



A number of papers in this month's *Journal* deal with matters relating to longer-term planning considerations in our hard-rock, deep-level mines (for example, 'Strategic and tactical requirements of a mining long-term plan' by B.J. Kloppers, C.J. Horn, and J.V.Z. Visser). It is also really good to see some mining engineering-related topics in this issue, as they have been in short supply for some time now. This may have led to a perception that the mining engineering fraternity were starting to fall behind in the publication of leading work being undertaken in the South African mining industry. Taken in conjunction with the current range of challenges facing the industry, this could also be interpreted as little being done to develop new solutions.

It is the SAIMM's fervent hope that this is not the case. However, it would be remiss of me not to also highlight the fact that local support of SAIMM conferences in 2015 is at the lowest level we have experienced in many years. So there are clearly short-term challenges. A joint meeting of the Technical Programme Committees (TPCs) was held during May with the objective of challenging the historical way that the SAIMM TPCs have functioned and to investigate new, modern options to satisfy a prime objective of the TPCs, as required by our constitution: to 'Disseminate scientific and technical knowledge to the benefit of the mining and metallurgical industries'. The message here is that the SAIMM needs to be as adaptable and responsive as any other business to the current circumstances.

I would not be the first to comment that under difficult circumstances one needs to have strong leadership come to the fore. This is not to say that good quality leadership is not always important, but it is usually adversity that brings out the best in people. In their paper 'Tough choices facing the South African mining industry', A. Lane, J. Guzek, and Dr W. van Antwerpen put matters very succinctly in their synopsis: the mining industry in South Africa finds itself in a difficult situation. Operating conditions are tough, the socio-political environment is complex, and financial performance is under pressure. The choices made by all the stakeholders in this industry in the short term will shape the future of the industry.' The level of energy and investment that is being expended to 're-tool' the platinum sector, for example, is considerable. It is my hope that more papers will be forthcoming in the medium term that tell more of the stories behind the herculean effort to re-position the platinum mining industry. An early indicator is the paper on the implementation of ultra-low profile mechanized equipment at Anglo American platinum mines, by F. Fourie, Dr P. Valicek, G. Krafft, and J. Sevenoaks (to be published at a later date).

It is reflecting on these papers and the conditions in the mining industry that brings me back to the matter of leadership. There are many elements to leadership, but the one I want to comment on herein relates to personal discipline and self-control. Let me be clear, I am not referring to the militaristic styles of leadership of the last century and characterized by Robert Malott, CEO of a chemical company in the 1970s and '80s, who said 'Leadership is demonstrated when the ability to inflict pain is confirmed'. I can vouch that I worked for a couple of these guys in my early career! What I AM referring to is the style of leadership that embraces the principal that once a rule or standard is set and agreed upon, then it must be complied with by all. There is not one set of standards of compliance or behaviour for 'workers' and another for 'managers'. At a very fundamental level, most people want to be led and given clear direction, but in today's technological environment where speed and communication tools are cheap and pervasive, a different level of self-control is required.

According to recent research, it turns out that self-control (or willpower) can be depleted. Several hundred studies (Google Professor Roy F. Baumeister) indicate that maintaining the self-control to lead by example, make the hard decisions, to be true to your word, etc. requires a concentration of effort that runs down over time. The good news is that by conscious effort, like a muscle, self-control can be strengthened. I think that many of us can empathize with this scenario? We have all had hard days at the office or with the children, which leave one feeling drained and depleted. It takes real work effort and conscious thought to lead in the context that I am using in these personal observations. According to a 2013 study by Wilhelm Hoffman, people with a high degree of self-control are happier than those without. So, for everyone out there under work or domestic pressures, there are five tips that I have picked up that may assist:

1. *Remove temptation:* Remove from your environment issues that distract you from your goals. If people are not working according to the accepted standards and norms, do not let it go by without challenge
2. *Eat and properly sleep:* Probably one of the trickier ones to comply with, but how can you strengthen self-control if you are tired and hungry?
3. *Consciously break habits:* Of the five, probably one of the hardest with which to comply. There are times when intuitively you know that you are taking the 'easy option'. That is when your gut feel has to say NO, I am going to do things differently
4. *Reward yourself and have fun:* Self-discipline does not imply a harsh life – not at all! When you have had a good day or week, when you know that you have made progress, have a glass of wine. Buy the team a cup of decent coffee. Take the family out for a meal. Whatever!
5. *Don't dwell on setbacks:* There are always going to be setbacks and things that do not go according to plan. To dwell on failure is unhealthy, to understand the lessons learnt is educational, to start today on the fix is inspirational.

My last comment about leadership in difficult times is that no one is alone. I really like this quote from Steve Jobs: 'It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and then tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do.'

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