

Serious Dialogue

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I would like to start by saying how honoured I am to be your President for the next 12 months. I have every confidence that our Institute will continue to grow in terms of membership and in terms of southern African branches. Although the South African mining industry is going through traumatic times I do see plenty of light at the end of the tunnel. The South African mining industry still has huge potential. Unlocking this potential will require more extensive and serious dialogue between all the mining industry stakeholders. There are already many forums where this is taking place and we need to build on this momentum.

Among the SAIMM office bearers, Council, and the various committees, we have mining engineers and metallurgists talking to each other. One of the Institute's success factors is this cooperation between mining engineers and metallurgists. Unfortunately, in my experience this is not as extensive as it should be in the mining industry as a whole. We hear about and read about the mining value chain. This is where geologists, mining engineers, and metallurgists are supposed to communicate and cooperate to maximize the value of mining projects and operations.

Let's consider ore. It is what geologists discover, it is what mining engineers extract from the ground, and it is what metallurgists process to a saleable product. Geologists will classify the orebody into ore types. However, a geologist's ore type is often not equivalent to a metallurgist's ore type. While differences in mineralogy and grade may be significant for a geologist, these same differences may not be important at all for a metallurgist. In between, we have the mining engineers concerned with a mine plan that will deliver certain ore tonnages and grades. Very often ore type does not feature in the mine plan. While metallurgists rely on geologists for guidance in determining orebody variations with respect to ore processing difficulties, metallurgists also rely on mining engineers to define run-of-mine ore, since this is what the metallurgical process plant design will be based on. This is an important example of why cooperation in the mining value chain is critical and why geologists, mining engineers, and metallurgists need to communicate on a regular basis. Ultimately I hope the dialogue we have within the SAIMM can spread through the mining industry, in turn creating more value.