The way in which we work has changed, perhaps permanently. The events of 2020 forced many mining and resources organisations to adopt new technology to support travel restrictions and remote working.

Now, 18 months on, what impact has this ‘new normal’ having on our sector? What challenges lie ahead? And importantly, what role does technology play?

Our team was recently invited to be part of a panel discussion on this topic at the three-day AusIMM Mill Operators Conference in Brisbane. With over 600 attendees, both virtual and in person, this conference explored best practice in all areas of plant operations practices and management, tailings and water management and geometallurgy.

Gary Larking, our expert Programme Manager sat on the panel.

**Gary’s insights focused around three key themes:**

1. **WITHOUT TRANSPARENCY THERE CAN BE NO TRUST.**
   This is one of the greatest challenges in the digital world. While there is technology available that can provide organisations with fully transparent and accurate data (like our Metallurgical Intelligence® suite), many organisations are still lagging in terms of their digital transformation.

   Historically, a lack of robust governance frameworks for industry has meant that many organisations are used to being able to control their data and report only on what they decide is accurate. While there may be short term gains and potential political advantage in this approach, it means efficiencies are often overlooked. This can have enormous negative financial implications.

   In reality, it takes time and the right approach to adjust to the level of exposure that digital technologies can provide. The key to overcoming resistance is ensuring engaged leadership with subject matter expertise. This will ultimately lead to a strong culture of reporting the facts, and working together to understand and improve operations. It is difficult to improve what is not accurately measured and reported.

2. **“WE CAN DO THAT OURSELVES”**
   Mineral processing operations rarely build their own Ball Mill. They obtain one from specialists and have their people trained on its use. Resource companies, particularly large ones, however have developed a “we can do that ourselves” mentality when it comes to software development. This inevitably leads to wasted time and money. In truth, developing reliable and highly effective software takes time. For example, our Metallurgical Intelligence® suite has been developed over 10 years, and we have invested more than 400,000 hours of time in continual refinement and development. And there is still more to do. Often mineral processing companies do not fully appreciate the challenges involved in software development, and their results often reflect they are not structured to succeed in this area.

3. **MEANINGFUL CHANGE REQUIRES A COMBINATION OF PEOPLE + PROCESSES + TECHNOLOGY**
   Throughout the conference, Gary also pointed out the importance of taking an overarching view of digital transformation – one that spans people, processes and technology to deliver meaningful information derived from quality data. Processes must be overhauled, gradually, and people who work at a site must be fully trained and brought up to speed on any new technology, or the technology investment on its own won't deliver the value expected. Fitness doesn't come from simply buying an exercise bike - you need to be disciplined in your use of it!

If you would like to know more about our panel presentation, [get in touch](mailto:jane@metallurgical.com.au).

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