



ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

As the company's Vice President of Corporate Affairs and New Business Development, Houlleberghs leads the company's efforts to grow its geographic footprint. Before joining Sakson, Erik held key positions with ExxonMobil and BG Group, where latterly he was a member of the exploration and production leadership team, serving in Russia, Central Asia, the Middle East and North & East Africa.

Erik Houlleberghs, VP Corporate Affairs and New Business Development, Sakson Group

Oil and Gas Middle East delves below the corporate strategy to understand what really makes the industry's leaders tick



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Tell us a bit about the Sakson Group?

Sakson is an independent privately held drilling contractor, specialising in the management of drilling rigs and providing tubular running services. In 2011, we purchased our first rig and broadened our geographical footprint into Africa, commencing operations in both Tanzania and Kenya. Due to demand, in 2012 we acquired another four rigs and also commenced operations in Turkmenistan and Algeria. Today, we enjoy a broad presence in the MENA region, operating 11 rigs, eight of which we own and three that we manage.

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What are some of major projects you are working on currently?

We are currently focusing on projects in the Middle East and Africa, mainly due to the market in these regions being fairly stable and the local economies quite robust, plus we see that there is still a strong demand for our services given the current oil price. Due to their stability, our big focus areas in the Middle East are the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. We also see a lot of potential in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria for example.

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Could you tell us a bit more about the company's ambitions?

With a current population of 1bn, expected to rise to 2bn by 2030 and countries in East Africa already starting to see the economic increase improve the overall standard of living. Sakson wants to contribute and be a part of this African success story and

the same is valid for the Middle East. That present some areas in the Middle East are volatile, but gradually settlements will be worked out, perhaps taking the Iranian nuclear programme as an example. Sakson is a company with strong, Arab/UEA roots and wants to play a crucial part in the post-conflict economic recovery.

What are some of the company's goals for 2015 and 2016?

As well as continual goals aimed towards our commitment to safety, the environment and the local communities. 2016 for Sakson is about controlling our costs, we are a company that always aims to ensure its services are cost effective, and given the current oil price this is crucial to the way we operate. Another goal is to further build our client relationships, it is essential to have a strong relationship with our clients.

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Will you be attending the ADIPEC exhibition this year? What are your hopes for the show?

ADIPEC is the event of the year in this region and yes, we will be there, Hall 10, 10855 if you're able to stop by. For us, is all about interaction, it gives us the opportunity to interact with the key players from the areas we currently target. ADIPEC is a place where we can network as a company, also maintain and expand our knowledge. It's a great opportunity to learn about new technologies entering the market, plus sharpen our understanding between technology and our clients, thus helping us to be a more cost effective partner.