



## Diversity and Inclusion in the Minerals Industry



A number of studies have confirmed that there is a positive relationship between diversity and business performance, and that diversity in leadership roles is what tends to define the success of a business. This is because knowledge creation and application is enriched by a variety of skills, experience, and cultural diversity. The more diverse a team, the more perspectives, the broader and more challenging the conversations, and the better the decisions that are finally taken.

In the past few years, the mining and minerals sector has changed significantly in terms of diversity in its workforce. However, there is always a great need to look beyond the numbers of diverse employees, or the diversity of the demographics, to inclusion. Inclusion is about recognizing, respecting, valuing and leveraging diversity in a way that enhances the operations of the company. The inclusion of voices from different geographic, gender, economic, and cultural groups shows workers that they are valued contributors to the company's operations and performance. And it is through the creation of a workplace that is flexible, respectful, welcoming, and with employers that respond to individual needs and interests, that employees are able to express, create and nurture their ideas openly and hence contribute to the growth of the company. A company that embraces diversity and inclusion not only creates opportunities for individuals but also harnesses great talent and potential for itself.

In the 2017 November edition, I wrote about women in the mining sector. I highlighted some of the challenges that women face and indicated that the SAIMM needs to engage the mining sector leadership in promoting an environment that fosters the retention and growth of women in the sector. Whereas our sister institutes like the AusIMM and CIM have long realized the importance of such platforms, this is a space in which the SAIMM has not been significantly involved. However, I am happy to report that a committee that looks into such an environment and other relevant issues has been initiated by the Institute. The committee for Diversity and Inclusion in the Minerals Industry held its first meeting in April. The committee is made up of both men and women, young and experienced, who are passionate about seeing change in terms of diversity and inclusion in the minerals industry. The focus is on providing a platform, through SAIMM activities, to raise awareness on issues of diversity (gender, ethnicity, religion and other diversifying factors) and inclusion in the workplace for professionals in the minerals sector. Partnering with other like-minded groups such as Women in Mining South Africa (WiMSA) on occasion to deliver initiatives and activities to members is also envisioned. The committee will adopt a professional approach, with positive reinforcement involving both a top-down and a bottom-up approach, where effort is directed at companies, management, and students. This will be achieved through the presentation of technical papers at conferences, seminars, and running of workshops. Students, both male and (more specifically) females, are usually unprepared for the work environment and culture. This can adversely affect their performance and hence their integration and retention in the industry. The SAIMM can play a role by providing awareness to and educating the students on the industry culture and environment that they will be working in. For this year, presentations highlighting some of the diversity and inclusion issues are earmarked for the MineSafe and the Career and Leadership conferences. Such an approach of interacting with both the current and future leaders of the industry will go a long way towards fostering change in the minerals industry.

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