



Southern Africa Initiative of
German Business – SAFRI



Students Experience Programme (STEP) 2010
March – August 2010



SAFRI

Southern Africa Initiative of German Business – SAFRI

Since its creation in 1996 with the supporting organisations Afrika-Verein (AV), the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), SAFRI has supported many different initiatives aimed at focusing attention on the economic potential of the member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and further promoting German business activities in the region.

SAFRI, under the chairmanship of Professor Jürgen E. Schrempp, fulfils the function of informing German businesses and industry about investment and trading opportunities within the SADC region, arranges contact between German and African entrepreneurs and engages in public relations to improve the image of Africa in the German media, as well as to raise the profile of Germany in Southern Africa.

SAFRI also supports human resources development in the SADC region with its projects, **The Journey to Excellence (J2Ex)** and the **Students Experience Programme (STEP)**. The goal of J2Ex is to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises and related organisations in SADC, thereby helping to promote entrepreneurship, create jobs, raise the standard of living, and generate and improve business opportunities. It co-organises and facilitates workshops for entrepreneurs, young people and management teams and promotes entrepreneurial mentoring.

Within the framework of its commitment to the SAFRI initiative, Daimler created the **Students Experience Programme (STEP)** in 2005 in response to the great demand in Southern Africa for practical training. It prepares the participants for the challenges awaiting them on the employment market and creates the basis for robust business relations in Southern Africa.

www.safri.de

Contents

- 2 SAFRI
- 3 STEP
- 4 STEP 2010 Project Team
- 5 Host Company
- 6 STEP Participants
- 18 Learning German
- 19 STEP Events
- 26 Photo Gallery
- 31 Thank you



Southern Africa Initiative of German Business – SAFRI

STEP

Students Experience Programme (STEP)

Since the project was initiated in 2005, a total of 56 students and young graduates from Botswana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe have successfully taken part in the Students Experience Programme (STEP).

The programme offers six-month internships in Germany to students/ graduates from the SADC region in the area of engineering, controlling, logistics, purchasing, IT, sales or marketing. The participants are given the opportunity to broaden their knowledge gained at university through practical working experience. They learn new skills, experience a new culture and learn the German language.

Each participant is allocated a supervisor to advise and support them in the work area for the duration of the internship (usually March until August).

The STEP 2010 participants were selected from a large number of applicants, with particular emphasis being placed on their university record, motivation, intercultural competence and team skills. The final selection took place at assessment centres in October 2009 in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa in cooperation with Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

After being selected for the programme, the STEP participants attended German lessons in their home countries to give them a basic knowledge of the language before they arrived in Germany. During the internships, the German lessons continued on a weekly basis.

By taking part in events organised by the SAFRI Office and their colleagues, the STEP participants have also gained familiarity with the culture, country and people of Germany.

We wish all the participants of STEP 2010 the greatest success when they return to their home countries and embark on their professional careers.





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Host Company

Daimler AG



Daimler AG is one of the world's most successful automotive companies. With its divisions Mercedes-Benz Cars, Daimler Trucks, Mercedes-Benz Vans, Daimler Buses and Daimler Financial Services, the Daimler Group is one of the biggest producers of premium cars and the world's biggest manufacturer of commercial vehicles with a global reach. Daimler Financial Services provides its customers with a full range of automotive financial services including financing, leasing, insurance and fleet management.

The company's founders, Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz, made history with the invention of the automobile in the year 1886. As an automotive pioneer, Daimler continues to shape the future of mobility. The Group applies innovative and green technologies to produce safe and superior vehicles which fascinate and delight its customers.

With the development of alternative drive systems, Daimler is the only vehicle producer investing in hybrid drive, electric motors and fuel-cell systems, with the goal of achieving emission-free mobility in the long term. This is just one example of how Daimler willingly accepts the challenge of meeting its responsibility towards society and the environment.

Daimler sells its vehicles and services in nearly all the countries of the world and has production facilities on five continents. Its current brand portfolio includes, in addition to the world's most valuable automotive brand, Mercedes-Benz, the brands smart, Maybach, Freightliner, Western Star, Fuso, Setra, Orion and Thomas Built Buses.

The company is listed on the stock exchanges of Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

www.daimler.com



DAIMLER

STEP Participants

Etuhole Efraim



I was born and raised in Namibia. For 21 years Namibia has been my comfort zone. I read for a Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology, Systems Administration and Networks at the Polytechnic of Namibia. I chose this particular field of study because technology fascinates me. Finding better and new ways of doing things and making work easier and more efficient makes me very keen. I love meeting new people and travelling and that is why, when given the opportunity to take part in the STEP program, I did not think twice.

It was not easy. For the first time in my life I had to leave my comfort zone, my family and friends and go to another part of the world. Excited and terrified at the same time, I was on my 6-month journey to explore a world different from the one I know!

For 6 months I worked in an IT department at Daimler called "Enterprise Architecture Management (EAM)". Since the very first day of work, I felt like a part of the team. The working environment was very friendly. Even when there was a lot of work to be done there was always time for laughter.

Every week we had EAM status meetings where all the colleagues present their weekly tasks, how the tasks are progressing, and if there are any issues, together we find solutions to them. This has taught me that in a team, each team member is a piece of the big puzzle put together to make a much more beautiful bigger picture.

I was trusted with tasks of great importance to the department; this has given me a lot of confidence and has taught me to give my utmost best in every task that I was given, whether big or small. My main area tasks were support for the global project on the definition of IT roadmaps for Europe, America and Asia-Pacific, EAM data quality management and content management of the EAM intranet site. This has improved my planning skills and technical skills immensely.

Apart from technical skills, my supervisors have taught me how to be more efficient. Many times I would be given more than one task at a time but I have learned to divide my time properly and deliver on time. I was also given the chance to improve on my presentation skills by giving a cultural presentation to the EAM team, which was a great way for my colleagues to learn about my culture and my country as well.

It was not "all work and no play" in the EAM team: We did a lot of team building activities. This was not only fun but has taught me a lot about different cultures, the importance of team work and communication. I realized it was easier for me to ask questions about work after the team building activities had taken place. I will always remember my supervisor's best advice to me after asking how to grow in a big company such as Daimler. He said "Before you define your goals and objectives for your career, you need to define your goals for your life". These words I will take with me and apply to my life.

Germany has been a blessed experience for me. For six months I learned something new each and every day, if not about life then definitely a new Deutsch word! In the student apartments, I had flat mates from all over the world; China, East Germany, Egypt and northern Germany. I was exposed to young open-minded students from different cultures and backgrounds. We often talk about our countries, experiences and school. This has made me more enthusiastic about travelling and it has made me friends that will last a life time.

In my free time, I took advantage to travel a lot around Germany and see as much as I possibly could. All the activities STEP has organized have not been in vain. My particularly favorite STEP event was the visit to Berlin where I learned about German history, politics and government laws; I have realized how important politics really is. Overall Berlin is a city full of life, so many different people, with tall buildings and many shopping malls yet holds powerful German history. I was also fortunate to be in Germany while the

World Cup was taking place. It was an exciting time to see everyone very excited, something I did not see very often. My list can go on and on but to wrap up, I had a lot of fun in my free time!

For me STEP was an eye-opening experience from the start till the very end. From Germany, I will take with me the way of doing things. Everything I do, I will give my utmost best. I will take with me the experience of being independent, being open to new experiences, time management; wow! That was a little hard to do but once I found out its importance, it became easier. I learned to appreciate different cultures. I also learned how important friends and family are, that even when I become successful in the future I want to have people to share my success with.

I strongly believe the experience I have received from Germany is going to help me reach my future goals. I would like to own an IT company that provides IT services such as internet services, creating websites for both small and large organizations, etc, and I would like it to grow and turn into a training institute that gives people quality computer literacy. The skills I got from the STEP organized activities are going to help me work well with people of different cultures and backgrounds. It will also help me make international relations that will help my company grow. When I go back to Namibia I will complete my bachelor's studies. I will continue learning the German language as well, and maybe one day I will come back to Europe to do my Masters.

In life, all good things come to an end and unfortunately my 6-months journey has come to that as well. It has been fruitful, lessons have been learned and I am ready to pursue my career, live my life to the fullest and put all I have learned to good practice. Thank you SAFRI, thank you STEP, thank you Daimler for an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life.



Etuhole Efraim
Windhoek, Namibia

Bachelor of IT Systems Administration and Networks
Polytechnic of Namibia

STEP Internship at Daimler AG, Stuttgart
in the department "Enterprise Architecture Management (IT)"

Supervisors: Michael Czech and Jan Grichisch

STEP Participants

Desmund Nawaseb



There I was, trying to figure out which path to follow after my studies, what to expect from the industry out there which unfolds around us on a constant basis. The motive I had was to seek an opportunity where I could best make use of the knowledge I acquired from my years of studying. As a wise man once said “You have to dream big to emerge in life and make the impossible seem possible”. With that in mind, I came across an opportunity that changed my life, both personally and professionally: The chance of being part of a well-regulated world in a renowned and top-notch automotive engineering company, none other than Daimler. What a way to kick-start a career as a young, fresh, dynamic, enthusiastic engineering graduate.

My name is Desmond Nawaseb, 23 years of age and I come from Namibia. I studied for a Bachelor of Technology Mechanical Engineering Degree at the Polytechnic of Namibia. I was not aware of the STEP program up until last year (2009), when a colleague on campus told me about the advertisement. The way he explained triggered my interest and I just had to see for myself. I realized that it was an opportunity that I could never allow to slip through my hands. A chance to go overseas, learn a new language and, most importantly, enhance my expertise in my field of study. And that’s when I realized that anything is possible, when you simply believe. After I got the confirmation that I was awarded a place in the program I was not sure whether I made the right decision, but curiosity to explore this opportunity got the better of me, and I sure don’t feel any regret.

During the 6 months of the stay in Germany, I was assigned to the Research and Development Center of Daimler AG, in Sindelfingen, in the division of “Lightweight Vehicle Development” EP/CRR. The department plays a major role in the development of the Rohbau “Body in White” of the SL-Class vehicles, and the coordination of work aspects throughout the entire project. As Sindelfingen was quite a distance away from Stuttgart (the city where we all resided), I was so to say the one who had to travel the longest distance to get to work. It was no problem because I had the chance to travel with three modes of transport – by tram, bus and S-Bahn. Mr. Mueller (my supervisor) and Dr. Rudlaff (Departmental Head)

gave me a warm welcome to the department upon arrival and clearly outlined the various aspects I would be exposed to during my time in the division. After the introduction process and viewing the work plans and schedules, I knew that I was going to have a fruitful, comprehensive and a definitely value-adding experience to my career. My major duties were: preparing technical presentations, the execution of intensive benchmark research, updating the technical database (Body in White concepts and standards), creating organizational charts, supporting the organization and planning of events hosted by the department and assisting with daily duties in general.

As far as the working environment is concerned my colleagues were very helpful and supportive as I was new in the department and they took the time to clarify tasks to me. I had to prepare technical presentations almost on a daily basis. I learned that I had to work with precision and pay attention to every detail in my research findings. As my supervisor always told me “One should first figure out how to do something, and then optimize on the time available”. Considering this, I learned how to prioritize my tasks, work efficiently, manage my time and organize myself appropriately.

As STEP interns we were given German language training which we started in our respective countries and continued learning in Germany. This made it easier for me to understand the work aspects, broaden my insight about the department continuously and be able to express myself better. My German language skills were put to the test as I had to prepare a presentation for a test track event that was scheduled for my fellow STEPpers at the plant. I must say, to my surprise, I pulled it off quite well.

As part of the STEP program the SAFRI Office organized training in Microsoft PowerPoint, Excel and a two-day seminar on “Effective Presentations”. I thought I already knew everything about the software and presenting but I was really surprised afterwards. I learned of functions I never knew that existed and how to use shortcut methods in order to maximize work efficiency and productivity.

With the experience I have gained during my time in Germany, I know that I will prosper further in life and give back to my country, to contribute towards the economy and the nation as whole. As an individual I have grown, and I could highlight my strengths and areas of weakness, and seek ways to overcome the challenges and further develop as an individual.

Thank you SAFRI for making my dream come true, for the splendid experience I had, both professionally and personally. The internship entirely met my expectations and totally prepared me to face the industrial world and excel in all my endeavors. My aim is to further my studies upon return to Namibia, and in the near future to establish a chain of engineering firms in the SADC region to cater for the needs of development.

I would like to take the opportunity to forward my thanks to Mr. Mueller, Dr. Rudlaff and the entire EP/CRR department, for the professional assistance and the good moral support throughout my internship.

Huge thanks to my supervisor for making my day, with occasional jokes, as it helped to calm me down and work more effectively. I will miss that a lot!!!



Desmund Nawaseb
Windhoek, Namibia

Bachelor of Technology, Mechanical Engineering
Polytechnic of Namibia

STEP Internship at Daimler AG, Sindelfingen
in the department “Development Lightweight Vehicles”

Supervisor: Michael Müller

Initially, I thought that my internship was all about getting experience from Daimler and in turn use that to make my résumé look attractive to prospective employers, but I had no idea as to what lay ahead of me.

The chosen one

My name is Mbirimuje Ngupandjara, but almost everybody calls me “Mbiri”. I recently graduated from the Polytechnic of Namibia with a Bachelor of Technology Degree in Accounting and Finance. I was born in the smallest of towns in Namibia, where everyone knows each other’s business. The name of the town is Tsumeb and has a population of approximately 22 500 residents. During the course of my internship, I worked and lived in Stuttgart. For those that do not know Stuttgart, it’s Germany’s 6th largest city and the home of both Mercedes-Benz and Porsche. Stuttgart has a population of approximately 600 000 residents and I cannot even begin to compare that with my hometown Tsumeb.

So how is it possible that SAFRI selected me for the Students Experience Programme (STEP)? It is my belief that I was handpicked way ahead of time to come to Germany. It was no coincidence that I obtained an internship in the Revenue and Controlling (FMG/MA) department of Daimler. My steps were purposefully directed to Daimler and specifically in the care of my supervisor Honoré Tchoukuegno. There is no other supervisor I could have wished for. He is a man with a firm grip and does nothing unless it is perfect. I was truly blessed to have learned from him.

During my time at the FMG/MA department, some of the tasks that I was involved in were:

- Net pricing issues, whereby I assisted in analyzing proposals from the markets of Japan and South Africa
- Assisting my supervisor with an efficiency program analysis of the monthly forecast and actual figures
- Creating templates in Excel to automate future processes and financial calculations
- Using PowerPoint to assist my supervisor to prepare for meetings

I really benefited from all of my tasks at the FMG/MA department and one of the quotes that I really treasure is from my supervisor when he told me that I wasn’t only employed by Daimler to find problems but also to find solutions to problems. Even though I had no knowledge of controlling, I can apply the knowledge that was imparted unto me in all areas of my life. I can use a simple methodology to find out what is potentially wrong, identify what I need to fix the problem and if I do not have all the resources, ask people who might be able to help me.

Blind eyes opened

The STEP experience was really fantastic. Watching television and movies do no justice as to how beautiful Germany is. The world is totally different as to what we see on TV. I left my favorite shorts back in Namibia, because I was told that it was cold all the time in Germany. Listening to people led me to make a wrong choice, and I am glad that I came to Germany. Everyone said that Germans were perfect, but no one really is, but I have to give credit that the Germans really try. Germany has really set the bar high and we can only learn from their pursuit of excellence.

Through this internship, misconceptions were broken down, and new truths were brought to light. I learned a new language, and even though I am not fluent in German, I learned that it is getting the message across that is important and not how fast one can speak. Learning German was not easy, as German is not the easiest of languages, but after 6 months in Germany, I can do more than simply ask for water. Most of my meetings (90%) were in German and at times hated it as I understood nothing. But after some time, you develop an ear for the language and I was surprised to discover so many words that are German which I used daily in my own native Herero language.

I met so many different people from all walks of life, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Nigerian, Greek, French, Australian... and the list goes on. Friends for life that I will never erase from my heart.

With STEP, I was also able to visit different countries and cities and was able to learn from the cultures of different nations and the history behind the culture and also food.

Tomorrow is today

As I mentioned in the beginning, I was looking for a good résumé, but what I discovered is worth more than all the gold on this earth. I cannot trade this experience with anything on earth. I advise all prospective candidates to definitely apply for this internship. You do not only get to work in a different country, but also get training and support from SAFRI through various workshops, which do not only give you knowledge but also challenge you to strive to be the best in your chosen field.

I would be lying if I said that it is an easy experience, because it certainly wasn’t. In fact, it was very challenging and at times I felt very discouraged, but through it all, I now know that if you do not struggle, you do not really learn. Only by doing something over and over again and by trying again after failing that one truly gets revelation. Perseverance develops character and that’s exactly what one should expect from STEP, character building!



Mbirimuje Ngupandjara
Tsumeb, Namibia

Bachelor of Technology Degree: Accounting & Finance
Polytechnic of Namibia

STEP Internship at Daimler AG, Stuttgart
in the department
“Revenue Controlling Asia, Africa, Latina, Russia and Compliance”

Supervisor: Honoré Tchoukuegno

STEP Participants

Gabriel Tuhafeni Nhinda



My name is Gabriel Tuhafeni Nhinda and I come from Namibia. I graduated in April 2010 with a Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology from the Polytechnic of Namibia but couldn't attend the graduation ceremony as I have been in Germany since March 2010 completing a 6-month internship at Daimler AG.

I enjoy playing basketball, which I have been doing for a while now, 9 years to be exact, and for the past 3 years I have been playing in the Khomas Men's Basketball League. Aside from sport I also like reading up on recent advancements in science as well as political news on-line in my free time.

Before coming to Germany I completed an internship at the Polytechnic of Namibia in the networking department as a wireless support officer dealing with wireless networking maintenance, configuration and security. Although this mapped well with my studies and I had fun doing it because it was a complex and challenging field, I felt like trying my hand at something totally different from this internship so as to know what else the IT world had to offer. The STEP program was just the right platform to do this.

I had my first interaction with the STEP program in 2008 when a former STEPper from my university returned home after completing his internship in Germany. He told me all about his experience and advised me to apply.

After having spoken to him there was always that curiosity in me that kept wondering what he meant by "my words could not express what I experienced". It sounded like during his time in Germany he grew not only physically but both academically and psychologically as well. In the last few months of 2009 I was nearing the end of my Bachelor of Information Technology at the Polytechnic of Namibia, but there was always that one thing that was lingering in my mind so I decided to apply for STEP. To my luck I won a place in the ITF/SP (Information Technology and Financial Service / Service Parts) Paragon department at Daimler AG.

This department deals with upgrading the warehouse management systems of Daimler AG warehouses with an SAP template. This meant project management in the IT world which is of particular interest to me. I was ecstatic and couldn't wait to start.

In the months to come, I had to put theory into practice and a lot of research too. That is when I realized that university only provides a foundation for your future career and for you to be successful in your trade, it all depends on how much effort you are willing to put in.

Some of my activities at Daimler included supporting the project management team, helping my supervisor with the preparation of a business case and additionally maintaining a live SAP database with regard to deleting so-called "supper-sessions" caused by faulty transactions.

Being a STEPper does not mean all work and no play. In my free time I had the opportunity to travel to Götzis, a small town in Austria where they held an IAAF athletics meeting in men's decathlon and women's heptathlon. This was a great opportunity to see and meet some of the world famous athletes who I only get to see on TV back in Namibia. I also travelled to Neuschwanstein, Wieskirche and Bad Tölz as well as attend a Bavarian festival at Brauneck (German Alps). All this was thanks to my supervisor Mr. Karl-Heinz Kaps.

During our stay here in Germany, the SAFRI Office organized IT and business training for us STEPpers, for example a seminar on "Effective Presentations" and Excel training. Personally as an IT graduate I was a bit sceptical as to what I could possibly learn from Excel training when I had used it for so many years during my studies. To my surprise I realized that I did not know all that much about Excel besides from the basics. Not only did these trainings help me do my internship to the best of my ability but I know that they have equipped me with skills that will last me a lifetime.

In the first few weeks of our stay in Germany we visited the University of Tübingen where we took part in intercultural training and German politics, history, economy and geography seminars. This gave me an overview as to why the Germans are much more disciplined than most nations in the world and it most definitely helped me integrate into German society.

We also travelled to Berlin where we met with the Namibian Ambassador to Germany who gave a very motivational speech. We also met Dr. Oliver Lamprecht, the Director of the Division "Agricultural policy, special trade policy issues, sub-Saharan Africa" at the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. He talked about his responsibilities at the Ministry and painted a very bright picture for trade relations between Africa and Germany. This opportunity also meant another chance to meet up with one of my new-found brothers from South Africa and a chance to see the historical locations and the all-so-famous Berlin wall. There is only one word to describe the experience – amazing!

Now I know what the gentleman back in Namibia had meant by "my words could not express what I experienced" because even I myself cannot possibly begin to tell you how much I have enjoyed my time at Daimler and Germany as a whole. This is an experience that has opened my eyes to so many things that have always been in front of me. It also provided me with the opportunity to look at my home country from an outsider's point of view to see the cracks and the many strengths which I most certainly will try to use to further help with the development of Namibia, SADC and Africa as a whole.

After the few months I am happy to go home but also a little sad because it means I have to leave my home away from home. With these last words I say "AYOBA Daimler AG"!



Gabriel Tuhafeni Nhinda
Engela, Namibia

Bachelor of Information Technology: Systems Administration and Networks
Polytechnic of Namibia

STEP Internship at Daimler AG, Stuttgart
in the department
"IT Management After-Sales Parts Logistics Wholesale with SAP"

Supervisor: Karl-Heinz Kaps

Wer, was, woher?

Ich heiße Liebrecht Otto und ich komme aus Südafrika. Ich habe “Logistics Management” an der Universität Stellenbosch studiert und habe auch ein Diplom in Buchhaltung. Während der letzten sechs Monate habe ich bei der Daimler AG, “Society and Technology Research Group” in Berlin, gearbeitet. Es war für mich eine lebensverändernde Erfahrung.

STEP

Before I applied for STEP, I worked for Stellenbosch University’s International Office, where I constantly interacted with students from across the world. Through this, I developed a keen desire to broaden my knowledge and understanding of other peoples and cultures. STEP was the ideal opportunity to realise this goal and I was immeasurably thrilled when I got the call informing me of my selection.

In Germany we attended various presentations and workshops organised by the SAFRI Office. We learned about European history and economics, better usage of Microsoft Office and my personal favourite, “Effective Presentations”. Dan Boswell taught us how to present effectively to an audience and make better use of visual aides by not solely relying on slides. It was a truly remarkable workshop and one that I am sure will impact on our professional lives for years to come.

The Society and Technology Research Group (STRG)

The Society and Technology Research Group is a very special unit within Daimler that investigates the “Society of Tomorrow”. Future Research is the study of what society might look like in the next ten, twenty or fifty years time and by using advanced methodologies like scenario planning, we illustrate these possibilities to our clients.

I was involved in various projects and worked with amazing researchers. My first big assignment was an overview of South Africa that I had to present to a Masters’ class at the University of Leipzig. I also researched various sub-topics on South Africa, including crime, mobility patterns and the middle class and was further involved with country overviews of 15 other African countries. In May, I had the opportunity of attending the International Transport Forum, where I was privileged to listen to Bertrand Piccard, the visionary Swiss adventurer and the first man to circumnavigate the world in a hot-air balloon.

Extra-curricular

I was further privileged to travel quite a bit and visited Potsdam with my supervisor, Frau Marion Diehr. She took me to Sans Souci, the summer palace of Frederick the Great, and to Cecilienhof, where the Potsdam Conference took place at the end of WWII. I celebrated the FIFA final in style on the Spanish island of Mallorca and Venice with its water streets was another highlight of my European travels.

What was learned?

I was the only STEPper in Berlin and this forced me to quickly look outside the group for support. I made many German friends and even met a few South Africans along the way. I learned to adapt and think beyond the confines of my own culture and background, however difficult that might have been at times. In addition to the radical new research methodologies and other things learned at the office, I definitely understand the German language a lot better than six months ago and plan to continue learning and improving.

Summation

I would like to thank SAFRI for this amazing experience and especially Frau Dittrich for coordinating everything and assisting us from start to finish. I would further like to thank my supervisor, Frau Diehr, for all her advice and guidance through this time. It is truly appreciated.

STEP is not merely an internship in another country; is a totally new way of looking at the world and at yourself. You realise that you can adapt to anything and work anywhere. You realise that you are only limited as far as you believe and allow yourself to be.

Nelson Mandela said,

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

I have changed in these six months and when I get back to South Africa, I plan to use all that I have learned to change it for the better as well.



Willem Liebrecht Otto
Worcester, South Africa

HonsBComm (Logistics Management)
Stellenbosch University

STEP Internship at Daimler AG, Berlin
in the “Society and Technology Research Group”

Supervisor: Marion Diehr

STEP Participants

Mpho Seretse



As a recent graduate of the University of Botswana Bachelor of Finance program, I wish to pursue a career in corporate finance. I believe that taking part in the STEP program has provided the best opportunity for me to set in motion this aspiration. The experience has afforded me the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in the Finance and Controlling department of a highly reputable company which operates on a global scale.

During my six-month stay in Germany I worked at Daimler AG in the division called “Daimler Central / Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia”, DCAA for short. DCAA is an independent Market Performance Center (MPC) and is one of the biggest MPCs worldwide for Mercedes-Benz Cars, Vans, Trucks and After-Sales. The division is responsible for key future growth markets. With over 100 markets on three continents, DCAA is tasked primarily with the successful exploitation of all market potentials in these regions. Within DCAA, I was attached to the “Controlling Participations, Strategic Projects and Budget” Department whose major tasks are to control the local results of MPCs, participate in and evaluate key investment projects, develop strategies and business models for DCAA, budget planning, reporting and steering of actuals for general & administrative expenses and investment, audit and compliance; Internal Reporting over Financial Controlling (ICFR), as well as briefing of DCAA board members in local entities.

My main role was to support my team and assist them with their daily work. My first task as new member of the team was to create a spreadsheet database for audit reports of the different DCAA MPCs and then present the idea to the CFOs of our MPCs at the annual CFO meeting. Now this may seem like a simple task, but for somebody who had practically no experience making formal presentations, the prospect of standing in front

of a room full of VIPs was very daunting. However, on the day of the meeting I managed to give a pretty decent presentation and at the end of it I received my first taste of the difference in corporate culture between Botswana and Germany; instead of applauding, the audience knocked on the table with their knuckles, which I later found out is show of approval or agreement with what the speaker has presented. Over the next several months I would be involved with license planning, license and trademark fee invoicing, updating of price sheets as well as the preparation of management reports. This was very exciting and interesting because it allowed me to work with colleagues from all our MPCs; from Egypt through India to Indonesia. Additionally, I assisted my supervisor, who was working with the corporate compliance team at the time, with the assessment of DCAA financial internal controls (ICFR), this was a particularly challenging task because it required persistence, patience and incredible precision. However thanks to my supervisor’s incredible work ethic and motivation we were able to complete the job well within our deadline and with no errors.

All in all my time at Daimler has been an incredible learning experience. I have been able to hone my Excel skills and develop PowerPoint and presentation skills. Moreover, working with colleagues from across three continents has helped improve my communication skills tremendously. As well as developing skills for a professional career, I have been able to learn about German culture and of course the German language.

I believe that the skills acquired from this experience will be instrumental to my success in the work place especially as the world rapidly develops into a global community in which geographical and cultural boundaries no longer play a role in business activity.

I would like to give my sincere thanks to Stefanie Ristow, my supervisor, for the wonderful support and guidance she extended to me over the past six months. You have truly been a superb mentor, going the extra mile to ensure that I understand the tasks that I was required to do and ensuring that I had all the necessary support to complete them. I also extend my thanks to Patrick Mackert, for his guidance with the company software, especially Microsoft Excel, and his unwavering patience when explaining complex company processes to me. Additionally I would like to thank all my colleagues at DCAA/FC for all the support that they showed me during our time together. Finally I would like to thank SAFRI for giving me this opportunity of a lifetime; it has truly been an unforgettable experience which will benefit me immensely in all my future endeavours.



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STEP Internship at Daimler AG, Stuttgart
in the department
“Controlling Participations Central Europe, Africa and Asia”

Supervisor: Stefanie Ristow

Tuesday German lessons in Stuttgart

One week into our stay in Germany, and it was time to start our German lessons. At this point we were very keen to start because for the whole week we had been exposed to German in the workplace; we were eager to learn new vocabulary which we could use to express our opinions on work related issues during the weekly team meetings. Not to say that we were complete novices in German language, before we arrived in Stuttgart. We had all gone through an 80-hour German language crash course which was aimed at introducing us to basics of the language. On 16th March we met Frau Kühnert who would be our tutor for the next 6 months, Frau Kühnert let us know immediately that she would only communicate with us in German. This made us curious as to how she would explain difficult concepts to us.

Our initial lessons consisted mainly of small talk because of our very limited vocabulary but as the weeks passed we started to dominate the classroom conversations, and as our German improved, the weekly two and a half hour class began to feel like 30 minutes. We learned how to construct sentences in past, present and future tense and with these we were able to make small talk with our colleagues at work as well as give our opinions about work related issues.

Learning German was not easy because of the various dialects we were exposed to at work and the student apartments. People from different parts of Germany have different dialects, for instance people from Stuttgart and its surroundings towns have a Schwäbisch dialect and those from

Bavaria have a different dialect. Although the different dialects did not make it easy to learn the language, they certainly made it much more interesting.

Unfortunately our time in Germany has come to an end, and although our German language is not perfect, it certainly has improved dramatically not only as a result of the lessons we had with Frau Kühnert but the conversations we had with our colleagues at work as well. I can safely say that we can effectively communicate with anybody in German now.

German language training in Berlin

Inlingua Sprachschule's motto is: Sprechen, Verstehen, Erleben. That means: Speak, Understand, Experience and that is exactly what this brilliant course allowed me to do.

We did not simply memorise lists of German words, we simulated basic everyday situations and were showed how to handle them. Simulated situations ranged from ordering coffee to checking into a hotel or even dealing with airport staff if you happen to have too much luggage.

The Schule is right down the road from Checkpoint Charlie and literally around the corner from Stadtmitte, the centre of Berlin. The teaching staff were of an exceptional calibre and our teacher, Frau Strunk, really brought the German language alive and made it applicable to our everyday lives. I would highly recommend this Sprachschule and am thankful I had the opportunity to attend there for the last few months.



The SWR is a public broadcasting company for the south-west of Germany, specifically the states of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz). The SWR has four radio stations, namely SWR1, SWR2, SWR3 and SWR4, and two television stations. Its active website (www.swr.de) shows the television and radio schedules, allows you to watch programmes you have missed and gives lots of information about the region and current topics.

After being welcomed to the SWR by our tour guide we visited the SWR1 radio station which was live on air. We were amazed at how technologically advanced everything was. The radio reporters write their own news using special software that helps them calculate the exact time it will take to

read a story. This helps them estimate the time it will take to read the entire news. The software also helps them easily find the songs they want to play. They just type the title and it plays the song from the 70 terabyte server or the 570 000 physical disks in the server room. They do this in the comfort of their workstations.

The best part of our tour was when we were present in the TV studio during a live news broadcast called "Landesschau Baden-Württemberg". There are 60 cameras in a live broadcast, and about 4 big cameras. One big camera costs about 230 000 Euros. It was unbelievable to see how just one room was filled up with so many cameras and lights all to bring a perfect atmosphere to the live broadcast. There was total silence as the news reporter, Annette Krause, went live. As soon as there was a break when a short film report was being shown, the make-up lady was powdering the nose of the presenter and fixing her hair. The camera men were changing the camera positions, the lights and the background televisions. In just a few minutes they managed to do all that. Once again, silence fell upon the room and only her voice could be heard as she was live again.

The trip to the SWR has not only made us appreciate the work of the TV, radio reporters and camera men but it has made us realise that what really connects the world together is media. Only through the media are we informed about the world around us and getting the chance to see how they do all this makes it an experience worth keeping with us always.



6th May 2010, the day that transformed the STEPpers dream of being on a real test track into reality. The weather forecast made the event seem impossible since it was raining, but the STEPpers were highly excited and kept the hope alive to see the day turn out to be a success.

Following the arrival of my fellow STEPpers at the Mercedes-Benz car plant in Sindelfingen (my workplace), I gave a presentation on my working area, daily duties, the department and the schedule for the day – in German! Directly after my presentation we left for the test track in a Mercedes-Benz E350 CDI (the test car we used) with Mr. Michael Müller (my supervisor) being our driver.

The car possesses a combined fuel consumption of 6,8–7,1 litres / 100 km, acceleration of 0–100 km/h in 6,8 seconds, torque value of 540 Nm at 1600–2400 rpm, output power of 170 kW at 3800 rpm and a maximum speed of 250 km/h. It is equipped with PRE-SAFE® which is an intelligent synergy of active and passive safety. In the event of a critical driving situation with a high risk of an accident, the system activates protective measures as a precaution, allowing the seat belts and airbags to deploy with maximum effect in the event of any subsequent collision; in other words the car prepares the passengers and itself in case of a potential accident beforehand.

On our way to the test track I could feel the excitement in the car as we were all looking forward to an experience none of us had an idea about. Upon arrival on the test track we were divided into two groups, since the

car was not big enough to accommodate all of us at one time. As the first group went on the test track, a number of us remained watching how the others drove around the track in the speedy saloon driven by my supervisor. As we (the second group) got into the car my heart started pumping quite fast and first thing I fastened my seat belt because I didn't know what to expect. The car accelerated very firmly and as we approached the turns and the breaks were applied to lower the speed we could feel how the seatbelts were tightening automatically as the PRE-SAFE® feature took action, job well done by the Daimler engineers. We tested the car on various harsh conditions like driving through a "Wasserdurchfahrt" (water-cross), driving around a track full of stones, and a surface associated with potholes and an entirely un-levelled ground (perfect simulation of the worst road ever). Despite the entire harsh conditions, the car maintained its balance, control, stability and perfect driving dynamics and I did not hear any sound nor feel any vibration, which is a true indication of a well designed automotive. I was totally impressed by the car so that I just couldn't stop smiling while I was writing this report, and it is such an honour to give my view on the best experience I ever had during my stay in Germany.

We had a memorable time at the test track and I would like to thank Mr. Michael Müller and department manager, Dr. Thomas Rudlaff, for granting us the opportunity to experience the elegance, comfort and the excellent driving dynamics of the car and the feel of being on a real test track. It is definitely an experience worth remembering for a lifetime.

Desmund Nawaseb



STEP Group 2010 on the test track. From left to right: Mpho Seretse, Joanne Ditrach, Etuhole Efraim, Liebrecht Otto, Desmond Nawaseb, Michael Müller, Mbirimuje Ngupandjara, Gabriel Nhinda

On 7th and 8th May 2010 we six STEP interns visited Tübingen and its University. Tübingen is one of the oldest and most beautiful cities in Germany not only architecturally but also intellectually and historically, having bred some of the most famous scientists, philosophers, writers and poets of all time, such as Johannes Kepler and Eduard Mörike. They were all schooled at the University of Tübingen which was founded in 1477. Tübingen has a population of about 80 000 of which a quarter are students. In the 17th century it was said “as long as the university flourishes, the city will most certainly prosper”.

Upon our arrival in Tübingen we had an introductory tour of the main places of interest in Tübingen including the “Burse” (built immediately after the foundation of the University to provide a place for teaching and student accommodation), the “Evangelisches Stift” (Protestant seminary), the “Schloss Hohentübingen” (castle) and the market place with its Town Hall and busy farmers’ market.

In the afternoon we took part in workshops on intercultural communication and German politics presented by Donato Tangredi, an Italian German who says he is a hybrid of both cultures and embraces both cultures. The seminar kicked off with us trying to define the term “intercultural communication” which yielded various explanations. He eventually told us what he had learned over the years during his studies and that there is no clear explanation or definition of it but there are common things that define a people and based on that, one can learn how to communicate with ease. He also told us not to judge other people based on your own personal safety zone and that nobody has the right to decide what is normal.

After giving us a good understanding of intercultural communication, Donato then presented to us the German political structure including “das Grundgesetz” (Basic Law). There are four rules of the Basic Law which are: Rule by Law, Democracy, Federalism and Social Welfare. After the Second World War Germany was divided into two: West Germany and East Germany and in 1990 it was finally reunified into present day

Germany. Since the end of the war, Germany has only had 8 chancellors and this is an astonishing occurrence as coming from Africa, prime ministers change constantly.

On Saturday morning we were once again welcomed by the wonderful Barbara Owen, responsible for the international language programmes at the University, with warm hugs, cakes and coffee. We were then introduced to Stephan Anders, geography and history expert. At the beginning of the geography workshop we were challenged with putting together a big picture puzzle of Germany and its states. By doing this we learnt all about the German states, cities, rivers, and neighbouring countries.

During the history workshop with Stephan Anders we learnt, among many things, about the “Wirtschaftswunder” which is the German term for “economic miracle”. Wirtschaftswunder describes the rapid reconstruction and development of the economy of West Germany after World War II.

After lunch it was time for our German economics workshop. Torsten Woyke took us through the history of the German economy covering such aspects as the Toll Union, German inventions, the chemical industry and developments since 1918. We learnt about the modern German economy, for example the population growth, income levels, important trade partners and the top ten German companies by turnover.

Our visit to Tübingen ended with a punting trip (Stoherkahnfahrt) on the Neckar River with Mike who, to our surprise, comes from South Africa!

Tübingen „hat sehr viel Spaß gemacht“ (Tübingen was a lot of fun). Vielen Dank SAFRI für diese Veranstaltung!



The STEP interns with Barbara Owen and Stephan Anders from the University of Tübingen



The big puzzle: learning about Germany



The STEP interns in Tübingen



Punting on the River Neckar

STEP Events

Visit to Berlin 2nd – 5th June 2010

The Stuttgart STEP interns arrived in Berlin in high spirits on the evening of 2nd June and after checking in to the Jugendgästehaus in Berlin Wedding, it was time for dinner in the atmospheric “Deponie No. 3” restaurant which is built into an archway under the urban railway.

The first appointment on Thursday morning was with the Daimler “Society and Technology Research Group” at Potsdamer Platz. After the head of the department, Mr. Thomas Waschke, and STEP supervisor, Ms. Marion Diehr, welcomed everyone, STEP intern Liebrecht Otto explained the research topics and methodologies of the department, as well as the projects that he was involved in during his internship.

The group then headed to the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology for a meeting with Dr. Oliver Lamprecht, Head of Division Sub-Saharan Africa; Agricultural Policy; Special Trade Issues. The group was left with much to ponder and discuss and Dr. Lamprecht’s talk will impact our views on resources, investments and policies for years to come.

A guided tour of the city followed next and everyone was amazed at guide Claas’s knowledge of the Berlin Wall, the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag and many other fantastic Berlin attractions.

Friday’s tour of Kreuzberg with Ms. Gökçen Demiragli of the Kreuzberg Museum was another highlight. Ms. Demiragli explained the history of the district and gave the visitors an insight into the lives of the foreign workers and asylum-seekers of Kreuzberg. She then took the group on a walk through the district which included a visit to a Turkish mosque and lunch in a traditional Turkish restaurant.

Friday evening’s braai („Grillabend’ in German) at the Namibian Ambassador’s residence was the perfect conclusion to a wonderful few days. It was a truly African evening with great food, music and even a bit of dancing. The STEP interns were fortunate enough to also meet ambassadors from Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa and would like to express their sincere appreciation to His Excellency, Ambassador Gertze, his wife and his colleagues for their hospitality.



STEP interns in front of the Brandenburg Gate



STEP interns starting their guided tour of the Kreuzberg district of Berlin



STEP interns with Dr. Bernd Pfaffenbach, State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (centre), Dr. Oliver Lamprecht (far right) and Mr. Hans-Leopold von Winterfeld (far left)

STEP Events

IT and business training



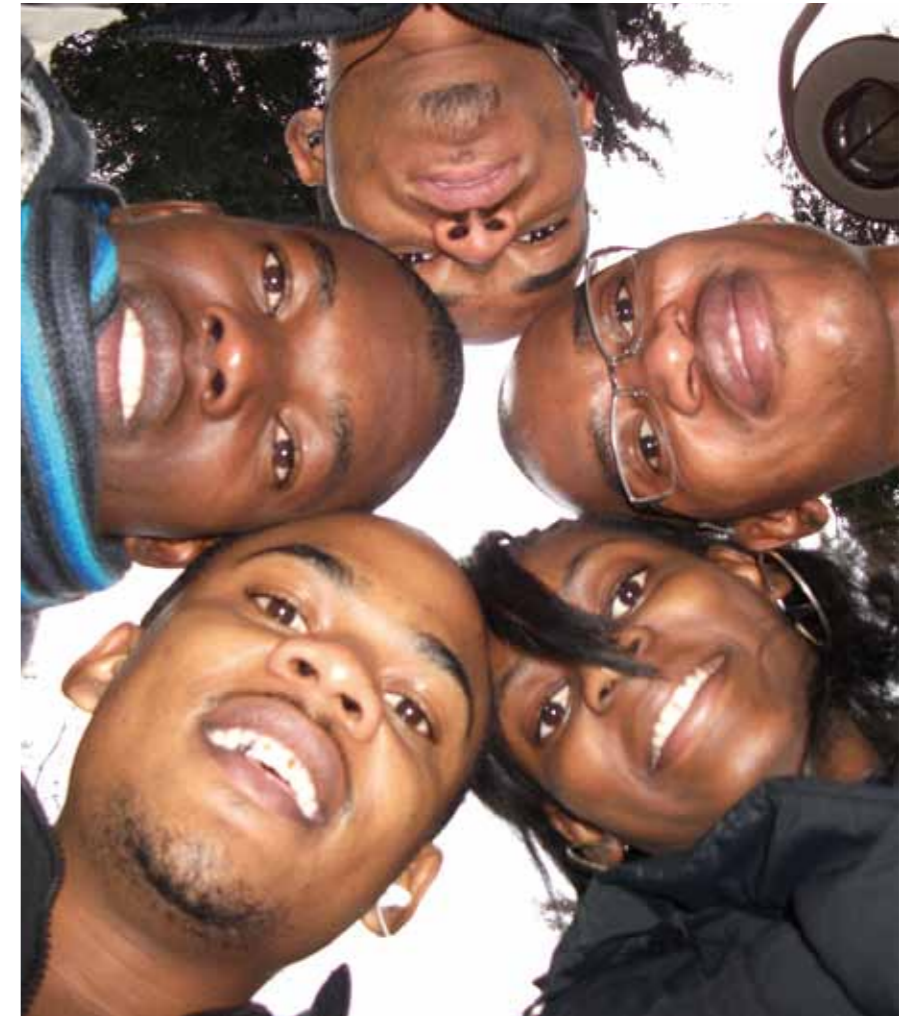
In 2010 the SAFRI office introduced additional IT and business training seminars into the STEP program in order to prepare the STEP interns for their tasks at work.

The advanced Excel and PowerPoint seminars with Alexander Heenes took place immediately after the arrival of the STEP interns in Germany. Both applications have become indispensable in modern office life and the knowledge the interns gained in the seminars was put into practice immediately afterwards in their workplaces.

In July the STEP interns took part in a two-day seminar “Effective Presentations” with trainer Dan Boswell. After the initial shock of being filmed whilst making a presentation only 30 minutes into the seminar, the interns realized that this was the only way to find out about their strengths and weaknesses. The interns came away from the seminar inspired, highly motivated and determined to spare their future audiences a “death by PowerPoint”!









We, the STEPers of 2010, would like to thank our supervisors for the opportunity they have afforded us and for their support over the last six months. Words cannot express our gratitude. We have learned a lot in a small amount of time. The skills you have equipped us with will not only help us succeed in our careers but in our personal lives as well. We strongly believe this opportunity has motivated us to continue working hard and become successful like all of you someday.

We are very grateful to so many other people who have interacted with us both in their professional and personal capacities to make the Students Experience Programme such a big success:

Our supervisors:

- Michael Czech and Jan Grichisch
- Marion Diehr
- Karl-Heinz Kaps
- Michael Müller
- Stefanie Ristow
- Honoré Tchoukuegno

SAFRI:

- Professor Schrempp
- Georg Beuerle
- Joanne Dittrich

Mercedes-Benz South Africa:

- Johann Evertse
- Pralene Mahabir
- Dylan van Heerden

Daimler Germany:

- Klaus Eisenhardt
- Dagmar Grove
- Elke Strnad

Our German teachers:

- Stefanie Kühnert
- Frederike Strunk
- Ingrid Milz
- Sandra de Kock

University of Tübingen:

- Barbara Owen
- Donato Tangredi
- Stephan Anders
- Torsten Woyke

PowerPoint and Excel Training:

- Alexander Heenes

Effective Presentations Training:

- Dan Boswell



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