

# Managing the rate of change

BY PENELOPE THOMAS

Rapid advancements in technology are delivering significant change for mining companies and the people who work for them.

Speaking to *National Mining Chronicle*, Cobalt Group Associate Director Tom Martin said while the pipeline of change was often perceived as relentless, there were unprecedented benefits being driven by the evolving technology landscape.

"These include increased efficiencies, enhanced stability and improved safety and environmental performance," he said. "By their nature, these changes can bring significant impact to the people who work in these businesses."

As a specialist in the delivery of organisational change management, Mr Martin said thoughtful and proactive engagement of people and supporting them through each stage of the change being effected was crucial.

"This typically starts with leaders and flows all the way through to frontline operators," he said.

"By executing effective change management, companies can ensure their people are involved and supported throughout the change process. This ensures the change is embedded with sustainable business outcomes and value is realised through a meaningful contribution to return on investment, measured through core metrics such as usage and adoption rates."

According to Mr Martin, change management is all about the people involved - people need to understand why the change is being made.

"In a technical sense, change management is the implementation of structured interventions to accelerate the adoption and acceptance rates of change, whether they are technological, systematic, organisational, process-driven, behavioural or cultural," he said.

"Our focus when partnering with our mining clients is to manage the impact the transition to the future state has on their people through the strategic design and implementation of the change.

"People underpin all critical activities relating to safety, production and cost targets. In brownfield operations it's about implementing the desired change in the most efficient manner while achieving or maintaining agreed operating plans and targets."

Mr Martin said organisational change management disciplines must align with a business' operating model and culture.

"What we all want to achieve is a workforce that focuses on agreed operational outcomes, understands when to change, adopts changes quickly and refocuses on new or amended operational objectives," he said. "Embedding effective change management routines within an organisation sets expectations with employees about how change is approached."

When considering how organisational changes are managed in the Australian mining sector, Mr Martin identified four key areas to keep in mind.

The first was to remember to maintain the pace of change while increasing employee engagement.

"Central to this is avoiding 'change fatigue' amongst those people who are most impacted by the changes being introduced," Mr Martin said.

The second key area involves managing the changes to ensure they will be sustainable.

Mr Martin said this required changes to various systems dimensions, including strategy, process, technology, organisation, people and culture.

The rate of change in the mining industry is a challenge in itself.



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The third area Mr Martin highlighted involved making change management an integrated part of both the corporate culture and the expectations of leaders in order to support continued change and reinforce organisational agility.

"There is often a strong desire to ensure changes are managed appropriately, yet the required capability of existing resources or capacity to deliver the change does not exist, which constrains change efforts," he said.

The final area Mr Martin spoke about was knowing which changes to go after.

"Having a portfolio view of the key strategic programs is really important," he said.

"It's commonly understood the clarity of an organisation's portfolio of programs and its disciplined management is critical to unlocking initiative-based value. Portfolio management disciplines require a change management lens to be applied in order to identify and prioritise the most valuable projects and changes."

Accenture Resources Asia Pacific Talent and Organisation Lead for Resources Gaston Carrion said there would be a significant change in the workforce as automated technologies are increasingly adopted in the mining industry.

"We expect 80 per cent of the mining workforce will be impacted, with major shifts in the way work is done and the required skills and capabilities," he said.

"Essentially, newer technologies require us to work differently. The success of applying these new technologies into any company is heavily dependent on people understanding the value, and more importantly, embracing new ways of working.

"Change management plays a pivotal role in enabling the workforce to accept new and different practices into their existing environment."

Accenture Resources Australia Talent and Organisation



Gaston Carrion.



Tom Martin.

Managing Director Marisa Perry said the global mining industry was in the midst of wide-scale technology disruption that must be embraced in order to remain competitive.

"In this context, change management is about enabling mining leaders to effectively transition their workforce to the new ways of working through changing mindsets and behaviours which achieve sustained change," she said. "It is also about supporting organisations to build agility into their company DNA in order to respond quicker to internal and external demands - including fast-paced technological advancements - and accelerate change adoption to ensure minimal disruption to productivity and no compromise to safety.

"Additionally, an integrated and holistic approach for change will be imperative, as the whole organisation transforms concurrently. Under some major change programs a centralised approach has been put in place, however these have been managed by the individual assets and operations."

Ms Perry said we were only at the beginning of witnessing the disruption that would hit the mining industry.

"The mining industry is yet to have its 'Netflix' disruptor moment," she said.

"There is speculation regarding what this might be, however the future is still uncertain.

"What we do know is those companies which survived when the disruptors hit were able to respond quickly and adapt smartly to stay relevant. They had the trust of their workforce who embraced the change rather than feeling threatened by it and resisting."

To achieve this, Ms Perry said mining companies would require a greater focus on defining their workforce of the future.

"It will also require creating highly change-capable organisations where agility is in the DNA of the company and infused in all aspects of its operations, processes and people."

Ms Perry said the elephant in the room at the moment was around the skills redundancy resulting from wide-spread automation.

"The ambiguity regarding future skill requirements has resulted in increasing fears over job security, and consequently a natural resistance to embrace digitally enabled ways of working," she said.

"The disruption to the workforce will be widespread, however, as other industries and history has proven, new technologies will create new jobs." **NMC**