



Celebrating Our People: Black History Month - James Wainaina

February is Black History Month, an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. Black History Month also is celebrated globally and observed in the UK, Canada and Germany. Each week during Black History Month, the LEAD BRG will profile a MasterCard leader who exemplifies such achievements. The fourth in the series features James Wainaina, country manager, East Africa.

MC Central: Provide some details on your career journey (previous work history/experience).

James: My career spans 24 years with stints in the consumer packaged goods sector, the motor industry and in the last 15 years, financial services in both corporate and retail banking. I have been with MasterCard for slightly over two years.

MC Central: Share some major accomplishments.

James: In my current role, I am proud to lead our East African team in consistently winning new licensing and issuing mandates in Kenya and the broader East Africa cluster. This includes mandates with Equity Bank, Kenya Commercial Bank (Kenya), National Microfinance Bank and CRDB (Tanzania), Bank of Kigali (Rwanda), Commercial Bank of Ethiopia – all dominant players in their respective markets.

This year, we are redefining market size and norms through innovation and a ‘value delivery’ sales process. For example, we are enabling contactless payments in the transport and retail segments in Kenya, growing our acceptance footprint for inbound tourist traffic in Ethiopia, launching our World Rewards premium product in three markets and driving an emerging eCommerce market through MasterCard Internet Gateway Services (MiGS) and SME online deployments with partner banks in Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

Prior to joining MasterCard, I led a sales team of 5,000 to become the second largest contributor of loan sales in a multinational banking group. In the space of four years, I helped turn around a retail banking business, effectively doubling its customer base and quadrupling its balance sheet and received recognition for service excellence.

MC Central: Share something which gave you inspiration.

James: Watching a leg amputee athlete cycle a 100km round trip and enjoy it! That really got me thinking and acting!

MC Central: Provide a couple of fun facts.

James: I can sing and play the bass (not at the same time!). I was featured as the poster athlete for the Nairobi Marathon in 2006.

MC Central: What advice or guidance would you like to share with LEAD members and employees?

If you are still and 'listen,' your hardest and lowest moments can be most positively profound. There really is no limit to what you can achieve in your career and life in general. In 1990, a young man visited Kenya. No one knew him as he used the public transport network to visit his relatives in western Kenya. Today Barrack Obama is serving his second term as President of the United States. Your past does not determine your future . . . unless you allow it to!