

Barnstone launches crisis response capability for mines

By [Conrad Steyn](#)

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The wave of recent violent strikes that has recently hit the South African mining industry demonstrates the need for experienced teams to manage unusual, high-profile and complex events. In response to this need, Barnstone Corporate Services has launched Barnstone Mining Crisis Response.

Barnstone Mining Crisis Response aims to give mines access to an experienced team with experience in managing this type of event. Large-scale labour disruptions, massive natural disasters and similar events require quick responses to a constantly shifting set of circumstances, and liaison with multiple stakeholders - all co-ordinated through a single hub to ensure consistency and effectiveness. In such a situation, mines might also need short-term access to specific specialist resources in a wide variety of fields.

Such events are, by their very nature, unusual and so it is highly unlikely that even the largest mining house has the skills and experience in house to deal with them. And, after years of running lean, it is no surprise that few mining houses have the necessary capabilities in house.

Marikana requires a different range of responses

Mines would typically have specialist teams, such as proto teams, to deal with what one might call "expected crises" related to their core business—a rock fall, for example. But something like Marikana requires a different range of responses, access to specialised skills and, above all, experience. That's what we offer.

Founded in 2005, Barnstone is a professional services firm focusing on programme and project management, change management, IT implementation and support, risk and training solutions for the mining and resources industries.

In the course of its work, the company has several times been called in to help clients deal with complex, high-profile events that are totally out of the normal line of business. One example was the vesting of shares in a large black economic empowerment scheme, which required providing support to large numbers of miners at multiple sites in a variety of languages, working with unions, and managing a multipronged communications programme with internal and external stakeholders. Other examples include managing one of South Africa's largest black economic empowerment deals and a large-scale (and very sensitive) legal investigation.

Barnstone's offering

Barnstone's Mining Crisis Response offering is structured across four dimensions:

- A crisis management project office to take stock of the situation, prioritise actions, set timelines, allocate resources and report back hourly or daily as required.
- A communications hub to identify communications needs for each stakeholder group, develop messages and set up appropriate delivery channels.
- A resource pool to identify critical needs and deliver tactical and administrative support as required.
- A stabilisation programme to help the organisation return to normal. Services here might include helping to renew employee contracts, developing and facilitating group communication sessions, and identifying hot spots that need to be watched.

Mines need to ask themselves whether they have identified the major threats they face and have a plan to neutralise disruptions quickly. Other questions they should be considering include whether they can cope with the magnitude and complexity of business restarts while maintaining productivity, whether their employees are sufficiently informed to prevent further unrest, and whether their administrative function can deal with the concentrated workload generated by such an event. If the answer to any of these questions is in the negative, then they should consider talking to us now, before the next crisis breaks.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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