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## Prologue

I don't believe that "accidents go with the job", although this belief has been articulated in some industries. It is heartening to now hear a top business leader from the mining industry also disputing this belief and calling for higher safety standards. The following summary of the Harvard Business Review article written by the CEO of mining company, Anglo American, contains an exceptionally positive and strong message to other leaders and managers of companies around the globe. In my previous visits down the depths of Anglo American mines in South Africa (measured by kilometres rather than meters), the government officials, inspectors, business leaders, workers and unions, that I spoke with suggest that a reform of safety and health systems and culture is being done in Anglo America. In fact, this reform should be done all over the world and it can be. It is, after all, not rocket science. Instead, this is responsible leadership as its best. One cannot use the argument that "this is another country, another industry, another culture - it would not work here" once it is shown that Anglo America, with one of the most challenging operations globally, can do it.

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## Cynthia Carroll, Anglo American, CEO

When **Cynthia Carroll** became CEO of one of the world's largest mining company, Anglo American, in 2007, she encountered one of her biggest challenges as well – **close to 200 workers had died on-the-job** over a span of five years prior to her arrival. Determined to transform the safety landscape at Anglo American, Cynthia started with South Africa, one with a particularly poor track record. In her first move, Cynthia decided to shut down the world's largest platinum mine at Rustenberg, and it would not reopen till safety standards were improved – "I wanted an indefinite shutdown, during which we would fundamentally overhaul our safety procedures with a top-to-bottom audit of our processes and infrastructure followed by a complete retraining of the Rustenburg workforce."

This was not an easy move and Cynthia faced many detractors; it even prompted the departure of the platinum division's CEO and many managers. Most believed that in a high-risk industry such as mining, fatalities were simply a by-product. To Cynthia however, this was not going to happen – "I fundamentally rejected that assumption". She was determined to reach her goal of zero harm. During the period of shut down which lasted seven weeks, Anglo American began retraining more than 30,000 employees, conducting intensive consultations with individual employees on safety and health, and the entire workforce was engaged in sports stadiums. Anglo American was undergoing a visible overhaul of its safety performance, and this was a perfect example of how influential organisation leaders could be. Cynthia's commitment was moving the Anglo American towards excellence in safety and health.

Still, unsatisfied with just changing the safety performance of Anglo American mines alone, Cynthia widened her focus towards the entire mining industry – "Anglo American's safety record wasn't out of line with those of its competitors, and I was horrified by safety statistics for the industry as a whole." Cynthia decided to establish partnerships with the National Union of Mineworkers and the minister of South Africa's Department of Mineral Resources. This put Anglo American's poor safety records under public scrutiny. But to Cynthia, this was necessary – "Our partnership with the government and the union was unusual but necessary. Making mines safer would be so complex and have such widespread ramifications that a single organization couldn't do it alone."

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## Anglo American Facts & Financials

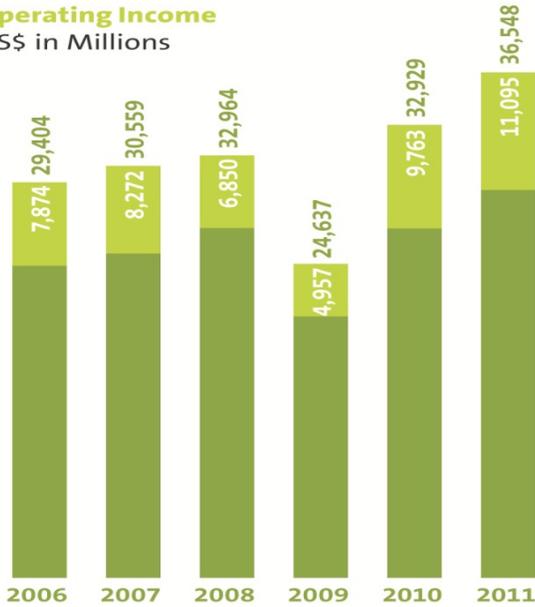
**Founded:** 1917

**Headquarters:** London

**Permanent Employees:** 107,000

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### Revenue and Operating Income US\$ in Millions



Source: Anglo American

A public summit was initiated, gathering mining industry leaders and the media together – “It was an uncomfortable experience: Facts and figures relating to the industry’s death toll were discussed openly, and everyone had to face a harsh reality.” This marked the beginning of close partnerships between the government and mining companies, and universal safety standards were set. Anglo American embarked on a training programme for all its employees; from the frontline worker, to the mangers, and to the senior leaders, inculcating a safety mindset in the entire Anglo American workforce. The safety culture of Anglo American was surely shifting.

It worked. The fatality rate in the South African mining industry was reduced by about 25% and Anglo American’s fatality rate was reduced by 62% over the 5 years – 17 lives were lost in 2011 compared to 44 in 2006. Moreover, this was accompanied **by an increase in revenue and operating income** of US\$10,365 million in 2011 from 2006. This was no surprise to Cynthia, a firm believer of the benefits of safety and health – “I have always said that safety is a leading indicator of wider performance—if you get safety right, then other things will follow, from stronger relationships with unions and governments to greater productivity and efficiency across the board.” Till today, Cynthia is not satisfied, and strives to continue improving Anglo American’s performance in safety and health. Her concluding statement says it all – “We’re not perfect. But I’m determined to reach my goal of zero harm.”

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*This article is an excerpt from **Towards Vision Zero: A guide for Business Leaders Towards a Safer and Healthier Workplace** (September 2012), Page 30 published by the WSH Institute. It is a comprehensive summary of an article published in Harvard Business Review’s *The Magazine* (June 2012) – *The CEO of Anglo American on Getting Serious About Safety* – written by Cynthia Carroll herself. To read a short excerpt or purchase a full copy of the original article, please refer to this link: <http://hbr.org/2012/06/the-ceo-of-anglo-american-on-getting-serious-about-safety/ar/1>*

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