

The Truck/Shovel Users Group Supports Innovation in Mining
by John Thomas and Gord Winkel

Continuous improvement in mining is being supported by a group that regularly meets to learn about innovations in operating both shovel and truck equipment. It's appropriately called the Truck/Shovel Users Group (TSUG) and it builds on a track record of mining firms working together and learning from each other when it comes to equipment performance. While historically much of this information sharing has been done in an informal manner, the TSUG was established to provide a more formal mechanism to enable learning to occur.

The TSUG has been operating for about three years, and it has been found that significant benefits result to participating members when they share some of their successes and issues with equipment performance. It also provides a forum for operators to look for commonality in terms of equipment performance topics, which is intended to directly support mine equipment manufacturers in terms of focusing this feedback and enabling them to address issues on a more universal basis. Further, we know mining to be a high-technology business, and are continually supported by mine equipment manufacturers developing new and beneficial technologies to improve performance. The TSUG has a wide range of membership that tests these new technologies under many different applications and conditions, and is looking to provide feedback on technology performance in a concise and coordinated manner to equipment manufacturers.

The focus for TSUG meetings is based on treating equipment performance holistically in terms of safety, operation and maintenance. The technology development that supports equipment design can act to focus discussions on maintenance and reliability considerations. In the TSUG the equipment is considered as part of a whole operating system, and in that regard it focuses not only on maintenance but also the practices of operation and the safety of people who work with the equipment, making it a somewhat unique group within the mining industry.

The TSUG seeks to use an interactive approach in their meeting process to encourage participation and learning. It is realized that many of those working on the front line of the mining industry are heavily engaged, and the work to compile more formal presentations while valuable, is not necessarily the vehicle of choice for sharing information effectively to groups that meet to dialogue on the subjects at hand. To address this each session has an open agenda that concentrates on the three aspects of equipment performance mentioned earlier, that being maintenance, operations and safety. The value proposition for the TSUG is driven by the intent of members to return from their sessions with information significantly helpful to their respective operations in each of the three categories to merit this participation. Driven by this value proposition, each participant is

expected to share this caliber of value added information with the balance of the group toward synergistically achieving a learning environment that supports increasing the effectiveness of their respective mining operations.

The TSUG value proposition is also supported through the rotation of meeting venues to different mine sites operated by the membership. An integral part of every TSUG session includes a comprehensive tour of the operation they are visiting. Experience has shown that host operators have benefited greatly from the comments and perspectives of visiting members in that many of the elements of a mining operation that are considered to be areas of opportunity or issue have been addressed by others. Further, in any host mine there are elements of an operation that successfully demonstrate practices that may still be a source of challenge for others. In addition, even established procedures can enjoy continuous improvement through the observations from members that are new to the operation and view it from a different experience base.

In terms of future objectives, the TSUG is working to more fully engage the equipment manufacturers in such a way that the information gained from TSUG sessions can be used effectively by them and shared throughout the industry.

The Truck/Shovel Users Group (TSUG) represents yet another collaborative effort by mining people to improve the overall effectiveness of the mining industry through sharing of grassroots innovations at work in many operations. For further information on the TSUG please contact John Thomas at thomas.john@syncrude.com or Tom Demorest at demorest.tom@syncrude.com.