



An agile SAIMM for the agile professional

'The most important single central fact about a free market is that no exchange takes place unless both parties benefit.' - Milton Friedman



I was encouraged to join the SAIMM by senior university staff in the early 'eighties. Most the students in the industry (about 90%) had bursaries with one or other of the large mining houses, which at the time dominated our minerals industry. Upon employment following our graduation, we were encouraged to continue our relationship with the SAIMM, where Student Members would then progress to Associate Members.

I soon sought recognition as a fully-fledged Member because, even though there were many benefits of Associate Membership, the international relevance of the brand held greater potential for me. I saw membership of the SAIMM as an additional endorsement of the quality of my education and professional development in the South African minerals industry.

Times have since changed, and support for the SAIMM from industry has faltered. Universities still encourage their students to join the Institute, but very few (some 10%) enjoy the security of financial sponsorship from a mining company, or an offer of full-time employment at the end of their studies. A further 20% seem to find employment within six months of graduating, and another 30% manage to secure employment over the following six months. The roadmap to membership for our emerging professionals is now fragmented, and this may have shifted the youth's perceptions of the SAIMM. To many, the Institute bases its activities on technical papers, webinars, schools, seminars, and conferences. Though we do partake in these activities, they do not constitute who we are, or what we stand for as the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

The SAIMM is, at its core, a fraternity of professionals who strive to connect with each other, learn from one another and contribute to the industry for the benefit of tomorrow's professionals.

The Institute is not oblivious to the fact that times have changed, and we are fully committed to doing things differently. We recently reaffirmed our fundamental purpose as:

'... to provide our Members with a unique collaborative platform where they can develop as agile professionals in the rapidly evolving future of work in our sector.'

Our administrative team have established more effective ways of working, with the aim of performing more efficiently in terms of our four well-established processes of engaging, informing, convening, and educating. These processes are the foundation of our ability to deliver on our promise to our members, as well as to the minerals industry which we all form part of.

Our new mindset looks to embracing technology for increased agility, greater flexibility, and enhanced performance. A full online membership interface system is now in place and our website is becoming increasingly user-friendly. It is rich with information and allows members easy access to the many benefits that the SAIMM has to offer.

Over the coming months, and consistent with our strategic realignment, we will be actively communicating with our members, and with mining companies, on the SAIMM's contribution to the minerals industry and its employees. We have generated a corporate brochure with a supporting video to facilitate this.

- Our Membership Committee has established a special working group to incorporate into our membership base, tomorrow's specialists and experts that our industry

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will need, to navigate green energy-related technologies and the challenges of environmental and social governance.

- Our Young Professionals Council, with the support of the Johannesburg Branch, is engaging with the Department of Mineral Resources on a project linking community initiatives with the development of our young professionals.
- Our code of ethics has been modified to encourage higher levels of self-governance and ethical leadership.
- We are engaging more closely with the Minerals Council so that our future activities are structured to complement the many initiatives currently underway for the long-term benefit of our minerals industry. This will prevent unnecessary and unwanted duplication of effort.
- We will also seek to secure firm partnerships with businesses that ultimately benefit from SAIMM-related activities. We believe that many of our activities can be appropriately tailored through these partnerships to secure a better operating environment for our minerals industry over the medium to long term.
- The SAIMM has secured an agreement to establish a branch in China, and similar discussions have been initiated on closer ties with Turkey.

However, we are going to need a lot more support and involvement from senior professionals in our industry and from long-serving members of the SAIMM if we are to get this right.

When seen to be proudly endorsing the SAIMM and actively participating in our activities, these industry leaders will be providing our young professionals with a much broader insight into the 'depth' and 'reach' of SAIMM-related activities, while perhaps also encouraging them to emulate the behaviour of their role models, just as I was encouraged by my mentors.

I thank my peers who contributed to this President's Corner.

V.G. Duke
President, SAIMM