

# Minor adjustments can lead to improved efficiencies, reduced costs

NADINE JAMES | CREAMER MEDIA STAFF WRITER

Regular audits on screening equipment enable service technicians to detect areas where maintenance or small adjustments are needed, which can subsequently result in improved operational performance of equipment, thereby increasing its longevity and reducing costs, advises vibrating equipment manufacturer Kwatani, formerly Joest Kwatani.

Kwatani MD Kim Schoepflin explains that such small changes – such as retorquing fasteners, replacing the screen panels and/or old isolations – can enhance operational efficiency and, thereby, produce better throughput.

She notes that the mining landscape has changed over the past four years, as a result of increased pressures caused by dismal commodity prices, higher

operational costs and a global decline in growth.

“Mining companies are trying to operate at the lowest possible cost, which often results in reduced production and maintenance, as well as job losses.”

Consequently, this has led to mines having smaller workforce and limited technical skills. “Some mines have been forced to reduce their staff complement, resulting in a limited number of skilled artisans and operators for the maintenance of processing equipment. Therefore, reactive and often substandard equipment maintenance occurs.”

Schoepflin stresses that mining companies need to realise that the quality and performance of their vibrating equipment directly link to the overall performance of their processing plants and, ultimately,

their mineral production and profits. Thus, a lack of maintenance is detrimental to not only screening equipment but also the company’s bottom line. She adds that companies should keep this in mind when

procuring spares for original-equipment manufacturer (OEM) machinery.

“At a few of the mines we’ve visited, artisans have lacked the basic tools to maintain equipment or are using non-OEM spares, where compatibility is negligible at best.”

Schoepflin affirms that using the incorrect tool often damages equipment, while using cheaper replacement parts can have “disastrous effects”.

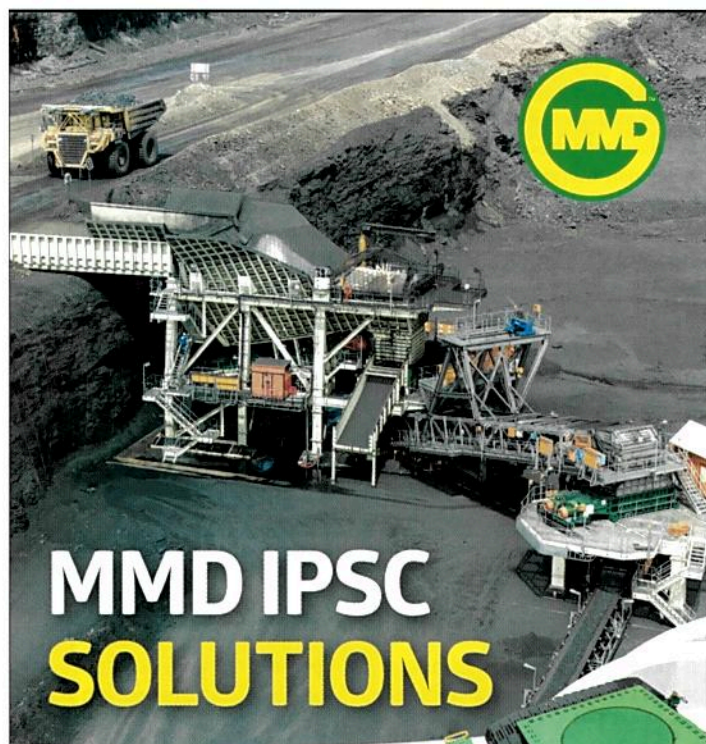
“Most of our screening solutions are custom-built, based on the customer’s specific site requirements. This means that, for example, if a company were

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to replace our exciter gearbox fasteners with non-OEM fasteners, it may damage the equipment and result in unnecessary downtime."

Schoepflin states that Kwatani's service offering, which includes on-site audits and tailor-made service programmes, ensures that the life cycle and productivity of its screening equipment are enhanced.

Servicing OEM vibrating equipment across Africa, Kwatani points out that its service technicians and engineers have the technical insight and ability to restore screening equipment to OEM specifications. The company also offers a refurbishing service.

Schoepflin notes that the first priority of any Kwatani audit "is to prevent catastrophic failure" by addressing pressing issues. "For most mine managers total cost of ownership (TCO) is not their foremost priority, but keeping the mine operational, especially during times like these," she adds.

Once the equipment is restored and catastrophe averted, the on-site technician will look for areas of improvement, taking note of the components that will require refurbishment at a later stage and, ultimately, looking for ways to improve TCO.

The company also uses an in-house, custom-designed, condition-monitoring system that uses testing and measuring technology to pre-empt equipment failure, retaining valuable long-term data on plant performance.

Schoepflin emphasises the importance of having the company's technicians on site and maintaining open working relationships with clients: "Being at the mine enables our technicians to interact with operators, metallurgists and artisans, gaining a sense of the kind of results each one is looking for. Kwatani's technicians can also attain a holistic view of how screening equipment operates at specific mines."

Kwatani also offers training to mine artisans and operators as stipulated by specific service agreements, whereby clients maintain their own equipment with the support and guidance of skilled and experienced Kwatani technicians.

Schoepflin explains that training artisans mostly comprises skilling them in the maintenance of core components, namely drives, looking after the screen deck and the isolation of the screens, while informing them of potential risks and providing troubleshooting processes and solutions.

Kwatani tends to prefer this approach, she adds, noting that it is more sustainable, as it empowers and upskills mine employees while instilling of a sense of accountability.

The company, a Level 3 broad-based black

economic empowerment contributor that is 30% black-owned, claims to be the first of its kind to exceed the Mining Charter requirements in South Africa. While it is not exhibiting at the 2017 Investing in African Mining Indaba, held from February 6 to 9, in Cape Town, Schoepflin and Kwatani staff will attend the event.

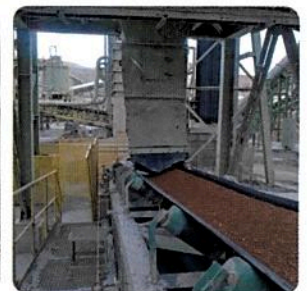
Schoepflin points out that the 40-year-old Kempton Park-based company looks forward to the Indaba every year, specifically because it is an "ideal networking platform and provides insightful panel discussions and presentations that enable attendees to judge the sentiment of the industry and react accordingly".

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**KIM SCHOEPFLIN**

Kwatani's service offering ensures that the life cycle and productivity of its screening equipment are enhanced



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