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COLUMNS



MAGAZINE FOR SAPREF EMPLOYEES, NEIGHBOURS AND STAKEHOLDERS



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ANOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In life there are two kinds of people, those who see the glass half full and those who see it as half empty. The first half of 2020 is behind us. It taught many lessons. Lessons we didn't sign up for. Lessons we were not ready to learn. Lessons we had to learn in order to survive. It taught us that we have to adopt new ways of thinking, adapt to new ways of working and evolve as an organisation.

This issue highlights how **SAPREF** as an organisation has journeyed along this path with its values intact and remaining focused on its vision. Safety still our number one priority. We also see how even in the midst of managing the effects of a pandemic; we have not lost sight of our stakeholders. Our learners are finding ways to continue with their development, we continue to respond to the needs to our neighboring communities and employees supported through the Employee Assistance Programme.

What lies ahead in the next half of 2020 and beyond? Perhaps a more appropriate question is; are we ready for whatever may lie ahead? We are certainly repositioning **SAPREF** to meet the challenges of the future. If we have learnt anything from the first half of this year; it is that adapting to changing environments is key in order to survive in the 'new normal'.

Hats off to the team that keeps going so that the country can keep going!

Spume



EFFICIENCY IS THE NEW END-GAME



In a May 2020 address to Parliament, Minister of Trade and Industry; Ebrahim Patel noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused a massive and rapid shock to the economy, which will affect the South African economy in a very deep and significant way.

SAPREF of course, has not been spared this shock. Instead, as a margin based company it finds itself having to go into survival mode as market demand for refined products, nationally and globally have dropped.

Managing Director Victor Bester, tackles this difficult conversation head on. “Refining crude oil is a margin and efficiency game that demands resilience in any market situation. Resilience in a good market means the ability to capture the entire available margin at best efficiency, so this is what good business looks like. In a depressed market the same applies but there is a significantly stronger focus on efficiency, especially cost efficiency. Covid-19 and the recent price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia has generated a perfect storm – that is, low product demand and depressed refining margins resulting in significant financial pressure on players in the oil and gas industry. This resulted in exposing the weaknesses of the marginal players in the game - the key determining factor being break-even cost.

To adapt and be resilient in this “new normal” means lowering our break even cost. Our old normal before Covid-19 focused on cost efficiency in running our installation. The impact of the market fallout runs through the entire value chain. We therefore can no longer rely on marketing margins to support refining. The end game is to be leaner, simpler, self-funding and adaptable to the changing market environment. SAPREF is well on its way to get there, the plan is clear and the work fronts established.

The key ingredients will be ownership, strong accountability, commitment, support and a strong will to win. Now our new normal demands that we go into survival mode to become more resilient and adaptable to changing economic conditions. On a global scale, we are not big enough to leverage scale to create efficiency for our shareholder companies, BP and Shell, who are also running their businesses with tight economic constraints. “Our new reality therefore finds the shareholders no longer in a position to generate market margins to fund SAPREF’s capital requirements. They too, are looking at streamlining their value chain, which is struggling. We are, after all, in business to make positive returns on one’s capital investment spend”.

That said, in December 2019, we initiated the Programme Management Office (PMO) as the critical building block needed to continually improve our business towards Safe, Reliable and Profitable Operations. This was a chance move that created the infrastructure for a ready response with a mindset to win in any environment, however challenging.

The Covid-19 and the global lockdown economic downturn forced us to accelerate our Vision 2025 change management plans. The pandemic exposed us to the harsh reality of how quickly the market can turn with bad consequences for players with low resilience and weak performance cultures. We are fortunate to have the infrastructure in place and people that will make us leap forward. This will however come with sacrifices in the short to medium term to weather the storm and to come out as a more sustainable business fit for a changing and more challenging market. Never before has the saying “One Team, One Purpose” meant more. We had to undertake a major overhaul of where and how we utilise our very limited resources.

Picture: VICTOR BESTER

Unfortunately, this has meant that we have had to make difficult changes as we rationalise our business to give us any chance of moving forward from this crisis.

Refining crude oil is a margin and efficiency game that demands resilience

“Recognising that we are all in this together and that management does not have all the answers. An e-mail address has been set up for SAPREF staff to propose ways in which we could become lean and efficient. The PMO team is tasked to evaluate these suggestions. We have seen well thought out recommendations that have identified areas of where we can improve our efficiency and margin generating opportunities. We have also seen evidence of Team SAPREF stepping up and rallying together as One Team SAPREF with One Purpose, and for this we thank you.”

“All of us, in our personal and professional lives, have been affected by Covid-19. The lockdown has been a chance to pause, re-evaluate and reset our priorities. It has probably also given us all a new appreciation of family and definitely for teachers, as people with school going children will tell you. As lockdown regulations are lifted, continue to adhere to recommendations so as to protect yourselves from becoming infected.”

“Although this crisis will test our mettle, we have an opportunity for creating a new reality for ourselves,” concludes Victor.

REPOSITIONING SAPREF TO COMBAT THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19



Picture: Ningi Khumalo

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided SAPREF with the opportunity to accelerate planned business strategies to ensure that the company survives it and goes forward as a sustainable, efficient as well as profitable business.

Head of Finance, Ningi Khumalo, elaborates on the cost reduction measures. “It can no longer be business as usual as global market demands for refined products are reduced. We are making bold decisions to ensure the sustainability of our business in an effort to be cash neutral at the end of the year and competitive against other peer refineries.”

“The success of these cost out plans demands that we identify and remove waste and inefficiencies from our operational processes. Taking a risk based approach we have cancelled some of our growth projects, put other projects on hold and deferred some projects, to allow us to focus on safety, reliability and integrity projects. We have also had to have a hard look at priorities. This has meant reviewing what is essential versus what is nice to have and reducing discretionary spend.”

“The rationalisation processes will not be easy as it will have a very personal impact on all stakeholders of the business. However, if we are to recover economically from this pandemic, we have to take ownership in working together to maximize the chances of our survival. We have seen excellent examples of this and we encourage continued engagement. Together we will find ourselves as a LEAN organisation post Covid-19,” concludes Ningi.

A SUCCESSFUL & INCIDENT FREE START UP

The start up of the refinery on the 18 May 2020, after the stoppage for repairs, did present some unique constraints and challenges however it was a challenge that the team was up for and ensured that they saw to completion without any incidents. .

Shawn Govender, Production Projects and Turnaround Manager, says, “The starting up of a refinery is a complex operation, which dictates having the right processes, people and mechanics in place to be able to execute a safe and reliable start-up. We were pleased to deliver an incident free start-up, and we attribute this to the team’s thorough planning and preparation, as well as the strategic alignment and collaboration between the various disciplines involved in the start-up.

One of the constraints presented by Covid-19 was that we were unable to import the required LPG stock. “Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) is used in the start-up process as a fuel for our furnaces and boilers. The team had to develop innovative ways of operating the refinery boilers on Methane Rich Gas (MRG) so as to conserve the available on-hand LPG stocks, for the restart of the refinery.

“Being cognisant of the fact that the refinery starting up process does cause noise and flaring, which impacts on our fence line communities, we take care to manage the process so as to minimise the inconvenience caused to our neighbours. Some of the ways we do this is to manage the quantity, timing and duration of flaring. Flaring during shutting down and starting up is part of the refinery’s safety processes”.

We congratulate all team SAPREF members that have been involved in ensuring that all critical start up activities were executed with care and all challenges were resolved without any injuries. An event with no incident is worth celebrating.

In any activity, safety is our number one priority!





Picture: Lubin Schabalala

SETTING OUT TO INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR

Being charged with a responsibility of being a relationship and behavioural influencer, was a significant motivator for Lubin to change careers, from Electrical Engineering to HSSE. “that and the fact that with Electrical Engineering, there were not that many truly unique problems to solve,” shares adds Lubin.

Lubin, who grew up and was educated in Cape Town, took up the position of SAPREF HSSE Manager during the COVID-19 national lockdown, which initially resulted in him working remotely from Cape Town.

“When faced with ever changing uncertain situations, one has to constantly make decisions and stretch oneself to find solutions from information from different sources. Looking back at my life journey and career path, I would say that this has been a strength.

I have had to be adaptable to handle situations out of my control. This has held me in good stead; be it from my university days where I first encountered a diverse environment, or starting an assignment in San Francisco with my wife Lynn, our two-year-old toddler and three month old baby and realising I could engage comfortably with colleagues from Ivy League universities.

“A business enabler starts out with a clear set of things they want to achieve. For me, if I can look back five years from when I started at SAPREF and say the default choice people make for HSSE is based on positive conditioning and reasoning, rather than on fear of breaking the rules, I would have succeeded in my role. This will ensure that everyone goes home safely to their families after every shift.”

RETURNING TO DURBAN TO TAKE ON ROLE OF FIRE CHIEF

Durban born and educated, Michael started his career in the then Natal Provisional Administration, before moving into the petrochemical industry in 2004. He was invited by an Ireland based non-profit organisation to be part of their six member Management Advisory Team, (MAT) and seized the opportunity.

“It was definitely an honour to be recognised by MAT as a subject matter expert who could contribute to developing the knowledge, skills and understanding of emergency response personnel working in any high hazard industry”.

“Working at Sasol from 2004 until 2014 I developed a passion for Fire Engineering, in part because it was a good fit for my ethos of being organised, disciplined and doing things as per regulations’ says Michael. Joining Chevron in 2014 until 2020 presented various opportunities for Michael to increase his ER competences.



Picture: Michael Clarke

I was also involved in the evaluation of SAPREF’s training school when it was established in 2018, as a member of the South African Fire Chiefs’ Forum.”

“Coming in as the ‘new guy’ I appreciate the necessity of stepping back to gain an understanding of the culture and appetite of my team as we build up a working rapport.”

This will determine how when we look back at 2020 we can say that we have created and maintained a team of highly trained Fire Professionals and Emergency Responders who delivered on their commitments.”

Our team can make it through the new reality of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst always being cognisant of costs, which will be a test for us. We must take the time to check that everyone understands what is expected and support each other.

TURNING PLASTIC INTO WHEELCHAIRS



What do you do with plastic bottle tops? Milk caps and bread stoppers?

Most people throw them away. However, what happens when you intentionally save them, get your family and the whole organisation to save? Well, you get to save the environment and buy a wheelchair for a person in need. this is exactly what Team SAPREF does!

This was the thinking behind Des Van Der Merwe's suggestion when SAPREF ran an environmental awareness campaign. Des suggestion was adopted as the winning idea for the environmental campaign and was implemented across site. Collection points are placed at all tea stations as well as all Canteens. Team members bring bottle tops, milk caps and bread stoppers from home.

A total of 134kg of bottle caps and 3kg of bread tags have been collected so far. these were handed over to Sue Martins of the Quadriplegic Association of South Africa (QASA). Sue is the inspiration behind Des suggestion and is living with a disability, and has dedicated herself to educating people about living with a disability and still having a positive outlook in life.

It is possible, all it takes is one person, putting the cap in the recycling bin. By doing your bit towards helping a person in need, you also do your bit towards a cleaner environment.

SAPREF DONATES TO SOLIDARITY FUND

Team SAPREF have generously opened their hearts to contribute financially to the country's Solidarity Fund, set up by President Ramaphosa in aid of Covid-19 initiatives. **Over R200 000 has been collected.**

“Thank you Team SAPREF for your caring nature.”



Solidarity Fund

Unity in action

FOCUS ON THE MOST VULNERABLE: COVID-19

The elderly and people with pre-existing conditions have been identified as most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. It is for this reason the SAPREF Corporate Social Investment (CSI) identified a number of Old Age Homes and donated 3-ply cloth masks as well as sanitizers.

The 3-ply cloth masks were sourced from local NGOs from Umlazi, Merebank and Wentworth. This was an opportune moment to empower organisations from our fenceline communities.

Homes identified that work with the aged and people living with disabilities are in Lamontville, Merebank and Wentworth. They are Issy Geshen Lamont Home For The Aged, Merewent Cheshire Home & John Dunn House.

They each received masks for residents and staff (2 per person) as well as 5 months supply of gel based sanitizers. In keeping with COVID-19 regulations, all donations were received at the Home's entrance without any interaction with the elderly. Social distancing and mask wearing were adhered to at all times. It was good to witness that all Homes had very strict hand hygiene practice and visitor registration processes in place.



A further donation was made to the St Monica's Childrens' Home in response to a published plea for assistance. We donated 230 masks as well as 100 litres of sanitisers. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly presented us with new challenges. We are however, undeterred in our vision to be a partner of choice for our neighbouring communities.

Everyday we are encouraged to Take Action & Inspire Change!

IMPLEMENTING A PLAN TO MANAGE COVID-19 AT SAPREF



Picture: Melanie Francis

Faced with the unprecedented reality of Covid-19, Team SAPREF rallied together quickly to prepare a succinct response plan to protect its people during the crisis and ensure business continuity. A multidisciplinary team was formed to formulate and implement the plan.

Environmental Manager Melanie Francis said, "Covid-19 has changed the way the whole world does business, and we acknowledge everyone working at SAPREF for embracing the changes implemented to try to keep infections out of the workplace."

“Covid-19 has changed the way the whole world does business”

HERE ARE SOME OF THE INITIAL ACTIONS TAKEN BY TEAM

- Pro-active reduction of the number of people on site from 13 March via with remote working and staff rotation to make social distancing easier.
- Early implementation of the use of face masks by all onsite.
- Closure of the canteen and review of other areas where people are required to gather in groups, to ensure measures for social distancing were implemented
- Review of all activities requiring face-to-face contact (e.g. shift handover, clearance issuing, meetings, clinic visits, deliveries) and implementation of mitigation measures to reduce exposure.
- Screening of employees, service providers and visitors via health declaration forms, temperature checks, proactive testing of employees who report symptoms or who have potentially been exposed via visits to hospitals or shops that have reported cases.

“Our first priority will always remain the safety and health of SAPREF people. With this in mind, we continue to implement additional measures based on the risk assessments completed and guidelines published by Department of Health and other international organisations,” adds Melanie.



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KEEPING THE DOORS OF LEARNING OPEN

Having to remind SAPREF Learners to adhere to ‘official’ work hours was not too hard a challenge to manage when SAPREF implemented e-learning during Covid-19 lockdown.

Malcolm Jacob, Production Learnership Manager, explains, “On 17 March, with the national lockdown imminent, we quickly strategized on how best to build up our existing structures to ensure ongoing learning during the lockdown period. “Leveraging the popular WhatsApp social medium was the obvious choice for communication.

Learners, facilitators, Training Centre Staff and Competency Development & Assurance (CD&A) colleagues came to the table with their ‘can do attitude’ and enthusiasm as thought partners to forge the way forward.

With permission from course content suppliers to share their material online, we were cognisant of data costs of doing so. We compressed some 80 content pages into just over three megabytes of data, the equivalent of a few HD pictures.

Impressively the material was able to be transmitted with sufficient speed and high resolution which made this option practical and effective.

“Some of the 2020 learners did not have suitable smartphones needed to receive the material and again they proactively made arrangements by using their family devices to ensure that they are connected to learn.

Some learners had their phones stolen in house robberies where fortunately there were no personal injuries sustained. Their can do attitude ensured that regardless of the setback they made plans.



“The WhatsApp group was set up to enable learners to have discussions with each other and ask questions about the uploaded material. After noticing that some of the learners were posting content questions and discussions late into the night and over weekends, we did have to curb their exuberance to learn by asking them to only post during office hours. This really supported our belief that by providing this e-learning platform that the learners would take ownership for their on-going development.

“We have now rolled out e-learning to the second and third year learners and have shared our methods with other departments within SAPREF who are also keen to implement similar programmes. We also have the support of the Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority and Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, who recognise that we have been proactive in keeping our learners constructively engaged in learning. We will keep the momentum going as we adapt to a new reality of learning under Covid- 19.

“Acknowledgement goes to all our learners, our facilitators, SAPREF Training Centre staff and the CD&A Team for showing us what is possible when we embrace the spirit of “One Team, One Purpose” and combine it with a “can do” attitude, commends Malcolm.

CHRIS WILLIAMS **BIDS ADIEU** FOR THE SECOND TIME

Chris Williams, Shell ex-pat Production Capacity Development & Assurance Manager, shares some insights with Columns readers about his two very different assignments as he prepares to leave SAPREF for the second time at the end of June.

What were your SAPREF assignments?

My first assignment, starting in January 2007, was as the Production Unit Manager in Central Zone. Working with very talented, hard-working and determined colleagues. We were able to prepare ourselves for the major 2009 Turnaround. This was when the FCC reactor was replaced. 10 years later, in 2017, I returned to help re-energise the Production Competence Development & Assurance activities after a long career in Technology & Operations. This felt like the perfect opportunity to give something back to SAPREF and to say thank you.

What legacy/impact that you are leaving behind at SAPREF?

Although it is both difficult and dangerous to describe what you think your own legacy might be, what I hope I will leave behind is the need for clear and rigorous processes and that whatever has been put in place during the last three years will survive my departure. Only time will tell....

What are you leaving SAPREF and South Africa with?

I might be physically leaving SAPREF and South Africa, but I will never leave emotionally. I will leave with the hope of a brighter future, for the organisation as well as the country and confidence in both. It will certainly be a sad day when we finally leave on a one-way ticket!

What do you think Team SAPREF has; to see them through these uncertain times?

Resilience. The ability to recover after a set-back. The ability to stay the course – even when everything (and everyone) seems to be working against you. The ability to stay calm in the face of adversity. This is something that SAPREF, in my opinion at least, has in bucket-loads!



Picture: Chris Williams

Where to from SAPREF?

The next immediate step is to return to the UK – it will be the first time since 1993 – probably for a few months before retiring to our home in south-west France, close to a town called Cognac!

I intend to divide my time between maintaining a classic car and other mechanical projects. I always promised myself I would find out how things really work by taking them apart and trying to put them back together! I will also try to keep my FCC knowledge up to date and to continue thinking about the integration of leadership & human factors into process safety.

Any closing remarks?

My apologies to anyone who I may have upset with my direct approach and occasionally “colourful” language.

It was never personal. Just my im-patience to move forward on the journey of continuous improvement. That said, I will never accept that a Central Zone operator cannot define complacency!

I think that I can now forgive Kevin Mitchell for not raising the South African flag on the FCC reactor when it was lifted into place in 2009! Or maybe not...

Finally, my thanks to Nalan Naicker and Ricky Munsamy for all that they taught me and to Team SAPREF for welcoming me into your family, on two different occasions.

MARCHING TO HIS OWN TUNE



Picture: Colin Hamilton with gun club members

SAPREF Retiree Colin Hamlington, who joined the British Air Forces, aged 17 and later the British army, elaborates on his life in South Africa and post SAPREF.

“In 1972 I was transferred from Shell UK on a two-year assignment and ended up working for 20 years at SAPREF, working mostly in the Engineering Planning department.”

“I am very proud to have founded the SAPREF Gun Club, which is celebrated as being the first registered multiracial Gun Club in South Africa. We then forged ahead knocking down racial restrictions placed on local and national championships and our club took top prizes at every event in which we participated, including at provincial, national and international championships.”

“A significant benefit of working at SAPREF was the generous bursary which enabled my son Ian to achieve a post-graduate degree in Architecture. He spent time at SAPREF as a vacation student. Ian, like myself, suffers from restless leg syndrome.”

He now lives in a small Chinese village where he worked closely with the government to upgrade the village with concrete roads and electricity. My wife, Winnie, and I were featured in a Chinese National TV documentary. They sponsored an all-expenses paid trip for us to spend a month in China. The following year a crew came to South Africa to film another documentary about our life here. They reported that about 800 million people watched the documentaries. Ian has been very active in assisting the village to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.”

“For six years after retiring from SAPREF, I was a weapons instructor for the X1Xth Field Regiment of Combat Engineers in Durban. Building a Bailey Bridge in Northern Zululand, across a river which cut off residents from a nearby town every time that it rained, was definitely a highlight. I was also a member of the South African Military History Society, and lead many tours to the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer wars battlefields.

“On obtaining a Government Proficiency Certificate as a registered firearm instructor, I resigned my commission of the Combat Engineers and Winnie and I opened the Titan Firearm Training School, which we operated for five years, before retiring again.

“In November 2018 we moved to the United Kingdom, to a small village called North Skelton, where we have spent much time fixing up the house. I also joined the local Skelton History Society. Doing all this activity definitely keeps me out of mischief.

“Contracting Covid-19 in November last year did slow me down significantly. I had never felt so ill and it left me weak for many months. We had planned on returning to China in May for a village celebration of Winnie’s birthday but of course Covid-19 put a spanner in those plans. We had a quiet celebration with friends and family. To say the least, my life has definitely been quite interesting and I am looking forward to going forward to face the new world after Covid-19.”

RETIREMENTS: JANUARY - JUNE 2020

Team SAPREF extends a word of appreciation to the following colleagues for their years of dedication and wish them a long and happy retirement.



- › SIVA GOVENDER: Technology Manager 46 YEARS
- › MIKE NAIDOO: Finance Operations Manager 37 YEARS
- › BRIAN POONEN: LP Model Technologist 35 YEARS
- › SAM MUNSAMY: Document Controller 25 YEARS
- › CLIFFORD COWLEY: Tankage Supervisor 25 YEARS
- › IQBAL KHAN: Area Specialist 12 YEARS
- › LISA KLOPPER: Contract Lead: Office Services 11 YEARS

Honouring Dedication

Congratulations to the following SAPREF colleagues for their long service achieved during April, May & June 2020.

15 YEARS	
Lucia Augustine	SHEQ Co-ordinator
Nomalungelo Buthelezi	Team Leader

10 YEARS	
Marinda Bekker	MS Systems Administrator
Mongezi Nomvalo	Instrument Artisan
Wanda Mthethwa	QMI Artisan
Steven Naidoo	Alkylation Technician

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