A drive to maximise existing assets will help those miners working to improve efficiency and safety, according to an engineering software company.

Intergraph Process Power & Marine (PPM) brought customers and technical experts together to discuss safety, operability and productivity at the company’s annual user conference.

About 130 delegates attended the recent Intergraph PP&M Australia 2013 conference in Perth to learn about industry developments, best practice and remote planning.

Asia Pacific senior vice-president Franz Kufner said Australia remained a competitive player in the global resources industries.

“Growth is expected to continue in these markets, so it is important that we support local Australian projects in this dynamic economy,” he said.

“Intergraph PP&M Australia 2013 provided the opportunity to show our customers how our industry-leading solutions can help them enhance safety, improve quality, enable interoperability, boost productivity, reduce timelines and ensure data accuracy across the facility lifecycle,”

Kufner said the company’s mining customers often used the term “sweating the assets”.

“They absolutely need to get 100% out of the plants,” he said.

“There is a huge reliance on absolutely accurate information to do the work.

“What we know from our experience is that there is an enormous amount of waste – just because people don’t have the right information.”

Kufner said a maintenance worker could spend a huge percentage of their time finding the right information before they were able to complete their work.

“There are studies that show wrench time – being out there and actually doing the work – is only 30% of what people are doing,” he added.

“The reason is they can’t find what they need. This is unnecessary inefficiency. They have a necessity to increase productivity and efficiency.”

Among Intergraph’s new software solutions for the mining industry is SmartPlant Fusion, which was highlighted at the conference as a key tool.

The software was developed to rapidly capture, organise and visualise large volumes of previously unstructured engineering information such as documents, drawings, 3D models and laser scan images through a simple web portal interface.

Delegates were also updated on the company’s SmartPlant 3D Materials Handling Edition, which was developed to provide all the capabilities needed to design a materials handling plant and then keep it as-built throughout its life cycle.

Another highlight of the conference was an introduction to SmartPlant Cloud, which supports the company’s suite of SmartPlant applications, removes the need for customer hardware and enables users to access applications and projects through a secure web address.

Intergraph said products such as SmartPlant Fusion and SmartPlant Cloud were the way forward for mining companies that needed to collect and transfer intelligent data for use in operations.

Intergraph Australia vice-president Greg Rohde confirmed the company was seeing a lot of interest in Cloud and Fusion products.

“The mining industry is obviously not expanding at the frenetic pace it has been, but there is still significant investment in the market place,” he added.

“They are looking to get more from existing assets and one of the things they need to do is capture that information from those assets.

“Fusion is a way of rapidly capturing information about an existing asset, both from a 3D visual perspective, but also the information about the plant as well.”

“Once we have captured the existing facility, which is both the three-dimensional laser scan and the matching photo images of the plant, the next step is that we can tie it into operator training.

“We are starting to see a lot of interest from the mining community in that ability.”

Rohde said the whole industry was working to address the same issues – namely reducing costs, shortening schedules and increasing the safety and reliability of the facilities.

“The Materials Handling Edition solution plays right into that, with the ability to modularise and standardise,” he added.

“For the mining industry, what that means is they can build standardised plants and when the demand is there, rapidly roll out new facilities.”

Intergraph says it has responded to the mining industry’s need for optimisation and productivity. By Alison Middleton