

An outside perspective

Theo Venter on PALS

This is the column where Perspective asks well-known opinion formers to give their views on PALS and its mission.

What is your perspective regarding the effectiveness and success of PALS in terms of the following angles?

Political

We inherited the concept politics from the Greeks when they phrased it as "Politeia", derived from the word "polis" which we still use today in words such as metropole or Indianapolis. To the Greeks, politics was about the debates in the city square and decisions taken by majorities to go to war or to make peace. We have taken politics from the town square to the church square into parliament and today the square contains the internet, twitter, TikTok, newspapers, Facebook and the like. Politicians are not ruling the debates anymore on the town square, the political town square has experienced a digital democratic revolution of sorts. PALS has surrounded itself with innovative approaches to stale political policies. You are doing what you are doing not because of political policy, but despite political decision to enhance the lives and the work for the people you care about.

Business

The business environment in South Africa is challenging and dominated by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This is the business normal and the challenge is to create business confidence in these conditions. Leadership from PALS has already demonstrated its ability to establish networks and business successes in several communities. The following may further enhance the business progress with PALS: innovate and create your own future; execute your plans with flexibility and ignore dogmas and blue prints of yesteryear; identify the anchors in life; search for simplicity in this complex world; create networks and work across artificial borders, because on your own, you cannot do much; never stop learning and lastly invest in agility because that is where your survival will come from in business.

Transformation

The concept transformation has lost its meaning through political mishandling over the last three decades, a fate that also brought the term democracy into disrepute. Transformation, however, is a very powerful concept if applied in the right way. We were blessed to see that concept applied by Rassie Erasmus and Siya Kolisi during their Rugby World Cup campaign. If you want to manage transformation you must be able to mobilise people behind a worthwhile cause and that is the work of leadership. Better rugby was not the cause, but healthy and fit players were and happy families were, but most of all national social cohesion became the aim, fighting it with happy troopers. In this process Erasmus took brave and innovative strategic decisions and his coach kept the players happy. By visualising a higher calling, the Springbok team overcame colour, language and cultural differences. They were keenly aware of rules regarding the management of diversity, but the higher aim superseded the negative impacts of politically driven transformation. With PALS there is a similar approach to transformation and that is to care about workers and partners and to mobilise them for a higher goal. Stretched targets is the business of transformation.



Theo Venter is professor of practice at the University of Johannesburg and was previously attached to the NWU Business School. Apart from being a facilitator, scenarist and strategist, he is also a political commentator on South African politics, especially on radio and TV since 1987. He has received recognition by the NWU as one of the most quoted members of the university staff in the media. In 2015 he was nominated as Agriculturalist of the Year by journalists in agriculture. He writes a monthly opinion column for Farmer's Weekly. He holds two master's degrees in political science and is the current chair of the North West Expert Panel on developing a Growth and Development Strategy.

Although *Perspective* will publish gladly, the views are not necessarily that of PALS who will respond to comments if deemed necessary.
We also welcome your comments. Write to *Perspective* at: editor@sapals.co.za

