

MARCH 2019

CCIFQ INTERVIEWS

Questions to an entrepreneur in Qatar



THIERRY DEZENCLOS

Suez - Qatar

Thierry, please describe your mission in Qatar:

We have been present for over 15 years in Qatar. Today we have five contracts there, mainly in the treatment of wastewater and waste management: 3 on the operation of wastewater treatment plants; we are also finishing the construction of a station extension with Ashghal on West Doha, and we have just finished building the Aspire plant.

On the waste side, last December we signed the largest soil remediation contract for the group, in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron and HH the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The aim is to clean up the lagoons of Al Karaana on the Saudi border, a site where tankers used to come and discharge the industrial wastewaters collected in different areas.

BIOGRAPHY

Thierry Dezenclos is Managing Director of Suez in Qatar and also responsible for all operating activities in the water sector in the Middle East.





Did your strong presence in Qatar help you win this contract?

Yes, the key is to gain the client's trust. Knowing Ashghal and, especially, having built a strong relationship, was a major asset. The good understanding is one of the most important criteria for who wants to last in Qatar; you have to know how to maintain trust to win other contracts. The quality and responsiveness of our customer follow-up make the difference with other companies that may have lower costs, even if of course the price is a determining criterion of choice. In addition, we have never delivered a site late, if it is the last for which we were ... a few weeks late. We have even delivered a site in advance!

What was the biggest obstacle to the project and that you managed to overcome?

Nothing in particular, but as often in the region the process is very long. As a result, there are changes in the customer demands, and of course you have to be available, responsive and flexible.

Did you have to adapt your corporate culture?

Not really because we are established in more than 70 countries in the world, and in Qatar our staff is made up of more than 30 different nationalities. But it is certain that working in Qatar requires a

business culture different from a Parisian culture, because you have to be able to work in a multicultural environment. Both within the company and in terms of relations with the outside world, your partners, your subcontractors, the authorities ... If you want to stay in Qatar, you really need to know how to adapt your attitude and your speech to multiple nationalities.

Once there, did you face unexpected difficulties?

No because we have been present in Qatar for a long time, so we are used to last minute changes, or they are already anticipated.

In addition, the rules change often, and with some customers it can be every month. So, you have to argue that it's not in the contract, negotiate. You have to keep in mind that there is nothing definitive, and above all know how to stay flexible.

Or good surprises?

We are very well placed in terms of price, thanks to our knowledge of the country and the site: the assumptions on which we had worked proved to be correct.

Does your headquarters in France take into account the specific constraints that you have in Qatar?

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The company already has an international component, so it makes things easier. We find English counterparts, and we are used to working in different countries and getting to know other cultures. And it is essential to be aware that we cannot have the same expectations here as with French customers. It is certainly complicated to work in France, but here it is different.

How does this market in Qatar help you promote your company elsewhere in the world, and win other markets?

The December contract is the biggest so it is a reference that we will use to communicate.

What advice would you give to a company that wants to respond to a tender specifically in Qatar or that wants to settle in?

A company wishing to develop a flow of business with Qatar must be present there, since things take time. You have to be here, not in Paris, even less at the moment in Dubai or Abu Dhabi. Availability is key, because when your client calls you to meet with you, it's for the same day or the next day. So, either you have a representative on site, or you are hyper reactive from Paris. And you have to be persistent.

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Sewage treatment plant of Doha West - Treatment of urban wastewater - operated by Suez - Qatar