

Project Management Update from France ¹



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INTRODUCTION

In each report, I'll try to give you insights about project associations in France and one main project: this month, we'll go to **La Samaritaine**.

PMI FRANCE



PMI France was founded in 1995.

With more 5000+ members, PMI France is the first Chapter in Europe and one of the 5th in the world.

PMI France is a unified Chapter with **13** regional branches: each branch can organize events, networking events, conferences. To leverage this diversity, every two years, there is a Forum of the Regions: there is a common theme and in each region, there is a local forum. It is an itinerant forum: kakemonos, and remaining marketing documentations are sent to each region. The project organization is centralized to provide templates of visuals, marketing materials but each branch can customize them. In 2020, I was the communication manager for this forum (that didn't take place because of 2020) and it was an interesting exercise of centralization and decentralization. Stakeholder stewardship was key to onboard and align everyone.

This year, because of the uncertainty with Covid, it has taken place virtually.

Please navigate to <https://pmi-france.org/> for general information on the PMI France Chapter and its events.

¹ How to cite this report: Khelifi, Y. (2021). PMI France and La Samaritaine: Project Management Update from France; report, *PM World Journal*, Vol. X, Issue X, October.

Major Programs/Projects: Let's visit the Samaritaine! M. Duchêne, Program Director of the Magasins 2 & 4 of La Samaritaine, LVMH Group, has shared with us his insights. I'll thank Mrs. Séverine Chabaud, communication manager, and Mr. Duchêne, program director, for their time, warm welcome and insights.

La Samaritaine reopened on 23rd of June 2021 after 16 years of closure.

For people living in Paris, the Samaritaine is an iconic landmark in the centre of Paris.

History

When Ernest Cognacq moved there in 1870—with his wife Marie-Louise Jaÿ joining shortly after—he immediately understood the geographical advantage. They started with a stall at the corner of rue de la Monnaie and rue du Pont-Neuf and gradually extended into adjoining shops. In 1910, the Art Nouveau building by Frantz Jourdain was inaugurated. With ambitious volumes, metal structure and elaborate ornamentation it was a masterpiece of its style. 1928 saw the addition of an Art Deco building designed by Henri Sauvage. Both architectural feats that clearly show the couple's avant-garde vision. Samaritaine quickly became the go-to place to buy the trendiest dresses, dine at the aptly named Le Toupary or simply to see and be seen. In 2005, for safety reasons, Samaritaine had to close its doors.²

The Renovation Project

A wealth of enterprises was part of this mega project. It's a mix of old and new architectural elements. Like in all projects, existing elements are used, transformed to create something new: A glass undulating building that reflects the old buildings opposite. It fits well in the structure of the Rivoli street.



Glass façade: Yasmina Khelifi



Reflections: Yasmina Khelifi

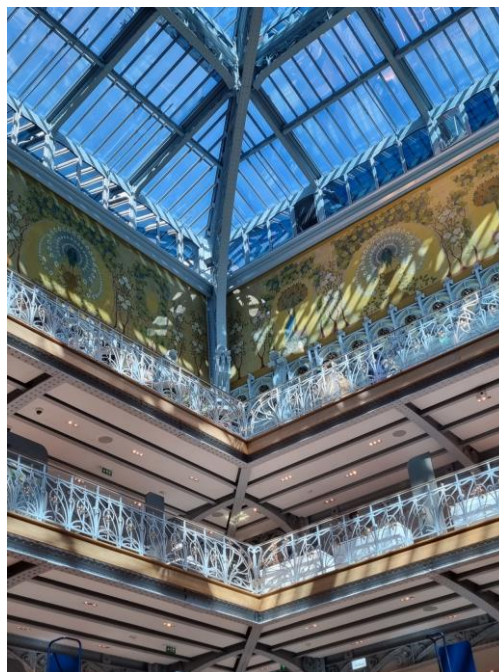
² Samaritaine Press Folder 2021 kindly provided by Séverine Chabaud

The peacock fresco at 3.5 meters high and 115 meters long, the painting surrounding the glass roof is considered one of the masterpieces of Art Nouveau. Signed by Francis Jourdain, the architect's son, the 452 m² canvas has been restored and has regained its former colors and brilliance.³



Frescoes: Yasmina Khalifi

In the centre of the building at the last floor, you enter a world of natural light going through the glass windows. It's particularly striking when the sun shines as the day I went there.



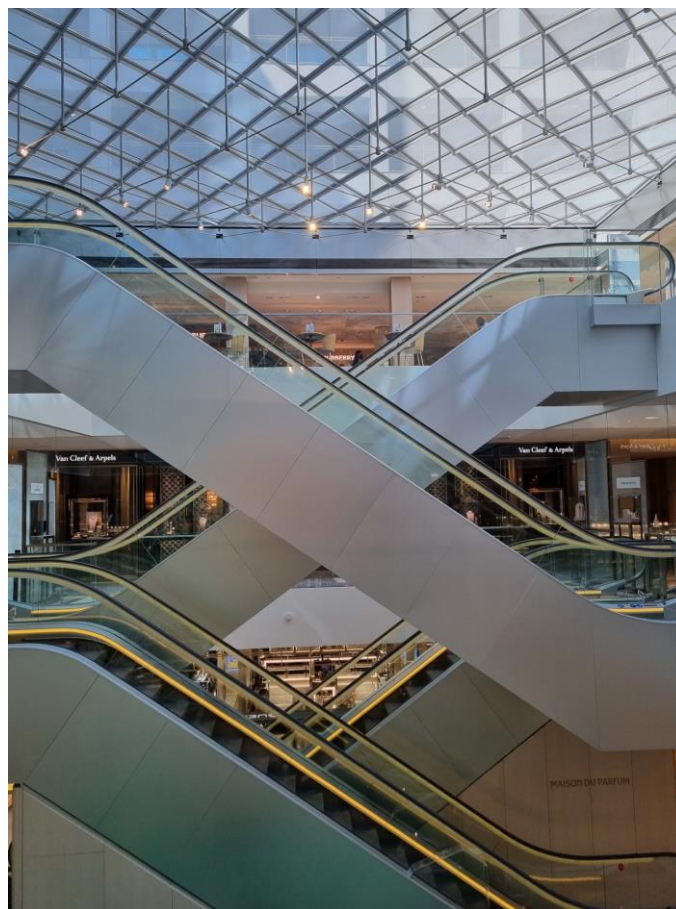
Glass roof: Yasmina Khalifi

³ Samaritaine Press Folder 2021 kindly provided by Séverine Chabaud

Inside, there is a part of the Parisian chic: sober colors. The grey-blue color is the original color of la Samaritaine. The technical team found it through the stratigraphic study by the C2RMF (Centre de Recherches des Musées de France).

There is much space to wander through the different brands, either using the oak staircases or the modern escalators. There are also some art objects and designed furniture.

The sky, the gold color of the frescos, the iron of the structure made a lasting impression of esthetic: art and modern technic are intertwined to create a lively dialogue with the past.

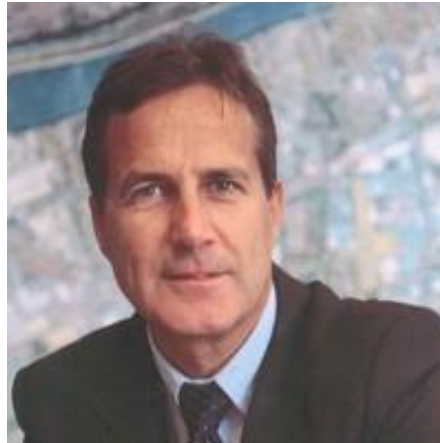


Escalators: Yasmina Khelifi

Project La Samaritaine – Renewal of a Paris Landmark

Interview with Didier Duchêne

Program Director of the Magasins 2 & 4 of La Samaritaine
LVMH Group



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Paris, France

Introduction to the interviewee

Didier Duchêne has spent a large part of his career in the commercial field with a real estate development company specializing in the commercial field, first the Lyonnaise company GRC EMIN, then with a merchant specialized in the equipment of the house the company Habitat. Then the company ALTAREA that became ALTAREA-COGEDIM

Since 2010, he has joined the project management team currently being set up for the renovation and rehabilitation of the 2 emblematic buildings of the Samaritaine.

The Samaritaine Maison Ernest Cognacq has been part of the LVMH Group since its partial acquisition in 2001 and finally in 2010, holding company specializing in luxury, cosmetics, perfumes and spirits.

Within a small project team, he has defined the specifications, selected the different providers both intellectual architects, engineers, specialized consultants, filed numerous requests for administrative authorizations, defended the architectural choices before the applicants and courts, chose the companies in charge of the realization of the works, animated the work teams and lead to its completion the projects with the unfailing support of the group LVMH.

Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. You are one of the program managers on the renovation of 2 buildings of la Samaritaine (historical name of the big department store and the associated company). Now the department store is open again. Looking back, how will you summarize the project and its milestones?

Didier Duchêne (Duchêne): In 2005, The department store had to close for security reasons.

1400 employees lost their job as a direct consequence of the closing of the Samaritaine. It was urgent to find new jobs in the LVMH group or to terminate contracts properly: this social aspect took some years to be sorted out.

LVMH defined a new project with the Paris City Hall Team. It will be a building with multiple destinations: a department store, social housing, a nursery, a palace, and some offices.

From the outset, the group decided to set up an internal project team to follow this emblematic project. It was a multidisciplinary team: engineers of different fields (civil, urban, environmental), architects, communication experts, project managers. It was also a diverse team of ages, academic backgrounds, and genders. And I'd like to insist on the two main ingredients of success: an internal, engaged, and multidisciplinary team and a strong sponsorship of the top management.

Q2: What are the particularities of this project?

Duchêne: La Samaritaine is part of Paris history. It's a historical building with different styles; Art Nouveau, Art Déco. It was one of the core specifications: keeping the historical buildings in agreement with the company of historical monuments in Paris and all the stakeholders. However, we wanted to add a modern façade. We launched an international architecture competition and a Japanese architect agency was chosen: Sanaa, worldwide renowned architects who got the Pritzker Prize (Nobel Prize for architecture) in 2010 What's remarkable is that the project of the undulated glass façade is exactly what was proposed and is even more beautiful.

Another aspect of the renovation of a historical building is that the materials, laws, standards have changed. For example, at that time, the construction followed different height standards that are accepted today. The way of building was also different: lead was used for the metallic structure of the glass roof and, we had to remove it without polluting.

So, the first work package was to get all the administrative authorizations to be able to start the renovation. This is long and tedious work: preparations of the paperwork, review with the lawyers and pitching them.

Besides, we decided to renovate it to get three international environmental accreditations: HQE (French), Breeam (UK), and Leed (USA), which is an outstanding accomplishment.

Finally, on the 19th of June 2015, the authorization for the renovation was granted.

Q3: On such a large project which risks did you identify?

Duchêne: As I have already mentioned, the major risk is administrative authorizations. The second risk we identified was to be sure to have reliable external enterprises in the long term. So, we have to follow them rigorously and, regularly to be sure they will deliver on time and budget. Following means also making the right decision if there is a risk of pollution, for instance: we need to be able to react quickly.

Of course, there is also a financial risk: we had to choose carefully the partners to exploit the Palace, the department store. What I am most proud of is that it will generate 4000 new jobs in total (direct and indirect).

Fortunately, the pandemic broke out at the end of the project.

Q4: What are the main drivers of success in this kind of project?

Duchêne: first the most important thing is to anticipate the changes and to have some studies ready before we begin the renovation. Most of the studies were carried out before. It let us time to align all the stakeholders and to evaluate the different possibilities.

The second, and for me, the most important one, is very good communication. We have a large number of stakeholders. And each stakeholder needs to have the right information (not all the information) at the right time. For that purpose, we had a very strong communication system where all the documents are stored with proper read/write rights. We had very regular meetings, sometimes every day. It also means that we need to anticipate the associated logistics for the meeting rooms. We have conference calls or video calls.

Communication also means identifying each problem whether it's relevant to law, technical, communications, or personal conflict. As project managers, we are facilitators.

Q5: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers?

Duchêne: Keep the faith, be passionate and take time to get to know people: I've met incredible people with so many different life histories. The genuine interest you have in people is an asset: people do their best to reach the goal.

About the Author



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Yasmina Khelifi, PMP, PMI- ACP, PMI-PBA is an experienced project manager in the telecom industry. Along with her 20-year career at [Orange S.A.](#) (the large French multinational telecommunications corporation), she sharpened her global leadership skills, delivering projects with major manufacturers and SIM makers. Yasmina strives for building collaborative bridges between people to make international projects successful. She relies on three pillars: project management skills, the languages she speaks, and a passion for sharing knowledge.

She is a PMP certification holder since 2013, a PMI- ACP and PMI-PBA certification holder since 2020. She is an active volunteer member at PMI France and PMI UAE, and a member of PMI Germany Chapter. French-native, she can speak German, English, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and she is learning Arabic. Yasmina loves sharing her knowledge and experiences at work, in her volunteers' activities at PMI, and in projectmanagement.com as a regular blogger. She is also the host and co-founder of the podcast [Global Leaders Talk with Yasmina Khelifi](#) to help people in becoming better international leaders.

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