



MiPlan's MiiNT displayed on a tablet.

A new plan

On the face of it, it seems another Australian software player has been devoured by a northern hemisphere giant. That does not mean it is a bad thing. By **Noel Dyson**

MiPlan has become the latest Australian software maker to follow the likes of Mintec and Surpac Minex into the maw of an overseas acquirer.

Hexagon, which started with the Leica Jigsaw mine software before snapping up Mintec and South African collision avoidance systems producer SAFEmine, has acquired MiPlan for an undisclosed sum.

For MiPlan founder Rob Daw, though, it is business as usual.

"The business can be managed out of here," he said.

"We will be recruiting out of here.

"It may be a different logo on the shirt but the business is still in Perth."

Indeed, Daw is quite excited about the opportunities the takeover gives him to further develop the suite of MiPlan products.

Those include the MiD&B drill and blast software tool and the MiiNT mining intelligence platform.

It was that very platform that really attracted Hexagon to the company.

MiiNT is a mine intelligence solution. It is a production management and reporting system that MiPlan says supports the data management, analysis and reporting needs of any sized operation. The solution is supposed to streamline data flows between traditionally disparate systems and departments, simplifying on demand data interrogation, trend analysis and reporting over live operational data.

It is designed to build a bridge between the traditional mine planning software and operational software packages.

It is also a step towards the "Nirvana" Daw sees of having a system that can take the actuals from a mine production management system and feed that back into the plan to update it in real time to optimise outcomes.

From Hexagon's point of view that is quite a handy thing to have in its quiver – something that can provide the link between its various software offerings.

Hexagon mining president Helio Samora said the MiPlan solutions suite would be a formidable addition to the company's technology portfolio.

"Safer, more productive mines depend on making sense of their data," he said.

"MiPlan's range of apps represents a scalable, real-time mobile production management solution."

Samora was particularly taken with MiiNT but impressed by the MiD&B application that he said would provide immediate enhancements to Hexagon Mining's blast design solution.

"This will close the loop on design, field data capture, reconciliation and reporting," he said.

From Daw's point of view, he sees the synergies between what MiPlan offers and what Hexagon already has.

"All the solutions Hexagon has brought under the one umbrella complement each other," he said.

"We've got the platform, from a reporting capability point of view, to bring it all together.

Daw said the mining market was changing and that it was no longer enough to just offer a mine planning solution or a fleet management system.

"Customers are looking for solutions," he said.

"They want to know how they can best optimise their operation."

Daw has long been trying to create the "one mine" vision where there was just one software system handling every part of the mine.

What he is talking about is in some ways akin to what the creators of the various remote operating centres at BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Fortescue Metals Group and Roy Hill have done.

However, those ROCs run myriad software systems. Daw wants to have just one.

As a small to medium-sized enterprise, though, MiPlan did not have the wherewithal to develop such a system on its own.

"We would have had to have brought a whole lot of microbusinesses together and formed a conglomerate," Daw said.

Which is kind of what Hexagon has done, albeit at a higher level.

For Daw the takeover is a way of pursuing his vision with some of the resources he probably never would have had access to.

It also means the Perth mine services sector will likely retain the MiPlan business for the time being.

When Hexagon took over Mintec, that business remained in its King Street, Perth premises – suspiciously close to one of the finer whiskey bars in the land.

Daw is expecting the MiPlan business to remain in Perth too.

"There're massive benefits for Perth," he said.