



Matida

Woow! We made it!

We made it to the summit as the very first, the inaugural, the pioneering class of the Master's in Management programme here at the ESMT!! It was the 9th of September, 2014, when a group of nerdy engineers, natural scientists and economics graduates stormed into this former communist building eager to learn about free market economics and managementthe irony of it. 22 months later and here we all are. Amazing, isn't it!

And so on behalf of our class, I say to you who have come from all corners of the world to celebrate this joyous occasion with us: Good afternoon, Guten Tag ... Sob bro he, Namaste. Ladies and gentlemen, proud professors and parents, esteemed guests, my name is Matida Michelle Ndlovu, and my name is Matthias Marzok and we, on behalf of our classmates, are here to take you through the journey that has us all standing here today at the pinnacle of a mountain conquered.

#2

If you're wearing a blue robe today, you're now a Master of Science in Management. But what does that mean exactly? A certificate, the dream job ... or maybe even just a reminder from mom to become a proper adult now ...

In his book *"Long walk to freedom"*, Nelson Mandela writes: *I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."*

Today, we stand on the top of mountain, looking back in gratitude and humility at the distance we have come.

#3

Like mountain climbers do, we set up at base camp in the very first week of studies and were handed the starter pack tools to survive the entire journey of this degree programme.



Remember when we hardly knew each other's names, and were assigned to our very first teams for the outdoor excursion led by Andreas and his team? One of the obstacles entailed climbing down the wall of a high tower by rope and collecting treasure bags on the way down. Some of us had to face our fear of heights, but it was amazing to watch the cheers of support and encouragement from fellow classmates. We didn't tell those that were scared of heights to give up, we didn't abandon them – no, we cheered them on and were empathetic to their fears.

Another challenge was the blindfolded exercise where only the team leader could see and she or he had to lead the rest of the pack to a destination – all this, without saying a word. Believe you me, we had to get creative. We were vulnerable to each other, but allowed ourselves to trust the team leader to not lead us into a tree trunk. And more importantly, we learnt to listen attentively to each other while moving forward with a common purpose.

Looking back now, in many ways, that Woltersdorf excursion gave us some of the building blocks that cemented the foundation of this class along the way: Drive, endurance, empathy, trust and a “can do” attitude.

⇒ **Matthias**

Now that we had been equipped with the necessary tools, Zoltan, Guillermo, Nick and Anne led the way and started the trek up the mountain on whose summit we stand today. With a daily supply of free bananas, free coffee to keep us both alert and alive, Bergfest beer, and occasionally the scandalous MBA leftover Bretzels, our nourishment was sorted for the journey.

In Decision Theory and Statistics, we learnt how to avoid biases and let the data do the talking, with a real-life case of how data was used to save the life of a baby. Operations Management saw us calculating how to optimize the profits of a cookie factory run from a student apartment, and after the Accounting course, we were able to write up and understand the books for such a business. We learnt the theories behind motivating, leading and managing individuals and teams in Organizational Behavior. As responsible business leaders of tomorrow, the fisheries game showed us how dangerous the tragedy of the commons can be. More importantly, we saw first-hand the importance of looking out for not only profits, but also people and our planet. In Supply Chain Management, we independently came up with cool models that could, for example, help you calculate how much to drink in order to just get tipsy or to go all the way – could be helpful for tonight ;) Economics, Finance, Marketing Analytics: the list of courses goes on: they were often grueling, but worth every minute. We had amazing professors that moulded us, guided us and stretched us far beyond our limits; without them, this journey would not have been half as enriching.



The ESMT provided us with a safety net which allowed us to try, fail and learn from our mistakes in a positive light – and simulations played a huge role in this. Remember we had the beer game Simulation in which the bullwhip of forecasting hit us hard. Think of the Marketing or MARGA Simulation. Or even remember the much-loved crisis management workshop. From a legal perspective ... customers of these simulation companies could have sued us mercilessly. All these simulations played a key role in giving us a taste of real-life business situations. We may not have gotten the best scores, however, like Henry Ford once said: “The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.” And learn we did.

While the completion of each course was a milestone, and the completion of each module another base camp, we had to keep moving forward with our eyes fixed firmly on the peak of the mountain – which is today’s ceremony. If you ask a mountain climber, you’ll find that one of the keys to successfully completing an expedition is to always keep looking up – and that’s exactly what we did.

In the last two milestones of our rally to the summit, it was all about giving back. The Social Impact Project is undoubtedly one of the unique aspects of this programme. We had the opportunity to give back to society by contributing our skills to organizations that fight to improve the livelihoods of those most in need of upliftment. To be a great leader takes not only skill, but also socially consciousness and empathy. Last but not least, our thesis period, although painful and often frustrating, gave us the chance to give back to science what we had learnt, through our own independent research.

⇒ **Matida**

A 93 year old woman once sat me down and said, “Girl child, whatever station you find yourself at in life, remember that you stand on the hopes and dreams and aspirations of those that have gone before you.” That 93 year old woman was my grandmother, Mzansi who had been born in 1914 in rural Zimbabwe and never made it to school.

I may not know all your stories, but I know that the 33 people we saw walk onto this stage to receive their degree certificates and prizes are a realization of hopes, and dreams and aspirations of those that have gone before them, those that have stood by them and those that have carried them. What we didn’t see, are the 33 groups of mothers, fathers, friends, even lovers; professors, sponsors, the ESMT family, and mentors that have helped propel us this far. In the words of the poet Maya Angelou from her poem *Our Grandmothers: We each “came as one, but stood as ten thousand”*.

Matida M. Ndlovu

MiM Graduation Speech - 01.07.2016



We are, because you are. Thank you for supporting us, believing in us, and for cheering us on ... Class of 2014, can we give them a biiiig round of applause?

If there were ever guardian angels, ours would be Anne, Dorota, Olivia and Nadine from the MiM Office – you guys have just been great with us. Please all come up to accept a token of our deepest appreciation.

So after we have *“taken a moment to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds us”*, let us dare to look yonder – there are higher summits to be conquered by the brave, my friends. Our walk is long not ended, this is just the beginning. May we all go forth and shine. Dream bigger, reach higher and run farther.