

Mine Training for Future Skills

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Future skills shortages are the most critical risk to the mining industry. Transfer of the knowledge and skills required for future positions will be a key factor in maintaining the success of the industry. Currently, mine training is largely failing to keep pace with advances in technology and automation within the industry and not addressed the changing learning styles of new generations entering the workforce.

The most effective training interventions are those that bring the trainee as close as possible to the real experience of work, without exposure to harm, or risk of damage. Advances in technology have introduced innovative training methods that immerse the trainee into a simulated working environment in a number of ways. Machine simulators have been used for decades in the industry and are a recognised example of best practice in training. Augmented and Virtual Reality are used in mining to a lesser extent by some larger companies, but often in a haphazard manner and rarely as part of a well thought out learning strategy.

As retirements are delayed, and the younger workforce becomes more mobile, training must be adapted for a multi-generational, multi-cultural workforce. A one size fits all approach to training is no longer effective, if it ever was. Training must become more learner centric, more adaptable and more relevant. New learning technologies will assist to some extent, but it is vital that companies also make a significant commitment in their investment to all areas of their training.

Mining industry training has made significant advances in some areas over the last few decades but there are still major gaps. It is critical that these are addressed thoughtfully and holistically to ensure that the future workforce is safe, productive and engaged.