

# MANITOU SOUTHERN AFRICA

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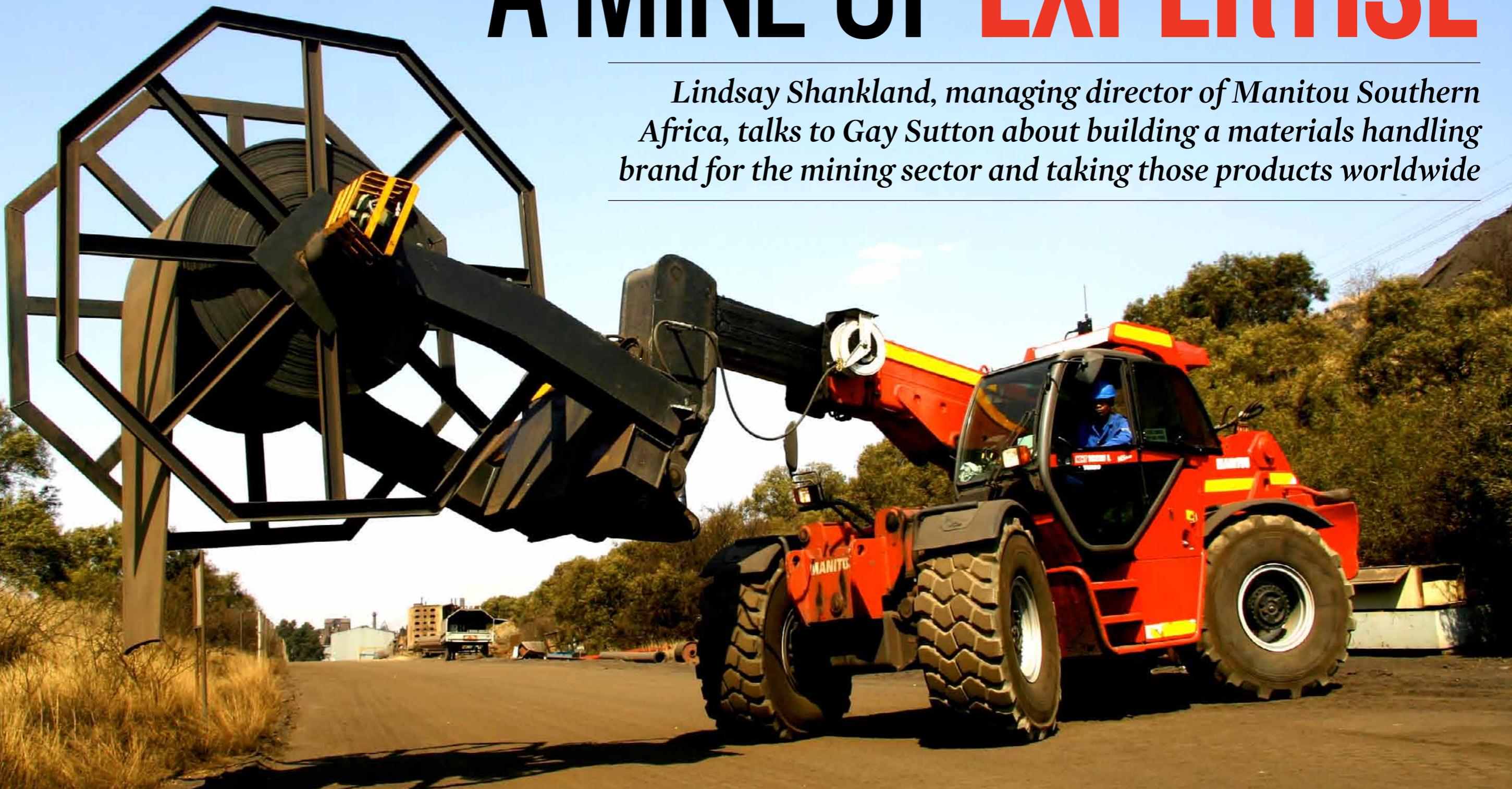


# A MINE OF EXPERTISE

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*Lindsay Shankland, managing director of Manitou Southern Africa, talks to Gay Sutton about building a materials handling brand for the mining sector and taking those products worldwide*

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Gehl skid steer  
loader 4840

**S**ome of the world's most challenging work environments are found underground, where conditions can be dusty, toxic, combustible or just plain explosive. More often than not, space is confined. The terrain is rough and the loads to be manipulated are heavy and awkward. And as though that wasn't difficult enough, time is money. So when it comes to designing and building materials handling equipment capable of performing in these conditions then safety, reliability and ruggedness are essential. In addition, to reduce costs, flexibility and efficiency are demanded.

Manitou Southern Africa, a subsidiary of materials handling equipment manufacturer Manitou of France, has had a presence in Southern Africa for 37 years and has been operating in this demanding field for over 14 years. With a regional headquarters in Johannesburg and a footprint of dealerships extending across Southern Africa, including South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia, the company imports the Manitou range of products from France and markets them within industries as diverse as mining, construction, agriculture, timber, warehousing and manufacturing. Anywhere that uses forklift trucks, loaders, access platforms and telescopic handlers, the Manitou and Gehl names can be found.

This standard product range, however, is merely the platform from which the Southern African operation is building a highly customised range of machines and attachments specifically for the mining

sector. In a specially equipped engineering and manufacturing facility in Johannesburg, heavy duty items from the standard range are engineered and adapted for mining conditions, and tailored for a range of demanding tasks. Equipment emerging from the facility includes flameproof soft rock mining equipment, flameproof skid steer loaders, hard rock mining equipment and telescopic handlers. "Safety, of course, is the primary concern underground," comments managing director Lindsay Shankland, "and safety is our top priority. All our equipment is compliant with South African, EU and United States mining regulations, and we provide 24/7 service and back-up to ensure reliability."

Where Manitou SA then excels is by having its project engineer Jannie Smith working closely with its customers and the SA Engineering Council on design to solve mining issues or satisfy specific needs. "We are willing to adapt and develop our machines to suit the applications our customers need," Smith says. And with an established range of base vehicles in the production portfolio, much of this customisation is achieved through the development of new attachments which were originally designed to satisfy a specific customer's problems. "We generally find that



Tyre handler

the same problem has been experienced by others in the same mining sector. So once we've developed a solution, it is then applicable to many others." The part then becomes one of the Manitou standard range, and these currently include anything from tyre handlers, strut handlers and drilling/roof bolter solutions through to cable/belt reel handlers, cylinder handlers, remote control handling of attachments and more.

**"WE ARE WILLING TO ADAPT AND DEVELOP OUR MACHINES TO SUIT THE APPLICATIONS OUR CUSTOMERS NEED"**

Manitou attachments are easily interchangeable, so any base unit becomes a truly flexible multi-purpose vehicle, doing the jobs that are often assigned to a number of vehicles. Not only does that make them very cost effective, but the efficiencies gained by individual attachments can also make a significant difference. "When we developed our first cylinder handler, for example," Shankland explains, "it had been taking our client three days to change a cylinder on one of their heavy duty machines, and they had been using a crane with slings for the job. Now, they are able to do it in about nine hours, which is a huge time saving."

Over the past year several new attachments have emerged from the Johannesburg workshop including a strut

handler which can be attached to any of the Manitou telescopic handlers to remove the struts from the dump trucks and used for maintenance operations. Meanwhile, development is ongoing. Working in collaboration with JIC Mining, the company is shortly to launch a new drilling/roof bolting rig. "This is a JIC drilling rig which we are fitting as an attachment to a variety of our underground telescopic/utility vehicles, successfully bringing together two well established products." Over the past six months the prototype has been undergoing underground trials in a South African mine and orders are now being taken for the product.

Manitou's ability to build a close working relationship with its customers lies at the

root of its new product development, and this is exemplified by the launch of the International Mining Club two years ago. Open by invitation to engineers and managers from the world's mining companies, the club provides an effective networking and information gathering forum, bringing mining specialists together to discuss their issues and share their knowledge, experience and problems. "We launched the first event in conjunction with

the Electra Mining Show in South Africa in 2010. The second was held in Sydney in conjunction with the AIMEX Mining show, and this year, we will hold the third at the MINExpo International in Las Vegas," Shankland reveals.

In mining, of course, time is money, and the reliability, running costs and safety of all equipment used underground is critical. Therefore, Manitou SA provides a 24/7 backup and support service to all customers

**"WITHIN A COUPLE OF MONTHS WE WILL BE TAKING OVER DEALERSHIPS IN ETHIOPIA, ERITREA, SOMALIA AND KENYA"**



Service being carried out



Manitou soft rock flameproof utility vehicle

across the Southern Africa region that includes regular service and maintenance, as well as a rapid response callout team. Those in the Johannesburg area receive this service directly from the company's own team of technical experts while for those further afield, the same standard of service is provided through the network of dealerships in each country where Manitou operates. "We rigorously monitor those standards of service," Shankland says. "And we provide very thorough training for them both here in South Africa and at our headquarters in France."

Looking to the future, the company has plans for expansion on the African continent, and to export its mining expertise worldwide. "Within a couple of months we will be taking over dealerships

in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya," Shankland says. "And we're looking at further opportunities for the future."

Meanwhile, with 14 years' experience of transforming the Manitou vehicles into highly specified mining equipment, the Southern Africa division is stepping up to take on a major role in Manitou globally. By exporting the Johannesburg engineered hard rock and soft rock mining vehicles as well as attachments through Manitou worldwide, the division is now firmly established as a centre of excellence for mining companies—worldwide. ■

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Manitou Southern Africa visit:  
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