



How an integrated drill and blast service can reduce project costs

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MANY mining projects engage a blast hole drilling contractor and a blasting supplier. Despite these work activities appearing to be separable they are unavoidably dependent on one another.

The blast design dictates the drilling requirements, which means an inefficient blast design can increase drilling costs. Poor drilling quality and accuracy can negatively impact a blasting outcome, which in turn can reduce productivity and increase mining costs.

This is why an integrated drill and blast service can offer a significant value-add. It's a benefit that is often under-utilised by miners unaware of the efficiencies available to them simply by selecting a contractor that can do both.

Considering this, it raises the question: if drilling is carried out by one party and blasting by another, can a project really achieve optimum efficiency and productivity?

When integrated, drill, blast and support services provide a competitive advantage in the market by delivering:

A best-for-project approach

With expertise in both fields of work, an integrated contractor can devise ways to optimise the blast which results in using less products and drilling fewer holes – it's not about the amount of tonnes they load or metres they drill, as these things are costs to them as much as they are to the client. With explosives contributing between 50 per cent and 75 per cent of a drill and blast project's costs, getting more value out of the same product can have a significant



impact on the client's profit margins and there are many techniques and methods that can reduce the amount of explosives required. This independence

from any one explosive manufacturer also enables them to select the most appropriate explosive products for the project.

Reduced labour requirements

An integrated drill and blast contractor's crews are typically multi skilled. If appropriate to the project, members of the crew can often perform drilling or blasting tasks as required. For the contractor this means better utilised ground staff, and for the client this means reduced labour costs. Efficiency is increased as personnel are able to action different tasks without waiting for another crew member to do them. It also equates to fewer light vehicles and a reduction in camp costs and airfares.

More efficient communications and decision-making

Because drilling and blasting operations are intrinsically linked, any decision made in one area will impact the other. By utilising an integrated contractor the decision-making process is simplified, reducing the risk of miscommunication. At all levels, the personnel making the decisions understand the impact across both areas of work and at the highest level, the client deals with a single supplier.

Safety benefits

The hands-on experience of crew members in different roles allows them to be proactive regarding safety in more areas of the drill and blast operation.

For a project to achieve optimum results, the objectives of the client and the solutions provider must be aligned. This means a commitment from the contractor to increasing productivity and cost efficiencies while not impacting on the quality of the work or safety systems. In today's economy, where maximising profits is paramount, establishing these partnerships is more important than ever.