

RAPID RESULTS SUCCESS**MANAGEMENT SUPPORT, TEAMWORK AND SKILLS TRANSFER BOOST PERFORMANCE AT ISIBONELO**

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Isibonelo colliery has experienced an increase of over 10% in its dragline digging time since the implementation of a key improvement project during 2011. The project, spearheaded by team 'Dragline Marionios', received the solid backing from management, spurred business improvement skills transfer and enhanced cross-discipline teamwork across operations.

Dragline matters

The colliery identified, addressed and overcame some of the dragline challenges that have been preventing Isibonelo from achieving its production objectives by implementing a business approach that Group Asset Optimisation (AO) facilitates.

Some of the biggest dragline downtime influencers that were tackled during the project included operational influencers such as pad preparation, positioning, shift changes, re-handling and unaccounted time. In addition to the operational issues, some of the engineering challenges that were addressed included boiler making, mechanical and electrical considerations.

Business improvement skills transfer

Improving production is feasible when a team of cross-disciplined, multi-level individuals come together to analyse challenges, propose solutions, formulate and implement short-term action plans, and monitor and communicate the results on a daily and weekly basis. These are some of the guiding principles of Rapid Results, the improvement approach that was implemented at Isibonelo colliery and facilitated by resident Business Improvement manager, Mbuyiselo Mafanya.

The dragline project, Isibonelo's maiden business improvement initiative using Rapid Results, illustrates the flexibility, ease of use and effectiveness behind the methodology. "Once you understand the fundamentals of Rapid Results, the approach can be applied to any project in any discipline in any industry where change will facilitate improvement," comments Mbuyiselo. "The methodology helps transform the way you think about constraints, it fosters innovation and learning. Team members find themselves thinking about improvement opportunities all of the time; once you see the success, it's difficult to stop searching for additional opportunities to improve operations."

Management backing

Management's support has been key to the ongoing success of the dragline project. Not only was management open to change, but they demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to the project by providing the necessary resources, time and personal involvement with the project.

After the 100 day project implementation came to an end, management invested further into the success of the project by appointing a professional dragline specialist to work in conjunction with the dragline operators, providing hands-on assistance and on-the-job coaching for 10 weeks from October to early December 2011. This intervention has helped bolster the sustainability of the improvement in production.

“Dragline operators feel better equipped to plan their shift, minimising standing time for pad preparation and dozer work. The results speak for themselves; the dragline standing for pad preparation has fallen from an average of 1 hour and 45 minutes per day to just 36 minutes. Similarly, the dragline positioning time has been reduced from over an hour and a half per machine per day to an average of just 45 minutes,” says Kevin Steyn, mining manager at Isibonelo.

Cross-function teamwork

The project illustrated how successfully change efforts can be put in place by stimulating an overall sense of urgency to achieve set goals. This urgency is transferred from the daily project team meetings to everyone on site through on-going communication about the dragline digging times achieved per shift.

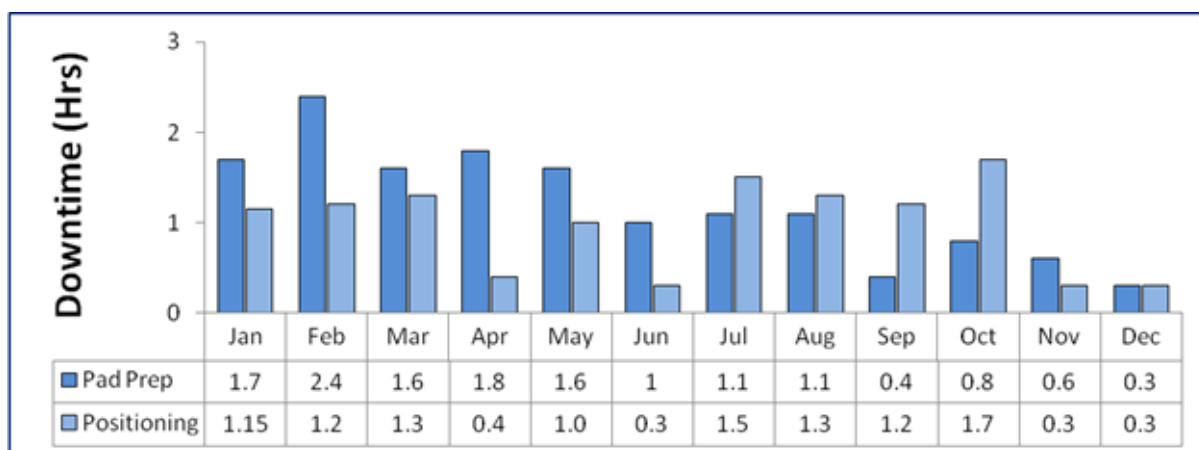
“Increased teamwork, most notable between artisans and operators, is a result of the expanded area of work where individual as well as team performance per shift is measured and communicated on a daily basis, incentivising the teams to work together to attain optimal shift performance,” adds Kevin Steyn. “Where performance is affected by an operational inefficiency, both the technical and operating staff quickly feel the pressure to work together in solving the issue so that they achieve better results during the next shift.”

Because many of the initial improvement ideas come from team members with front-line knowledge of operational challenges, grass-root level individuals are empowered to directly influence productivity. Implementing a proposed solution not only motivates individual performance, but stimulates informal propaganda for the improvement activities across the operation. This increases the buy-in by a much wider audience than management and the project team members alone.

Embedding change

Kevin Steyn continues: “The mining environment, with its shift cycles and different machine operating modes, means that a longer time is necessary for embedding the desired behaviour by the operators. The momentum for instilling these behavioural changes consumes much of the allocated 100 day period. The true operational benefits are only really experienced after the project has been completed.”

“The business approach has proven its worth and demonstrated its value; it has equipped our own resources to be the power house and driving force behind operational changes that really impact production,” concludes Reuben Hlatshwayo, general manager of Isibonelo colliery. “We look forward to achieving ongoing implementation success with the assistance of Group AO implementation support.”



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