

Construction Week

Hill International to create new jobs amid major Saudi push

Saudi the "main centre of gravity" for regional construction sector, senior VP says



Imad Ghantous says Hill International is interested in Saudi's megaprojects [ITP Images].

by [Oscar Rousseau](#)

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Hill International, the consultancy behind King Abdullah Financial District, will create new jobs in 2019 as it expands in Saudi Arabia as part of a global growth push.

Following a restructure, US-based Hill International is in the midst of a plan to lift profits following a tough period. Its senior vice president, Imad Ghantous, told *Construction Week* that job creation and expansion in Saudi Arabia were important pillars of the firm's growth strategy in the Middle East.

Hill is “targeting Saudi Arabia very strongly at this point” due to a surge of megaprojects such as Neom and the Red Sea project, he said.

While Hill is chasing growth in the Gulf, it continues to face a challenging market in the region. Its revenue from the Middle East declined by more than a quarter in Q3 2018 when compared with the same period a year ago, and its overall operating loss for the period increased as well. In a statement on the results, Hill International's new chief executive officer, Raouf Ghali, said the company was re-focused on growth and would expand its sales team to do so.

Ghantous said Hill would create new jobs in the Middle East in 2019 as part of this plan. “Absolutely [we plan to expand the sales force in the Middle East],” he said when asked by *Construction Week*.

“In the Middle East, the main centre of gravity or critical mass is Saudi Arabia, by virtue of all of the megaprojects that are coming up,” Ghantous said.

These projects will require a project management office, commonly known as an PMO, which matches Hill's expertise in delivering complex projects.

“There are many ministries in Saudi Arabia and therefore, there are many PMOs coming up, so it aligns very favourably with what we do. This is why we are targeting Saudi Arabia,” he said.

Hill International has been active in the Middle East for more than 30 years and has worked on a number of noteworthy regional projects, including Muscat International Airport. It is currently working on the Riyadh Metro in Saudi Arabia, delivering a scope that includes project management, construction management, and construction supervision.

As part of its expansion in the Middle East, Hill will continue to explore rail in addition to other sectors.

“We are currently working on the Riyadh Metro, [and] we have a strong background in rail,” Ghantous added. “We like aviation projects because we have a good track record in aviation, so that is interesting for us. We are also interested in real estate projects. Those big megaprojects like Neom or the Red Sea project are interesting, which is really what everybody is targeting going forwards.”