

CLEOPHUS (CLEO) FRANKLIN JR.

FOUNDER, PRESIDENT & CEO
FRANKLIN STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS



Cleophus “Cleo” Franklin Jr.’s leadership expertise is globally recognized. His passion for designing robust business growth, brand strategies, and implementing innovative, disruptive business models have benefited many businesses, across multiple industries. Franklin’s values and beliefs are centered on approaching difficult challenges with curiosity and maintaining a beginner’s mindset. He is a purpose-driven leader who embraces servant leadership and investing in the personal and professional development of the next generation of leaders.

Franklin is a published author, as his global leadership book “Coffee with Cleo” was launched in June 2020. Cleo’s book highlights 10 leadership lessons from his global business executive career through artful & engaging storytelling. His book showcases how one can navigate challenges successfully in our ever-changing, fast-paced, and complex business world by using an innovative entrepreneurship mindset to improve your livelihood, but more importantly your life.

His new book “Lessons Learned from our Mothers and Fathers”, is a fantastic capture of sage advice, and includes valuable generational lessons captured by successful leaders across many industries of the timeless wisdom passed down to them from their parents. He serves also as a Senior Corporate Fellow at the University of Houston and teaches MBA students at the Marilyn Davies Graduate School of Business.

Franklin is also an entrepreneur. He founded Franklin Strategic Solutions, a global consulting business that focuses on leadership development, business development, business/brand strategy, keynote speaking, and executive coaching across all business and non-profit industries. He is also the founder of Morningside University’s “Franklin Leadership Foundation.” The foundation’s purpose is centered on creating future leaders today by partnering with businesses, entrepreneurs, and community organizations to develop future leaders through internships, scholarships, experiential learning, and career/life mentoring access for high school and college students.

Prior to creating Franklin Strategic Solutions, Franklin spent eight years with Mahindra as their chief marketing officer and EVP of strategic planning for Mahindra Americas. During his tenure, he led new business development, utility vehicle business operations, strategic planning, marketing, corporate social responsibility, market research, product development, and dealer development for North America and South America. During his tenure, the company doubled its brand awareness, increased revenue by seven times, became a top player in the off-road utility vehicle business, and helped the brand become a top three tractor manufacturer in the 0-120 horsepower tractor industry in North America. Franklin's game-changing and innovative brand growth strategies also spanned internationally as he helped develop Mahindra's acclaimed "Come Rise with Us" global brand strategy.

Franklin's business and brand-building contributions helped propel the company to new levels of recognition, resulting in Mahindra being ranked number one in Marketing & Advertising for eight consecutive years in the annual Agriculture Equipment Dealers Association (EDA) Survey. Other awards include the American Marketing Association Website of the Year Crystal Award, the Indo- American Corporate Excellence Award for Corporate Social Responsibility, the World Fest Remi Global Advertising Award, and the Grand Prix Advertising Award in Japan. These efforts landed Franklin, along with his colleagues, as the first entrants into Mahindra's Hall of Fame for business performance, distinction, and excellence in 2017.

Before joining Mahindra, Franklin served as vice president of sales and operations for Case New Holland Agriculture North America. His career also includes twenty-one years at John Deere, where he held numerous strategic, finance, sales, business development, operations, and marketing executive leadership roles. Franklin served on the Board of Directors for Mahindra Agriculture North America, Mahindra's Global Diversity Board, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) Finance, Vitaliga Farm Technologies, and the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Foundation Board of Directors.

In 2016, he received the Honorary American FFA Degree, awarded to members who have demonstrated through their contributions the highest level of commitment to agriculture, focused on developing the next generations of farmers through local and national community partnerships. Franklin also serves as a board adviser and investor for several non-profit companies and new business ventures from vertical farming, agriculture technology, STEM education technology, equipment solution manufacturing, consumer goods, and digital platform business ventures.

Franklin earned a master's degree from the Kenan-Flagler School of Business at the University of North Carolina and a bachelor's degree from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. He was inducted into the Morningside "M-Club" Hall of Fame in 2018 as one of the school's all-time leading scorers. He and his wife, Lois, reside in Cypress, Texas, with their family.