



Capaci occasio



Nurturing the future leaders of Southern Africa's mineral's industry is one of the key pillars of the Institute's value proposition and it is understandably highlighted in the opening statements of the new [SAIMM brochure](#)¹. The sentiments and the purpose statements encapsulated in the brochure are the outcome of an intense period of introspection. This self-analysis was sparked by financial sustainability concerns, dwindling volunteerism and participation by members in committees and on organizing committees for technical events, and while there has not been a mass exodus, membership numbers have stagnated, with fewer employers sponsoring individual professionals to join the Institute.

The SAIMM's office team has adapted methods, implementing numerous changes to the internal structure and workings of the Institute, and in response to the impact of the pandemic, shifted completely to a remote working model. But a change in tactics requires more than just polishing the silver, and in this context, the Institute is refocusing on maximizing the value to our membership. And, of course, being financially sustainable, and relevant in fast-changing times.

Although many things have changed over the past few decades, and most particularly the past two years, the need for professional development remains a constant. Throughout this period of reflection, the Institute's purpose has withstood, and is withstanding, the test of time. A glance at the SAIMM's coat-of-arms reminds us of the SAIMM motto, *Capaci occasio* which means 'To the capable the opportunity'. Therefore, developing and nurturing capable leaders for the minerals industry, because the capable create opportunities, is still one of the key pillars of the SAIMM's purpose. The coat-of-arms, which was adopted in 1965, has become closely associated with the SAIMM brand of professionalism and quality technical events, and the motto is probably more relevant today than ever and is entrenched in what the Institute delivers.

As an Institute, we have emerged with a renewed focus on the core of our existence, strongly underpinned by our history, and the capabilities to deliver on this core purpose. The rapid increase and availability of digital content has created a smorgasbord of options for all. We are flooded with digital content, a trend that accelerated throughout the pandemic. It is also common knowledge that the global mining and minerals community is facing a retirement tsunami, as people with decades worth of expertise wind down their professional activities.

When we think about professional development and growth, it is often in terms of continuing education, job-related skills, or job responsibilities, but we don't necessarily associate professional development with volunteerism. You may think of volunteerism as one more thing you need to juggle in a busy schedule. But volunteerism can provide personal growth, satisfaction, learning opportunities, development of new skill sets, professional and ethical development, and through volunteer activities one can build a new group of friends or colleagues. The SAIMM is at its core a voluntary association of professionals, that exists for our members, through our members, and acts as a vehicle through which members can share knowledge and enable professional development. The SAIMM only exists because of our membership.

As we near the end of another tumultuous year, it is a good time to reflect on the year ahead and how we plan to spend our valuable time. With these thoughts in mind, the definition of volunteerism is quite powerful, and inspiring.

¹The link to the SAIMM brochure is <https://saimm.co.za/news>

President's Corner *(Continued)*

Volunteering is a form of helping in which people actively seek out opportunities, and involves making considerable ongoing commitments to sustain these involvements over extended periods, often at a considerable personal cost, usually time. Volunteering is not the same as helping though. Helping occurs spontaneously in response to an emergency or unwelcome situation, while volunteering requires seeking out opportunities to help. Finally, and this is the aspect that perhaps makes volunteerism particularly powerful at the personal growth level, volunteers typically do not know those they help in advance and have no prior bonds of obligation to help them.

Volunteerism is an act of giving towards a greater cause.

Volunteering is not a one-way street. Through active involvement in voluntary associations, the volunteer also gains from this process. In the SAIMM, volunteering enhances the value of your membership while your time and efforts help others. The feedback loop is positive and personal and professional growth follows. Young or established professionals find that they stay up to date with developments in their industry by being involved in technical events or reviewing papers. As we engage in these types of activities we constantly add to our continued professional development. For some, their involvement with Institute matters leads to new opportunities, and even new career paths; but, most importantly, professionals, through volunteering, build their formal and informal networks, which in turn strengthen their professional capacity.

The formal and informal relationships built through active involvement in a voluntary activity contribute to a healthy society and healthy individuals living in such a society do better in moving forward to meet common aspirations. Many volunteers do it to give something back ('paying it forward') to their profession, especially since someone did it for them earlier in their careers. Volunteer activities can range from serving as a moderator on a webinar session to being an officer of the Institute through Council and Office Bearers. Volunteers could be involved as committee members, serving as committee chair, acting as a liaison with another professional organization, reviewing papers for the Journal, judging student presentations, facilitating panels at technical events, or presenting a webinar or technical talk at a branch meeting. The volunteering opportunities are numerous, and each small act contributes towards the development of capable professionals and a sustainable Institute. The SAIMM is a living institute, and member involvement is the fertile ground in which the Institute and the members flourish.

In conclusion, while any organization ought to be introspective and sharpen its tools, an entity such as the SAIMM relies on membership for content and direction, and growth. It is easily overlooked that the SAIMM can exist only if members are willing to volunteer their precious skills and time in an act of giving towards the greater good of the mining and metallurgy industry.

In the coming year, may the SAIMM and our members find a new and stable footing in a world, where predicting the next wave has nothing to do with surfing. May all our members have a safe and restorative holiday season this summer.

May the road of opportunity rise to meet you in 2022.

I.J. Geldenhuys
President, SAIMM