

New cutting-edge Epiroc Control Tower takes remote online customer support to new levels!

Epiroc South Africa is proud to announce the launch of its state-of-the-art Control Tower, a collaborative space specially developed to enhance remote customer support capabilities and to further explore and optimise the company's digital and automation technologies and information management solutions.

"When customers invest in Epiroc machines and technologies, they want to know that we are a trusted partner armed with all the necessary capabilities to support them," states Kumeshan Naidu, Regional Automation Centre (RAC) Manager at Epiroc South Africa. "From our Control Tower, and with the customer's permission, we have access to near-real time data of our customers' smart machines irrespective of where in the world they are operating. By being 'virtually present' at our customers' sites they can rest assured in the knowledge that we are 'close by' and ready to act swiftly. This is how we further strengthen our customer relationships."

"We therefore had a number of clear objectives in mind when we decided to invest in the high-tech Control Tower which is based at the Epiroc head office in Jet Park, Johannesburg," continues Naidu. We wanted to establish a platform to showcase our extensive digital and automation technologies as well as our competencies and capabilities. We also wanted to create a simulated training environment. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Control Tower is well-aligned with our strategy to improve our remote support services to our customers by gaining a better understanding of their requirements. The more remote support we can offer, the better utility customers can get out of their machines at lower operational costs." Naidu also draws attention to the fact that this remote access capability was particularly pertinent during COVID-19 restrictions. "Despite the fact that we were not permitted on site during the isolation period, we were still able to assist our customers seamlessly. Even in a post-COVID environment remote access delivers immediate results."

Epiroc, with its smart machines and advanced technologies and systems portfolio, is a significant partner on a mine's digital and automation journey. Machine health monitoring, remote operation and automation technologies such as CERTIQ Telematics, Mobilaris Mining Intelligence (MMI) and Rig Control Systems (RCS) optimise machine performance and life cycle and create safer working environments, improving uptime, productivity and ultimately profitability for customers. Forming part of Epiroc's after-market portfolio, the Control Tower functionalities are relevant to all smart OEM machines equipped with these technologies.

CERTIQ is a cloud-based solution from Epiroc that is centred around data collection by IoT devices. Naidu explains that all the raw data from CERTIQ is collected, then accessed via a web-based customer interface or Application Programming Interface (API) and then visualised in a Business Intelligence (BI) platform in the Control Tower.

"Our objective is to extract more value from this data and to share productivity data, machine health statuses and alerts or warnings with our customers. Deeper investigation into the data sets alerts us to potential problems, upcoming

services or uncharacteristic behavior of the equipment, thereby priming our support teams for proactive engagements that could potentially reduce downtime and improve productivity through higher machine availability.”

Mobilaris is a leading multi-role 3D location-based decision support system that enhances the safety, productivity and efficiency of mining operations by allowing the location and movement of workers, vehicles and equipment to be visualised in real time. A complete Mobilaris demo has been set up in the Control Tower that can take customers through all the system’s capabilities and functionalities. “With permission from the relevant site owner, we are able to visually show the customer’s active site from the Control Tower, enabling us to get a sense of current events at that mine in that moment.. By working remotely in partnership with customers’ strong IT teams and technology champions, we can assist them with trouble shooting, right here from the control tower so that the system’s functionality is not impaired for too long.”

Naidu points out that all these cutting-edge technologies and systems installed in the Control Tower, provide an opportunity to upskill both customers as well as Epiroc employees. Although the Epiroc Control Tower is currently geared for in-house training, Naidu alludes to future plans that will involve training for customers. “As the Control Tower presents a simulated training environment, we will be able to support theory with practical hands-on experiences by giving our customers the opportunity to ‘explore and operate’ remotely operated and automated Epiroc machines.”

The formal inauguration of the Epiroc Control Tower, which is the first on the African continent, took place via a live stream on 10th September 2020 complete with a virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony. Hosted by the RAC team, the virtual event showcased some of the Control Tower’s capabilities; in addition to various live, remote feeds to customer sites and equipment, participants were also given a quick review of real-time data and analytics dashboards.

The first Control Tower was inaugurated two years ago at Epiroc’s facilities in Örebro, Sweden, followed by Chile. A Control Tower is currently under construction in Canada with plans underway for one in China.

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Epiroc is a leading productivity partner for the mining, infrastructure and natural resources industries. With cutting-edge technology, Epiroc develops and produces innovative drill rigs, rock excavation and construction equipment, and provides world-class service and consumables. The company was founded in Stockholm, Sweden, and has passionate people supporting and collaborating with customers in more than 150 countries. Learn more at www.epiroc.com.

Press release from Epiroc South Africa (Pty) Ltd

For further information please contact:

Kathryn Coetzer – Regional Communications Manager

T: +27 (0) 821 900 / kathryn.coetzer@epiroc.com

Issued by Laverick Media Communications T +27 (0)11 0400 818 sonia@laverickmedia.co.za / www.laverickmedia.co.za