

Round Table – ICT, Skills and the changing face of Mining

Workshop Agenda

Introduction

The looming skills shortage will come as no surprise to keen observers of the mining industry. Some people estimate that there will be a shortfall of some 65,000 skilled workers in the very near future. There will be many things that will be done about this shortfall; training more people, importing skilled people, etc. These actions will deal with the short term problem, but with demand for commodities predicted to rise for decades to come, the mining industry needs to consider longer term structural change to the way they do business. The use of information and communications technologies to underpin the automation of mining operations will be a central part of the long term solution, and that is what this round table event will discuss.

Unfortunately, the people in the mining industry are currently not well prepared to have the kind of discussions that can lead to building the right systems to support the sorts of technologies and approaches which are needed; things like machine and business process automation, advanced communications that allow operations to be run from a distance, and advanced analytics that will make sense of the exponentially increasing flow of data.

If you agree that this is a valid comment, then the question arises about how the mining industry will respond. At best, the mining industry is a laggard when it comes to taking up these technologies. The biggest inhibitor to technology adoption is that IT professionals do not understand the business of mining nearly well enough, and mining professionals do not understand the value that IT can bring. One group can't speak the business language well enough to convince the other group to invest. Conversely, because they don't understand enough about IT, the operators are leaving good proposals on the table because they don't know the right questions to ask.

So the problems that we seek to address in this workshop are:

1. How can the business and higher education sectors collaborate better to ensure more graduates are attracted to the industry?
2. How can we ensure that those graduates, in operational mining disciplines and information and communications technology are properly equipped to have substantive conversations about the value that new technology can bring to the mining business?
3. How can we keep a dialogue open on the shared challenges faces by the industry?
4. Clarifying the issues, the level of implementation risk, and the degree of difference between Australian industry practice and its global competitors.

Objectives

The outcomes of the workshop shall be determined, in part, by the issues that surface during the day. However, the following objectives are offered as a starting point for the discussion.

1. The workshop should produce a statement of the issues that are the most important for the industry as it moves towards a more technologically enabled future.
2. The workshop should identify some approaches to how these major issues are likely to be addressed.
3. The workshop should endeavour to identify a core group of interested people, broadly representative of the participating organisations, to carry forward the discussions.
4. The workshop should investigate any potential funding opportunities to support the ongoing discussion.

Schedule

10.15 Register and Network

10.30 Welcome – Christopher Goldsworthy (B-HERT)

Vision – where does the sector want to go?

10.35 ITC Perspective – Dr Dennis Franklin (CSC)

10.45 Mining Industry Perspective – Dr Andrew Shook (BHP Billiton)

10.55 Higher Education Perspective – (Prof Steve Hall, Curtin University of Technology tbc)

11.05 Breakout Session – Brainstorm issues. Three groups

11.30 Morning Tea

11.50 Breakout groups report back – continuing discussions on issues in single group session

12.40 Lunch and Networking

Strategic Matrix (degree of priority < > level of impact) – long-term option identification/areas for reform/recommendations for stakeholder alignment

13.15 Breakout Session – Brainstorm solutions. Three groups

13.45 Breakout groups report back – continuing discussions on issues in single group session

14.30 Nominations for continuing working group.

14.35 Plenary session to identify potential ongoing activities and funding options.

15.00 Close