

ASCENT'S MICROSOFT DATA PLATFORM SKILLS ENABLE THARISA MINERALS TO FOCUS ON ITS CORE BUSINESS

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By managing, securing, upgrading and ensuring best practices within the Data Platform Environment, Ascent delivers significant value to mining company.

Tharisa plc is a European-headquartered PGM and chrome co-producer incorporating mining, processing, beneficiation, marketing, sales and logistics.

The company is a low-cost producer of platinum group metals (PGMs) and chrome concentrates, and through various subsidiaries, is developing its beneficiation capabilities to optimise its operations and capture a greater share of the value chain.

Tharisa also undertakes logistic operations related to the handling of the road, rail and seaborne distribution of Platinum and Chrome concentrates produced by its Tharisa Minerals mining operation at Marikana, as well as sales and marketing of the Group's chrome products, which are sold to customers in China and other international markets.

With so many mining-related functions to deal with, it is no surprise to learn that for Tharisa Minerals, its Information Technology Systems are core to its business. It was with this in mind that Tharisa Minerals decided several years ago to bring in an external partner to assist it with ensuring that its data platform was performing optimally.

"When we began our relationship with Ascent Technology, our aim was simply to ensure that, from a performance perspective, our database environment was working well. Through their DB Health Service, Ascent performed a thorough health check on our entire Microsoft SQL Server environment, including that of our enterprise resource planning system and our other business-critical applications," explains Leon Kamffer, Systems Manager at Tharisa Minerals.

"Following this, we expanded Ascent's ambit to also include a review of the environment's security and compliance. This now encompasses 24/7 monitoring with daily, weekly, monthly reporting on its security posture, via the company's DB Shield Service."

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Kamffer indicates that Ascent has also assisted the company to ensure that all new data platform expansions and developments within the environment are set up according to best practices. He explains that although Tharisa Minerals' environment started out reasonably small, it has been growing quite rapidly, and

requires new business-critical applications to be added from time to time.

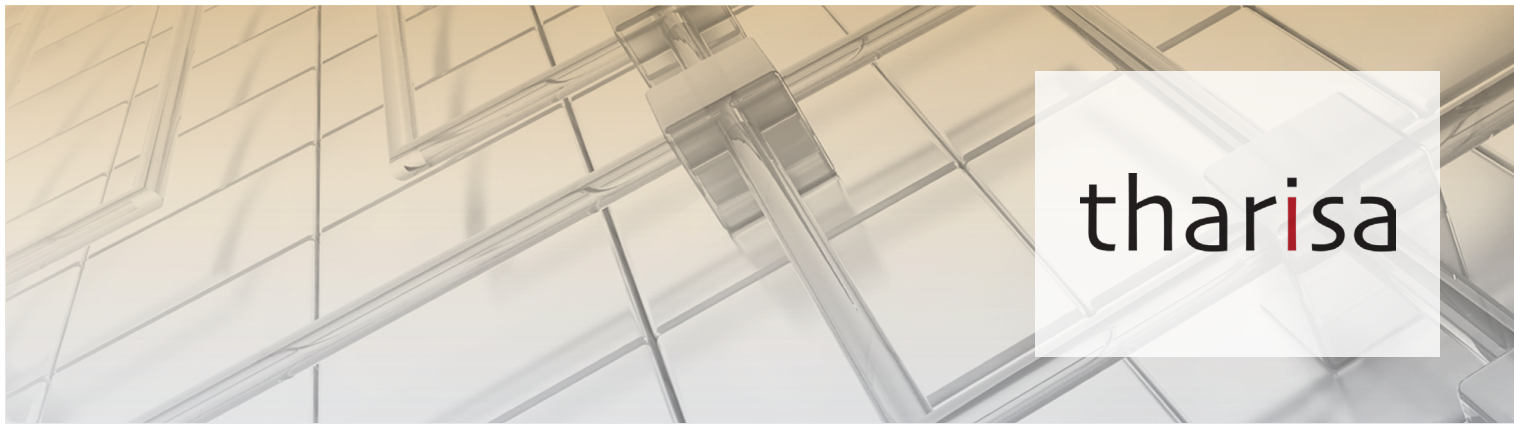
"When it comes to these new applications, we need to be assured of their performance and identify any potential challenges at the outset. Moreover, it is also critical that we

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are able to ensure that all standards follow best practices in terms of security, compliance and access. In light of the creation of the Protection of Personal Information (PoPI) Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), such best practices are crucial for us. Tharisa is, after all, listed on both the Johannesburg and London stock exchanges, so it is imperative that we completely abide by the relevant legislation.”

The company is also working with Ascent to upgrade its entire database environment to Microsoft SQL Server 2017, including leveraging the Azure platform in respect of Business Intelligence. This is an ongoing process, as some of the company’s applications and business solutions are legacy in nature, and therefore require a multi-system environment in which to operate.

Kamffer adds that Tharisa Minerals has developed its vision for the future, which will require integrated data across the business, coupled to targets, dashboards and mobile access to this information through a centralised data platform that encompasses a single interface into the organisation.

“We have begun this Vision 2020 approach by focusing on the

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implementation of a Business Intelligence layer, which will enable us to integrate multiple types of internal information, as well as leverage data from external client and supplier systems.

“As our data platform continues to grow and change, and as our Information Technology needs grow more complex, the importance of having a trusted advisor like Ascent increases all the time. When it comes to overcoming challenges like the need to improve performance and manage the health of our environment, Ascent’s skilled personnel and deep understanding of data platforms adds enormous value to our business.”

Furthermore, according to Kamffer, Tharisa Minerals has recently in-sourced its entire mining operation, which has virtually doubled the requirements on the Information Technology Systems in one stroke. In addition, he says, this has created a whole new dimension in terms of the integration of systems, and has impacted both the performance of existing systems and the volume of data generated.

“This has only increased our need for a partner with innovative thinking, who understands, and can overcome the unique challenges in such a multi-faceted environment.”

Johan Lamberts, MD at Ascent Technology, suggests that the rapid evolution currently occurring in the Information Technology space and the nature of the modern data platform means that having access to the relevant skills is more critical than ever.

“We are pleased to be considered a trusted partner by Tharisa Minerals and have built a strong and fulfilling relationship with them. We realise that they are an enterprise whose Information Technology Systems are core to its business, and we are pleased to be the partner they have chosen to take care of their data platform,” he says.

Kamffer adds that the future growth of the organisation will depend upon the support of partners like Ascent.

“I like to think of the data platform as a living organism, one that is a collaborative system that encompasses business units, partners and suppliers and which constantly grows and evolves. In order to effectively handle this constant evolution, it is necessary to have partners with the required expertise to manage it efficiently and in the most cost effective manner possible – Ascent Technology is such a partner,” he concludes.

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