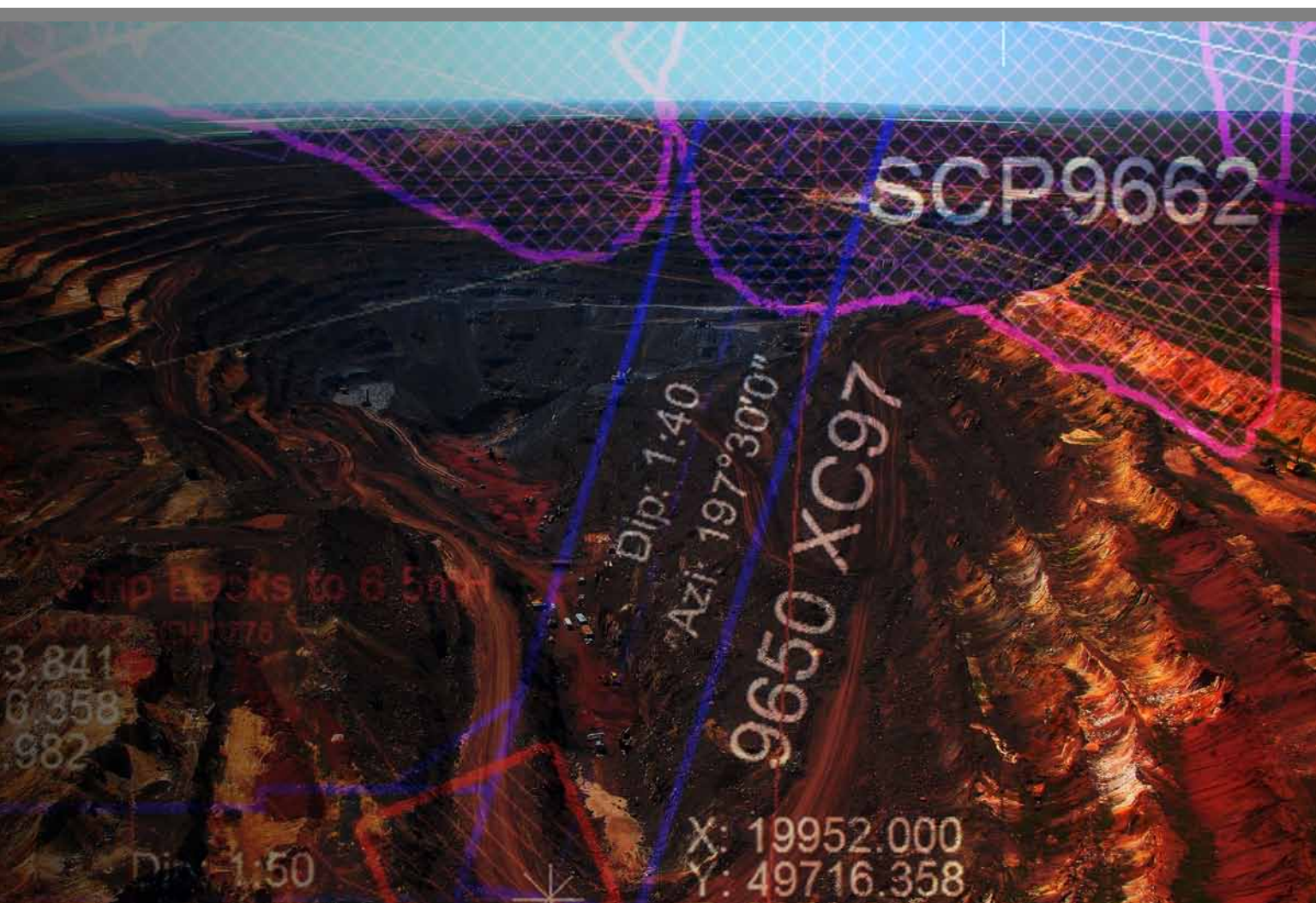


MINE RP

www.minerpsolutions.com



AHEAD OF THE PACK

Alan Swaby talks to a South African mining software company that is resisting being pigeon-holed and, in the process, carving out a successful path for itself



Empie Strydom



Is it a mining-savvy IT company or an IT-savvy mining company? At one time it might have been the first; but these days, MineRP is very much a rounded supplier of mining solutions and actually wants to get much rounder.

It might be that the name MineRP is not that familiar. The reason is a fairly recent name change from the previous Gijima Mining (or GMSI if you were in South Africa) in order to better reflect the broader scope of work the company is now doing, over and above the software side of things.

Prior to 1997, GMSI was an in-house service at AngloGold, providing backroom assistance with mining technical software such as CADSmine, which combined many of the disciplines needed during valuation, reconciliation and sampling of mining assets. That year, the decision was made to spin the department off as a freestanding company and GMSI was established, pushing CADSmine, PEGs and MRM, its very successful software suites written and tailored specifically for South African conditions.

In 2000, the company spread its wings overseas and bought ACMS—a South African and Canadian business—and with it, a very complementary software package, Mine2-4D. Later on, MineRP also acquired an equal share in EPS (Enhanced Production Scheduler), through a partnership with Crest Software, its original developers. Along the way, the company attracted the attention of

Gijima Technologies (then the AST Group)—one of South Africa's largest IT suppliers with 4,000 employees—and is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gijima. The company's current workforce of around 230 is split about 50-50 between mining and IT specialists.

Armed with these and more IT solutions, MineRP has expanded its presence into all five continents, currently running eight offices that service clients in 52 different countries. In the process, it has developed some unique ways of working. "R&D is a major part of who and what we are," says vice president marketing Empie Strydom, "to

the extent that as much as 15 per cent of growth revenue is invested in new products and renewal of existing products. But none of this is done in a vacuum. Much of the direction our development takes comes from a group of 'grey heads' we have assembled—respected and

revered mining authorities who may or may not be retired but who have the time and capacity to consider what is happening within the mining industry and to identify trends almost before they have started."

Nor does MineRP try to build a wall between itself and the competition. "Rather than simply competing," says Strydom, "we prefer to 'co-pete'. We have good relations with many other mining consultancy firms who are both our opposition and customers for our software. Some of the ideas incorporated into products are even influenced by their input!"

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Number of countries
where MineRP has
a presence

“R&D IS A MAJOR PART OF WHO AND WHAT WE ARE”

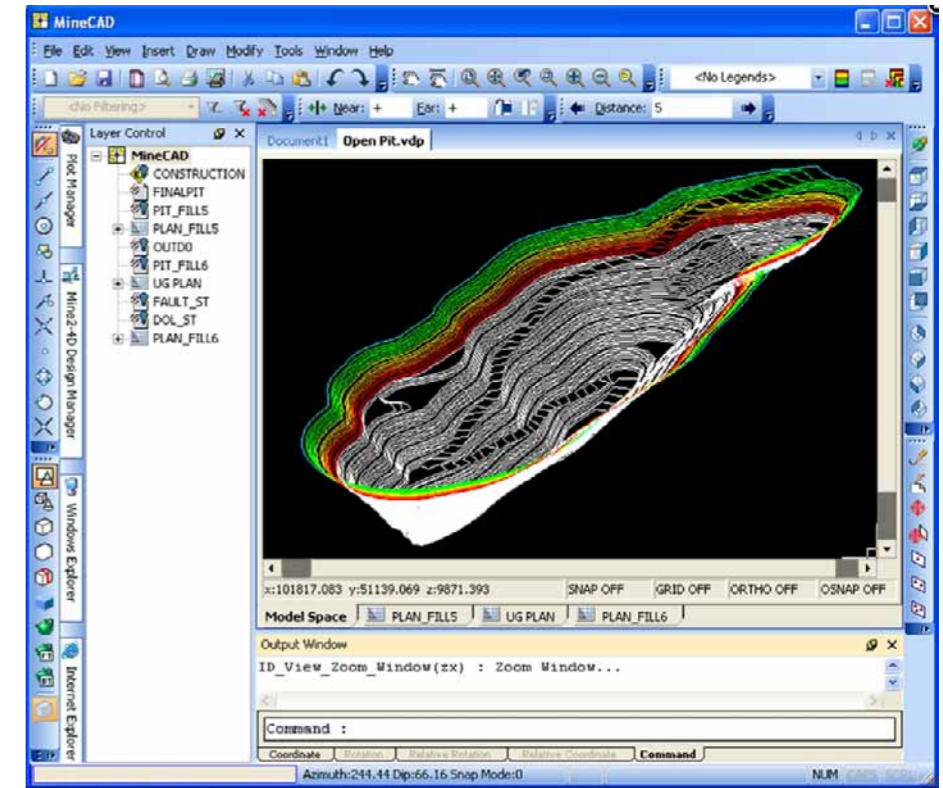
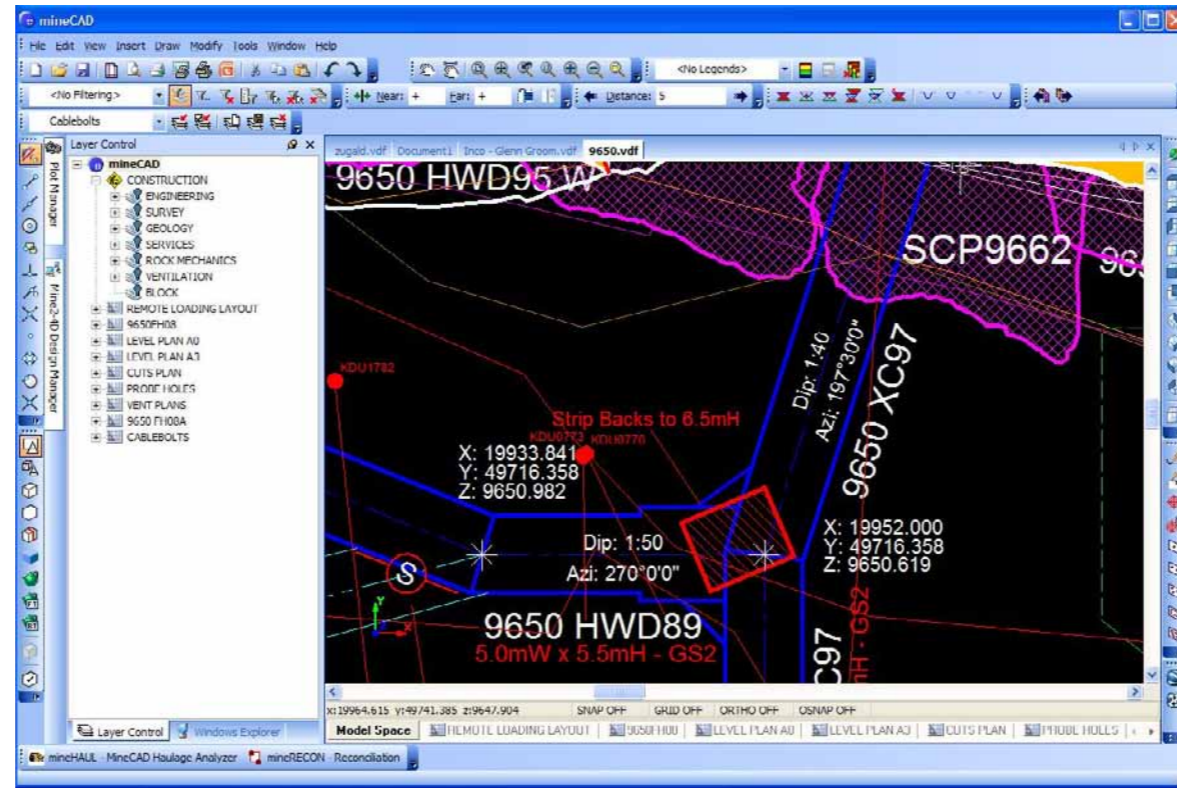
In fact MineRP’s openness goes further, through active participation in industry groups such as the Mining, Metals and Mineral Forum of the Open Group, and technological alignment with the Open Geospatial Consortium, which is setting global standards for interfaces or encodings of spatial information. “At our most recent international mine planning,” says Strydom, “we even invited two of our major competitors to share the platform with us—something we are not aware of happening anywhere else in the world. In the long run, though, collaboration to support standardisation—rather than developing purely proprietary products—is in the interests of the mining industry as a whole.”

One of the focuses of attention within the mining industry is how best to integrate the numerous engineering disciplines that make up any mining enterprise. “Specialists such as geologists, mining engineers and surveyors,” says Strydom, “often work in their own silos, and moving information between departments is not nearly as integrated and seamless as it is on the commercial side of the business. We have developed a product known as SpatialDB which can accept mining technical data from a variety of operational sources and store this data in an open and accessible

format for others to use.”

Not surprisingly, though, Strydom thinks that MineRP is well ahead of the pack when it comes to product development. “The open standards part is easy,” he says. “What’s more difficult is working within these standards to create something which operates effectively and adds real value to mines. Having developed enterprise mining products shaped by mining experts who understand the business of mining, we consider that we are years ahead of the rest when it comes to enterprise integration.”

With a solid base in both mining software and consultancy, MineRP has established a three-pronged strategy for future growth. Firstly, MineRP wants to support more disciplines across the horizontal mining value chain. This will be achieved



MineCAD screenshots

through a dual approach of expanding in-house offerings as well as establishing relationships with third party suppliers who want to benefit from the MineRP Enterprise Integration Framework.

Secondly, the company is expanding its consulting and software capabilities to assist mines with moving information ‘from the planning room to the boardroom’—a simple way of referring to turning operational data into visual, understandable information appropriate at every level of the organisation. Says Strydom: “MineRP’s SpatialDash software breaks new ground by enabling executives of mining houses to access and collect data from any location in the world and on any platform they care to use in a consistent and meaningful way.”

Despite being a South African company,

an important part of MineRP’s plans is to expand its global presence. This is the third element of the three-pronged growth strategy. With most R&D work performed in South Africa and Australia, new consulting and sales offices are being opened wherever there is a hub of mining activity: the most recent being in Chile and Turkey, which will soon be joined by a US base.

With new versions of popular products such as Mine2-4D and MineCAD due for release in 2012, mining companies can expect to see a lot more of MineRP in the years to come. **BE**

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