

Supervisors critical to making up lost mining production

In the wake of the Covid-19 new normal, frontline supervisors will play a key role in rapidly ramping up mining production in an effort to recoup output lost during the hard lockdown.



Arjen de Bruin, managing director, OIM Consulting

The slow return of migrant workers - which make up a large contingent of the industry's workforce - has had a knock-on impact on production targets. "In addition to this, mines are now faced with an entirely new operating environment. Physical distancing, concerns within communities around coronavirus infection and changes in day-to-day operations have altered existing team dynamics.

Capex, digitisation, and transformation projects have taken a backseat, as the urgency to rapidly meet new production targets moves to the fore. "We're back to basics, and the emphasis is fixed firmly on output," says Arjen de Bruin, managing director at OIM Consulting.

He sees the supervisor as being key to accelerating production within this new context, and thus maintains that it is critical for senior leadership to understand what their frontline leaders are thinking, and how they're dealing with their new reality.

"With less on-site senior leadership representation, supervisors ultimately become the organisation's primary culture carrier; responsible for motivating teams, instilling company values, ensuring adherence to new safety processes - and importantly, meeting production targets."

Safety is in the industry's DNA

De Bruin says the mining industry is unfairly perceived as an [epicentre](#) of Covid-19 in South Africa. However, a [recent poll](#) by Verdict revealed that the mining industry had, in fact, responded adequately in safeguarding their workers against the virus.

“Stringent safety processes are entrenched in the industry’s very DNA. There are inherent health and safety challenges associated with a large amount of workers operating within a confined space, and thus mines are extremely diligent in enforcing adherence to protocols, which are there for the protection of workers.

“If a concern around safety arises, mines are geared to respond quickly and effectively - making the industry better equipped than most to handle the new complexities around Covid-19,” he says.

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