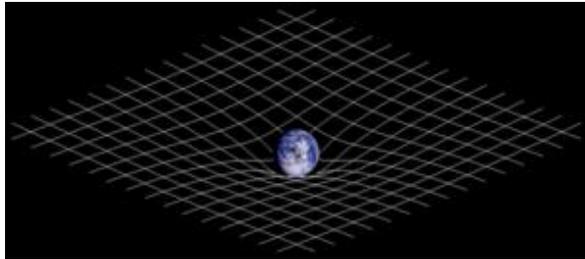


TLP changed my life

My eyes kept opening wider...

By Paul Sikhakhane



When I thought of writing this short article, I stopped myself, thought that maybe it should just be a letter to Dr Kemm, but then, the more I thought about it, the more it occurred to me that this needed to be more than just a letter, this needed to be an article of praise, acknowledgement of participating in something that truly changed my life.

It is interesting to write on something that changes one's life, would I write this way if the change was for the worse, or am I writing this way because the change was for the better?

I am reminded of a story of a man who went gambling, and lost all his money, then he needed to go to the men's room, but he needed a coin for that, so he went around asking for the money, then he got his coin, and proceeded to the men's room. Just as he was about to enter, someone was coming out, so he did not have to pay. Returning from the men's room, he went back to the machines and played with that last coin. Like any good tale, he won the jackpot from that coin, and suddenly he was rich beyond his dreams.

He started to search for the person who gave him his lucky break! He wanted to share the riches with this man! And when he made the announcement, the man who gave him the coin showed up, and stated that he gave him the coin, so they should share the money!

But the "rich man" answered... "No, you gave me the coin to go to the men's room, I need to find the man who left the door open, that is the person who gave me my break!"

As I write this article, I was just thinking, two years ago, when I was returning to Tongaat Hulett Sugar, part of the employment offer was for me to attend the TLP course. At that time my previous company was offering me a course in Malaysia, I remember weighing the deals, a month in Malaysia, my first trip overseas, or TLP? The course in Malaysia would make me an expert, or at least set me on course to becoming one, very exciting indeed, but against the Malaysian offer, was this internet printout of what the TLP course offered, I looked at pictures of people who had done the course, and thought of the idea of formal evenings and speeches, and I decided I would forfeit my Malaysian trip and go for the TLP option instead.

So I went for it, shopping for the formal evenings, excited and puzzled. I got to Hotel 224 in Pretoria with my workmate, and at first we looked at the number of people on the course and thought, what are we doing here?

Over the next few months that question got answered, and I recall the third trip to Pretoria, the conversation in the car had changed to... "Boy, are we glad we came to TLP!"

The thing is, I just cannot summarize what the TLP course does to a person, except say... It is like the apple that hit Newton on the head! In fact, after some visits and tackling the tasks that I was involved in, people were forever asking questions about the course, and whenever I tried summarizing what the course was about, the conversations lasted more than an hour!

But maybe in summarizing, one has to think of the laws of relativity, because I certainly think that they apply to TLP, "time dilation certainly..." in order for TLP to have covered so much, exposed us to so much, time had to slow down!

My conversations have changed, they now feature, "countries that adopted the inflation targeting monetary policy, projects at the innovation hub,

electricity profile around the globe, memory techniques, working abroad, marketing, law, project management, innovation, free market foundation, working with the media, deciding whether one has what it takes to start a business, even a session with a bomb squad member, trips to the reserve bank, military plane ride, race tracks. All this and more in what appears to the normal person as one year, in reality, the year is just the beginning of the realization.

Infact, as Einstein put it, what a normal education does so well, is to get people to study for exams to the level that the moment they pass, they are glad it's over and are convinced that they have had enough!

That said, what TLP does so well is ensure that after the year passes, you want to go back to your life plan and review it, you want to follow a story in the media and read between the lines, you want to read outside your field of expertise, you want more!

Well, to keep this short and simple, I could thank Tongaat Hulett for giving me the coin, but I actually feel that all the praise is owed to Dr Kemm for opening the door. You certainly have exposed me to a realization!

Thanks also to Carol, all the evening speakers, the lecturers, the companies that we visited, Leon Louw, all the guys that I attended TLP with, and finally all the hotel staff! I have never been so proud in my life!

Regards,

Paul Sikhakhane