



In the November corner I advised newly graduating engineers to celebrate their achievement, finish their graduate training programmes and achieve professional registration; to find a substantive job as soon as possible, take accountability, be responsible, and learn to be part of a team. I advised them to welcome those difficult jobs in awkward places as adversity builds character, improves creativity, and enhances self-reliance, all of which are critical attributes in the minerals industry. I urged them to 'pay it forward' by guiding and coaching new entrants to our industry and by being active in the SAIMM. I closed out the column with the comment, relating to the current turmoil in the Industry, that 'their positive attitude reinforced my view that change is not a bad thing - it's how we evolve with, or rebel against, inevitable change that makes the difference'.

This month, as we finally get a chance to slow down and reflect on 2012, I would like to turn to the 'seasoned' members of the Institute with a similar message around learning and change.

We live and work in a rapidly changing world. Technology and globalization are steadily raising the skill levels required for new jobs. During my career we have moved from solving complex numerical calculations using log tables and the slide rule, to digital calculators, to spreadsheets, to GUI interfaces with macros, and now to touch-screen rule-based logic. Similarly, in the survey and planning disciplines, area computations once calculated on paper plans using a mechanical planimeter, then calculated based on digitized paper plans, are now calculated directly from screen images of digital files, which may never even make it to a paper print. Simply put; what you are good at now may be irrelevant before you reach the end of your career. What new skills do you require just to stay in the game, let alone to move ahead?

More than ever, lifelong learning is critical to success. These change dynamics require that we regularly learn new skills and competencies as changes in technology and working practice occur. Despite support from our employers, the responsibility for making this happen lies with us individually – we each need a re-skilling strategy and implementation plan that maintains our professional and personal edge.

So, during the festive season please take some time to consider what is changing in your world and how you need to adapt to remain successful and make a contribution to your family, community, workplace, and the country. We all need re-growth and revitalization, personally and professionally – lifelong learning is a necessity, more so in dynamic times.

Wishing you all a safe and happy festive season with family and friends; a time to reflect on the year passed and to look forward to a less turbulent 2013.

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