

**The minerals industry and SD.
Are we talking to the right people?
Are we sending the right message?**

by

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Introduction

- **In spite of the obvious dependence on minerals in our economy is the minerals industry not considered to be very important, neither by the public in general, nor by politicians and the authorities.**
- **This is partially caused by the seemingly minor role of the sector in the economy, because primary production of mineral raw materials accounts for less than one percent of the GDP and number of jobs in most industrialised economies.**

Public image

- **The minerals industry has in general a negative public image compared with many other industry sectors.**
- **The reasons are many, some of which are well founded, and the responsibility has to be carried by the industry.**
- **Others are caused by the lack of knowledge, personal perceptions and even misunderstandings held by the public, politicians and the authorities.**
- **The industry has therefore job to do in order to inform the public and try to clear up these perceptions and misunderstandings.**

Public image

- **The following examples can be used to illustrate some elements of the challenges we are facing:**
 - 1. The uninformed public**
 - 2. The World Watch Institute**
 - 3. The Internet**

The uninformed public

- **At the 17th. International Conference of the Production and Operations Management Society in Boston last year, I presented a paper titled: "The Minerals Industry and Sustainable Development. International Initiatives and Corporate Sustainability Reporting".**

The uninformed public

- **In the presentation I referred to the MMSD project, the Global Reporting Initiative with its Mining Sector Supplement, as well as the EU sustainability indicator system.**
- **I also told the audience that 14 of the world's largest mining houses publish sustainability reports, six of which are in full accordance with the GRI Guidelines.**

The uninformed public

- **In the following discussion it seemed that no one in the audience believed it when I concluded that the minerals industry is taking sustainable development seriously.**
- **They also found it very hard to believe when I told them that each of them was using about 20 tonnes of mineral raw materials a year.**

The uninformed public

- **So, considering the fact that the audience represented a group of highly educated people, we have a job to do with regard to the uninformed public.**

World Watch Institute

- **In their State of the World report for 2003, there is also a chapter called: “Scrapping Mining Dependence”.**
- **The author has selected some extreme examples world wide in order to show how bad the mining industry is with regard to the environment, human rights, and social equity.**
- **The author has succeeded really well in omitting any positive information whatsoever, including the fact that mineral raw materials lead to substantial value creation in downstream industries.**

World Watch Institute

- **Perhaps the main problem with this and similar reports is that they will be read by many people who are positively engaged in environmental issues, but the majority will have very little or no knowledge whatsoever about the minerals industry.**
- **The report is well written and seems to be thoroughly documented. The readers have therefore no reason not to believe that the report paints a true picture of the minerals industry world wide.**

The Internet

- **The Internet has revolutionised worldwide communications.**
- **This means that any real or perceived mining incident or environmental spill, no matter how small or remote can become a disaster of “biblical proportions” through the judicious use of the Internet by environmental and anti-mining groups.**

The Internet

- **The websites of numerous anti-mining NGOs use the same method of very selective information as in the World Watch report.**
- **They will, however, reach a different group because young people are more engaged in internet surfing than reading thick reports.**

The Internet

- **In order to get an impression of the volume of these activities, a Google search on “anti-mining websites” and “anti-mining NGOs” got 36,100 and 13,700 hits respectively.**

Talking to the right people

- **It is quite obvious that we need to inform and educate the general public about the minerals industry and the benefits it brings to society.**
- **This is a job for every one of us working in the industry or being connected to it, and it is a never ending job.**

Talking to the right people

- **But we also need to work more directly towards politicians and the authorities.**
- **The importance and need for this approach can be illustrated by an example from the production of dimension stone in Norway.**

Quarrying of dimension stone

- **Larvik is a small municipality south of Oslo where one can find one of the world's more exclusive and expensive dimension stone varieties called larvikite.**
- **The industrial quarrying of larvikite started 120 years ago, and at present are about 20 quarries in operation. Most of the production from these quarries is exported world wide.**

Quarrying of dimension stone

- **One of the larger quarry sites was originally located in the middle of a tract of agricultural land with no neighbours nearby, and no conflicts with the surroundings.**
- **The quarry had been in operation for more than 40 years without any problems. But about 10 years ago the municipality of Larvik made a local change in their zoning plan which allowed an area just outside the fence around the quarry premises to be developed for housing instead of being used for agriculture.**

Quarrying of dimension stone

- **At that time was the housing zone quite a bit away from the active quarry area, but as the quarry expanded over time and became more visible, the house owners started complaining.**
- **The residents in the area have now become so opposed to quarrying that they have managed to stop several new projects, even if the proposed new sites were located much further away from their homes than the existing operation.**

Quarrying of dimension stone

- **This is but one example of how short sighted local planning and a lack of understanding of the dynamics of quarrying can lead to unnecessary conflicts, in addition to substantial sterilisation of very valuable reserves and reduced creation of value for the local, regional and national economy.**

Sending the right message

- **It is well known that different people interpret the things they hear or see in different ways.**
- **One reason is that people tend to filter information in ways that support, and not contradict their cultural model.**
- **The message we try to bring across will be filtered by factors such as attitudes, experiences, values, feelings, desires, needs, the opinion of friends, as well as distrust of industry, science, and other “authorities”.**

Sending the right message

- **The second reason why good communication can be so challenging is selective perception, that is, what we see is determined by what we look for. We tend to see what we have seen before, what we expect to see, and what we are tuned into.**
- **How we interpret what happens around us depends, in large measure, on whether we are male or female, conservative or liberal, rich or poor, etc.etc.**

Sending the right message

- **In short this means that lecturing with statements such as: “You must understand that minerals are important” or using slogans saying that “Without minerals, Europe stops” will not work.**
- **What we need to develop is honest and open dialogue with stakeholders based on mutual respect and trust.**

Sending the right message

Some practical tips for communication in general are:

- **Seek first to understand, then to be understood.**
- **Practice active listening, learn to listen, and listen to learn.**
- **Practice the art of asking questions.**
- **Communicate in the receiver's world.**
- **Replace or supplement abstract ideas with concrete down-to-earth explanations and examples.**
- **Accentuate the positive and give credit where credit is due.**

Conclusions

- **Are we as an industry doing enough to bring our message to the right people?**
- **The simple answer to that is NO (John Chadwick).**
- **However, we are learning to do better.**



