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Good Partnerships Can Lower Mining Contractors' Cycle Times

When planning and implementing load-haul mining contracts, the importance of close cooperation between contractor and customer cannot be over-emphasised, says Graeme Campbell, commercial and operations manager of Raubex Group company SPH Kundalila.

“It begins with the customer providing relevant and accurate data, so that the contractor can make the right calculations, but it goes much further than this,” says Campbell. “When both parties are focused on improving cycle times, the project efficiency can be significantly improved, and the cost reduced.”

He highlights that contractors will not be able to achieve the required cycle times if the customer causes any delays. But, on the other hand, it only takes small improvements to shorten cycle times and reduce the cost per tonne. This result should provide enough motivation for a constructive partnership.

“There are basic principles of earthmoving that influence cycle times, and these include ensuring ideal conditions both on-site and off-site,” he says. “On site, the loading area should be level and stable underfoot, while the haul road needs to be well-maintained, quality surface with as few stops as possible.”

The off-load area should also be easy to access, as this contributes to a quick turnaround time, he emphasises.

“Conducive off-site conditions mean that all activities must be accurately recorded, information on tonnes handled and hours worked per shift must be regularly provided, and there must be constant feedback on health, safety and machine status,” he says.

Not only will this achieve the shortest cycle times possible, but it will ensure a safe working environment – to the benefit of both the contractor and the customer.

“When adjudicating load and haul tenders, it is therefore vital that mines scrutinise the cycle times that contractors estimate, as this is a key criterion on which service providers can differentiate themselves,” says Campbell. “The difference between a couple of minutes per cycle could add unnecessary millions to the cost of a contract.”

GOOD PIC 01 : SPH Kundalila partners with customers to reduce cycle times.

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