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New Concept Mining
 A Place of Opportunities



Outline

The market leader in hydraulic mine support systems, NCM has fostered a culture of innovation through the efforts of an in-house research and development team. This division has been renamed 'Connect and Develop' because the company's goal is to ensure that it connects with customers and adequately meets their needs. By establishing cross-functional teams, innovation has become a company-wide responsibility, and this has ensured that there is a continuous pipeline of new products under development.

Biggest plus

NCM's core values of integrity, innovation and investment set it apart from other industry players, ensuring that employees are ever cognisant that their efforts play a role in improving the safety of the mining industry.

Biggest challenge

NCM is seeking to differentiate itself and entrench its reputation as the best partner to the mining industry in the field of high-volume mining support and related products. This will be achieved through innovation, professional service, high-quality manufacturing, short lead-times and competitive pricing.

New Concept Mining (NCM) boasts a 20-year heritage, during which time it has established itself as a leading supplier of mine support technology in South Africa with a reputation for innovation in the design, engineering and manufacture of products.

The business

NCM was established by Paul McKelvey in 1989 with the vision of providing quality products which improve the safety and productivity of South Africa's mining industry. The company's first success came with the introduction of a range of mono-rope equipment, which had a dramatic impact on safety, and swiftly obtained dominant marketshare. By the mid-1990s, NCM had commenced producing a range of permanent and temporary mining support products, and it built on its success with the Jackpot range of pre-stressing units – products which further entrenched the company as the market leader, and earned the company its second SABS Design Excellence Award. Other accolades won by NCM »



'NCM is a young company untouched by an inherited, archaic management style, yet retaining good values, gentlemanly conduct and integrity. The directors and staff have learned together, bringing us to a point where the company is honed and efficient.'

Glenda Stephens – Financial Manager

include the Cullinan and Design Institute of South Africa (DISA) awards. Meanwhile, the company has filed almost 100 design patents both locally and internationally.

From a people perspective, the company prides itself on being 'a place of opportunity'.

Differentiating factors

Innovation is the hallmark of NCM, and is the defining quality that has driven it to the top of the industry's ranks.

The company's rapid growth means that exciting opportunities are available to employees. Yet, despite this evolution and development, which has necessitated the implementation of more formal business practices, the company has successfully maintained the spirit and energy which are typical of a small company.

NCM's cross-functional teamwork approach not only encourages transparent and ongoing communication throughout the organisation, but has also shaped the company culture to a large extent. The result is an informal atmosphere – 'We have no designated parking bays, for instance,' says Managing Director Philip Maxton – marked by vibrant idea exchange.

Talent management and development

Henri Visser, General Manager: Human Resources, reveals that among the company's top HR priorities is the formalisation of certain processes. 'The company's growth has brought to our attention the need for more sophisticated structures,' he explains. 'Our focus has traditionally been on building capacity to serve product demand. However, we are now in a space where we can concentrate more on the importance of people – which means we can devote more attention to ensuring our ship stays on course.' Performance management systems are a case in point: in the past, performance assessments were conducted on an annual basis. These are being re-engineered to encourage greater participation from management, with greater frequency. 'We believe that regular feedback will not only enthuse and energise the workforce, but also help staff become more aware of areas requiring improvement, and provide a platform for tweaking these areas,' notes General Manager: Marketing Brendan Crompton.

The company's workforce comprises a large number of less skilled workers, and Visser admits that it is a challenge to help these individuals move from waged into salaried positions. NCM's Nugget programme was introduced in 2006, with an eye to identifying and upskilling talented employees. Fifteen workers were

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selected to undergo a comprehensive process, which focused on pinpointing the areas of the business they enjoy, and formulating corresponding development plans with the requisite training and mentoring. 'This initiative has proved most successful,' reports Maxton. 'Many of the individuals have already been promoted since embarking on the programme.'

Added to this, an ABET programme was established in 2006. Initially a pilot programme with just 12 participants, the campaign has met with an extremely positive response, and is now attended by 40 employees.

Training initiatives have been devised to meet the needs of salaried staffers, too. According to Visser, 'The development of technical skills is of particular importance. One of our key initiatives is a programme aimed at developing maintenance assistants into fully qualified artisans.'

He adds that the company has also recently introduced a retention and development strategy, which concentrates on identifying and growing employees who exhibit exciting potential. 'The implementation of this process will ensure that NCM's culture remains one of high performance,' he states.

Job opportunities at NCM range from logistics to processes, finance, marketing, sales, HR, and project and design engineering. »

'I see NCM as a place of opportunities. The company has helped my son further his studies and helped me in my plans to get married and improve my living conditions.'

Obed Coka – Press Operator

'NCM provides an excellent training ground for young engineers, offering great exposure to both new product design and capital investment projects.'

Morne Smuts – GM Supply Chain



Salaries, rewards and benefits

NCM participates in a national salary benchmarking survey, which ensures that salaries are market related. Visser reports that remuneration is further linked to knowledge. Packages are structured on a cost-to-company basis, which provides the flexibility for employees to choose their medical aid and provident fund, although NCM offers the opportunity to participate in a Liberty Life-administered fund which provides death and disability benefits, as well as financial advice.

Other benefits offered to salaried staff members range from leave (increasing with long service) to overtime pay. Study assistance is available for courses related to individuals' fields of practice, while bursary schemes are available for children of staffers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This year, 25 bursaries have been awarded.

The company's '100 Club' reward programme is a points-based initiative recognising stellar performance. Employees become a member of the '100 Club' when they have accrued 100 points. They may then choose a gift from a pre-selected range.

Waged staffers earn competitive remuneration according to a grade structure. NCM is a member of the Metals and Engineering Industries Bargaining Council (MEIBC), which is responsible for overseeing national wage and benefit negotiations. Visser says that a number of benefits, in addition to the Main Agreement, are negotiated at company level.

According to Visser, NCM's greatest contribution lies not only in its attractive remuneration packages, but in the emotional contract the company has nurtured with its workforce, through its range of benefits.

Black economic empowerment

NCM is ranked as a Level 7 Contributor. BEE ownership in the company stands at higher than 25%; this stake being held by members of the Royal Bafokeng nation, a women's empowerment group hailing from Rustenburg, as well as local mining empowerment companies.



'We consider Best Employer accreditation criteria as a framework for measuring and improving our performance as an employer. We recognise that the success of all our business strategies depends on our ability to be an employer of choice.'

Philip Maxton – Managing Director



Philip Maxton

– Managing Director

Henri Visser

– General Manager:
Human Resources

Morne Smuts

– General Manager: Supply Chain

Schalk Burger

– General Manager: Finance

Dave Gravett

– General Manager: Sales

Vittorio D'Amico

– General Manager: Quality

Brendan Crompton

– General Manager: Marketing

Juan Quiroga

– General Manager: South America

Responsible citizenship

NCM is currently conducting a review of company electricity consumption, with an eye to reducing its energy use. Great care is taken to ensure that effluent and fumes produced at the company's factory are within legal limits, and the company participates in air quality and lighting surveys to ensure compliance. Greening activities include the re-landscaping of office premises, and sponsoring Arbor Day at a customer's headquarters.

The company has focused its corporate social investment initiatives on employees' communities, and the areas surrounding the mines it supplies.

Flagship interventions centre on education, and include a school feeding scheme which provides daily meals for 60 learners at a Rustenburg school. The company has, moreover, joined forces with the Royal Bafokeng Nation to equip the science laboratory at a Phokeng secondary school. 'This was a particularly relevant project for us, as we are keenly aware of the need to promote maths and science,' Maxton comments. 'These subjects are crucial for the development of the mining and manufacturing industries.' The company has deepened its contribution in this area by sponsoring top mining and engineering students at the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg, and offering vacation work experience.

Maxton is proud of the role that NCM has played in growing the country's skills pool; not only through its support of educational initiatives but also through the company's growth which has seen it upskill a number of staffers with technical skills.

Other initiatives supported by NCM include a daycare centre for a Magaliesburg school and the annual CANSA Lost City Cycle Classic (where it mans one of the water points en route).

Following the ethos that charity begins at home, NCM has established an on-site clinic providing primary healthcare. Visser »

reports that the clinic receives around 20 visits per month. Added to this, a meal supplement scheme is in place for waged employees – a means of addressing their health and wellbeing, Visser explains.

International stance

NCM enjoys a global presence through its Peru-based operation, which acts as a sales and distribution centre for Latin American customers. Products are also distributed throughout Australasia through an Australian-based agency, while NCM has successfully attracted customers in North America as well as Europe.

The future

Maxton predicts that the growth enjoyed by NCM will continue. 'We ceaselessly strive towards improving efficiencies by investing in new technologies and implementing world-class manufacturing practices,' he states.

The people

Paul McKelvey founded NCM with the goal of improving the safety of mines, a topic for which he felt a deep passion. His work is continued by Managing Director Phillip Maxton. 'Our goal is to attract the top people in their fields to the company,' says Visser of the company's recruitment practices. However, in the spirit of creating opportunity and nurturing talent, all vacant positions are advertised internally first. If no appropriate candidates are found, the company will approach recruitment agents or advertise externally in relevant media. Graduate recruitment is a major drive, with NCM striving to establish a presence at leading universities. 'Our specific challenge is creating awareness



in the engineering industry; although we enjoy a good presence amongst mining players, we are eager to attract more attention from the former,' Visser comments. He adds that people are drawn to the company because of its dynamic nature, its professional and challenging work environment and the exciting opportunities for growth and development that NCM offers.

'Attitude, interest and skill are important attributes that NCM looks for when recruiting staff,' Crompton continues. 'Employees need to be able to cope in a fast-paced environment and have the ability to think laterally.' Energy and drive are other highly valued traits, as is a knack for executing ideas.

An induction programme introduces new employees to the company. Employees are encouraged to question and discuss company issues, which necessitates a significant degree of trust. Hence the importance of open communication, Visser says – particularly because the nature of NCM's business requires a large number of people working at different sites, and is characterised by shiftwork. Open channels are maintained through quarterly 'What's Hot' management meetings and an open-door policy, as well as the internal newspaper, social events and teambuilds. Regular Employee Teas provide a platform for staffers to raise their concerns with the managing director. Creative initiatives include theatre groups, to communicate around issues like HIV/Aids and safety.

Company culture and style

NCM prides itself on having preserved the zest and entrepreneurial spirit of a small, young company, in spite of the growth which has been achieved. This is largely thanks to its cross-functional approach to projects, which prohibits a silo mentality. 'Innovation remains at our core, and suggestions for change and improvement to any aspect of the business are encouraged,' Crompton says.

Maxton adds that NCM's culture further encourages staff to take responsibility for their roles, and to push themselves to grow. ■

FACTS & FIGURES

- Total number of staff employed: +500
- Industry sector: Mining and engineering
- Black employees: +90%
- Black executive (senior) management: +25%
- Women employees: +3%
- Women executive (senior) management: +5%
- Previously disadvantaged individuals in management: +65%
- Absenteeism/sick leave taken during the past financial year: +4%
- Employee Assistance Programmes: Bursary schemes, meal programme, HIV testing being implemented through the American Presidential Emergency Plan for Aids Relief