

Technology Research Pays Dividends

By Deborah Spicer

Research into available technology is always worthwhile when setting up a new mineral processing plant. This is according to Venmyn Minerals Projects Management Advisor Moses Goosen, who is currently investigating alternative technologies that would be appropriate for a mineral processing plant in the Northern Cape.

For the Northern Cape project, Venmyn is investigating technologies that are suitable for that particular grade of Run of Mine ore; comparing processes that are used for lower- and higher-grade ore; examining the costs of the processes; and determining the benefits of each of the technologies.

“The aim is not to prescribe a particular technology, but to make a recommendation based on the costs and the advantages and disadvantages of each of the available technologies,” says Goosen.

When considering establishing a plant or mining operation, it is important to take cognisance of the acronym “PESTL”, which highlights that political, environmental, social, technological and legal issues should be investigated in all business endeavours, in addition to technical, financial and marketing considerations.

Technological considerations are particularly important because they ensure that a company is familiar with the technologies others have developed and ensure that its costs are comparable with other producers’ costs within that industry sector. “Cost is one of the factors that determines whether you should go into business or not as it affects profit margins,” says Goosen.

In addition, technological considerations can influence a company’s environmental footprint. “Considering newer technology can ensure that a company has a sustainable business model in terms of being green – and this is in line with the latest trends,” Goosen notes.

While the technology research project that Venmyn is currently involved in relates to a greenfield operation, Goosen notes that brownfield projects require similar technology-research benchmarking projects.

This could involve doing process re-engineering of the process flow within an operation or other business improvements, including Six Sigma and just-in-time technology, etc.

To find out more about technology benchmarking, please contact Moses Goosen.

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Email: michelle@venmyn.com

Tel: +27 11 783 9903