

# Transformational and risk-savvy leadership

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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While reputation has always been important, there has been a rethink about the purpose of a mining company. Accessing and building skills, developing the leadership for tomorrow and diversity are playing increasingly important roles, said Marco Pagnini, director of mining for DuPont Sustainable Solutions (DSS).



Marco Pagnini, director of mining, DuPont Sustainable Solutions

Even in reducing catastrophic risks, he pointed out that it was the collaborative effort of all stakeholders that significantly reduced the number of fatalities in the mining sector from 81 in 2018 to 51 in 2019.

“There has also been a great uptake in digital technologies to reduce risk and boost production in the mining sector in the past five years,” he said.

“In a fast-paced and technology-enabled industry, the key question for leaders is: ‘Are we bringing the organisations along?’ This needs to be a top down process,” Pagnini said.

“In a mature organisational structure, engagement enables risk reduction. They are characterised by people making choices to work in a certain way rather than working to a set of rules. “Digitalisation brings solutions to the table that is contributing to risk management,” he said.

“If we look at mining, the mindset and beliefs are typical of a lower mature culture, where compliance still falls within the tick-the-box mentality.

“We are seeing a congruence gap between technological advantages and mindset,” Pagnini said.

## What can leaders do to address the congruence gap?

1. Drive people and digital convergence. “There is still a lot of focus on pushing digital solutions without changing people’s mindsets,” Pagnini said.
2. Adopt a risk- and value-based and user-centric approach to digitalisation. “This includes capability building, management control and high-risk operations,” he said.
3. Make change inevitable. “The key levers includes a fail-fast-learn-fast mentality; digital solutions that are fully integrated and vertically employed, insisting on and enabling visible felt leadership, address mindsets at all levels and focus on experiences,” Pagnini said.

In answering the question: What do leaders really do? Pagnini quoted John P Kotter, who said: “They don’t make plans; they don’t solve problems; they don’t even organise people. What leaders really do is prepare organisations for change and help them struggle through it.”

## ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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