

PRESS RELEASE

BT Industrial diversifies its service offering for the mining industry

9 November 2018: Industrial solutions provider BT Industrial is diversifying into heavy engineering services for the mining industry. With innovation as its key driver, the 100% black-owned company has developed an array of proprietary technologies in collaboration with top universities in the field of engineering. It provides business solutions, quantity surveying, specialised piping systems and solutions, and specialised procurement.

With the South African mining industry faced with transformation, economic, and technological challenges such as increased mechanisation, BT Industrial saw a gap to increase its value-added proposition for its customers in this space. “In order to keep our spirit of innovation alive, we wanted to move into industrial solutions to continue to differentiate ourselves,” Managing Director **Kgomotso Lekola** comments. Here the main focus was minerals-processing plants and refineries, which have specific engineering requirements.

Lekola, who has a BSc and MBA among his qualifications, comments that what sets BT Industrial apart in a highly competitive marketplace is the quality of its ideas. “Given our relative size, we spend a lot on research and development compared to many other much larger companies. We had to come at it with the aim of doing something different. What has helped us gain traction in such a short space of time is our ongoing commitment to innovation.”

Without innovation, the only differentiator is price, and without scale it is impossible to compete with the entrenched players. “You have to bring real value to the table, which is what we have always strived to do. Having said that, constantly coming up with new ideas is difficult, combined with the general risk aversion of industry,” Lekola explains.

From the introduction of prepaid television in South Africa to insurance hail-warning notifications, Lekola’s involvement with the mining industry began with his acquisition and further strategic development of AfricaWeather, a leader in weather-risk management for the mining industry. Here the key value proposition is safety and work planning according to weather conditions using technology developed to track storms, monitor lightning strikes (cloud-to-cloud and cloud-to-ground), and generating accurate bespoke seven- to 14-day forecasts based on the mine’s unique operational requirements.

This paved the way to develop more technological solutions for mines, and hence BT Industrial was established. “This gave me direct exposure to the mining industry in terms of both its business risks and opportunities,” Lekola adds. He reveals that the company has been hard at work on an array of innovative processes and techniques for proactive maintenance in process plants and mines that it will launch officially in early 2019. “The key to proactive maintenance is that it must be optimised to reduce the risk of disruptive shutdowns.”

Lekola elaborates that pilot trials are currently being undertaken in conjunction with a major industry player. “We want to complete the pilot trials first in order to showcase our value proposition, following which we will come to market with full guns blazing. It is very exciting for us. I am of the view that the only way to be successful in this industry in Africa is to be able to innovate. This allows you to stay ahead of the pack without being mired in price-cutting exercises, which end up being costlier in the long run, as it detracts from the total return on investment.”

In terms of the South African mining industry, Lekola notes that it has been a pioneer in ultra-deep level gold-mining for many years. “We have an incredible knowledge base and skills set in South Africa. The one area where we have lagged is in mechanisation, compared to Australia, for example,

where the production cost for an ounce of gold or ton coal is lower.” However, it then created the misconception that this lack of productivity is inherent in the local labour force itself.

This is where a major innovator such as BT Industrial stands to play a key role in revitalising the mining industry in Africa. “We have a choice as a continent whether or not we want to be behind the curve, or ahead of it. Yes, it is capital-intensive and difficult to execute, with a lot of socio-political factors to consider as well. The balance that we need to strike is between increasing efficiencies and mechanising without necessarily putting people out of work. There is no simple solution to that.”

However, Lekola remains bullish as to the future of the mining industry, both locally and in Africa. “I do believe we will solve the problems facing the mining industry, however intractable and systemic they may appear to be. We are a proudly South African company, and are deeply committed to helping our country continue to prosper well into the future,” he concludes.

Ends

Notes to the Editor

To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click on the BT Industrial link to view the company’s press office.

About BT Industrial

We are a 100% black-owned industrial solutions business, which aims to assist South African industry in delivering projects with maximised ROI. We plan, cost, model, and execute large and complex projects, with the objective of maximising returns for our clients. We have a team of experienced financial and economic modellers, professional engineers, project managers, and quantity surveyors, and a strong execution labour force. Our team has executed projects with a combined value of R3 billion.

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