

Leadership Bios

Jesse Hemson-Struthers

Co-Founder & CEO

Jesse's previous ventures in e-commerce and gaming were successfully acquired by global media giants Naspers and Sportradar respectively – but he's been focused on fintech since 2014. Launched in October 2021, BVNK is a stablecoin payments infrastructure provider, unifying banks and blockchains to enable fast, secure, and borderless payments for businesses worldwide.

Donald Jackson

Co-Founder & CTO

Donald has 10+ years of experience building blockchain products. He is a serial entrepreneur and founder of several successful startups including Cue, a bootstrapped customer engagement platform, and Verity, a service aimed at reducing fraud caused by digital document forgery and tampering. His specialisation is in enterprise-grade systems with extensive experience with highly available, high translational, back-end systems and solutions.

Chris Harmse

Co-Founder & Chief Business Officer

A respected authority in the stablecoin infrastructure space and digital asset innovation, Chris co-founded BVNK to help enterprises accelerate global money movement through blockchain technology. Chris spearheads BVNK's strategic growth initiatives, overseeing teams, product innovation, and P&L performance. A Chartered Financial Analyst with over a decade of financial markets expertise, Chris brings valuable institutional knowledge from his tenure as an FX trader at BNP Paribas and his partnership role at a macro/crypto investment fund.

Amit Cheela

US CEO

At the helm of BVNK's US operations, Amit Cheela blends 15 years of financial expertise with crypto industry success. As BlockFi's former CFO, he helped scale the company to nearly \$500 million in revenue in just three years. Throughout his career, Amit has raised almost \$2 billion in capital and built teams that transform innovative ideas into market successes. He holds degrees in Economics from NYU and Accounting from USC.

Keith Vander Leest

General Manager - US

Keith leads strategy, sales and customer success for BVNK's US business. Prior to BVNK Keith led the Payments Team at Cross River Bank responsible for the second largest business unit for Cross River covering acquiring, ACH, RTP/FedNow and push to card. In his 5 year tenure at Cross River Keith grew the Payment Revenue to \$51 M with a CAGR of 70%. He launched RTP and FedNow growing it to the number 2 US FI sender at over 3M RTP transactions. He also launched the acquiring and issuing programs growing acquiring to \$110B annually to be in the top 10 acquiring sponsor banks and top 20 issuing sponsor banks. Prior to Cross River Keith spent 7 years at American Express in a wide variety of roles in strategy, product and business development on both the acquiring and issuing businesses. Prior to American Express Keith was at both First Data and Western Union. Keith has a MBA and a BS in Engineering.

Emma Mayer

Chief Marketing Officer

Emma Mayer is CMO at BVNK, where she leads the marketing and design teams to help drive mainstream adoption of stablecoin payments. She previously led marketing at TrueLayer, where she scaled the business across 12 markets and contributed to its \$1bn valuation. She has also held leadership positions at Cytora and brings extensive experience building growth functions across B2B tech.

Phil Doyle

Chief Compliance Officer

Philip has spent the past 20 years of his career leading fraud and compliance at Revolut, Visa, ClearBank, and Zepz.

Chris Halbert

Chief Financial Officer

Finance leader with 20+ years in Fintech. Built and scaled JUMO's finance function through multiple funding rounds. ACMA/CGMA qualified.

Ian Beth

Chief Commercial Officer

Ian is an established leader, previously heading up the Customer team at Currencycloud (acquired by Visa in 2021) for 8 years.

Darran Pienaar

CEO Malta

Darran has significant experience leading finance teams for publicly listed companies including Ebury, Marks and Spencer, and Tesco.

Tina Meschino

General Counsel

Tina has over a decade of experience working for leading payment companies, previously acting as Deputy General Counsel for Clearbank.

Natasha Malola

VP of Business Operations & Strategy

Natasha leads strategy execution and the first line of defence at BVNK, a global, enterprise-grade stablecoin infrastructure provider. She oversees Support, Customer Portfolio Risk, Financial Crime Intelligence, and Financial Crime Architecture, while driving cross-functional execution through the BizOps function. Her work delivers measurable impact by improving operational efficiency, accelerating execution, and driving outcomes that boost revenue and enhance the customer experience

Maxim Ivanov

Director of Product – Core Banking

Maxim joined BVNK from Checkout.com where he led alternative payment method products. He has previously held product leadership roles at digital payment provider Yandex.Money and neobank Qasl. Maxim has spent the last 12 years in product management and the last decade focused on fintech. He has deep expertise in payments, banking and the global expansion of financial services products.

Darren Palmer

VP Product

Darren is an experienced product leader who previously led teams at Checkout.com, WorldFirst, and other fintechs before joining BVNK.

Nikita Knezovich

VP People & Talent

Nikita has spent the past 6 years building teams in the fintech industry, supporting BVNK's growth from 50 to 270 employees globally.

Julia Morrongiello

VP of Corporate Development and Strategy

Julia is an experienced venture capital investor turned operator. She has spent her career either investing in or working at leading crypto and fintech firms. Most recently she worked at Zero Hash and Trade Republic.

Jane McEvoy

SVP of Platform Partnerships

Jane joined BVNK from crypto tax firm Koinly, where she built a network of 40+ global partnerships. Jane began her fintech career as an analyst for AIB in Ireland, before moving to Starling, where as business manager to the CEO she was part of the team building the neobank from the ground up. Jane later led financial services partnerships for Capgemini Consulting, before moving to Wise as Head of Banks in UK & Ireland.

About BVNK

BVNK is the stablecoin-powered financial stack for enterprises. Build financial products. Unlock new markets. Move money in seconds across 130+ countries. One platform for every use case. Trusted by Worldpay, Deel, Corpay and Flywire. Processing billions annually. Learn more at BVNK.com.