



**"The concept of Mission Directed Work teams is a foundation for**

**problem solving, continuous improvement and innovation."**

**Cornelia Holtzhausen**  
General manager  
Thabazimbi mine

## CASE STUDY: ON A MISSION AT THABAZIMBI MINE

As Thabazimbi mine nears the end of its life and as mining has become increasingly challenging, this has the potential to have a negative impact on employee morale and safety. Managing productivity and costs has, therefore, become increasingly important.

Enter the Mission Directed Work (MDW) team concept in 2011 with a view to saving costs and supporting the drive to improve company culture, safety, innovation and communication. As the programme has progressed, some sustainable cost-saving ideas have emerged whereas suggestions for safety and culture improvements have come to the fore due to the involvement of employees, unions and safety representatives at all levels of the mine. Rather than a mere management initiative, it harnesses the knowledge of people at the work face.

The success of the MDW concept is embodied in Jan Rossouw, foreman and leader of the haul truck MDW team at Thabazimbi mine. He was identified as one of the company's top performers in 2012 and sent to Chile, South America, for the Anglo American Asset Optimisation Conference in April. The biennial conference brings Anglo American employees together to share knowledge and global best practice – Jan was one of five representatives of Kumba's mines.

Jan and his 24-strong team stand out among their colleagues as they have completely embraced the MDW concept since its inception, implementing it with enthusiasm. Dries Burger, manager: finance at Thabazimbi mine, says: "In a short space of time, they experienced positive results; not only in terms of the availability of the haul trucks but also in human behaviour and a positive outlook towards safety. Measured according to a number of MDW criteria, they have performed exceptionally well overall. Based on this, and the fact that Jan guided and managed his team professionally in taking ownership of their responsibility in the workplace, he was identified as a top performer."

In Chile, Jan shared his experiences in working as a "mini business" which continuously sets goals and strives to achieve these objectives as a team; solving problems and making decisions as a unit primarily responsible for the maintenance of Thabazimbi mine's haul trucks. The team uses the MDW concept to set relevant key performance indicators and thus continuously measure their performance and implement

corrective measures where necessary. The team is, therefore, a critical production support system in ensuring the availability of mining equipment.

The secret to their success is the 100-day Rapid Results programme, which focusses on process improvement by multi-disciplinary, cross-functional teams. It has helped Jan's team identify areas in need of improvement and then conduct root-cause analyses, present solutions, implement ideas and measure the outcomes. After 100 days, where performance was found to be below standard, action was taken.

The Rapid Results programme first came to Thabazimbi mine when the head of the Mining department, Pieter Lategan, invited Alrien van der Walt from the Anglo American head office to train employees in its implementation. Conducted between September and December 2012, training was initially intended solely for the Mining department but the Engineering, Supply Chain Management and Human Resources training departments also joined in.

Production targets were set over three shifts on a daily basis and specific focus areas were identified to help teams reach their targets. For example, measurement of time and attendance was indicated on a chart "owned" by a team member. The duties of the chart "owner" included updating information and ensuring that changes were made where expectations were not being met. As a consequence, time and attendance performance improved from about 90% to 97%.

"We measured the tonnages, availability, utilisation, spares usage and drilled holes on the MDW charts," explains Dries. "The problems identified were channelled to the responsible people and action plans were implemented to address the issues at hand."

MDW is now "standard practice" at Thabazimbi mine – the Engineering, Maintenance, Training and Geology teams are also enjoying the satisfaction of realising their goals as a supportive unit.

**Above**

01 The introduction of Mission Directed Work teams at Thabazimbi mine had a significant impact on the availability of haul trucks.



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