

CHARLOTTE LAU

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PROFILE

I love building things from scratch, and I have spent the last 12 years doing just that.

I thrive in early-stage startups, amid ambiguity, async workflows, and internationally remote teams. I have multiple Series A/B rounds & acquisitions under my belt.

I find and fill gaps where they may be. Accordingly, I've worked across product, design, data, marketing, communications, biz dev, operations, and finance, for both B2B and B2C products.

EDUCATION

2014 - 2015 **University of Oxford.** *Masters of Public Policy, with distinction (highest honors)*

2006 - 2010 **Stanford University.** *BA, International Relations (GPA 3.9 / 4.0)*

Plus: **Additional coursework in:**

Data analytics, UX, Digital marketing, Copywriting, Behavior change, Digital financial services

EXPERIENCE

2026 - now Civic tech volunteering

U.S. Digital Response (USDR). *Civic tech non-profit that consults with cities/states*

- Volunteer tech specialist (product/UX/research) – Helping city or state governments to build new tech or improve existing digital services. Deployments are usually 8-12 weeks.

NY State Division of Human Rights (via NYC Pitchfest)

- Civic fellow – Building out a referral engine for cases out of the NYSDHR's jurisdiction, to connect human rights victims with help elsewhere.

2024 - now **Sabbatical** (*Open to fractional / short-term work only*)

- Taking an intentional break from full-time tech work, but open to fractional (part-time) roles, short-term consulting/advisory work, or high-impact volunteering
- Launched **Let's Talk AI Tools**, a side project with a friend building fun things with AI, like:
 - A tongue-in-cheek tool to estimate the human & canine population in heaven
 - A daily South African news podcast called Mzansi Lowdown (on Apple / Spotify)
 - An ETL workflow to combine data from messy spreadsheets into a database
 - A language-learning flashcards web app

2019 - 2023 **Going Merry.** *Edtech scholarships & financial aid platform*

Acquired by Navient (a publicly listed company with \$1.5B market cap) to operate under Earnest

Head of Product & Growth (founding team) | Fully remote

- Part of the founding team of 7. Was the only person on product, design, or marketing (I did all three). Performed business modeling/forecasting & led due diligence for all fundraising discussions, playing a crucial role in Going Merry's acquisition.

- Post-acquisition, built out & led a team of 3 product managers, 1 marketer, 2 designers, 1 data analyst, and 18 engineers/QAs.
- **Product:** Oversaw a range of products (consumer and SaaS), on web & mobile app, used by 2 million customers, maintaining a 4.8+ star rating on the iOS app store
 - Oversaw all product design, including visual UI, copy, interactions, data capturing (e.g. DB structure, CSS tagging), and tracking (e.g. dashboards)
 - Led user research, to improve product and test appetite/pricing for future products
 - Cross-functional project management (with legal, operations, etc) to ensure delivery
 - Hired & mentored new PMs, designers, and engineers.
- **Growth:** Managed all growth efforts, including content marketing, SEO, partnerships, & paid
 - Achieved a 73% YOY increase in acquisition, with ~20% of all US grade 12 students registered (across ~50% of all American high schools) at close to \$0 CAC (no paid ads)
 - Identified opportunities for and designed “growth hacks” to improve specific metrics -- e.g., individual changes 4x’ed application rates and 5x’ed counselor pageviews
 - Increased organic traffic by 100% YOY and referral traffic by 300% YOY, while maintaining an overall conversion (registration) rate of >4%.
 - Wrote (later oversaw/edited) emails/newsletters, with high engagement among registered users (avg open >40%; avg click: >8%), with nearly as high performance for unregistered cold/purchased leads (~27% open, ~6% click).

Reason for leaving: Felt I had seen the acquisition through + prefer early-stage ventures.

2018 - 2019 **Sabbatical.** *Taking a year off to travel around the world*

- Traveled across the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and the Americas
- Reading voraciously ([see here](#)) - including books from each country I visited

2016 - 2018 **Zoona.** *Mobile money Series B startup, backed by social VCs Omidyar and Acción.*

[2017-2018] Head of Growth | Cape Town, South Africa

- Led a small team of 3 and built data/tech infrastructure to enable experimentation
- Leveraged behavioral science to run large-scale (100k+ users) business experiments
- Designed, prioritized, administered, analyzed and reported on experiments
- Oversaw digital marketing optimization (Google Play, Facebook Business, Google Ads)

[2016-2017] Senior Product Manager (Savings) | Cape Town, South Africa

- Designed, piloted and launched the Sunga savings account across Zambia - growing it to 150,000 customers and winning the 2017 Bank of Zambia Innovation Awards
- Directed a team of 30+ people for the product launch
- Oversaw strategy, tech, pricing, marketing, training, regulatory compliance, and data

Reason for leaving: My partner & I planned (and had saved money for) a joint year of travel.

2015 **Gimlet Media.** *Podcast network, subsequently acquired by Spotify.*

Product & Business Ops fellow | New York, USA

- Four-month summer placement as “practical” requirement for my Master’s degree,
- Joined when Gimlet was <30 people and reported directly to the cofounder Matt Lieber
- Product managed the launch of Gimlet Memberships, a new revenue stream
- Performed surveys & data analysis to show success of podcast advertising

Reason for leaving: Return to South Africa (where my partner is from).

2012 - 2015 **Prodigy Finance.** *Global student loans startup, backed by Balderton and Index.*

Business Development & Product Marketing Manager (employee #6) | Cape Town, South Africa

- Landed a \$25m annual impact investment deal with Credit Suisse
- Assisted with senior debt & equity fundraising; handled all Series A due diligence requests and reviewed term sheets— leading to a successful >\$100m round, led by Balderton Capital
- Designed and implemented data-driven marketing strategy, including A/B testing

- Led user research (UX tests, creating personas) & wire-framed website redesign

Reason for leaving: Went to grad school.

2010 - 2012 **CGIAR.** *International research/development group focusing on food security.*

[2012] Program on Water & Food: Co-leader, Global Drivers | Various international locations

- Designed research process & strategy for \$250m program
- Created tools for scenario planning and for gender-sensitive research

[2011] Program on Climate Change: Project Coordinator | New Delhi, India

- Managed all social science and gender research portfolios for the entire South Asia region

[2010] Program on Climate Change: Visiting Researcher | Cali, Colombia

- Performed economic and policy analyses of the impact of climate change
- Published two articles (as contributing author) in peer-reviewed science journals

Reason for leaving: Early in career & wanted to try something very different (private sector & small)..

SKILLS & TOOLSET

- Data: Airtable, Alteryx, Excel/Sheets, SQL, Superset, Qlikview, Looker, Pycharm/Colab (Jupyter)
- Product design: Figma, Balsamiq, Miro
- Product management: Jira, Loom, Pivotal Tracker, Trello, Asana
- Human-centered design: Pitch tests, focus groups, personas, rapid prototyping, usability tests, PSMs
- Analytics: Google Analytics, Search Console, Firebase, Kissmetrics, FullStory, Amplitude
- AI: LLMs (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grok), Specialized (Perplexity, Descript, Gamma, NotebookLM), Prototyping/Coding (Cursor/Windsurf, Replit, Base44, Lovable, Cursor), Visual (Lensa, Artbreeder, Dalle), Meetings (Granola, CircleBack), etc.

LANGUAGES

English (native) - Spanish (advanced / proficient) - Cantonese (native/elementary)

HOBBIES

- Aerial/circus acrobatics
- Podcasts & long-form journalism
- Hiking & scuba diving
- Traveling (to 70 countries and counting!)