

PRESS RELEASE

De Beers, Debswana give insight into digital transformation at 5th Natural Resources Forum

17 September 2019: Leading mining companies Debswana and De Beers gave key presentations about how they are implementing digital transformation in their operations at the 5th Annual Natural Resources Forum, hosted by French software leader Dassault Systèmes, at The Michelangelo Hotel in Sandton on Wednesday 11 September.

Accessing data from over 1 km underground is a particular challenge for the Debswana Diamond Company of Botswana, according to **Brian Chimoba**, Principal – Business Process Integration. Here the diamond-mining giant is leveraging the **3DEXPERIENCE®** platform, Dassault Systèmes's flagship digital platform, to optimise its geoscience, mining, and production operations.

De Beers was represented by **Giel Marais**, Senior Automation and Information Manager, and **Freddie Breed**, Senior Mining Engineer. They gave a joint presentation on how the Venetia Underground Project is aiming to develop an integrated management solution for the entire operation.

Both companies are evidence of a new mindset in the South African mining industry, according to **David Osborn**, Managing Director of Dassault Systèmes in South Africa. While the local mining industry remains a tough environment due to a combination of political, economic, and social factors, a key realisation is that change is inevitable.

“Now that we have all of the challenges mapped out, mining companies are acknowledging that, if they continue with business as normal, results will not improve. It has got to take a different approach to doing things. Due to the fact that the mining industry has been stagnant for so long, it has since been surpassed in the technology stakes by other industries such as manufacturing, automotive, aerospace, and oil and gas. It has the opportunity to cherry-pick what will work best for it in terms of digital innovation,” Osborn argued.

Mining companies like Debswana and De Beers have intuited the significant value inherent in such an approach. “The key is collaboration. We might not have all of the solutions at hand, but together with our partners, we can solve their problems. Helping establish a future-proofed mining industry based on digital innovation is our main goal,” Osborn affirmed.

Raoul Jacquand, CEO of the GEOVIA Brand from Dassault Systèmes, stressed that the positive experience of mining companies like De Beers and Debswana was creating a snowball effect within the local mining industry. “Hearing what our clients have to say about their experiences in implementing our solutions, and how they are collaborating with us, is so much more powerful.”

It is for this reason that Dassault Systèmes established the Natural Resources Forum as an interface with the local mining industry. “We also realised that, in the conventional way of doing things, the mining industry was jumping too quickly to the ‘how’. They were more interested in the functionality and features required to solve specific technical problems, for example, as opposed to stepping back, take time to revisit the “why?” and the “what?” to ultimately serve a business purpose.

“The main aim of the Natural Resources Forum is therefore to allow clients to understand our role as a business partner interested in the overall outcome. Of course, resolving all of the technical issues is still paramount, but we can get so much more out of a holistic approach. This has been a mindset change as much for us as for our clients, and it is an evolutionary process documented by the Natural Resources Forum over the years,” Jacquand highlighted.

The forum has also been key to showcase the user-friendliness and flexibility of the **3DEXPERIENCE®** platform, which is completely scalable according to specific client requirements and operations. “The fact is that any mining company wishing to embark upon the digital transformation journey can start off small. We want to dispel the notion that it is overwhelming, complicated, and costly. There are tangible low-hanging fruit like simple enterprise collaboration that can deliver immediate results.”

The secret to the ultimate success of embracing digital transformation in the mining industry is maximising the potential of big data. “Traditionally information has been synonymous with a mining company’s competitive edge, but the digital platform reveals that democratising data unlocks its value so much faster. It allows mining companies to address an entire spectrum of issues on a single level, which means that a unified solution is entirely feasible,” Jacquand pointed out.

However, he stressed that the **3DEXPERIENCE®** platform was much more of an enabler than a replacement for any existing or competing systems. “Not only is it completely scalable, ultimately it is a vehicle for innovation. As a result, it needs to be open by nature, and able to interact with the landscape of existing systems. It is there to give a direction for the future and assist mining companies in orientating their business strategies. Hence the platform’s representative icon is a navigation compass, as it reduces complexity and guides businesses in the right direction towards clearly-defined goals.”

This is where the **3DEXPERIENCE®** Twin of the Mine concept plays such a crucial role. A holistic virtual twin of a mining site can optimise operations through simulation. Exploring different scenarios in a virtual space will allow mining companies to simulate for any eventuality and plan accordingly.

This virtual twin is a powerful instrument to engage all stakeholders. “What digital transformation achieves is to break down physical and organisation boundaries, which is essential for innovation. The fact that the mining industry is highly technical has resulted in a series of silos developing over time.

“Our **3DEXPERIENCE®** solution brings all of these vertical silos together on a lateral level in order to leverage change and achieve a complete mining value chain. While automation in the mining industry has always thought to be synonymous with job losses, different opportunities will instead be presented, and current roles transformed rather than replaced,” Jacquand concluded.

Ends

Notes to the Editor

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

About Dassault Systèmes

Dassault Systèmes, ‘The **3DEXPERIENCE®** Company’, is a French software company headquartered in Vélizy-Villacoublay, France that develops 3D design, 3D digital mock-up, and product lifecycle management (PLM) software. Dassault Systèmes develops and markets PLM software and services that support industrial processes by providing a 3D vision of the entire lifecycle of products from conception to maintenance. Dassault Systèmes has customers in the following industries: aerospace and defence, architecture, engineering and construction, consumer goods (distribution), FMCG (distribution), energy and processes, finance and corporate services, high-tech, industrial equipment, life sciences, marine and offshore, natural resources, and transport and mobility.

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