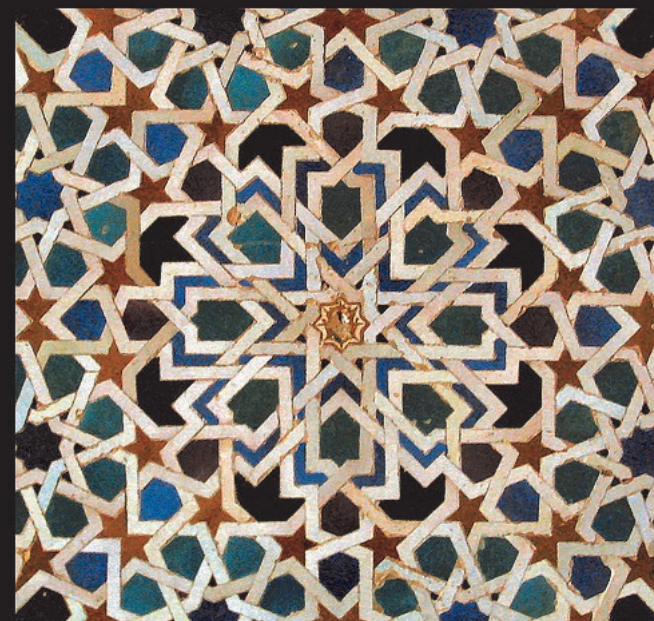
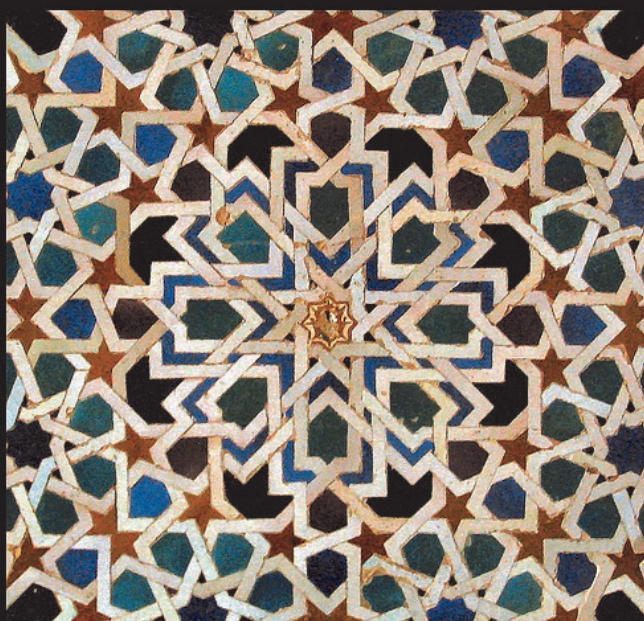


Understanding *media*

A GUIDE FOR IMAMS WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

Australian Multicultural Foundation, 2012



Introduction

An Imam (Arabic: إمام plural: أئمة *A'immah*; Persian: امام) is an Islamic leadership position, often the worship leader of a mosque and the Muslim community. Similar to spiritual leaders, the Imam is the one who leads Islamic worship services. More often, the community turns to the mosque Imam if they have a religious question. In smaller communities, an Imam could also be the community leader.

Many Imams are also community leaders in the West, often involved in counselling and youth work, and often called upon by the media to speak on behalf of their community and their religion. However, partly owing to cultural differences that exist between Islam and secular Australian society, there has been a developing need for the training of Imams in Media and Civics.

Quite often in the Muslim world, imams have simply been the person who led prayers and on occasion dealt with the social problems of Muslims in their community. So, being an Imam in the West presents a range of challenges for clergy.

In an increasingly globalised world religious leaders are seen as having an important part in promoting social cohesion and contributing to security and peace-building. In 2004, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) released the *Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safe-guarding Australia (RCDSA)* report. The *RCDSA* report examined the role that religion and faith communities play in social cohesion and security in Australia (Cahill et al. 2004).

The *RCDSA* report identified that there had been an increase in the number of clergy recruited from overseas due to a lack of local religious personnel (Cahill et al. 2004). Concerns were raised about difficulties that newly arrived clergy were experiencing in orienting to Australian and in ministering effectively within a multi-faith society (Cahill et al. 2004). In order to address these concerns the *RCDSA* report recommended that a course for all clergy new to Australia be developed in preparation for ministering in culturally diverse and multi-faith society. (Cahill et al. 2004).

In 2005 the School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University and the Australian Multicultural Foundation developed and conducted a pilot program entitled *Introducing Australia: A Course for Clergy New to Australia* for DIMIA. The course was designed to impart knowledge and understanding of Australia's multicultural and multi-faith history, politics, laws and values to religious community leaders new to Australia.

The knowledge and insight gained from the *Introducing Australia* course provided the framework from which the current *Religious Leaders Civics and Media Training* program was built.

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Preamble

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What is the media and How Does it Work?

The media is made up of a variety of different mediums, including television, radio, internet, newspapers and magazines

Each medium presents information in different ways and through a variety of programs or sections.

Each medium presents information in different ways and through a variety of programs or sections.

The "media" refers to various forms of communication. Its purpose is to deliver a message – but it does a lot more than that.



Who are the 'media'?



- ♦ Journalists working on local papers
- ♦ Regional and national papers (The Age, Australian etc.)
- ♦ Regional TV or pay TV programs
- ♦ Student press
- ♦ Newsletters



- ♦ Social Media
- ♦ Blogs
- ♦ Online platforms
- ♦ International Press
- ♦ Community newspapers



What is the media and How Does it Work?

Radio: is made up of commercial, non-commercial and community radio stations. Radio provides information to listeners through news, current affairs, and talkback programs. Information on radio is presented in segments ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. Radio relies on conciseness and people who can articulate ideas simply.

Magazines: cover a wide range of special interest and general issues, everything from health to design, surfing to food. Magazines are usually weekly, monthly, bimonthly or quarterly. They rely more heavily than newspapers on good pictures and will also devote several pages to special stories.

Newspapers: consist of national daily newspapers, metropolitan daily newspapers, suburban newspapers and regional newspapers. Newspapers present information in a number of sections (e.g. news, education, business, sport). Newspapers rely on both words and pictures to tell a story. Newspapers provide a number of publicity possibilities ranging from news stories, supplements and feature articles to "What's On" and "Letters to the Editor" sections, Editorials and Opinion Editorials.

Television consists of commercial television stations, non-commercial stations and pay television. Each of these stations presents information through programs such as news, current affairs, lifestyle, documentaries, dramas, etc. Television mostly relies on good visuals to tell a story.

The World Wide Web: includes websites, emails, blogs, e-zines, and videos to get your message out to the world. Many media outlets have their own websites on the internet which provide the latest news or "breaking news" items at any given moment. Some media web sites offer fact sheets, tips or more information. The benefits of media websites is that information can be stored for a longer time, allowing users to view stories that were published months ago.

How to Target your story

The media's job is providing news, information or entertainment that connects with the interests of their readers and viewers. A story that may be appealing to one publication or program may not be appealing to another. **Your job is to target the right media outlet for your news story.** For example:

There are 'media guides' and databases that list media organisations and the people who work within them. These guides are available by subscription online or can sometimes be found in public libraries.

However, nothing is quite as effective as getting to know media coverage trends.

This involves regular monitoring of newspapers and magazines, television, radio and the internet.

As you read and listen to the news media, identify journalists who cover stories of interest to your organisation. These are the journalists with whom you should establish relationships. It's important also that you understand how they cover the issues of interest to your organisation.



Who's Who in Media?: Staff, departments, sections, and varieties of mainstream media

Print Newsroom



Radio News/Radio Programs

TV Newsroom



Understanding Media

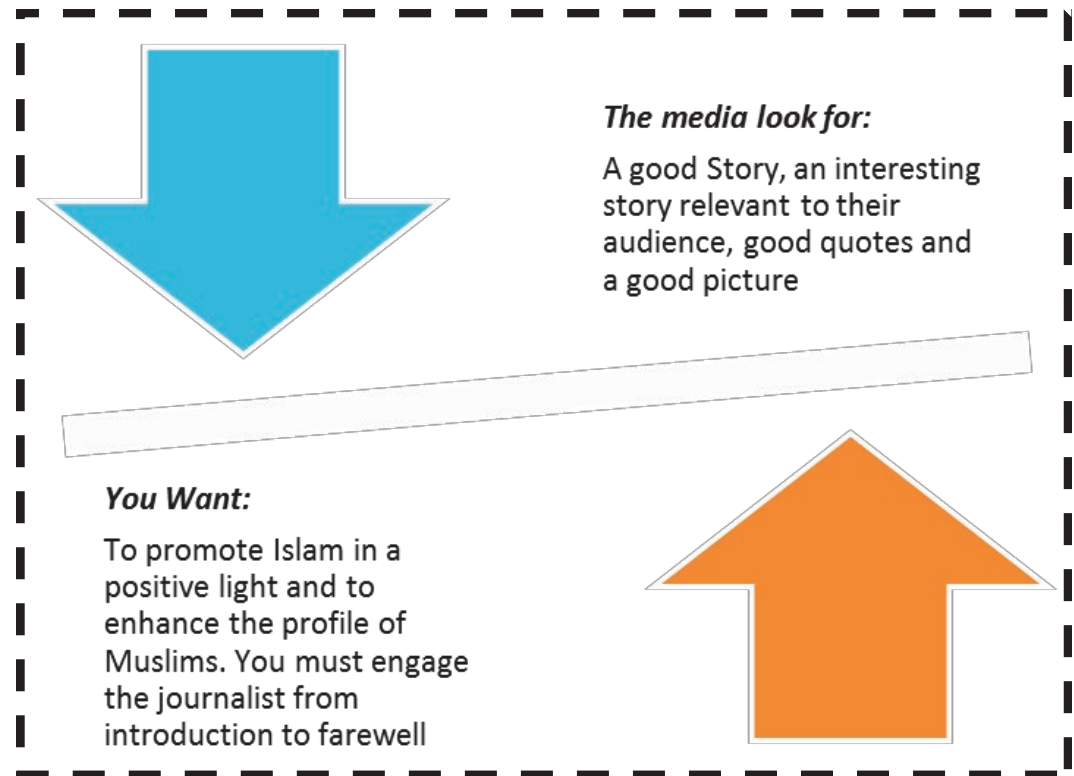
Understanding the media means knowing what makes news. Every bulletin contains a mix of these stories:

- ♦ New and developing
- ♦ Different, unusual or unique
- ♦ Controversy or conflict
- ♦ Emotive/feel-good
- ♦ Relevant to large numbers

Remember. A journalist's perspective of a story is not necessarily your perspective.

They can help you share a story, but it might not turn out the way you or your organisation had anticipated

The Transaction



Building relationships with the media

It is important to build relationships with journalists. This allows you to learn which journalists cover your area of interest, the position the paper/radio/television programs take on your cause, and how journalists/editors/producers like to be contacted.

By getting to know journalists who are in a position to cover your issues is a good way to build credibility and to be persuasive when the time comes for an important message to be told.

Building a relationship with your local media you can teach them about your organization for example, what your mission is, what your key messages are, what benefits you are bringing to your community and how you can be reached.

The better you understand the media, the better equipped you will be to provide them with the information they need to interest their readers.

Working with the media can generate positive press coverage which will inform and shape public opinion and set priorities for decision makers.



Interview tips and techniques

Dealing with media in a crisis

- A crisis can hit a community organisation at any time
- The media will always respond quickly to news of a crisis
- New media i.e.: blogs and online news sites have meant news travels quickly and often can't be 'contained'
- If the position is taken not to comment, find alternatives to "no comment"
- The media serves as a conduit to convey a company's values or concerns to customers and stakeholders
- The media and the way they report on an organisation can greatly affect and often alter a company's credibility
- Ultimately the media can't be ignored because of the powerful role they play in shaping public opinion

Timing is everything

- When the media calls it should initiate the crisis communication process
- All parts of the business should be engaged quickly to formulate responses
- Keeping commitments to journalists is important- buy more time if required



Key messages

- Have between three and five key messages prepared
- Use relevant examples and simple anecdotes to illustrate the point
 - Make it simple, concise and to the point

Radio

- Determine if the interview is for 'news' or 'programs'
- Ensure every interview is treated as live even if pre-recorded
 - The most important point should be made first
 - Ensure there is no background noise
 - Responses should be brief and self-contained

Checklist for engaging media

CHECKLIST

The following list includes some of the activities required by a media coordinator, a spokesperson and a writer.

Find out if your community group has these jobs in check.

Media Co-ordinator: Does your group have a designated person/s who:

- Develops and updates media contact lists
- Cultivates relationships with media personnel at all levels
- Ensures that press releases meet journalists' deadlines
- Ensures that any information the media needs is supplied

Works up story ideas that might appeal to different media organisations and proactively suggests story ideas even when there is no major event happening

Spokesperson: Does your group have a designated spokesperson/s who can:

- Articulate and speak with authority and clarity to the media
- Know how to counteract negative comments from journalists without being defensive or appearing uncomfortable
- Have in-depth knowledge about your group's issues, activities, events and aims
- Present the organisation or the issue in the most advantageous light
- Cater to the journalist's need for an interesting and entertaining interview

Writer: Does your group have a designated writer/s who can:

- Clearly communicate the messages decided on by your group
- Accurately reflect the position of your group

Write concisely and cater to the media's need for an interesting and informative story

REMEMBER: *There should always be someone in the organisation that reads and checks all communications before they are sent out.*

GOOD ADVICE: *You can learn to become a good speaker by listening to other interviewees and identifying their strong and weak points. Remember to always research your issues and familiarise yourself with all the details so that you can hold your own in interviews or debates.*

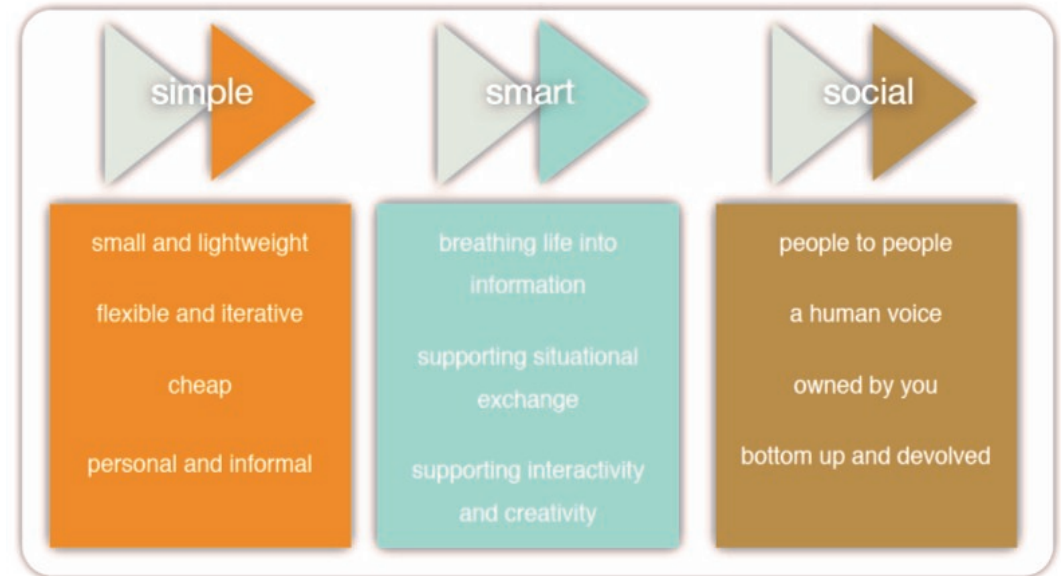


Social Media

The internet has changed the face of media forever. Media outlets are now competing to break a story online, not just in the next day's paper or in that evening's news.

What does this mean for the community? It means providing the media with proactive information: video footage, and embargoes as well as reactive material such as approval processes and citizen journalism.

Some of the defining characteristics of working proactively with social networking tools are set out in the diagram:



Social media can be a cheap, positive, and proactive platform for community groups and organisations. The trick is to be entertaining and informative, yet sensitive to the community you are promoting and also to wider audiences.

Keep in mind however that the adoption of social networking tools can involve risks (for example with 'trolling' which we will briefly cover on the next page). But when the risks are considered, there are ways to mitigate them. **As with any communication tool, taking time to reflect on your message, how it could be interpreted, and understanding where it could end up are all important starting points.**

If you choose to use such tools for communication, it makes sense to set some standards for etiquette for any member communicating on your behalf or on your community organisation's behalf. As when engaging mainstream media, be engaging and informative, yet sensitive to your communities' image.

Social Media: The Golden Rules for Social Media Engagement

Be careful of what you post online. There are some risks involved with sharing information on the internet, and there are also some people who will deliberately provoke provocative responses from communities—particularly minority communities. Such 'online' individuals are called, in internet slang, "trolls".

For example, there may be a page on Facebook about Islam, or a Muslim group, and a 'troll' may post deliberately offensive or provocative messages to inflame readers.

So, when posting messages representing your community, keep in mind the following points, and remember, your messages can reach the wider public:

- A. In releasing information to the public, write about what you know. If you make a mistake, admit it and correct it immediately.**
- B. In ensuring consistency, don't make a lot of noise and then fade away. Live up to the expectations you have set.**
- C. You are responsible for what you release to the media and the public. Use good judgement and common sense, and run content by someone who has an understanding of media.**



Dealing with media in a Crisis Situation— The Golden Rules

A crisis can hit your community at anytime!

And media will always respond to such stories

Keep in mind, media and the way they report can greatly affect a community:

If the position is taken not to comment, find alternatives to “no comment”

Ultimately the media can't be ignored because of the powerful role they play in shaping public opinion:

It is therefore important the spokesperson takes control of the interview - answering questions proactively, keeping in mind the ways some issues can be reported

Resources

This section contains a few good websites designed to assist you with working with the media and related topics. But check out the web for yourself; you'll be amazed at the amount of information on marketing, promotion, media; basically anything you need to know about getting your community group's name and message out there in the public eye.

ourcommunity.com.au provide a one-stop-gateway for practical resources, support and linkages between community networks and the general public, business and government - building capacity to strengthen the community. They have a range of practical resources such as layouts and templates, contacts, training courses, help sheets on a range of topics that may be useful - log into their site at www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_main.jsp.

Jayne Cravens & Coyote Communications provide resources and [consulting & training services](#) for mission-based organisations (not-for-profit organisations, non-governmental organisations/NGOs, civil society and public sector/government agencies, departments and initiatives) www.coyotecom munications.com

Social Change Media is a full service social marketing agency that develop communication/education strategies; implement comprehensive education programs for the community, industry and other groups; carry out social research programs; carry out community consultation programs; provide a full range of communication and social marketing tools (incl. direct mail, media relations, publications, face-to-face etc); provide ready-friendly and Plain English graphic design to a high standard; provide web-site development and strategic internet consultation. They also have some online resources you may be able to use <http://www.media.socialchange.net.au/>

American Public Health Association –APHA is the oldest and most diverse organisation of public health professionals in the world and has been working to improve public health since 1872. Their website is a good example of how to put a community group's information together. It also provides a manual on working with the media entitled **Connecting with the Media** http://www.apha.org/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf

Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations Media Toolkit - The Media Toolkit is intended to help Voluntary and Community organisations raise their profile by taking advantage of free publicity which is available, and producing effective publicity material. The **Toolkit** provides examples of press releases, newsletters, posters and websites, plus tells you how to prepare for an interview. Log into their site <http://www.savoelearning.org/media/index.htm>

Colorado Nonprofit Organisation - Working with the Media Nonprofit Toolkit - A complete guide to working with the media for not-for-profit groups. Log into their site at <http://www.coloradononprofits.org/media%20toolkit.pdf>

Transforming Communities is a not-for-profit advocacy group for the prevention of violence against women and girls. Their website has excellent resources on effecting change in the community and political arena including guides that can be downloaded on working with the media <http://transformcommunities.org>

