

Nurturing local mining talent amid changing political landscape

By [Roland Innes](#)

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The traditional practice of employing and recruiting expatriates for senior management roles is being phased out. This change is driven by a variety of factors, but the result is a potential gap in expertise and leadership. Mining companies are now urged to focus on nurturing local talent and leadership, particularly at the supervisory level. The role of the right training partner is crucial in this context, not only for talent development but also for unlocking individuals' full potential, which is key to maximising productivity, profitability, and sustainability in mining.



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One of the major reasons for the shift is that many African countries are implementing new legislation discouraging the employment of foreigners where there is local talent available.

It is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to secure work permits for foreign nationals, and while there may be ways of working around this, it can deteriorate the relationship between mining organisations and government. Since mining relies on various permits, licenses, and other compliance elements, maintaining this good relationship is vital.

Aside from this, there is a significant cost associated with hiring foreign nationals, as they must be transported and housed, insured against risk, and paid in foreign currency. In addition, there is growing antagonism toward ex-colonial powers.



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This results in a lack of ability to inspire the lower levels of leadership, and their lack of knowledge of local culture can cause tension, which can escalate into industrial action and disruptive behaviours if it is not professionally managed.

Strength from the inside

Mining organisations need to start developing internal skills and strength at a mid- to supervisory level, as they have the

broadest influence over the widest range of mine employees. If they can be empowered, uplifted, and educated to become an effective part of the management team, there are many benefits.

Local leadership understands cultural nuances and local customs and can help mining organisations push production by improving productivity and efficiency, because the employees at the rock face will be able to relate to them so much better.

This in turn benefits both sustainability and continuity, while fostering a circular economy as salaries are kept within local communities and in-country. It also creates upliftment and progressive career paths and is the most effective way to engage with communities, creating seamless integration.

By employing local leadership talent, mining organisations can reap several benefits beyond keeping money in circulation in the country and uplifting local communities.

Enhance production

Local leaders can enhance production by being more effective in influencing workers and overcoming many of the common communication barriers. Improved communication also improves safety and machine usage, which in turn saves lives and money. In addition, the cost of employing local talent is less than that of foreign nationals. Working with communities also places mining organisations in a better position when it comes to various compliance requirements.

Mining organisations need an aggressive policy in place to achieve this, as well as the right training partner. An external resource to facilitate upskilling and training is essential, as it is a conflict of interest for incumbents to develop the people who will effectively replace them.

A training partner with experience in Africa, a sizeable footprint in the mining sector on the continent, and local offices or partners in the various regions, is an invaluable asset. With an understanding of community and leadership dynamics and culture, and a methodology that embraces cultural norms within African societies, the right partner will help mining organisations unleash their peoples' full potential and reap the benefits into the future.

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