

Marius Kloppers

– an alumnus rises to the top

When you hear the name Marius Kloppers, you instinctively think BHP Billiton, superpower executive, ambitious risk-taker and family man. Marius is an alumnus of the University of Pretoria who graduated with a Bachelor of Chemical Engineering in 1986. In 2007, when he took over the reins as chief executive officer of BHP Billiton, he was awarded a TuksAlumni Laureate Award for his steamrolling professional career and exceptional rise to the top of the world's single largest mineral resources group. With the celebration of the Department of Chemical Engineering's 50th anniversary in 2010, *Innovate* found it fit to profile this remarkable mining man.



→ *Marius Kloppers.*

Marius J Kloppers was born on 26 August 1962 and grew up in Johannesburg. He graduated from Helpmekaar Kollege and completed his BEng at the University of Pretoria. He went on to receive a PhD in the same subject at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States. He also graduated with an MBA from INSEAD in France, an experience that he has described as “incredibly rewarding” for the open, cross-cultural debates it stimulated with people around the globe and the grounding experience it gave him in commerce.

Marius worked in petrochemicals at Sasol and as an engineer in materials research with Mintek in South Africa. Following the completion of his MBA at INSEAD, he went to work for McKinsey & Co in the Netherlands. It was here that his interest in the aluminium industry was sparked, paving the way for his future at BHP Billiton. In 1993, Marius left McKinsey & Co to join Gencor, which later became Billiton.

Marius has been progressively active in the mining and resources industry since 1993. He was appointed chief commercial officer of BHP Billiton in December 2003. Previously he held the roles of chief marketing officer, group executive of Billiton Plc, and chief executive of Samancor Manganese, as well as holding several other positions at Billiton Aluminium, including those of chief operating officer and general manager of Hillside Aluminium.

In 2007, at the age of 45, he was appointed CEO of the largest resource company in the world. He officially assumed the position of CEO on 1 October 2007. He has been a director of BHP Billiton Limited and of BHP Billiton Plc since January 2006 and executive director of BHP Billiton Plc since 1 January 2006. He also serves as a director of the BHP Billiton Group.

Fortune 500 voted Marius as one of the world's 25 most powerful people in business. “Talk about being in a hurry,” wrote Brian O’Keefe on the *Fortune* website. “Kloppers took over as chief executive of the world's biggest mining company by market capitalisation (some \$200 billion) on 1 October 2007. One month later he launched a \$150-billion takeover bid for rival Anglo-Australian mining giant Rio Tinto.”

Mining insiders weren't too surprised by Kloppers' bold takeover move, writes O’Keefe, as he has a reputation as “an aggressive executive with superior intellectual bandwidth.” Today his quick-thinking, yet humble management style continues to steer BHP Billiton to success.

Marius is married to Carin, whom he met in high school. They live in Melbourne, Australia, with their three children, Noni, Reuben and Gabrielle. 🇳🇿