

Coring Magazine exclusive interview

# Conversation with Kelvin Brown



**Kelvin Brown**  
Reflex Global Product  
Manager Perth  
Australia

He has been with REFLEX for ten years and is in charge of the Drilling Solutions, globally. He is a holder of the Australian Prospect Mining 2010 Outstanding Contribution to Mining and Miner of the Year awards for his contribution to the 2010 Chilean mine rescue.

**Coring Magazine:** How did you get started in drilling?

Kevin Brown: As a teenager I was amazed at how a rig could drill into the earth and wanted to see for myself. Unfortunately my repeated attempts to gain employment in the oil and gas industry were constantly knocked back because "we only want experienced people". Several years later by chance my mother arranged a job interview for an off-sider position and asked if I still wanted to be a driller. I said yes and the rest is history...

**CM:** Now you're in R&D, do you miss your time on the rig?

KB: No - I actually have the best of both worlds at the moment. I work closely with our regional teams and spend quite a bit of time out in the field, and from the cool of my office I can also get all the information on the activity on-site in real time via our Hub system.

Being in a more R&D-focussed role, I enjoy the opportunity to put my years of experience into developing solutions that I know would have made our lives at the rig so much easier.

**CM:** You have worked extensively on tool development in your carrier. Do you hold some patents, and for what?

KB: Working for an innovative company like REFLEX has provided me with the opportunity to work in a team that has invented numerous instruments and systems with the majority being related to our patented survey and core orientation systems.

**CM:** Is there any news about Imdex - about acquisitions, products or initiatives - that you can share with us at Coring Magazine?

KB: As you can appreciate, there would always be confidentiality around acquisitions prior to their announcement but what I can say is that as a direct result of our recent acquisitions we have diversified and strengthened our talent base and this will enable us

to focus on organic growth.

**CM:** REFLEX are famous for selling and renting equipment. Why have they not considered opening a service department?

KB: Part of the philosophy at REFLEX is to create instruments and systems that are highly accurate, robust and easy to operate, removing the need for specialised service technicians on-site. In keeping with our philosophy, we deliver cost and time savings to the industry that then allow more money to be spent on more drilling!

**CM:** Is it true that Reflex is developing a directional core drilling system? If so, how is that going?

KB: This is an area we have been asked to get involved in on numerous occasions. We have researched this part of the market and believe that there is room for improvement. However, with the current market conditions and the wider acceptance of driller operated directional systems like deflection wedges and down-hole motors, we feel that these will be sufficient to service the industry for the time being.

**CM:** There are rumors that Imdex is giving up on the directional drilling mud motors rentals. Is this true?

KB: Not at all! In fact we have noticed a pleasing growth in this area as a viable option to directional coring systems especially in the European region, and only last month we commenced a deep directional trial for a large mining company in Sweden with great results.

**CM:** Can you tell us what developments or projects you're involved in at the moment?

KB: I have been involved in the development of what we believe is the world's first truly driller-operable north-seeking gyro tool. This is progressing very well and delivering significant cost and time savings to drillers and geologists.



Kelvin (right) training local Chilean drilling crews on-site during the Chile Mine disaster

Another project that was recently released is the EZ-GAMMA which is a gamma logging device that can be operated by the drilling crew or on-site geologist saving time and money by no longer needing a service provider onsite.

**CM:** How did you get involved in the Chilean mine rescue, and what was your involvement?

KB: REFLEX, being a well known provider of drilling solutions to the local Chilean exploration industry, was contacted directly by the President of Chile and asked if they could assist. Without hesitation, we mobilised surveying and directional drilling equipment to the San Jose mine.

Our local manager Felipe was aware of my directional drilling background and asked me to help. Twenty-four hours later I was on site, helping the local drill crews to run our survey equipment, down-hole motors, and, most importantly, planning the quickest way to hit the target.

**CM:** What was the strongest impression the incident left on you?

KB: It was a highly rewarding and very emotional event and I would say that seeing the faces of the children smile and laugh when word went out that we found the 33 survivors is an impression that will stay with me forever.

**CM:** Few people know that you received the 2010 Outstanding Contribution to Mining and Miner of the Year Australian Prospect Mining Awards for your involvement. How do you feel about that?

KB: While I was very honoured to receive the awards it was a team effort and I am just happy that my small contribution assisted in achieving a successful outcome.

**CM:** How is the exploration industry handling the downturn? Do you see any signs of a recovery?

KB: The last 12-18 months have been difficult times and we see a strong focus on cost reductions across the board. This has vali-

dated our product development strategy of delivering time and cost saving solutions to the industry.

Going forward, we have seen activity stabilise and it looks like we are back into the normal exploration cycle, but we expect improvements to be small and slow.

**CM:** In terms of drilling equipment - surface and down-the-hole, where do you think developers should focus their efforts?

KB: Real-time information sent from the rig through improved communication, more driller-operable instruments and optimised drilling performance systems.

**CM:** In your opinion, what is the best direction for exploration core drilling technology in the future?

KB: I think we will see more advances in the use of automation technology being applied to the drilling process.