


THE GENESIS PROJECT

Building
Entrepreneurs
for Africa

**STUART HENDRY
& ANTHONY HILL**



“As you read through these pages you will come to realise that the vision of exponentially increasing the number of innovative and competent entrepreneurs who will go on to create the jobs that are so desperately needed in Africa is real, practical and achievable.”

ANTHONY FARR

CEO: Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy Africa

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Genesis Success Stories: next up – Tebogo Moraka Seoloane!



Here we are – the CEO with the entrepreneurial mind-set!

Tebogo is the CEO of Morubisi Technologies a multi-million rand company operating in the surveillance space. She is also the second youngest person in the company.

Morubisi Technologies, founded by her father in 2003, was the business Tebogo grew up in. She clearly recalls “talking business” at the dinner table as well as week-end after week-end.

However, this is *not* the story of someone just joining the family business. It is, rather, what a young South African, blessed with that unique combination of innate talent, drive, entrepreneurial grit and willingness to risk leading a business in a totally different way, can achieve!

After completing her PDE in 2016 Tebogo was the only one of her Genesis Group who had the entrepreneurial drive to take their Genesis business forward. Their product was a sustainable, lightweight portable laptop stand made primarily from bamboo. Stands to reason that they called their company BamBoost™ and she wanted to give it at least a year to try it in the market. In that year she took Bamboost online and gradually handed it over to her sister. The business is still running today with Tebogo’s sister driving the logistics) but, for Tebogo herself, it was now time for the next step in her journey.

She moved to London in 2018 to complete a Masters in International Business and Corporate Finance. She was particularly well-prepared for it due to a combination of the PDE and a year of running a start-up. But the really interesting learning was that the Masters provided an opportunity to deal with the public sector for the first time. The country was Nigeria and her project, focusing on using recycled rubble and used tyres to build roads, was tough enough but the major challenge was having to answer questions from government officials about the supply chain, the skillsets needed and, pertinently, what jobs would be created for Nigerians as opposed to bringing people in from another country. Little did she know how valuable that would be in her future role as CEO of Morubisi.

III: What happens after Genesis?

Knowing that she wanted to be an entrepreneur (like her Dad) had, by now, crystallised. The Genesis programme, running BamBoost and finally, her project-led Masters had prepared her for the challenges ahead. She felt in control and ready to determine her own destiny - and what a destiny so far. Let's look at her insights.

Tebogo's Entrepreneurship Insight # 1: Value the wisdom in front of you!

For Tebogo the impact of growing up in an entrepreneurial family led to that core belief of "being in charge of your own destiny and never having that 9 to 5 mentality". Every weekend at home was the opportunity to listen intently to the discussions about what was going on in the world.

As much as these insights stayed with her it was never her intention to join a corporate. She had her own interests and goals. But, after her Genesis experience (by the way Tebogo still fondly refers to Genesis as 'The Entreps Programme') she began to develop a deeper appreciation of the power of what it takes to start and build a business on your own.

"After my Genesis experience, I had a deeper understanding of the power of starting something. I realised that what my Dad had started had a great niche market and presented a great opportunity to leverage technology, perhaps even into a global market."

This appreciation led her to understand the wisdom of applying different approaches to resolving different challenges. In her industry she has to deal with a sector like no other – the Security Cluster of the Public Sector in South Africa. It doesn't get more interesting than that when it comes to managing difficult business relationships! Imagine being responsible for monitoring the work of law enforcement officials in the country without the authority to take decisions and, at the same time, being subjected to relentless scrutiny as part of the deal?

She constantly realises the value of standing back at times when her natural inclination is to take immediate and direct action. It is not always the role of the CEO to be 'front & centre' during sensitive negotiations.

Tebogo's Entrepreneurship Insight # 2: Apply learning to build a vision!

As she reflects on her initial insight, Tebogo remembers going to Genesis super-charged and ready to do the work and that's where her exponential learning journey, built on the foundation of Insight # 1, begins.

"The lessons from Genesis are still very fresh in my head – times a thousand every single day. Those learnings were phenomenal!"

Nice vote of confidence Tebogo but *what were those learnings and how do you apply them to your current business?* There are so many but, for starters;

III: What happens after Genesis?

- 1) Instill a culture of 'continuous learning'. For example there's always the need to remain relevant and she remembers developing the mind-set during Genesis of "Look – I'm selling laptop stands today but I can't be still selling the same laptop stands when there's a 1000 other models in the market."
- 2) Put in the work. She sees so many business owners in South Africa who might have ideas but they're just not being implemented. "It's putting in the work, putting in the hours, being committed. It doesn't matter what skill-set you have – you don't need a commerce degree – you've just got to be disciplined enough to see things through."
- 3) Have total clarity about your end-goal and share that with your team. When she joined Morubisi her end-goal was to grow the business exponentially. This resonated deeply with her personal quest to create work opportunities in South Africa. Her thinking was simple - "the more you grow the business – the more people you are able to employ and to empower!"
- 4) Empower employees to take responsibility. Here Tebogo faces an interesting challenge. Every employee has been trained from the ground up e.g. all Operations Managers started as CCTV operators. But, many are so happy in their jobs that she had to find ways to keep them on their toes. Her response? Empower them to lead the change! "How do you keep yourself relevant in your own domain? If there's a need to digitize processes how will you ensure that the data is safe, secure and can it be presented in a different way?"
- 5) Hold everyone accountable. So how does she convey this message to her employees? Very, very directly! How does this sound? "Guys this is not just a job – if you don't do your job well today, you might not have one tomorrow. So let's work collectively to make sure we're securing one another's jobs for the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years plus."

Tebogo's Entrepreneurship Insight # 3: Constantly measure performance!

While building the BamBoost business Tebogo found (to her dismay) that achieving goals took much longer than working in a Genesis team - not because the work was too much but because her levels of discipline and accountability were not up to standard. Add to this the learning from a finance module taken during her Masters and that was it. For her, no matter how small or how large your enterprise, you have to find a meaningful measure of performance (she chose ROI) and use it to constantly measure performance throughout the business!

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On joining Morubisi that's exactly what she did. Even though her initial role was operational she was clear on the best way to measure how much value she could add. Simply "OK, I'm here now. Give me three years and let's see what our ROI looks like." Wow! This willingness to be held to account has engendered enormous respect for her from her management team – not that easy when you are 10 to 15 years younger than all of them. Her open, transparent communication style just reinforces this.

"I review performance even when it's not performance review time. When someone's work is shoddy I have to hold them accountable but in a way that encourages them to do better. It comes back to reinforcing the end-goal - explaining that if they don't do it properly, this is what the implications look like. I'm paid to hold them accountable."

Tebogo's Entrepreneurship Insight # 4: Build capacity in one area of focus!

She vividly remembers a Genesis Guest Lecture by Charles Maisel, serial entrepreneur and founder of Innovationshack. As part of their product ideation process, Charles teaches students a technique he calls "*Seeing the Leaves*". They learn to unearth real customer problems worth solving by using newspapers to identify a specific problem and then to conceptualise a solution to that problem. Great ideas, all rooted in a real problem. It's this focused approach that continues to resonate with Tebogo;

"Now that I'm older I realise that there are so many business ideas sitting out there but you have to be clear on what you are offering. I have a lot of peers and family friends who are doing bits of everything. Rather build capacity in one particular thing in creative ways."

And that's what attracted her to Morubisi in the first place. It had built a great track-record by focusing exclusively on just one aspect of surveillance. This made a strong business case to her – a niche market combined with the use of evolving technology. Such a strong case in fact, that Tebogo is excited about growing the company into a global player.

Tebogo's Entrepreneurship Insight # 5: Build *your own* value chain!

When Rob Arnold shared his insight about entrepreneurs needing to develop a transformative mind-set, we saw the powerful lessons for any founder of a start-up. But – what happens when you scale the business sufficiently to employ other people? What about tapping into *their* mind-set? Maybe they have their own entrepreneurial dreams and aspirations?

Sometimes that transformative mind-set could, and should be more than the strategic direction of the business. Let's see what 'Transformative Tebogo' did within her bigger business. She saw that Morubisi, as is the norm, sourced products and services from external suppliers.

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But, with her burning passion for ‘empowerment’ she reasoned that there was a better way. We offer three practical examples to delight you!

- 1) Morubisi have a fleet of vehicles that operate 24-7. They have to be serviced. For the company, getting into that week-long service queue at a dealership (remember the Tesla story from Chapter 7?) is a huge and costly problem. They can’t afford to have vehicles off the road! But hold on – some of their technicians have been involved in part-time car repair businesses for years. What about offering them the opportunity to service the fleet? It’s a ‘win-win’!
- 2) Instead of finding a big corporate to produce the hundreds of uniforms worn by over 90% of their employees what about creating an opportunity for one of their senior managers to supply their needs? After all, she used to wear one herself in her early days at the company and knows a thing or two about uniforms that are both hard-wearing and comfortable.
- 3) It’s easy to just buy in stationery from a big supplier but what about offering the bright young daughter of an employee an opportunity to learn about business by taking on the procurement of stationery for the company? Upskilling someone long before they actually enter the ‘world of work’ sounds like a real investment for the future!

This creation of a value chain outside of the business that, in turn, creates work opportunities is, perhaps, the NEXT LEVEL of transformative thinking for the unique South African business environment. Many of you may see the inherent risks attached to this approach but remember that the culture of this company is one of measuring, managing and controlling all business interventions. Tebogo is adamant that quality remains key. So, for example, if the quality of uniforms supplied has fallen below the required standard? Sorry, you had your chance – we’ll change suppliers. Business leadership at its best!

Any last words Tebogo?

“I feel I got more value out of my Entreps programme than my BCom Degree! What Entreps did was to let me determine what I could do. It forced me to think differently and continues to make a helluva difference in everything I’m involved with. I look forward to seeing a lot more graduates from the programme.”

As much as their primary focus remains monitoring for public sector clients, Morubisi Technologies will be delighted to partner with you to install systems at your house or business. Check them out @

[MORUBISI TECHNOLOGIES – Surveillance Specialists](#)