



## WISSAM JAAFAR

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Nationality: Canadian / Lebanese – D.O.B: 01/09/1962

### PROFILE

I am an experienced retail professional with over 30 years of experience in the retail sector. I have a proven track record working in the Middle East including the GCC, Iran, Turkey and North Africa for established regional groups which include the Azadea Group Holding and Patchi. My experience covers brand development, franchise management as well as the expansion of leasing strategies for major retail projects.

My sector knowledge is complemented by an in-country management experience, operations skills and real estate experience. Managed diversified portfolios, across multiple geographies where I demonstrated high leadership capabilities and ability to work in a multicultural environment. Have worked extensively on market studies and remain up to date on market developments and the latest market changes and trends.

Trilingual & Proficient Writer in: Arabic, English & French.

#### Education:

- BSC in Business Management & Computer Science, Lebanese American University (LAU) – Class of 1988.
- Baccalaureate, Mathematics Section, International College (IC) – Beirut 1981.

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### WORK HISTORY

#### RCG MIDDLE EAST FZC – DUBAI, UAE

##### Head of Leasing and Brand Development Manager

January 2014 – Current

- Duties include strategic retail advisory, leasing services, retail operations.
  - Established and implemented complete retail project strategies including franchise acquisitions, leasing contracts and retail operations.
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- Main projects include the complete launch of Jeddah Economic City, The Village Jeddah and Le Mall Lebanon, Cascada Mall.
  - Franchise Acquisitions include Roadster Diner in Kurdistan, Grand Cinemas in KSA becoming one of the first cinema providers in the Saudi market.
  - Responsibilities included the successful development of the franchises' business plans from the expansions plans to the operational set-up.
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#### **BEST SELLER GROUP – BEIRUT, LB**

##### **Business Development Manager**

November 2013 – November 2014

- Managed the Business Development Department and expansion of the group's presence in new countries and markets, such as South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana & Ivory Coast and LATAM region.
  - Brand list include Jack & Jones, Vero Moda and Pieces.
  - Successfully franchised the brands in 5 countries with major distributors in each market.
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#### **AZADEA GROUP HOLDING – BEIRUT, LB**

##### **Business Development Manager/Regional Group Real Estate Manager**

November 2006 – October 2012

- Responsible for developing Azadea's operations in existing and new markets mainly focused on the GCC, Iran, Turkey, Algeria and Egypt. Brands handled were Zara, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Pull & Bear, Oysho, Zara Home, Paul Bakery, GAP, Butcher Shop and Grill, Kosebasi, Decathlon, Virgin Mega store, Mango.
  - Prepared, developed, and executed expansion plans for newly acquired and existing brands.
  - In charge of setting up the business from ground up, was responsible for mall selections, locations, rent conditions and negotiating contracts.
  - Coordinated with all business departments including supply chain and franchisors on deliveries and new openings for new brands and concepts, new locations, and new markets.
  - Synchronized and coordinated efforts with fit out engineers and contractors.
  - Advised on licensing as per the different country regulations while working closely with the legal department on franchise agreements and business plan creations.
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## PATCHI S.A.L. CHOCOLATE & SWEETS MANUFACTURER – BEIRUT, LB

### General Manager

October 2003 – October 2006

- In charge of the international expansion of the brand starting with the effective launch of PATCHI Egypt, reporting directly to the Chairman of the Group.
- Responsible for the flagship mega store project – the first of its kind projects in Lebanon that became the unique best practice concept in the retail sector in the region.
- Organized, planned, and launched the new concept project until fully operational including the launching of the Tamaris Restaurant with a special collaboration with major French chef Alain Ducasse.
- Coordinated the project with architects, visual merchandisers, specialized contractors and suppliers for the built
- In-charge of the recruiting and training of new employees ensuring the brand image and key target audience are considered.

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## I.D.S. GROUP HOLDING S.A.L – BEIRUT, LB

### Operations Manager

March 2000 – June 2003

- I.D.S Group is the largest cosmetics and beauty group in Lebanon in both wholesale and retail operations
- Managed the human resources departments for both the warehouses and retails stores
- Supervised the warehouses operations ensuring efficient production lines
- Oversee the legal matters for the proper operation of the holding consisting of four sister companies (distribution, manufacturing, retail, wholesale).
- In charge of all external relations for the group and their representation in official matters through direct contacts with our legal advisors.
- Successfully led the expansion of the group with 2 new markets including KSA consisting of 10 brand new locations

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## BAHIA COTTON – CAIRO, EGYPT

### Country Manager

January 1992 – December 2000

- Bahia cotton is a textile manufacturer owning and operating two factories in Egypt with a total manpower of 1200

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employees. It specializes in knitting, dyeing and manufacturing of ready-made garments. All production is for export purposes.

- Ensured the efficient operation of the business including the manufacturing, HR, accounting, purchasing, sales and shipping departments under my direct management and supervision with 25 direct reportees.
- Managed the timely delivery of orders while ensuring the highest quality of production.
- Customers and agents spanned over 5 continents with a constant business expansion under my management. This required direct contact and coordination with all the departments of both factories and constant follow-up of new customers and orders to keep all departments running efficiently.
- Represented Bahia Cotton during its participation in different fairs in Europe, Canada, the U.S., & Asia to ensure the successful business development for the company.

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#### GREICHE & SKAFF (OPTOMETRISTS) – MONTREAL, CANADA

##### Area Manager

May 1990 – December 1991

Greiche & Skaff are the biggest optometrists' chain stores in the Province of Quebec, operating more than 55 retail stores.

After an intensive three months training in the field of eyewear and lenses. Duties were to:

- Guarantee the best customer experience with a key focus on the loyalty aspect.
- Supervised the retail operations of six stores with direct contact with external franchisors ensuring brand and service consistency across the full business model.
- Promoted to area manager in the franchising department, in charge of finding suitable new locations for the company's expansion plan.

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#### AGHA EST. LTD. – LIMASSOL, CYPRUS

##### Assistant to the Managing Director

May 1989 – May 1990

Operating in Cyprus as an offshore company, Agha Est. is one of the major import & export companies in the Middle East.

- In charge of the timely delivery of customers' orders
- Reviewed and managed the P&L of the company while creating customers purchase orders to meet yearly KPIs.

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- Coordinated with the logistics team to ensure the smooth implementation of orders.
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#### I. Y. EL KAYSSI CO. (TRANSPORT SERVICES) – BEIRUT, LB

##### Assistant Manager

April 1985 – April 1989

I.Y.EL KAYSSI Company is a renowned shipment company in Lebanon, operating a fleet of more than seventy trucks delivering goods from major Lebanese ports to different customers in the republic.

- Managed the delivery schedules across the full fleet for the complete market.
- Main point of contact with all port's authorities and shipping companies to ensure easy clearance
- Contributed in establishing an in-house maintenance department to cut costs on all third-party services
- Issued a P&L per truck that led to substantial savings in unnecessary expenses.

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#### SOFTWARE SKILLS

- MS Office English, French, and Arabic
- OS Software
- Google Analytics
- AutoCAD

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#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Certified in the below skills:
    - Customer Services.
    - Negotiations Skills.
    - Leadership Skills & Executive Leadership Programs.
    - Executive Management Program.
  - Trained several Brand Managers for strategic thinking and expansion plans.
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