

Advertorial | **SRK – 50th anniversary**

SRK celebrates its half century of innovation in mining

It has been 50 years since SRK Consulting founders **Oskar Steffen, Andy Robertson** and **Hendrik Kirsten** started their consulting business in Johannesburg.

The world was a different place in 1974, but the innovation on which SRK Consulting has built its global network remains a key ingredient in mining's success. Now with over 1 700 staff around the world, the company has made 'Innovation in Focus' the theme of its golden anniversary year.

"Innovation was a key driver in the company's founding and our people continue to build on that legacy," says SRK Global group CEO **Tim McGurk**. "Because the projects we undertake

with our clients are becoming increasingly complex, it is inevitable that we renew our commitment to innovation in our work, as we reflect on our past and future."

Sustainable Solutions

This year, SRK continues to innovate both with technology and with its approach to tailoring services to meet clients' needs for sustainable solutions, explains McGurk.

"For example, we have consultants harnessing machine learning to support exploration projects, and others using object-oriented programming to optimise field data interpretation and visualisation," he says.

"Still other professionals in our teams develop tools for understanding the impact of hydrology and climate change on surface water."

Statesman, Entrepreneur, Scientist

Speaking at SRK's 50th anniversary celebration at the Investing in African Mining Indaba in Cape Town, global chairperson **Alejo Sfriso** paid tribute to the three founders: a statesman, an entrepreneur and a scientific mind.

"They invited bright people to join SRK with these simple words: come build your own practice within our company," said Sfriso. "They then set up a flat, employee-owned business model that creates empowered employees and, with time, partners."

The result, he said, was innovation, as this occurs most frequently at the boundaries of the many disciplines that SRK now contains.

 **srk** consulting **50 YEARS**



Responsible Mining

SRK Consulting (South Africa) MD **Andrew van Zyl** points to the importance of innovation in solving technical challenges in mining – and in the journey towards more responsible mining.

“The sector remains central to the provision of society’s basic needs, supplying critical resources for daily life today as well as the transition to a lower carbon future,” says Van Zyl. “As SRK, we believe that we are making a difference in the industry – helping to maximise the contribution that mining makes to society and communities.”

This achievement, he notes, is based on having people with the right skills, experience and attitudes – and notably a passion for solving technical problems in a way that contributes to society and to sustainability.

“While we are proud of the growth of our business over the past five decades, we have not prioritised growth per se,” he explains. “Our goal is to attract and nurture professionals who are committed to quality and innovation in their work, so that they can help find the best solutions for clients, communities and the planet.”



ANDREW VAN ZYL
Managing Director of SRK Consulting (South Africa)

Organic Growth

The company has developed organically from the contributions of many different technical areas and disciplines, he says, evolving to reflect the various services that mining demands over time.

“It is a journey that is full of surprises and has been incredibly rewarding for those of us who have been in the business for a while,” he says. “It is also really motivating to see people find their passion and their home in SRK – and to watch them thrive.”

Advancing by Exchanging Ideas

Indeed, the best ideas are often born from diverse minds working together, according to SRK Australia principal consultant and head of Data Services **Tracey Drew**.

“SRK Consulting recognises that innovation thrives on the exchange of ideas, so we advocate for an open environment where experts can apply a collective approach to problem-solving,” says Drew.

She highlights that one of the most important ways the company does this is through its biannual innovation workshops. These encourage thought leaders to “step outside the box” and stimulate creativity by breaking away from traditional workspaces.

“The internal workshops serve as a meeting point for SRK’s engineers and scientists to share their ideas with like-minded creators,” she explains. “We also gather insights we otherwise might not have had and explore

novel solutions to some of the mining industry’s most complex challenges.”

If an employee has an idea that they believe is great but they do not have the time or money to explore it further, they are encouraged to apply to attend the workshop. Here, they can put their regular day-to-day work tasks aside and focus their efforts on seeing their idea come to life.

Collaborative Effort

“Many of us are generating or improving tools and applications to aid our work, but we often may not be aware of others working on similar initiatives,” she continues. “This lack of collaborative effort can restrict the evolution of many ideas.”

The decision to commit time and funding to this initiative was sparked at a global SRK Practice Leaders meeting in 2015, where members highlighted the value of harnessing innovation in the consulting group. An example of the power of these workshops was the software package developed by tailings consultant **Jonathon Eldridge** and his team at SRK Australia. Presented at the latest innovation workshop in 2023, this digital tool assists in the easier interpretation of *in situ* geotechnical testing, offering significant value to SRK’s clients.

Van Zyl concludes that SRK remains “a little bit like a family” and is always looking out for skilled people who share its values of respect for each other.

“I believe we’re fundamentally a caring organisation and we nurture each other,” he says. “We want to see our people find fulfilment in the solutions they develop and to prosper in this innovative environment.”

Global chairperson **Sfriso** concurs, by answering the question of what lies ahead for the company.

“Our future lies in securing that our culture of empowered individuals choosing to work together stays as we grow and diversify as the world-wide mining consultancy of choice,” he says.



Tel: +27 11 441 1111
www.srk.com