot, ActiveCampaign, Mailchimp
- Web Analytics: Google Analytics 4 (GA4), Search Console, Hotjar, Mixpanel
- SEO Tools: SEMrush, Ahrefs, Moz, Screaming Frog
- Strategy: Funnel optimisation, lead scoring, attribution modelling, A/B testing

Data Analytics & Business Intelligence

- Visualisation: Power BI, Tableau, Looker (Google Data Studio), Qlik Sense
- Statistical Analysis: SPSS (Advanced), NVivo, Python (Pandas – intermediate), R (Basic)
- Database: SQL (Intermediate), MySQL, PostgreSQL, Excel (Advanced/VBA)
- Business Metrics: CAC/LTV analysis, churn prediction, revenue forecasting, cohort analysis
- Reporting: Dashboard design, KPI tracking, executive reporting frameworks

Strategic Leadership & Project Management

- Methodologies: Agile, Scrum, Lean, Change Management (Kotter/ADKAR)
- Project Management: Asana, Monday.com, Jira, Trello, Notion, Microsoft Project
- Financial Management: P&L Management (£50M+ portfolios), Budgeting, Cost Optimisation, ROI Analysis
- Leadership: Cross-functional teams, stakeholder management, public speaking, executive coaching

Platforms & Productivity

- Web & Design: Webflow, Framer, WordPress (advanced), Canva Pro
- Collaboration: Slack, Teams, Zoom, Confluence, Miro
- Frameworks: OKR frameworks, 1-1 coaching methodologies, business model innovation

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Location

Bedfordshire, UK.

Right to Work

British citizen.

References available on request · Full professional portfolio and research publications at bearmcblack.com
 · LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/bearmcblack