

Cutifani defines the new normal in mining

Innovation, sustainability and resilience are the three qualities that will get mining out of the woods after the extremely rocky ride, said Mark Cutifani, CEO of Anglo American.

 By Nicci Botha 8 Feb 2017



“We still have a lot of work to do to regain broad stakeholder confidence in the global mining industry. Despite our challenges and the dubious objectives of those wanting to redefine our current reality, there has never been such an opportune time to reinvigorate ‘the promise of mining’.”

He pointed out that the challenge is to think differently to find new, safe, responsible and cost-effective ways to mine the ore bodies to meet the needs of a rapidly urbanising global population.

A population, which is estimated to reach 9,5bn by 2050, with an even faster growing consumer class in the emerging world.

But to realise this opportunity, the current global climate requires some tough, but necessary, questions about a shared future.

Innovation

Cutifani believes that innovation is the key to the future. It extends far beyond mining technology - and applies equally to safety, health, the environment and community engagement.

Anglo’s answer to innovative thinking is its FutureSmart™ approach to mining. Cutifani said that the most effective solutions are often already out there, but requires collaboration with other industries and technologies.

This covers four key areas:

- **The Modern Mine**

This concept deals with hard rock mining, particularly regarding employee safety and eliminating the need to use explosives underground.

“At our Twickenham platinum mine, here in South Africa, we have created a system that allows us to develop low-profile tunnels in hard rock - safely, quickly and cost-efficiently. This is, as many of you would know, important in preventing the risk of collapse and guaranteeing roof stability in platinum mines,” he said.

- **Concentrate the Mine™**

“Picture a mine where we are no longer processing more than 95% waste rock, and instead, getting more directly to the precious metals and minerals that the world needs.

“We have seen this approach reap rewards for us at Kumba’s Sishen Mine, where our plant optimisation programme has allowed us to increase our production,” Cutifani explained.

- **The water-less mine**

“We are investing in a number of ways to conserve, and where possible, eliminate, the use of freshly drawn water from our mining processes. In 2015, of our total operational water requirements, 64% were met by our recycling of water,” he said.

- **The intelligent mine**

To reduce maintenance spending and reduce safety risks, the mining house is using advanced analytics to interrogate existing data and to estimate the probability of component failure in some of its mining equipment.

“Since we started thinking about our business in a very different way, our productivity is up by around 40% since 2013. This means that every individual employed at Anglo American is producing around 40% more product than they were just three years ago.”

Sustainability

Cutifani said that through responsible and collaborative partners that the level of trust that society demands is achievable. This should be a “North Star” for mining’s future.

“The imperative for us as an industry is and here I want to paraphrase the founding sentiment that Anglo American was built on: ‘...to earn profits, but to earn them in such a way as to make a real and permanent contribution to the wellbeing of the people’.

“Through our ‘stretch goals’ - many of which are anchored in the global Sustainable Development Goals - we will reinforce how sustainability is at the heart of our decision-making as a business.”

Resilience

Socio-political and economic changes have become the new normal, Cutifani said, and it’s within this framework that a more resilient mining industry needs to be built.

“The disruption that we see all around us, whether it be social, political, technological and economic, can either make us obsolete, or can propel us into the future.

“The common characteristic that resilient companies have is a relentless focus on innovation, matched with firm commitment to sustainability while investing with the future in mind, even during tough times,” he explained.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.
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