



Scott Williamson
Managing Director, Blackstone Minerals Ltd

Admittedly, a career in mining was not Scott Williamson's first choice. "I was always told to look for a role that combined business with a technical bent. Pharmacy was my first pick but I didn't get the score, so I had to settle for mining engineering and commerce. However, I fell in love with mining from Day 1 when I went underground, which was one of the most interesting and exciting things that I had done," Williamson tells **Paydirt**.



ince tasting underground dirt for the first time over 10 years ago, Williamson has expanded his repertoire in the mining sector with big companies like Rio Tinto Ltd and outfits such as Resolute Mining Ltd and Perseus Mining Ltd in a number of roles. As managing director of Blackstone Minerals Ltd, which is focused on the Ta Khoa nickel sulphide project in Vietnam, Williamson has found his calling and couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

PD: In 10 years' time Scott Williamson will be...

SW: ...doing exactly what I am doing now.

I can't see myself doing anything different whether it is with Blackstone or not we'll see, but there is no reason it can't be with Blackstone. A lot of MDs hang in there with the same company for a long time. It has taken me a long time to find the right role, but I can't see myself doing anything different for a long time.

PD: What's one piece of advice that has helped your mining career?

SW: I was always told to try and get as much exposure to different commodities, jurisdictions, methods and companies as quickly as possible. That is what I did early on and jumped around a lot. I think the longest stint in my first decade was two years in one place. It was a really good grounding because I got good exposure from Rio Tinto down to the smaller companies like Perseus when it was just starting out; the smaller the company the more you learn. Even back when I was a mining analyst, I did 12 international site visits in three years, so I got to see a fair bit of the world. My first was trip was to Kyrgyzstan, which I visited before I had even been to the office.

PD: Following your big company experience, what was the most difficult adjustment to make in running a junior company?

SW: Trying to achieve a world-class standard on a shoestring budget; that is frustrating. I have worked with the likes of Rio Tinto which does everything to a world-class standard but they have the world-class budget to do it. There is always this compromise between being able to do it the best in the world versus the cash to be able to do it. That has taken a little bit to get used to.

Also, everyone wears one hat and everyone has to be good at everything. Your position title doesn't really mean anything because you are going to do more than that; you are basically doing the job of 3-4 people. To do that effectively, you incentivise through shares and options and everyone becomes shareholders of the company.

PD: What drives the Blackstone team?

SW: I think we are driven by something bigger than anything else going on right now and that is the movement to clean energy and cleaner cities.

We are driven by that and we have found guys that can take us to the next level; the Korean battery end-users. There is something much bigger than a junior here. We're driven by a global movement to electric vehicles. That makes it a little bit more special than just drilling holes in the ground. Also, restarting a mine that has brought a lot of wealth and prosperity to the local Vietnamese people will be something to savour.

PD: What comes first: restarting operations at Ban Phuc, Western Australia opening its borders or the Fremantle Dockers winning a premiership?

SW: WA borders and I think Ban Phuc might pip the Dockers... let's hope not (laughing).

PD: Your next vehicle will be...

SW: Tesla or e-bike.

PD: Having travelled a lot, what do you enjoy most?

SW: I always try and embrace the culture I am in, trying the local food or embracing the local drinking culture. I think it is really important because it shows empathy and understanding of whatever culture you are in.

PD: What do you most like about the Vietnamese culture?

SW: It is very loyal and hardworking. It is all about family and team and how the Vietnamese people embrace that is as good as any I've experienced. It is a group-based culture where everyone is in it to achieve a common goal.

PD: What do you do to recharge?

SW: Family time with my two little girls (aged five and seven) and keeping fit through running. Ideally, I'd like to do more of that but in this role it is hard to spare time for yourself, but I like family time to recharge.

PD: With karaoke bars now reopened in Vietnam, what would we see SW belting out behind the mic?

SW: Gay Bar by Electric Six

in the spotlight