STAR PROFILE – Johan Snyman CSAM



Why Asset Management?

Because it is where everything I have learned, technical, strategic, operational, comes together to create real, measurable value.

I started my career on the tools, as a Radar Technician, then an Electrician, and later as an Automation Specialist. I loved solving problems, getting systems back online, and making things work better. But even early on, I realised that technical fixes alone were not enough. You could be the best tradesperson in the room, but if the work were not aligned with the bigger picture, if it were not the right work, on the right asset, at the right time, it did not move the needle.

That is what drew me to asset management. It sits at the intersection of strategy, engineering, finance, and operations. It is not just about maintaining assets, it is about making decisions that optimise their whole, of, life performance. It gave me a framework to connect reliability with return on investment, and maintenance with long, term sustainability.

I have worked across defence, facilities, ports, utilities, and mining, and the same principle always holds true: assets exist to deliver value. Our job is to make that value visible, measurable, and achievable.

I will admit, I stumbled into formal asset management. I was a solid Maintenance and Shutdown Manager, but in 2010, a serious incident at a refinery involving a hydrogen vessel changed everything. I was tasked with restoring the plant's integrity. That led me to UWA, where I met Professor Melinda Hodkiewicz. That conversation was a turning point. I began to pursue asset management deliberately, through qualifications, system design, major implementations, and eventually developing the AM8760 simulation model to teach and apply it.

Meeting Dave Daines at BHP further accelerated that journey. Since then, I have seen asset management turn around underperforming businesses, justify major capital decisions, and shift mindsets from reactive cost centres to proactive value creators.

The AM8760 framework became a cornerstone of my work. It is about aligning asset decisions with the full operational calendar, 8,760 hours a year, and ensuring every action contributes to business outcomes.

So why asset management? Because it is where I have built my career, created impact, and found purpose.

How long have you been working in the asset management sector?

I have been in asset management for over 30 years, but the way I have practiced it has evolved significantly.

I started my development in a technical school (HTS Sasolburg) in what would today be vocational training with my career path as an electrician and

then worked in a career on the tools, as a Radar Technician, then an Installation Electrician, and later as an Automation Specialist. In those early years, I was managing assets in the most hands-on way possible: maintaining, repairing, and optimising systems in real time. I worked in steel mills, defence, mining, oil and gas, and utilities, environments where failure had real consequences, and where I developed a deep understanding of structure, discipline, and reliability.

That was the foundation. But 15 years ago, my focus shifted from managing assets to managing asset management.

My global journey shaped that transition:

- In South Africa, I built my technical base, working directly with maintenance systems, reliability practices, and asset performance improvements.
- In Mozambique, I moved into infrastructure and project delivery, navigating complex environments and learning to lead across cultures and constraints.
- In Australia, I refined and scaled my asset management expertise. I have worked across ports, facilities, FMCG, robotics, heavy industry, and mining, delivering everything from ISO 55001 implementations to shutdown strategies and digital asset management systems.

Over time, my roles evolved from operational to strategic. I began designing system frameworks, collaborating with executives, and preparing the next generation of asset leaders. I developed the AM8760 simulation model to help organisations understand the full, year impact of asset decisions, and I have led award, winning transformations that turned reactive maintenance cultures into proactive, value, driven systems.

A pivotal moment came in 2010, after a major incident at a refinery involving a hydrogen vessel. I was tasked with restoring the plant's integrity. That led me to UWA, where I met Professor Melinda Hodkiewicz, a turning point that launched my formal journey into asset management. Later, working with Dave Daines at BHP, I saw how structured asset management could transform entire businesses.

So, while I have always been close to assets, the last 15 years have been about building the systems, strategies, and cultures that make asset management a driver of business value, not just a cost centre.

Wherever I have worked, whether in an engine room, a boardroom, or a shutdown bunker, the goal has remained the same: build systems that work, empower people to use them, and make asset value visible, measurable, and achievable.

What drew me to this specialty was the consistent gap I saw between operational effort and strategic value. Early in my career, I saw highly skilled people working hard, but without a clear line of sight to business outcomes. Work orders were closed, but asset risk was not reduced. Budgets were spent, but value was not measured.

That disconnect made me ask better questions, *Why are we doing this? What is the actual value? How do we know it is working?* and asset management gave me the language and structure to answer them.

As I moved into more senior roles, I saw the power of a structured asset management system to change behaviours, drive better decisions, and justify investment. ISO 55001 gave clarity. GFMAM and AMC frameworks gave structure. But more importantly, implementation gave results, improved uptime, optimised spend, and making sure the work lines up with business goals.

That is why I kept digging deeper. I did not want surface, level compliance; I wanted systems that work, that last, and that people believe in. That is how AM8760 was born, because people needed to experience that alignment, not just read about it.

It is the combination of technical, strategic, and human elements that keeps me in this space. Asset management is where all those elements come together to create real,

lasting value.

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The best career advice I ever received did not come in the form of encouragement, it came as a challenge. Someone once told me, "You can't do that." I heard it back in school, when I was a bit wild and always insisted on doing things my way. But instead of discouraging me, those words lit a fire. They pushed me to question the status quo, explore alternative methods, and never settle for "that's how it's always been done."

That mindset taught me a powerful lesson: activity is different from impact. Just being busy does not mean you are delivering outcomes that matter. I learned to pause and ask everybody around me the most important question: *"What do you think?"* a question that invites insight, challenges assumptions, and empowers others.

Another question that is guided me throughout my career is: *"Is this helping the asset, the operation, or the business?"* If the answer is no, it is time to rethink.

That simple but profound advice has shaped everything I do, from planning shutdowns to designing asset management systems. It is influenced how I lead teams, engage with executives, and build systems that do not just tick boxes they solve real problems.

It started as a challenge. It became a mindset. And it has never failed me.

A great asset manager connects **technical insight** with **strategic thinking** and drives **decisions that create value.**

To me, a great asset manager has:

- **Clarity of purpose –** They understand that assets exist to enable organisational objectives, not the other way around.
- **Decision discipline –** They know how to balance cost, risk, and performance across the asset lifecycle using data, context, and risk, informed judgment.
- **System thinking –** They see the whole value chain, from planning and design through to operations, maintenance, and renewal, aligning people, processes, and systems.
- **Credibility on the ground and in the boardroom –** They can engage tradespeople and executives with equal confidence, translating strategy into language that resonates at every level.
- **A bias for action –** They do not wait for the perfect system; they make incremental improvements that deliver real impact.
- **Resilience and curiosity –** They ask questions, challenge assumptions, and keep learning.

In short, a great asset manager builds trust, makes value visible, and leaves behind a system that works without them.

The most exciting trend in asset management today is the **shift to ensure the** w*ork we do actually supports the business and delivers results that matter* driven by data, systems integration, and a stronger focus on decision, making.

Organisations are moving beyond just having an asset register and maintenance plan. They are asking:

- *Are we spending in the right places?*
- *What risk are we carrying?*
- *How do we demonstrate the value of our decisions to stakeholders?*

This shift is being accelerated by digital tools, like predictive analytics, real, time condition monitoring, and digital twins, but the real power lies in how those tools are used to inform smarter, faster, and more transparent decisions. What excites me most is the maturity of the conversation. Boards are now asking for asset risk profiles, long, term investment scenarios, and evidence of asset stewardship. And frontline teams are starting to see how their work

connects to business outcomes. That alignment between boardroom, engineering, operations, and finance, is where the future of asset management is heading. It is not just about managing assets better. It is about using assets to manage the business better.

The biggest challenge facing up-and-coming asset managers today is navigating complexity without getting lost in it.

Modern asset management demands more than technical know, how. You need to understand finance, risk, regulation, digital systems, and organisational culture, all while being held accountable for long, term outcomes with short, term constraints.

Many new asset managers come in well, trained technically but struggle to:

- Connect their work to strategic goals.
- Influence decisions across functions.
- Speak the language of executives and CFOs.
- Prioritise in environments flooded with data but short on insight.

There's also pressure to adopt every new tool, AI, digital twins, advanced analytics, without a clear purpose or maturity framework behind it.

The key challenge is learning to **think in systems, focus on value,** and **communicate clearly across the business.** Without that, it is easy to end up buried in compliance tasks, reactive noise, or technology distractions, delivering activity, not impact.

Asset management is not just a technical role, it is a leadership role. And stepping into that space with confidence, clarity, and credibility is what sets great asset managers apart.

My advice to an up and coming asset manager is simple: focus on value, not just activity, and learn to connect your technical knowledge to business decisions.

Here is what I would tell them:

- Learn the business – Understand how your organisation makes money, what your customers value, and how your assets enable that. If you do not know the commercial context, you cannot make strategic decisions.
- Get fluent in the language of risk, cost, and performance – Asset management is about trade, offs. Be the person who can explain those trade, offs clearly to decision, makers.
- Do not chase tools, build systems – Digital tech is powerful, but without process and purpose, it is just noise. Get your fundamentals right before layering on complexity.
- Work across silos – Great asset managers build trust between operations, maintenance, engineering, finance, and executives. Learn to listen, influence, and bring people together.
- Stay curious but stay grounded – Frameworks like ISO 55001 and the GFMAM Landscape combined with the AMC models, exist for a reason. Use them to guide your thinking, but never forget the practical reality of the site, the crew, and the customer.

Most importantly: own your role as a decision, maker. You are not just managing assets; you are helping the organisation decide how to get the best from them. That mindset changes everything.

The biggest challenge facing the asset management sector today is bridging the gap between strategic intent and operational execution, especially in complex, asset, intensive environments.

Many organisations have frameworks, plans, and systems that look good on paper, but they struggle to embed those consistently across frontline operations. The result is misalignment: strategy says one thing, but daily decisions say another.

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Specifically in my field, designing and implementing ISO 55001, compliant systems, the challenge is getting beyond documentation and delivering cultural adoption. It is not enough to have a SAMP or an AMP. The hard part is getting planners, maintainers, engineers, and executives to think and act in ways that reflect those documents.

Other key challenges include:

- Data quality and integration – Organisations are collecting more data than ever but still struggle to trust or use it effectively.
- Workforce capability – There is a growing skills gap, particularly around strategic thinking, risk, based decision, making, and systems leadership.
- Siloed thinking – Finance, operations, and engineering often operate in isolation, making it hard to manage lifecycle value.
- Short, term pressure – Asset managers are expected to deliver long, term value in environments that reward short, term results.

The sector does not need more reports. It needs strong implementation, decision discipline, and a culture of asset accountability that runs from the boardroom to the workshop. That is the challenge, and the real opportunity.

My proudest career achievement is leading the development and implementation of an **ISO 55001, certified Asset Management System at Southern Ports,** transforming how the organisation managed critical port infrastructure across three geographically dispersed sites.

This was not just a compliance exercise; it was a full system uplift. We built a clear line of sight from board, level objectives down to work execution. We integrated strategic planning, risk, based maintenance, lifecycle costing, and performance monitoring into one cohesive framework. And most importantly, we did it with the people on the ground, through engagement, training, and cultural alignment.

That system went on to win national recognition, but what makes me proud is the legacy it left:

- Better decisions based on risk and value.
- Clearer roles, accountabilities, and priorities
- A stronger safety and performance culture
- And a structure that continues to deliver value well beyond the certification

I have delivered many successful programs, shutdown strategies, and digital initiatives, but that system proved what asset management can achieve when it is properly embedded, owned by the business, and focused on outcomes. That is what I stand for, and that is still the benchmark I hold my work against.

What is next for me is **helping the next generation of asset managers and organisations build systems that deliver value, at scale, and with purpose.**

I am focused on three priorities:

1. Expanding AM8760 – The simulation I developed is evolving into a full learning platform to teach asset management principles in a hands-on, scenario, driven way. It is already used to train professionals across industries, and I am scaling it to support boards, graduates, and frontline leaders alike.
2. Advising on high, impact implementations – I am continuing to work with organisations, particularly ports, utilities, and mining, to design and embed ISO 55001, aligned systems that actually work in practice, not just on paper.
3. Publishing and mentoring – I am documenting the lessons from 30+ years in the field through publications, case studies, and mentoring. The goal is to share proven approaches, challenge outdated thinking, and support practical leadership in asset management.

For me, it is not about chasing the next role, it is about driving maturity in the sector, lifting capability across the industry, and making sure asset management remains grounded in value, not jargon.

You have recently authored a book on Asset Management System implementation.

Yes, I have authored a book that explores how to implement an asset management system using structured methodologies and a delivery model and using AI to align the methodology.

The idea was born from years of hands, on experience in asset, intensive industries, where I saw firsthand how traditional approaches often fall short in delivering sustainable value. I wanted to create something practical, actionable, and scalable; something that could help teams move beyond compliance and into performance.

AI played a pivotal role in shaping the book. It helped me structure the content, validate methodologies, and even simulate implementation scenarios.

At the heart of the book is the **AM8760 framework**, which I developed to align asset management activities with the full operational calendar, 8,760 hours a year. It is a way to ensure that every decision, every intervention, and every system is designed to support continuous value delivery. The framework integrates:

- **Strategic alignment** with business objectives
- **Operational planning** that reflects real, world constraints
- **System design** that supports both compliance and performance
- **Team engagement** through clear roles, responsibilities, and feedback loops

The **Southern Ports Implementation** were instrumental in grounding the book in reality. They provided case studies, data, and insights into how structured asset management can transform port operations, from maintenance planning to executive engagement. These papers demonstrated how a well, implemented system can reduce downtime, improve safety, and unlock hidden value in existing assets.

One of the key messages in the book is that **activity is different from impact.** Just being busy does not mean you are delivering outcomes that matter. That is why I emphasize the importance of asking powerful questions like "*What do you think?"* and *"Is this helping the asset, the operation, or the business?"* These questions drive clarity, accountability, and innovation.

Ultimately, the book is more than a guide, it is a mindset. It is about challenging the status quo, embracing structured thinking, and using technology (like AI) to build systems that solve real problems. I am looking forward to seeing how these ideas resonate with professionals across industries.

When I am not deep in asset systems or strategy workshops, I keep things simple. I enjoy b**eing outdoors,** whether that is walking along the coast, working on DIY (LEGO) projects, or spending time on the kayak fishing, anything that gives me space to think without screens or noise.

Zandra and I are currently preparing ourselves for the BIG LAP, yes, we are going to do it, and based on my career history, this is becoming an asset management system implementation.

I also enjoy writing, especially reflecting on projects, lessons, and the people I have worked with over the years. It helps me process experience and share knowledge in a meaningful way, whether through articles, case studies, or just a relevant story.

And when I really want to switch off, I spend time with my two grandchildren, enjoy a good meal, and stay curious, our profession is an evolution and we need to stay informed and see the future, whether it's through reading or whitepaper research that challenge my thinking. Balance helps me come back sharper, more grounded, and ready to tackle the next challenge.

My career has taken quite a few turns, across continents, industries, and disciplines, but always centred around one thing: making assets perform better, for longer, and with greater value. And always supported by Zandra and my two daughters as they

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travelled the globe to support me always be where I am working.

What did you learn from working in Defence and Mining, and how does that help you in Asset Management?

Working in Defence and Mining shaped how I approach asset management today, through deep exposure to risk, precision, pressure, and performance accountability.

From Defence – *Overberg Test Range (OTR):* At Overberg Test Range in South Africa, I supported operations within one of the most technically demanding and security, critical environments in the Defence sector. OTR managed high, value, high, risk assets including radar systems, telemetry installations, and missile testing infrastructure, where failure was not just costly, it was unacceptable.

Here is what I learned:

- System integrity and readiness are non, negotiable, Defence assets at OTR had to function under strict conditions, with zero tolerance for downtime during tests. This sharpened my understanding of asset criticality, configuration control, and contingency planning.
- Documentation and traceability matter, Every asset action at OTR had to be traceable and justifiable. That experience drove home the importance of audit, ready systems, lifecycle documentation, and alignment to international standards.
- Interdisciplinary coordination is essential, Collaborating with engineers, scientists, operations teams, and national defence bodies taught me how to build systems that work across technical, regulatory, and operational boundaries.

From Mining: Mining taught me how to apply that same level of rigour in harsh, high, pressure, production, driven environments. I have worked across large, scale mines, processing plants, and infrastructure services, where:

- Production never stops; I had to develop maintenance strategies that delivered reliability without holding up throughput.
- People matter as much as systems, Success in mining comes from frontline buy, in, especially in remote sites. I learned how to create asset processes that are practical, visual, and owned by the workforce.
- Data needs purpose, From asset registers to condition monitoring, I saw firsthand that data is only useful when it drives better decisions.

How it Helps in Asset Management:

Together, Defence and Mining gave me a dual perspective:

- Defence taught me how to engineer for risk and certainty.
- Mining taught me how to manage assets under constraint and complexity.

This background now helps me:

- Build structured, standards, aligned asset systems with clear roles, traceability, and assurance.
- Deliver risk, based maintenance and planning frameworks that work under production pressure.
- Design decision, making models and training tools (like AM8760) that link asset performance to business value.
- Operate confidently across strategy, systems, and frontline operations.

Whether it is a radar array or an ore handling plant, the principles remain the same: align purpose, manage risk, make value visible. That is what I have taken from those sectors, and it is shaped everything I do in asset management.