

This story, from the 28th Annual Assessment centre Study Group Conference, held in Stellenbosch 12 – 14 March, is free for your use. For more information or pictures please contact lynne@ofcourse.co.za or phone Lynne Smit at 083 299 7383

The South African Assessment Centre Study Group (ACSG), presently holding its 28th annual conference in Stellenbosch, is living proof of the old maxim that “n boer maak a plan”.

As industrial psychologist Willie Marais, pointed out, the potential for new growth can be unlocked by the most unexpected of events.

Marais was the guest speaker at the official launch of a new book, "Assessment Centres: Unlocking Potential for Growth" edited by Sandra Schlebusch and Gert Roodt which, he said, marked the coming of age of the ACSG in South Africa.

“When the ACSG was founded,” he said, “It relied heavily on speakers from overseas. For the first few years the US influence was strong. Then more and more speakers from Europe came to share their wisdom with us. Then the US influence became strong again.”

Then, in the late 1980's, just two days before the annual conference was to be held, the unthinkable happened. The main speaker, from the US, happened to open a newspaper in New York and saw pictures of the riots in Crossroads. A phone call later, the organisers were faced with the challenge of a conference with plenty of delegates, a great venue, plenty of wine, but no speakers.

And so, in a true example of how potential can be unlocked, the delegates banded together to draw up a list of topics they would like to discuss. Some offered their services as impromptu speakers, and revealed a wealth of talent and research. Since then, the conference has, as Marais explained, “lost its dependence on overseas visitors, and is blessed by them instead”.

The book is a mirror of all that wealth and talent. It is a tribute both to its authors and to the group, and, according to Marais, marks the beginning of the ACSG's age of maturity.

Not only is it an academic work of note, which should be prescribed to students, it is also a practical handbook for Assessment Centre practitioners.

“It helps us meet governmental and legal requirements. It's a benchmark of professional and ethical practice. It challenges and refocuses us all and leaves no room for unprofessional practice.”

Assessment Centres: Unlocking Potential for Growth" edited by Sandra Schlebusch and Gert Roodt is published by Knowledge Resources.