How the Mining and Metals Industry can use innovation and digitisation to streamline performance and operations

The Mining and Metals industries are under increasing pressure to re-build trust with stakeholders and efficiently deliver on capital projects. Being a sector that is heavily reliant on other industries to find new uses to support the continued growth of the market means that they must show that they are a viable investment opportunity capable of delivering good returns. The lack of innovation and digitisation within the sector has meant that project management and operations have incurred unnecessary costs and unpredictable outcomes. In some cases, this has had a detrimental impact and resulted in projects being shut down. Despite being so reliant on investors to fund projects, the sector has failed to take advantage of available technologies that could help revolutionise operations, enhance effectiveness, and help boost attractiveness to new industries.

Challenges facing the Mining and Metals Industry

Funding challenges and resilience
A key challenge facing the sector is a lack of available funding for capital-intensive projects. Investors have lost trust in mining companies after they failed to deliver returns on highly priced merger and acquisition deals in the last mining cycle. Many operations have since gone into liquidation, and those that have reopened, have had to undergo a feasibility study beforehand. If firms are to re-establish trust and land investors to complete projects, they need to find ways to deliver consistent shareholder returns and improve efficiency with costs and operations. To optimise, businesses must understand their supply risks and create more predictable outcomes by streamlining procedures.

Environmental risks
Mining has a negative impact on the environment by contributing to deforestation, erosion, sinkholes, loss of biodiversity, and soil and water contamination. Along with ESG mandates, firms face growing demands to reduce their environmental impact and address decarbonisation. Businesses have a responsibility to play an active role in implementing more responsible business practices that work towards more sustainable outcomes.

Health and safety dangers
Firms suffer from information being siloed and delays in communications due to the use of outdated processes. The lack of an effective communication process can increase risks to safety as teams are unable to monitor conditions and report incidents in real-time. Implementing a central transparent communication system that connects the entire company will help firms improve safety and increase productivity by ensuring that everyone is working off the most recent developments by cutting communication delays.

Supply chain issues
The supply chain, with its various moving parts and lack of transparency or collaborative communication in real-time, is an area that offers significant risk for wasted costs and resources. By connecting all business units to a supply chain nerve centre, it opens a more transparent and aligned working process, preventing silos, and giving the ability for threats and opportunities to be addressed quickly and collaboratively.

Inefficient technology systems
The sector has failed to take advantage of technological advances and still relies on historic, inefficient, and outdated operating methods. Implementing integrated advanced planning systems (APS), warehouse planning systems (WMS), and central communication systems will ensure that operations are more efficiently run and enable more intelligent planning. By adopting a more digital and data-centric approach to business operations, algorithms can be used to automate pre-building inventory, reduce the chances of wastage and excess storage costs, and help create more predictable outcomes for projects.

Boom and bust cycles
The sector experiences fluctuations in growth and value due to broader economic factors. In a growth period, investors will be plentiful, but as boom-and-bust cycles can vary in length and severity, firms must prepare to ride out the bust periods by optimising the areas of the business that they have control over. Ensuring that costs are reduced where possible and that operations are streamlined will be imperative for ensuring a firm's survival through bust periods.

Operational costs
Mining and Metals firms have been slow to embrace technology and innovation, making them reliant on outdated operating systems and slow to react to the fluctuating changes in the market. If businesses are to survive, they will need the means and agility to pivot quickly.

How can Mining and Metals firms optimise performance?

Invest in digital Innovation and automation
AI (Artificial Intelligence), automation, and data-driven solutions will help companies reduce costs, improve efficiency, and help reduce emissions. Implementing digital innovation and a data-driven approach into the business will enhance competitive advantage and allow them to pivot depending on industry conditions. Projects can be seamlessly connected, and with the use of AI, drones, robotics, and virtual reality, firms can make better decisions about what projects to take on and where to drill. In addition, collecting and analysing data helps the business better understand production processes and the opportunities to maximise them in the future.

Creating an internal nerve centre
Forward-thinking businesses are taking control of the factors they can control and optimising them to make them as efficient as possible. By implementing a fully digital central control tower (or nerve centre), firms can increase their resilience by using AI to connect and improve visibility within all business functions, including those historically working in siloes. End-to-end planning is improved, and supply chain issues are detected and communicated early on to allow flexibility and quick decision-making. Having a central nerve centre for communications and supply chain management also reduces the need to visit sites physically. Inspections, project progress, and compliance can all be monitored within a few clicks, regardless of location, subsequently lowering costs and boosting productivity.

Improving safety procedures
Introducing smart machinery and automation will enable risky operations to be automated and reduce the room for mistakes resulting in injury to staff. For those that still require manual labour, nurturing a safety-first system and checks procedure can help minimise risk. Implementing a central transparent communication system that connects the entire company will help firms improve safety by ensuring that teams monitor and report conditions and incidents in real-time.

Introducing a central location for email and document storage
Implementing a central cloud-based storage solution such as SharePoint into the business provides the flexibility for employees to access data and communications from any location and on any device, which is particularly advantageous for companies like Mining and Metals that operate from various sites.

The benefits of an email and document management solution for the Mining and Metals Industry
A central email management system and central storage location will help improve business communications and ensure close collaboration with operators, management, investors, and other stakeholders regardless of location. Much like the internal nerve centre, an email management system will ensure that everyone is kept up to date with the most recent communications and developments as they happen.

How Mail Manager can help Mining and Metals Firms

Mail Manager is an email management system that helps firms store all critical information in a safe, secure destination of their choice. The market-leading search tool makes data retrieval fast and accurate, stopping project delays and increasing productivity.

Reduce risk through collaboration in real-time
Mail Manager provides complete transparency of all communications to all team members working across a project, so critical information or developments are shared in real-time. Management can ensure effective project controls and provide complete visibility on progress and delivery with the whole team.

Remove project and supply chain disruptions.
No more isolated groups working in silos as Mail Manager connects the entire team, meaning that you are never at risk of working from old or outdated information.

Make informed decisions by utilising the most recent data.
Increasing speed and transparency between company communications means that delays and health and safety risks are reduced, and you can be sure you are working with the most accurate, up-to-date information to make informed decisions.

Cut costs and increase staff productivity.
Emails and data can be found within seconds, reducing the need for hours spent scouring email inboxes for lost information.

Ensure compliance and regulation
An automatic filing system helps keep mineral leases, planning, environmental consents, and other essential compliance documents in designated project folders and ensures they are easily accessible to everyone on the project.

With Mail Manager, Mining and Metals firms can make it easier for employees to communicate and collaborate across projects and reduce the risk of losing essential information and sensitive data. The software is quick and easy to implement and roll out across an entire business. Discover how Mail Manager can revolutionise your email management practices with a [free trial](#).

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