

Career Development in the Minerals Industry Event

The SAIMM Young Professionals' Council (SAIMM-YP)

On 31 July 2015, the SAIMM Young Professionals Council (YPC) hosted the Career Development in the Minerals Industry event for final-year university students in mining and metallurgy, at Mintek in Randburg. The event was attended by students from the universities of Johannesburg, Pretoria, and South Africa.

The first Career Development in the Minerals Industry event, organized by the former Career Guidance and Education Committee of the SAIMM, took place in August 2013. This event was not held in 2014. The YPC, having taken over the mandate of promoting the interests of young people in the minerals industry (formerly assigned to the Career Guidance and Education Committee), took on the task of convening the event in 2015, as they considered it valuable for final-year university students.

The event was aimed at providing the students with relevant information as they embark on their professional careers. The motivation was the perception that new graduates entering the minerals industry are often not fully aware of the realities and challenges that they will encounter, which leads to frustration in the early years of their careers.

As the intake of new graduates into the South African mining sector seems to have plateaued, with a significant number of recent graduates finding themselves without work, the issues of employment and employability were high on the agenda of this year's event. Career and personal development were also recognized as important topics, and featured strongly in the programme.

The programme included representatives from various mining and consulting companies, the Chamber of Mines, the Engineering Council of South Africa, the Engineering Leadership Academy, and the Financial Planning Institute of South Africa, who gave talks on topics such as mentorship, networking, family planning, and financial planning, and which also included some personal testimonies. The event also featured three panel discussions, where questions were put to a panel of industry representatives by the YPC and the students in attendance.

The three panel discussions were on the following topics:

- Employment and employability: how to obtain employment and differentiate yourself in the depressed 2015/2016 mining environment
- Career development: developing a good career
- Personal development: becoming a well-rounded individual.

Based on feedback received from the students, the key learnings that were taken away from the event included (but were not limited to):

- South Africa is producing more graduates than the mining industry can handle. The rest of Africa is a growth market for mining, look there for opportunities. Learn languages such as French or Portuguese, to make penetration into the rest of Africa easier
- Don't be too picky with the opportunities that present themselves. The current mining environment doesn't allow for that. Take the opportunities that you get and make the best of them
- Your university education actually provides you with the tools that you can use to be entrepreneurial. Recognize these tools and use them to be more enterprising
- Due to the significant increase in the number of graduates in industry in recent years, the environment has become more competitive. You need to differentiate yourself by going the extra mile and doing what others may not be willing to do
- To be successful in industry you need to understand people, be an effective communicator, and show leadership
- Don't underestimate the influence that mentoring and personal networks can have on your professional success.

The YPC has compiled a reference handbook for students, which was handed out at the event. The handbook contains information on job search skills, career planning, networking, mentoring, professional registration, and personal development, which students can refer to during the early years of their careers.

The YPC is proud to have organized such an event and we hope that the students benefited considerably from the proceedings of the day. The YPC would also like to thank the many industry participants that contributed to the success of this event, who are unfortunately too many to name individually.

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