

# **Leading with Compassion**

## **Anchoring Leadership Practices in Prophetic Traditions**

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Outskirts Press, Inc.  
Denver, Colorado

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Anchoring Leadership Practices in Prophetic Traditions  
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Outskirts Press, Inc.  
<http://www.outskirtspress.com>

ISBN: 978-1-4327-3667-5 (paperback)  
978-1-4327-1055-2 (hardback)

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

*And [the believers] say: our Lord, favor us with spouses and offspring who are a comfort to our eyes. And make us leaders of the righteous.*

*(Furqan 25:74)*

*And we made amongst them leaders giving guidance under our command when they patiently persevered, and had conviction in our signs.*

*(Sajda 32:24)*

*Put me in charge of the treasures of the land, for I am trustworthy and competent.*

*(Yusuf 12:55)*



## Praises for Leading with Compassion

"*Leading with Compassion* offers the reader the opportunity to explore effective leadership from an authentic Islamic perspective. Dr. Safi has done the American Islamic community a great service by explaining and providing a context for Islamic leadership in an easy to digest form. This book is a must read for those who desire to help lead the Islamic community in the 21st century" - *Dr. Miles K. Davis, Associate Professor of Management, Director of the Institute for Entrepreneurship, Shenandoah University.*

"Louay Safi is a preeminent American Muslim intellectual of our time. This combined with his vast practical knowledge in community development places him in a unique position of authority to write on the complex issue of compassionate leadership. Safi has done a brilliant job in analyzing the subject matter, providing appropriate normative Islamic examples and extending the theory with practical illustrations on how to foster compassionate leadership in the continued development of the Muslim experience in America. A must read!" - *Prof. Parvez Ahmed, Professor of Finance, University of North Florida, and Past President, Council on American-Islamic Relations*

"This book helps fuel the growth of our Muslim organizations within North America. It provides the tools that leaders, organizers and workers require to institutionalize community work. The book does an excellent job in relating prophetic principles to leadership tasks in the 21st century." - *Iman M. Faris, Senior Management Consultant and Vice President of the Islamic Society of North America, ISNA*

"This invaluable addition to the literature on leadership in the Muslim community is different in one important way: It makes as its point of departure the management style of the Prophet Muhammad, who, as Safi convincingly explains, led with compassion. Compassionate leadership is particularly useful

to those trying to empower the disenfranchised sectors of the community, those in the difficult position, that is, of speaking truth to power." *Dr. Muneer Fareed, Secretary General, Islamic Society of North America*

## Preface

My interest in the question of leadership goes back to the mid-1980's when I was involved in organizing leadership training programs on campuses as part of my student activism. To help provide material appropriate for Muslim student training, I developed a training manual that focused mainly on leadership skills and made a very modest contribution to addressing leadership questions in the context of the then burgeoning American Muslim community.

Two decades later I was asked in 2004 to head ISNA Leadership Development Center (ILDC) whose main mission is to build leadership capacity in the American Muslim community. The current work grew out of my efforts to address the challenge of leadership in the American Muslim community.

This work, unlike my early attempt to address the issue of leadership, pays equal attention to both leadership qualities and skills. It does not, though, stop there, but examines closely the motive and purpose of leadership. It argues that in a community based organization, like the Islamic centers throughout the country, the most important type of leadership is that whose primary motive is to serve the community and whose main purpose is to empower community members. This kind of leadership is what is termed in this work "compassionate leadership."

Compassionate leadership builds its model on the prophetic traditions that forms the foundation of compassionate humanity, particularly – though not exclusively – on that of Prophet Muhammad. Compassion was the overriding quality of Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, so much so that he is repeatedly referred to in the Qur'an as the prophet of mercy and compassion. Indeed, the Qur'an uses the term "compassion" to summarize his whole mission: "We sent you merely as mercy to humanity," the Qur'an stresses.

While examples and lessons are drawn from the prophetic tradition and the American Muslim community settings, the book endeavors to develop a model of leadership that transcends specific religious practices and geographical communities. It attempts to outline a leadership model uniquely suited for

leading community based organizations, and for transforming practices and conditions so as to make them more inspiring and nurturing. So while the primary beneficiaries of the book are North American Muslims, all those whose main concern is to empower their community and uplift its spirit and standards can potentially benefit of this work.

I have been fortunate to work closely with many people who have been a source of support and inspiration, and who themselves have exemplified in many ways the model of compassionate leadership. I am grateful to ILDC directors whose trust and support has been essential for me to be able to devote the last four years to work on issues of leadership development. I would like to express my gratitude to current and former ILDC Board Members, including Sayyid Syeed, Ihsan Bagby, Muhammad Nur Abdullah, Syed Intiaz Ahmad, Ingrid Mattson, Mohamed Hagemagid, Muzammil Siddiqi, and Muneer Fareed. I am grateful, as well, for the help of Pervaz Ahmed who read the manuscript and provided very helpful feedback.

I am also grateful for the support of many colleagues and friends who worked with me on different ILDC projects. The list is quite long to be included here but I have, nonetheless, to mention few names: Iqbal Unus, Miles Davis, Rafik Beekun, Maha ElGenaidi, Iman Faris, Mazen Asbahi, Ahmed ElHattab, Mohamed Elsanousi, Mukhtar Ahmad, Ashfaq Lodhi, Basharat Saleem, Rodwan Saleh, Azhar Aziz, Habibe Ali, Milia Islam, Abdullah Bade, Bahauddin Bade, Mahmood Akhtar and Nadia Pirzada. Dilnawaz Siddiqui, an old friend who passed away a little over two years ago, made frequent contributions to leadership workshops organized by ILDC, and I pray for his eternal peace and salvation. I would like also to thank Diane Hummeid for administrative and editorial assistance.

I would like to express my appreciation to my wife Razan, and to our lovely children Lubna, Rahaf, Munir, and Mackeen for their loving hearts and gracious spirits.



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## Introduction

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Leaders are individuals who make a difference in the life of their communities. Visionary, honest, and competent leaders are crucial for overcoming challenges and inspiring community members to work toward developing better practices and establishing good traditions. To lead is to take responsibility for improving personal and community life. Anyone who chooses to respond to community needs and do something about the challenges facing his or her community is indeed a community leader.

In times of uncertainty and change, leadership becomes crucial and nothing can substitute for good leadership. And in times when communities lack a cohesive thread to help build collective strengths and pull the community resources together, a specific type of leadership becomes particularly crucial: compassionate leadership.

Compassionate leadership is the legacy of those special individuals who were called upon to transform their communities and to bring hope, enlightenment, and justice to places where despair, confusion, and exploitation became entrenched. Prophets and leaders with prophetic vision provided throughout history the example of compassionate leadership where character, competence, and compassion were combined.

*Leading with Compassion* draws on the prophetic tradition to outline the type of leadership capable of inspiring communities, empowering their members, and developing traditions that encourage cooperation and mutual support and help. It draws in particular on the example of Prophet Muhammad, peace and mercy be with him, and shows the importance of moral vision and compassionate heart for lifting up collective life to a new height.

Leadership, though, is not simply a choice, but involves a continuous endeavor to build character and improve skills. The individuals who are concerned about the state of their communities, and are committed to contribute to their development, need to constantly develop their capacity to lead. They also need to

work with other members of their communities to build leadership capacity through education, training, and charitable work.

Islamic organizations and Islamic centers of North America have experienced a tremendous growth in both numbers and capabilities over the last three decades. Islamic centers and organizations cater for the needs of a rapidly growing Muslim community, and continue to struggle to meet the challenges of the North American environment.

The challenges are many, including the cultural diversity of North American Muslims and the rising Islamophobia in American society since 9/11. These challenges have been compounded by growing cultural and generational gaps between immigrant and American born Muslims. The challenges are coupled, however, with great opportunities, including establishing Islam for the first time as part of the fabric of the American society. The struggle to integrate Islam into the American fabric also provides the opportunity to bring America a step closer to its founding principles by confronting the vestiges of racism and bigotry and reaffirming religious freedom and equality before the law.

These challenges, while serious, are not insurmountable. Since its inception, Islam provided powerful principles and guidelines for dealing effectively with cultural diversity, as it stressed individual dignity and celebrated cultural plurality as a sign of divine wisdom and glory. Islam also embraced religious diversity, and considered the right of people to follow their own convictions as paramount.

Similarly, the American people have repeatedly rejected the forces of racism and bigotry every time they tried to assert themselves under the guise of religious piety or patriotic duty, and have consistently chosen to honor the principles of human decency, religious freedom, and equal dignity of all citizens that form the foundation of the American union.

Muslim success in promoting pluralistic society, and nurturing vibrant communities, must be accredited to the attitudes and values stressed in the Qur'an and exemplified in the life of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet set in motion a new style of leadership. His leadership style was derived from the very mission he was charged with: to be a mercy to people. "We have sent you but as a mercy to humanity," the Qur'an asserts.

*Leading with Compassion* outlines the important qualities community leaders should have and discusses in some details the skills such leaders need to acquire. The book is divided to two parts. In part I, important leadership qualities and skills are discussed: leadership qualities and tasks, community development, communication, conflict resolution, strategic planning, team building, and managing project details. Part II provides a number of important resources leaders may utilize to set a strong organization and develop an effective team: ethical pledge, model bylaws, best practices, arbitration panels, and interfaith dialogue.



## Part I - Leadership Character, Competence, and Compassion

1. Discover the Compassionate Leader in You
2. Empower Your Community, Empower Yourself
3. Communicate Effectively in Diverse Social Settings
4. Manage Conflict and Effect Positive Change
5. Think Strategically and Realize Your Full Potential
6. The Power of Team Work
7. Attain Excellence by Managing Details





# Discover the Compassionate Leader in You

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## Chapter Topics

- Leadership defined
- Compassionate leaders and lessons from the life of Prophet Muhammad
- Principled, exemplary, visionary and caring leader
- Capacity to lead and essential leadership qualities
- Understanding the motivation of compassionate leaders
- Building leadership capacity and the cycle of growth

## Learning Objectives

- Introduce the concept of compassionate leadership as the most effective type for leading a community based organization
- Identify leadership qualities and traits that are central to the community-based leadership
- Understand the motivation to lead and the way to develop the appropriate motivation to lead with compassion
- Examine how to build leadership capacity, understanding the cycle of leadership growth, and learning the skills to nurture the qualities of compassionate leadership

Leadership is, arguably, the most important and complex act in human life. Leadership is often perceived as a position of power and authority endowed on particular individuals by organizations and governments. While power and authority are obvious manifestations of the act of leadership, leadership involves much more than the exercise of power and authority. To lead is essentially to move ahead of others, to guide and to show the way, and to be willing to withstand friction, resistance, and uncertainty, often experienced by those who move ahead of others and advance into higher grounds and uncharted territories.

Leadership is, evidently, one of the most elusive concepts and is exceedingly difficult to pin down, as it continues to manifest itself in individuals who possess different qualities and styles. This has given rise to the contingency theory of leadership. According to this theory, leadership hinges more on the circumstances surrounding the actions of leaders, than on any specific set of traits, skills, or leadership styles. Simply put, contingency theory argues that it is the circumstances in which people find themselves that make particular traits or styles more effective than others.

Contingency theory of leadership underscores an important fact: traits and skills do not by themselves give rise to leadership unless they are brought to bear on the challenges and difficulties facing a particular group of people. Traits, qualities, and skills are, nonetheless, important aspects of understanding leadership, and have, since time immemorial, constituted the key to examining the act of leadership.

In this chapter, we identify the essential qualities of leadership, first by examining the Qur'anic account of the traits of the most influential leaders in history, namely, the prophets who were entrusted with the responsibility of reforming the deteriorating moral and social conditions of their communities. Focusing on lessons from the leadership of Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, we examine the concept of compassionate leadership and its relevance for community-based organizations. We finally

conclude by exploring the process of building leadership capacity.

### **Leadership Defined**

Leadership is a social function that every society needs and requires. It is a practice that goes far beyond any formal position and involves all individuals who decide to respond to challenges facing their communities or take responsibility for dealing with social challenges and needs.

The Qur'an informs us that leadership is an element of true faith, and that every human being who has deep faith in God, and feels responsibility towards his or her fellow human beings desires leadership:

And those [the believers] who say: our Lord, favor us with spouses and offspring who are comfort to our eyes. And make us leaders of the righteous (Furqan 25:74)

If leadership is independent of formal positions and offices, how are we to perceive it? Contemporary studies of leadership offer definitions with varying emphasis. For instance, it has been defined in relation to the task of initiating and maintaining a definitive organizational structure. It has also been associated with charismatic individuals gifted with the ability to charm people around them.

A more useful definition should capture the basic elements of leadership. *Leadership* may be defined as *the capacity to inspire a group of people to pursue an articulated vision, and to ensure their continuous cooperation for the realization of this vision*. This definition is broad enough to encompass the various aspects of leadership and also specific enough to identify the combination of elements necessary for the emergence of leadership. Drawing on the above definition of leadership, *leaders* may be defined as *visionaries who have the capacity to communicate their vision with clarity, translate it into a set of concrete actions, and inspire others to follow their lead*.

According to the above definition leadership is perceived to have the following components:

*First*, leaders possess certain qualities and skills that allow them to organize their communities around a specific vision. An individual's capacity to lead should not, however, be conceived

in a vacuum but in connection with the common activities of a specific group of people sharing common aspirations and goals.

*Second*, it underscores the need to understand the act of leadership in connection with a specific group of people who are receptive to the leader's vision and directives. In other words, understanding leadership requires that one examine the attitudes of the group members towards their leaders and explore the source of receptiveness to leadership among group members. Since no leader can emerge outside of a community, understanding the values and concerns of the community in question is essential for the exercise of leadership.

*Third*, the definition suggests that the presence of a shared vision is fundamental for the emergence of leadership. Indeed, the articulation of a vision and the identification of common goals are necessary both for the formation of the group itself and the cooperation among its members. Quite often, leadership emerges in the process of articulating a vision and a set of goals and persuading others to commit themselves to achieving them.

We will postpone the discussion of the impact of leadership on the community to the next chapter, as we will focus in this chapter on understanding leadership qualities and the process needed to develop these qualities.

### **Lessons from the Life of the Prophet**

The most outstanding quality of Prophet Muhammad was his compassionate heart and his profound desire to improve the lives of those around him. This quality has been underscored time and again in the Qur'an:

"Now has come to you a messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that you should experience hardship: ardently anxious is he over you: to the believers is he most kind and merciful." (Tawbah 9:127)

The Prophet's compassion, while quite apparent towards the believers, was not confined to those who believed in his message, but was extended to all human beings.

"We sent you merely as a mercy for all humanity." (Anbiya 21:107)

Prophet Muhammad was indeed a compassionate leader, and his compassion was derived from a genuine interest in the wellbeing of other human beings, combined with an unwavering devotion to God and the sublime principles He declared as worthy of human life. His devotion to God inspired him to lead a harmonious life. The moral balance in the life of Prophet Muhammad was so evidently clear that the Qur'an praised his moral character and directed the believers to take him as a moral example.

Many people can develop certain qualities associated with leadership, such as courage, knowledge, forbearance, generosity, etc. Few, however, can bring the right balance in applying these qualities to meet the demands of the situation that calls for the exercise of leadership.

The Prophet was firm and flexible, principled and reconciliatory, courageous and deliberate, and resolute and engaging. His ability to bring into harmony qualities that seem at first glance at odd is impressive, and can only be explained by his unwavering moral commitments and character, as well as his remarkable ability to subordinate the demand of the self to the demands of the spirit.

Let us zoom in on crucial moments in the life of Prophet Muhammad to understand how the moral character and balanced personality of this compassionate leader were brought to bear on his life's challenges. Below are several snapshots from the life of the Prophet that reveal his balanced personality and compassionate leadership.

### **Principled Leader**

The Prophet was easy going, gentle and kind in dealing with people, patient and forbearing and always ready to overlook the faults of others; behind the soft-mannered demeanor, however, stood a principled leader with strong commitment to his mission. The remarkable strength of the Prophet was often revealed at crucial moments. One such a moment was during a conversation he had with his foremost supporter against the persecution of Quraysh, his uncle Abu Talib (Box 1.1).

As the number of people who embraced Islam in Makkah continued to rise, Quraysh increased the pressure on Abu Talib to either force Prophet Muhammad to give up his mission, or abandon him and allow Quraysh to deal with him. Abu Talib

eventually at a moment of anguish and exhaustion asked the Prophet to give up his mission and spare himself and his clan of the wrath of Quraysh. The Prophet was pained by the harm they inflicted on his family and his clan, many of whom, like Abu Talib, did not embrace Islam. He, however, knew well that there was nothing he could do to ease the pain and suffering of his people. Abandoning his mission and compromising his values and principles were not a real option, as they would lead him to abandon God and reject faith, and that he was not willing to do.

His response resounded through the ages: "O uncle! By God I swear, even if they were to put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left that I abjure this cause, I would not do so until God has vindicated it or caused me to perish in the process." Simple and straightforward words expressed in difficult and agonizing times left lasting impact on the life of countless people. Not only do they reflect courage, but also patience, vision, and devotion to God and the values and principles associated with him.

The principled leader could be seen very vividly in another trying moment when the Prophet met with the leaders of the tribe of Banu Amr bin S'as'ah. He met with the leaders of this tribe after visiting two other tribes in the region, the tribe of Kindah and the tribe of Kulaib. Both Kindah and Kulaib did not respond favorably to him, and both repudiated his call with insults. The leaders of the tribe of Banu `Amir were ambitious and wanted to receive assurances that they could assume a position of leadership should the cause of Muhammad triumph. But when Muhammad told them, "The matter belongs wholly to God; he places leadership wherever he wishes," they turned away and rejected his call.

The Prophet's decision to decline the offer of support that comes with strings attached to it was not easy. Banu Amr was the only tribe that showed interest in providing support after years of outright rejection by other tribes. Many leaders would have been tempted to agree, but the Prophet was principled and foresighted. He realized that it was not up to him to force leadership on the community, and that such leadership must emerge out of

**Box 1.1****Standing Firm in the Face of Persecution**

"Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, had not joined the faith, but he continued to protect his nephew and let everyone know of his preparation to fight for him. Led by Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, some noblemen of Quraysh went to Abu Talib and addressed him in these words: "O Abu Talib, you are an honorable elder among us. We have asked you to stop your nephew but you have not. By God, we cannot permit him to insult our fathers, to ridicule our ideals, and to castigate our gods. Either you stop him or we shall fight both you and him until one of us perishes in the process." To alienate them and to arouse their enmity was too much for Abu Talib, and yet he was neither prepared to join the faith of his nephew nor to betray him. What would he do? He called Muhammad and told him what had happened and pleaded with him: "Save me as well as yourself, and do not cause me to carry a burden I cannot bear." ... [H]e turned to his uncle and said, "O uncle! By God I swear, even if they should put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left that I abjure this cause, I shall not do so until God has vindicated it or caused me to perish in the process." ...

Choked with emotion at his uncle's request as well as at his own certainty of the course he was to follow, Muhammad got up to leave. For but a moment Abu Talib hesitated between the enmity of his people and the cause of his nephew. Immediately, he called Muhammad back. "Go forth, my nephew," he said, "and say what you will. By the same God I swear I shall never betray you to your enemies."

Muhamad Hussein Hykal, *Life of Muhammad*

consultation and agreement. He must have also realized that agreeing with the conditions of Banu Amr would compromise his mission, as it would bring the factor of power and domination into the commitment to the revealed truth. And he was not prepared to turn his mission of religious and moral reform into a game of power politics.

It ultimately took the determination of a leader who was sure of his principles and moral commitments, and who possessed vision and wisdom, to realize what was at stake and to courageously stick to his principles.

### **Exemplary Leader**

Not only was Prophet Muhammad principled, but he was also an exemplary leader. He lived by the values and principles he professed, and was a genuine leader who did not only talk the talk but did also walk the walk.

One of the remarkable instances that revealed his exemplary character involved an out-of-town trader who concluded a business deal with Amr bin Hisham, the most influential leader of Quryash. Amr promised to pay him back but continued to delay the payment, apparently hoping that the man would soon give up and leave the town. When he failed to collect his money, the trader sought the support of the town elders who met daily in a public house near the Kabah known as Dar al Nadwa. The elders were not eager to help the stranger and sought instead to make mockery of him. One of them pointed to the Prophet who was praying in the shade of the Kabah and told the man: "See that man who is sitting near the Kabah, go and ask him for help, for he will help you!"

The elders of Quraysh knew well that the Prophet was no match to Amr ibn Hisham, who the Muslims named Abu Jahl, or the father of ignorance, because of his unsparing and vicious attacks on Islam and Muslims. Abu Jahl was one of the most powerful leaders of Quraysh, while the Prophet was shunned by Quraysh because of the new religion he was preaching. Unsuspecting the ill design of Quraysh leaders, the trader went to the Prophet and asked him for his help.

The Prophet did what Quraysh elders thought he would never do. He stood up and asked the man to follow him to the house of Abu Jahl. He knocked on the door and when Abu Jahl opened he asked him if he owed money to the man. The Prophet then asked him to return the money to the man in a commanding voice: "give this man his money." Shaken by the sight of the Prophet standing side by side with the grieved trader, Abu Jahl rushed inside the house to reemerge shortly with the money he owed to the trader. When Abu Jahl later appeared at Dar al



Nadwah to meet with the elders, they jeered at him and taunted him with having submitted meekly to Muhammad's demand. His justification for responding positively to the demand of the Prophet he rejected and persecuted was to refer to a huge camel that he claimed to have seen standing behind the Prophet as he looked at pale faced when opened the door. He told Quraysh elders who confronted him that he was convinced that the camel would have attacked him had he failed to obey the Prophet's command.

Regardless of whether Abu Jahl concocted the story to save face or whether this was a divine intervention in support of the Prophet, the response of the Prophet is telling, and is a remarkable illustration of exemplary character of compassionate leadership. The Prophet's response to the call for help is indicative of a profound sense of duty and of a person who cares deeply about the rights and dignity of other human being. He could have found an excuse as he himself was subject to ill-treatment and injustice. Abu Jahl in particular was harsh to him, and he took every opportunity to rebuke the Prophet and humiliate him, so much so that when Hamza bin Abdul Mutalib was told how Abu Jahl treated Muhammad, peace be with him, he became so angry that he decided to go to Dar al Nadwa and hit Abu Jahl with his bow and declare that he is from that moment on one of Muhammad's followers.

The Prophet decided to respond positively for the cry of a complete stranger even though he was unsure whether his intervention would bring any good. He clearly realized that as a person who cared about justice, he was obliged to at least try his best to help. He obviously had no assurance that he could force Abu Jahl to pay the man, as Abu Jahl had the upper hand on numerous occasions in the past. But while he was not certain that he could get the man his money back, he knew that he could speak on his behalf, and he was willing to take the risk associated with speaking truth to power.

### **Visionary and Caring**

The Prophet was a compassionate human being and a compassionate leader, who cared about the wellbeing of all peoples, both those who were close to him and shared with him his values and beliefs and those who were complete strangers. He showed great

respect to the human dignity of his adversaries and was always hopeful in their moral redemption. When he was once asked to curse the pagans, he said: "I was sent as mercy and not as curser." (Bukhari). He repeatedly directed the believers to show mercy and compassion to people around them regardless of their background, as it was reported in Tirmidhi's *Sunans* that he urged his companions to show mercy: "Compassionate people will be shown mercy by the Compassionate: Shown mercy to the people of the earth, Heaven will show mercy to you."

**Box 1.2**  
**Peace of Hudybiyah**

"Muhammad publicly proclaimed that the pilgrimage had started and asked the tribes, including the non-Muslim, to accompany him on that holy mission. When the Quraysh learned that Muhammad and his companions were approaching Makkah for purposes of pilgrimage, they were filled with fear and pondered whether or not Muhammad was now playing a war game against them in order to enter Makkah after they and their allies had failed to enter Madinah. Muhammad and the Muslims continued their march. At 'Usfan, they met a tribesman of Banu Ka'b whom the Prophet questioned regarding the Quraysh. The man answered: "They heard about your march; so they marched too. But they wore their tiger skins, their traditional war apparel, pledging that they will never let you enter Makkah. Their general, Khalid ibn al Walid, set up camp for his cavalry at Kara' al Ghamim." Upon learning this, Muhammad said: "Woe to Quraysh! Their hostility is undoing them..."

The Makkans had resolved to prevent the Muslims by force from entering their city. To them, this was a clear and final commitment. The Muslims, on the other hand, did not know whether or not they were heading for an all-out war with the Quraysh which would decide the matter between them once and for all. Undoubtedly, some people on both sides preferred a settlement by the sword.

Quraysh sent Suhayl ibn `Amr to negotiate with the Muslims and to ask them to return for the same purpose the following year. They argued that in such an arrangement the tribes would not claim that Muhammad had entered Makkah in

defiance of the Quraysh.

The pact stipulated that Muhammad and his companions would leave the area of Makkah that year without fulfilling their religious function but that they might return the next year, enter the city and stay therein three days for this purpose while carrying no more than swords in their scabbards. The pact also specified that any person from Quraysh emigrating to Muhammad's camp without permission from his guardian would have to be returned to Makkah, whereas any Muslim emigrating from Muhammad's camp to Makkah would not have to be returned. It also specified that any tribe was free to ally itself to Muhammad without incurring any guilt or censure from Quraysh, and likewise, any tribe seeking an alliance with Quraysh could do so without let or hindrance from the Muslims.

So patient was Muhammad in these negotiations that many Muslims remembered anecdotes which speak most eloquently to this effect. It is reported, for instance; that Muhammad called 'Ali ibn Abu Talib and said to him: "Write, 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.'" Suhayl, the non-Muslim delegate of Quraysh interrupted. "Stop," he said, "I do not know either 'the Merciful' or 'the Compassionate.' Write, 'In your name, O God.'" The Prophet of God instructed 'Ali to write accordingly and continued: "Write, 'Following is the text of a pact reached by Muhammad, the Prophet of God and Suhayl ibn 'Amr.' "Suhayl again interrupted. "Stop it. If I accepted you as a Prophet of God I would not have been hostile to you. You should write only your name and the name of your father." The Prophet of God instructed 'Ali to write accordingly, referring to himself as Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah. The text of the treaty was redacted and agreed upon."

Muhammad Hussein Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*

His caring character and visionary leadership can be vividly seen in the negotiations of the Peace of Hudaibiyah, a treaty he signed with Quraysh despite strong opposition by his companions (see Box 2). The Companions were not happy that the Prophet agreed to abandon the *umrah* plan and return to Medina in favor of a peace treaty. Quraysh mobilized its army to prevent the Muslim from entering Makkah, and were ready to fight if the Muslims insisted to perform the rituals of *umrah* immediately.

They also mobilized their allies to help them protect Makkah, claiming that the Muslim came to take the city over. When their allies insisted to send emissaries to explore the Muslims' intention before initiating any military attacks, they reluctantly agreed to their allies' demands. Quraysh allies soon discovered that the Muslims came to perform the rituals of *umrah*, not to fight, and negotiation between the two parties commenced. To save their face and force possible conflict with the Muslims, Quraysh insisted that they should delay the *umrah* for next year as a condition for entering into a peace treaty.

The Prophet knew that he was in the right, and that he was backed by three thousands of willing fighters, but he chose peace and one year delay to spare life and avoid bloodshed. His vision was to build a peaceful society based on moral principles and respect of human dignity, and he knew that that vision is better served by postponing *umrah*, despite the inconvenience of waiting a whole year and the disappointment of the Muslims who have already started the *umrah* rituals and travelled for days to reach the outskirts of Makkah.

### **Capacity to Lead and Essential Leadership Qualities**

The Qur'an associates leadership with four concepts: patience, conviction, trust, and competence. The first two—patience and conviction—are alluded to in *Surah Sajdah*—and the others—trustworthiness and competence—in *Surah Yusuf*.

And we made of them leaders giving guidance under our command when they patiently persevered, and had conviction in our signs (*Sajdah 32:24*)

Put me in charge of the treasures of the land, for I am trustworthy and competent (*Yusuf 12:55*)

A fifth quality that the Qur'an considers essential for leadership, particularly when the act of following a leader is a voluntary act not induced by coercion or monetary reward, is the quality of compassion. The Qur'an tells the Prophet that it was his compassionate heart, more than anything else, that brought people close to him.

It is by the mercy of God that you have been kind to them [the disbelievers]. Were you severe or harsh hearted, they would have broken away from you... (Qur'an 3: 159)

The above five values associated with leadership can be reduced to three essential elements: Character, Competence, and Compassion.

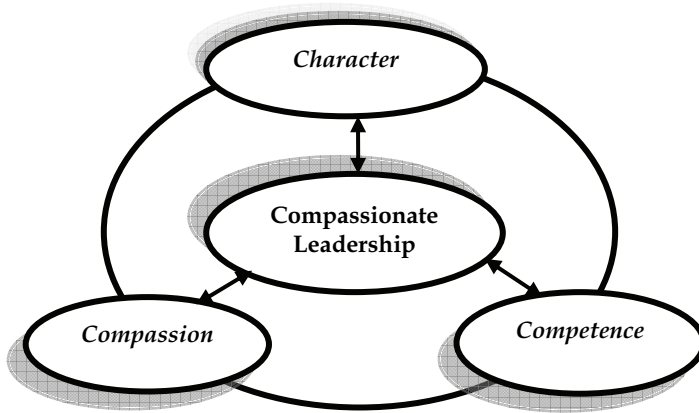


Figure 1.1: Components of Compassionate Leadership

### Character

Character is the total sum of the moral qualities that distinguish a person. Leadership that leaves lasting impact on a community is associated with important moral qualities, including courage, care, patience, forbearance, resolve, humility, generosity, honesty, trustworthiness, etc. These various moral virtues can be subsumed under two essential qualities: *conviction and constancy*.

*Conviction (Yaqin)*: Conviction is the most fundamental quality of leaders, as the leader's conviction in his or her mission and purpose lies at the root of all other qualities. It is for this reason that the higher the leader's responsibilities and the more volatile the environment in which he or she operates, the more crucial is his or her personal conviction in the mission.

The importance of the leader's conviction in times of volatility and change becomes particularly apparent during time of crisis

and uncertainty. In such times, deeply rooted values and beliefs become the anchor of collective action. Thus a deep conviction in, and a strong commitment to, a set of principles or values are essential for a leader who wants to reform the prevalent patterns of behavior. Again, the same conviction is needed if the leader is to challenge the status quo, for without a deep faith in a higher and better order, the task of changing the prevalent order is impossible.

Prophet Muhammad was subjected by his people to all type of temptation and pressure to give up his call to them to lead a life of honesty, truth, and justice. The Qur'an reminds the prophet of the favors God bestowed on him by strengthening his resolve and giving him certitude in the face of temptation and pressure.

And had we not given you certitude you would nearly have inclined to them a little. (Isra 17:74)

The certitude of the Prophet and his companions was gained, the Qur'an points out, by receiving constant inspiration and affirmation in the form of Qur'anic revelations that came down to support him over the span of 23 years.

Those who reject faith say: "Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once? Thus (is it revealed), that we may strengthen your heart thereby, and we have rehearsed it to you in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually. (Furqan 25:32)

*Constancy* is what the Qur'an calls (*Sabr*). A quick survey of Islamic literature shows that no virtue has more affinity with leadership than patience. The Qur'an emphasizes repeatedly the importance of patience for believers in general and for leaders in particular and identifies it as one of two essential qualities of leadership, the other being conviction (*yaqin*):

And we made, from among them, leaders (*a'immah*), giving guidance under our command, so long as they displayed patience (*sabr*), and continued to demonstrate faith (*yaqin*) in our signs. (Mu'minun 32:23)

As a general quality, patience is manifested in one's endurance in the face of pain and suffering or constant annoyance. The term itself signifies, more often than not, calm endurance in the face of pain and suffering caused by such natural disasters as diseases, famines, floods, or earthquakes, all of which lead to a loss of life and property. As such, patience is manifested in the believer's calm endurance of the trials of life:

Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. (Baqarah 2: 155)

However, when the source of pain and suffering is human instead of divine, the Qur'anic terms for conveying the meaning of calm endurance are resolve (*'azm*) and forbearance (*hilm*). Resolve denotes perseverance when people are confronted with superior human power. A resolute person continues to pursue higher objectives despite the strong opposition of those who have the power to inflict pain and suffering. This was the kind of patience with which prophets persisted in their mission of transforming their communities from the state of corruption to that of truth:

Therefore patiently persevere, as did the resolute among the prophets, and be in no haste with them (the unbelievers). (Ahqaf 46:35)

*Forbearance*, on the other hand, refers to one's ability to endure annoyance and irritation even when one has the upper hand over those responsible for producing them:

For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing, compassionate, and given to look to God. (Hud 11:75)

And as the *hadith* stresses:

“The strong among you is not the one who can overpower others, but the one who can control himself in the moment of anger.” (Sahih Muslim)

Resolve and forbearance are important qualities for effective leadership. The former is essential for overcoming adversaries, and the latter for maintaining unity and solidarity between leaders and followers.

One of the most distinguishing features of leaders is resolve in the face of difficulties. This trait reveals itself through the initiatives taken by a leader in his or her drive to carry out their mission. The leader’s resolve is usually manifested by self-confidence, boldness, and willingness to take risk whenever necessary, as well as by personal energy, diligence, and hard work. The Qur’anic equivalence of the term “resoluteness” is *al akhdh bi quwwah* (taking with might). This meaning can be found in God’s injunction to Musa to take the divine mission with firmness and strength:

And we ordained laws for him [Musa] in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): Take and hold of these with strength and enjoin your people to hold fast to the best of the precepts. (A’raf 7: 145)

It is this attitude of “taking with might” that one sees in the boldness of the young Abraham when he stood firmly before the elders of his community and told them:

Fie upon you, and upon the things that you worship besides God! Have you no sense? (Yusuf 12:67)

It is the same attitude observed in the energy exhibited by Nuh (Noah) as he pursued his mission with diligence and hard work, despite the negative response he received from his people:

He said: O my Lord! I have called to my people night and day, but my call only increased (their) flight (from truth)... So I have called them aloud; further I have spo-



ken to them in public and secretly in private. (Nuh 71:5-6, 8-9)

The attitude of “taking with might” can also be seen in the bravery displayed by Musa as he stood before Pharaoh and demanded that the children of Israel be released from their servitude in Egypt. Responding to Pharaoh’s bragging about his favors upon him when he was taken in as a member of the royal household, Musa said:

And this is the favor with which you do reproach me that you have enslaved the children of Israel. (Shu’ara 26:22)

In this way, he reminded Pharaoh that his mother’s decision to set her baby boy in the boat that took him, by divine design, to the royal palace where he was raised was precipitated by Pharaoh’s persecution and abuse of the Israelites.

The same attitude is revealed in the self-confidence shown by the Prophet when he stood on the mount of al Safa and called his people to the way of God:

Tell me, O men of Quraysh, if I were to inform you that I see a cavalry on the other side of this mountain, would you believe me? They answered: Indeed, for we trust you and we have never known you to tell a lie. Muhammad said: Know then that I am a Warner, and that I warn you of a severe punishment.<sup>1</sup>

### **Competence**

Leaders are expected to be knowledgeable and well informed. They are not merely middling members of their communities, but to acquire the necessary knowledge and insight in the areas in which they exercise leadership. Those who assume leadership responsibilities in political, economic, intellectual, legal, educational, or military fields of endeavor must acquire the necessary

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 8th ed. (Indianapolis: North American Trust Publications, 1976), p. 85.

specialized knowledge and expertise. A leader of a commercial firm, for example, should have a general knowledge about his social and political environments, but he or she also must have mastery over the specifics of his trade. It was Yusuf's (Joseph's) knowledge that gave him the confidence to step forward and ask Pharaoh to appoint him as treasurer of the realm:

[Yusuf] said: Set me over the storehouses of the land: I will indeed guard them, as one that knows. (Yusuf 12:55)

Ultimately, however, it is not one's scope of pure knowledge (*'ilm*) that matters in the exercise of leadership, but one's ability to apply the knowledge obtained to practical situation—i.e. one's wisdom (*hikmah*).

While *'ilm* and *hikmah* are closely interrelated, they have slightly different connotations. The term "knowledge" denotes the various ideas one receives about the nature of reality, whereas the terms "wisdom" or "judgment" (*hukm*) signify the way by which knowledge is brought to bear on action. More specifically, as is evident in Surah Isra and Surah Luqman, wisdom consists in those principles that guide actions. In Isra, for instance, wisdom is used in reference to such precepts as "fulfill every engagement" or "pursue not that of which you have no knowledge." It is for this reason that wisdom receives special emphasis in the Qur'an, where it is made abundantly clear that wisdom is a source of blessing and goodness to those who possess it:

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and he to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overwhelming. But none will grasp the message but men of understanding. (Baqarah 2:269)

It is also emphasized that wisdom has been an essential quality of prophets:

O Yahya, take hold of the book with might: and we gave him wisdom even as a youth. (Mariam 19:12)

When he [Musa] reached full age, and was firmly established (in life), we bestowed on him wisdom and knowl-

edge: for thus we reward those who do good. (Qasas 28:14)

And we strengthened his [Dawud's] kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgment in speech and decision. (Sad 38:20)

In short, leaders must be intellectual and perceptive, capable of analyzing the overall situation, establishing priorities for action, and developing strategies for their implementation.

### ***Compassion (Rahmah)***

Self-confidence, boldness, and courage do not produce community-oriented leadership if they are not balanced by kindness, courtesy, and compassion. The latter are the result of the leader's genuine concern for the well-being of subordinates and for those who come under his or her responsibility and reflect an attitude of compassion and humility. It would be quite difficult for a leader who lacks this trait to keep people attracted to his or her message or stay interested in them for long. It was the Prophet's kindness and good manner that kept the believers attracted to him:

It is by the mercy of God that you have been lenient with them [the disbelievers]. Were you severe or harsh hearted, they would have broken away from you..." (Aal Imran 3: 159)

### **Compassionate Leaders**

The most salient aspect of being compassionate is to focus on people as the goal of any social and organizational task. One can, therefore, realize when examining the actions of compassionate leaders, including prophets who were historically sent to reform their communities, that they were all caring and considerate when it comes to dealing with human beings.

The table below contrast leaders who focus completely on the given task, and hence identified as task-centered leaders, and those who give priority to the community, and referred to as community-centered leaders.

The idea is not to create dichotomy between the two, but to see the first as a means to the second. Compassionate leaders, therefore, care about people without neglecting rules. They see the rules as a means to bring order to the life of people and help them grow.

<b>Task-Centered</b>	<b>Community-Centered</b>
Focus on Rules Control Direct Criticize Judge Seek Compliance	Care for People Empower Inspire Appreciate Develop Seek Commitment

Similarly, compassionate leaders are interested in establishing control and order in the community, but the order they established is based on self-initiation and a sense of responsibility that is achieved by empowering the members of the community, and give the chance to grow and develop their moral and organizational capacity.

Compassionate leaders do not just give instructions and directions, but they inspire people by both words and actions.

Criticism is essential for pointing out shortcomings and hence for inducing personal and community growth. But focusing on the negative often brings the opposite results as it demoralizes individuals and groups that are subject to constant critical and negative remarks. If criticism is to be used positively and effectively, it has to be combined with frequent appreciation of good actions.

One often repeated mistake, particularly among individuals with strong moral commitment, is to use moral values and principles as instruments for judging and labeling others. Moral values should, rather, be seen as standards to inspire and uplift the individual and the community, and for that to happen the goal of evaluating performance should be to care about the wellbeing of other human beings and to develop a strategy and an approach to help them develop the performance and conditions.

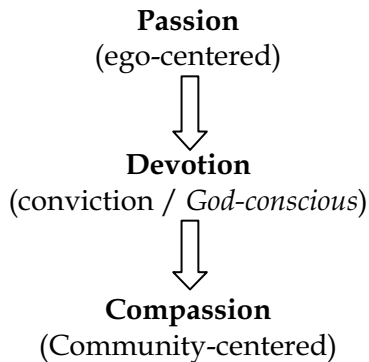
Finally, leaders should seek commitment and not simply compliance. That means that good leaders must develop ways

and means to persuade others to commit to the goals and plans desired by the leadership.

### **Understanding the Motivation of Compassionate Leaders**

One way to understand how compassion impacts the act of leadership is to define “com-passionate” leaders as those whose passion is directed towards the community. At the heart of this definition is the issue of motive. What motivates individuals to lead? There are two main sources of motivation, natural and spiritual. We will call the first motivation “passion,” which is inspired by natural instincts or the ego, and will call the other “compassion,” which is inspired by the human spirit and a deep faith in God.

The human spirit embodies the divine voice because it emanates directly from the Divine Spirit and yearns to return to It. It hides within it that voice that urges us to do the right thing and maintain justice and balance. This hidden voice is what modern psychology constantly refers to as our “conscience.”



The ego, on the other hand, belongs to the natural order and focuses on immediate desires and needs. It is the voice of the self-centered individuality that urges us to pursue our self interests unfettered, and places individual inclinations over all other considerations, including moral considerations, i.e. the consideration of the rights and dignity of other individuals. It is therefore by remembering God and being conscious of his will and presence that the spirit can balance the ego. Recognizing the priority of the divine will over the human, and subordinating individual interests and needs to the demands of truth and

justice, is the essence of human spirituality and the true mark of having profound trust is divine goodness and justice, and the manifestation of “*tawakkul*,” i.e. placing one’s trust in God.

And for those who fear God, He (ever) prepares a way out, and He provides for them from (sources) they never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in God, sufficient is (God) for him. For God will surely accomplish His purpose: verily, for all things has God appointed a due proportion. (Talaq 65:2-3)

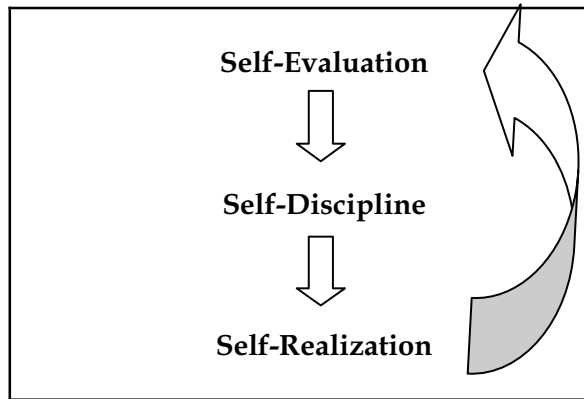
The above verse relates the believer’s consciousness of God to his ability to place his trust in the Divine, and asserts that these qualities result in bringing divine aid and support to the person who possesses them. The sooner the individual align himself with the divine and surrenders his will to him, the sooner God’s elevates the stature of the faithful and bless his life. The Qur’anic statement concludes with an important clue: Happenings that transpire in individual life falls within a greater scheme of things that corresponds with divine purpose. And so a complete trust in the intrinsic goodness of divine command and in the success of the lifestyle God’s desire is matter of deep faith. Trusting God is not simply an affirmation of one’s faith, but is also the acceptance of one’s fate, i.e. acceptance of the challenges and opportunities that are linked with one’s moral and social commitments.

Turning passion to compassion hinges, therefore, on developing consciousness of God (*taqwah*) through remembrance (*dhikr*) and compliance with the dictates of faith (*ta’qih*). Devotion to the purpose of life and to spiritual connection with the source of life kindles human energy and the desire to serve other human beings. Devotion, therefore liberate the individual from the demands of the ego, and balance these demands with spiritual demands, thereby turning passion to one’s own needs and aspirations into a compassion for the community and for wellbeing of others.

### **Building Leadership Capacity and the Cycle of Growth**

Developing individual leadership is a life-long process. Leaders grow by serving their communities, and by being conscious of their inner thoughts and motives. They continue to grow as long

as they do not feel they have learned all that they can learn, or did all that they could do. Such feeling of completeness is a clear sign that growth has come to an end. For leaders to continue to grow spiritually, morally, intellectually, and emotionally they must continue to learn and refine their skills and actions.



Cycle of Growth

Personal growth is therefore not spontaneous but deliberate, and requires that one continuously engage in self-evaluation, self-discipline, and self-realization, in what we call here the cycle of growth.

**Self-Evaluation** – Knowing one-self and reversing years of unhealthy habit formation is the first step in personal growth. Compassionate leaders are in the habit of evaluating their personal strengths and weaknesses, as they work diligently to build on their strengths and rid themselves of bad and limiting habits.

The Prophet practiced self-evaluation and advised others to do the same. The Prophet is reported to have said: “The prudent is the one who engages in self evolution and work with the hereafter in mind, and the feeble is the one who follows his self inclination and engages in wishful thinking.” (Tirmidhi)

Similarly, Umar bin Alkhattab is reported to have said: “Judge yourselves before you are judged, and evaluate it before

you are evaluated, for it will be much easier to face the final judgment if you judge yourselves today.”

**Self Discipline** – self-discipline is the second step in the cycle of growth, as it involves a conscious effort on the part of compassionate leaders to affirm moral values and commitments. Through it the individual aligns personal values with revealed principles. This constant affirmation of moral principles makes them a second nature and personal habits of the leader. Self-discipline gives rise to the moral character required in leaders. This meaning is evident the following *hadiths*:

A man asked the Prophet, O Prophet of God advice me: The Prophet said: “Be conscious of God wherever you are, follow bad actions with good, and deal with people in the best manner.” (Tirmidhi)

“None of you is a true believer until his inclinations are brought in line with what I have brought.” (Muslim)

Self discipline is indeed moral discipline inspired by one’s deep commitment to a set of moral values that guide his or her actions and responses. With time, the commitment to values translates the conscious endeavor to act in the spirit of these values to a set of habits that the individual practices with relative ease.

**Self Realization** – knowing one’s true self and realizing one’s self potential is the essence of self realization. The key here is authenticity, justice, and balance. Realizing oneself requires that one be honest with oneself, recognizes what he can do best, and focuses on it and avoid taking responsibilities beyond what one is capable of doing effectively and with degrees of excellence. This focus allows a person to develop capacity in a specific area, and add to the wellbeing of the community and society to which the person belongs.

### **Faith and the Power of Positive Thinking**

Positive thinking is the brainchild of deep faith while negative thinking is a sign of shaky faith. This statement is true because



the worldview of a person of faith helps him or her to see difficulties and frustrations, even pains and calamities, as essential parts of the human condition and as elements that are important for the spiritual and moral growth of people.

The Qur'an repeatedly describes pain and suffering as a tool for testing one's faith and for gaining deeper faith.

...and never give up hope of God's soothing mercy: truly no one despairs of God's soothing mercy, except those who have no faith. (Yusuf 12:87)

So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief: Verily, with every difficulty there is relief. (Inshirah 97:5-6)

Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. (Baqarah 2:155)

It is important for leaders in general and compassionate leaders in particular to reject negative thinking and embrace positive thinking. Compassionate leaders who want to make a positive impact on their surrounding must purge their thinking of all limiting ideas and thoughts and maintain liberating and empowering ideas. This is because human attitude and action are informed and guided by the type of ideas and values people entertain. Put differently, human life is shaped by the very thoughts and values people espouse, and the ideas affirmed by people chart future actions and hence become self-fulfilling prophecies.

The coach of a basketball team who assures his team that they will win the national league competition if they follow his plan, and make sure that the excellent plan he designed is faithfully implemented is likely to lead his hard working team to victory, and hence fulfills what a few years ago seemed like a "prophecy." People future is closely interrelated with their ideas, values, and beliefs.

Humans do not respond to events and happening around them instinctively in the same fashion that animals do. Rather, people's reaction to stimuli that take place in their surrounding

undergoes a four-stage process in which ideas and emotions serve as filters. That is, any stimulus, such as reward or threat that makes an impact on the individual goes through an analysis stage in which the person forms an idea as to the nature and meaning of the stimulus. People's perception and meaning invoke emotions that motivates them to take a particular action.

**Stimulus**  $\Rightarrow$  **Ideas**  $\Rightarrow$  **Emotions**  $\Rightarrow$  **Actions**

Ideas are the crucial link in the above chain. Ideas affect, at least partially, the type of emotions that would be induced by a stimulus, and hence shape the action that follows. Positive ideas or thoughts produce empowering emotions and lead to positive actions, while negative thoughts produce limiting emotions and lead to negative actions.

**Stimulus**  $\Rightarrow$  **Positive Ideas**  $\Rightarrow$  **Hope**  $\Rightarrow$  **Positive Action**

**or**

**Stimulus**  $\Rightarrow$  **negative Ideas**  $\Rightarrow$  **Fear**  $\Rightarrow$  **negative Action**

Compassionate leaders who want to build their leadership capacity and leave a positive impact around them cannot solely focus on acquiring skills. They also need to develop a healthy and balanced understanding of their faith and develop the moral discipline they need to control their emotions.

**Box 1.3**  
**Basic Elements of Compassionate Leadership**  
**(The Three C's)**

*Character- Morally Responsible*

- Know themselves through reflection and self-evaluation.
- Understand both their history and present environment.
- Are guided by set of strong values and clear principles
- Are committed to maintaining trust through empathy, constancy, and integrity.

*Competence – Vision, knowledge, and skills*

- Are clear about their priorities and goals.
- Are aware of and able to apply their learning style to solving problems.
- Are willing to be lifelong learners.
- Are skilled in creating a vision, and see themselves and their lives as part of that vision.
- Are able to communicate their vision in ways that others are inspired by it.

*Compassion*

- Are able to accept mistakes and failures as precursors to creativity and problem solving.
- Are skilled in translating intentions into reality by empowering others and inspiring them to bring about the desired change.
- Grateful for the blessings they have, and use their position and resource to help others with humility.

### Summary

- Leaders are visionaries who have the capacity to communicate their vision with clarity, translate it into a set of concrete actions, and inspire others to follow their lead.
- Many people can develop qualities associated with leadership, such as courage, knowledge, forbearance, generosity, etc. Few, however, can bring the right balance in applying these qualities to meet the demands of the situation that calls for the exercise of leadership.
- Prophet Muhammad brought the right balance in applying leadership qualities to meet the demands of the situations that called for the exercise of leadership. He was easy going, gentle and kind in dealing with people, patient and forbearing and always ready to overlook the faults of others; behind the soft-mannered demeanor, however, stood a principled leader with strong commitment to his mission.
- The Prophet was a compassionate human being and a compassionate leader, who cared about the wellbeing of all peoples, both those who were close to him and shared with him his values and beliefs and those who were complete strangers.
- The essential qualities of compassionate leaders can be reduced to three basic qualities: Character, Competence, and Compassion.
- Compassion is the result of the triumph of the spirit over the ego. Such triumph requires that the leader constantly remember God and become conscious of his will and presence.
- Building leadership capacity and achieving personal growth  
Personal growth is not spontaneous but deliberate, but requires continuous engaging in self-evaluation, self-discipline, and self-realization, in what we call here the cycle of growth.
- Compassionate leaders who want to make a positive impact on their surrounding must purge their thinking of all limiting ideas and thoughts and maintain liberating and empowering ideas.

## Questions and Exercises

Answer the following questions and then write your personal vision statement.

1. Why do I want to lead? Do I have the qualities to lead with compassion? And what are my strengths and weaknesses?
2. Relate an instance where you or person you know was able to succeed in overcoming a challenge because of positive thinking.
3. Complete the following exercise to determine your current leadership capacity

### *Leadership Evaluation: Am I a compassionate leader?*

This exercise is intended to evaluate the leadership capacity of the participant and to help him or her recognize whether they need to focus on developing qualities, skills, or both.

Participants should complete all 18 questions in 30 minutes. Then they need to add the scores for odd and even questions separately. Their current leadership capacity be determined by comparing their scores against those provided in the chart at the end of this exercise.

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>always</b>
0	1   2	3   4   5

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy working on challenging tasks
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I seek the input of people working under my supervision and make sure that their ideas and suggestion are incorporated into decision I make.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The most important thing for me is to achieve the goal and accomplish the task.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I love mentoring people who work with me and I take the time to explain new projects and tasks.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I am always conscious of time and closely monitor the project schedule to make sure that tasks are completed on time.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ I welcome new ideas and suggestions, and encourage people who work with me to be creative in their work.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I pay attention to details and make sure that complex tasks are executed thoroughly to the smallest detail.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy reading articles and books about spirituality, ethics, biographies of leaders, and human psychology; I then do my best to put what I learned to action.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I am a multitasking person and have no problem in undertaking several tasks and projects at the same time.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I encourage my team to discuss complex tasks, and spend whatever time they need to explain the intricate details of the project.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I manage my time very efficiently.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Nothing is more important than developing the skills and building the capacity of my team.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy analyzing problems and pay great attention to planning and evaluation.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I respect people who interact with me and honor their boundaries.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ When pointing mistakes and dealing with conflict, I do not worry about what others think.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Counseling members of my team to improve their performance or help them achieve their task is very important to me.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy reading articles and books that focus on managerial skills; I then do my best to put what I learned to action.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Whenever I assign tasks, I meet with my team members to ensure that they have needed resources for their completion.

<b>Odd Score</b>	<b>Even Score</b>	<b>Leadership Capacity</b>
Above 45	Above 45	Compassionate Leader
Below 45	Above 45	People-oriented but lacking in leadership skills
Above 45	Below 45	Task-oriented but short on compassion
Below 45	Below 45	Weak capacity to lead

## Empower Your Community, Empower Yourself

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### Chapter Topics

- Leadership tasks
- Community empowerment
- Focus on mission's priorities and sphere of influence
- The process of empowerment and growth
- standard setting and guidelines for best practices
- Empowerment through involvement

### Learning Objectives

- Define the essential leadership tasks.
- Understand the concept of culture and its impact on individual and group behavior.
- Contrast legalism with compassionate orientation.
- Community development through raising expectations and compassionate engagement.
- Contrast values and standards, and exploring the use of standards to generate best practices in the organization and the community.
- Develop vision, mission, and priorities

Compassionate leadership matters in that it enhances the life of the community in which it emerges and mobilizes community members to advance shared goals. Leaders help in developing community resources and improving community conditions by empowering those who they get in contact with.

To empower a person or a group is to help them to realize their full potential. Empowerment requires, on one level, that the leader trust the people around him and delegate his authority to them so that they can contribute to the overall mission of the organization. On a deeper level, empowerment involves a long process of cultural change that aims at overcoming challenges and limitations, and harnessing potential resources available within and outside the community. Compassionate leaders, as such, are by definition agents of change, whose more basic task is to help their community to develop and grow, and to help community members to realize their potential and contribute to the wellbeing of their communities.

Unlike business corporations whose goal is profit maximization, the bottom line for communities is the creation of a culture that nurtures people and help them realize their human potential. Compassionate leadership is, therefore, the most appropriate type of leadership for community-based organizations. Similarly, the highest standard for community empowerment is not efficiency, as these values must take a backseat to other more important values, including justice, character development, compassion, and care.

### **Leadership Tasks**

Leadership is not simply a matter of individual qualities, but is also derived from: (1) one's ability to bring the right balance to the application of personal capacities to the task performed by the group, (2) the prevailing values and norms among the leader's group, and (3) the overall cultural and structural conditions. It is quite possible that a person could possess a combination of the leadership traits discussed in Chapter 1 but still fails to exercise leadership within his or her community for several reasons: person's qualities have not been brought to bear on the group's



organizational activities, the incompatibility between his or her priorities and those of the community, or even because the person's vision is not supported by the community.<sup>2</sup>

In order to relate leadership qualities to the task of leadership, we must, first of all, identify those activities that are intrinsic to the act of leading. Leaders are usually involved in a variety of activities, such as directing, planning, negotiating, persuading, and evaluating. These may be subsumed under the following general tasks:

1. Analyze the internal and external environment
2. Create vision and set standards
3. Communicate their vision with meaning
4. Overcome friction and structure conflict to bring agreement
5. Realize goals through strategic planning and action
6. Cultivate good relations and build team spirit
7. Pay attention to details

We will focus on the first two leadership tasks in this chapter, and will leave the elaboration of the other tasks to subsequent chapters.

### **Rediscovering the Compassionate Mission and Humane Purposes**

Empowering a community requires the development of a culture of respect, nourishment, and cooperation. In the absence of such a culture no meaningful community growth is possible.

Culture refers to the pattern of activities and relationships in a specific community. It embodies shared values and meanings, providing specific answers as to how people deal with gender and ethnic differences, how they deal with authority, what behavior they value, and what differences they tolerate. These patterns change from one society to another, and do also change from one region to another, one community to another, or even on organization to another.

The most important elements of a culture relate to the rules a specific community develops as to what is an acceptable and

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<sup>2</sup> For example, a leader of a political party with an unpopular message.

unacceptable behavior and how much a community tolerates deviation from the established norms. Equally important is how a community goes about defining acceptable behavior and affirming and promoting ideal norms.

Very often societies and communities demand individual compliance with established norms, and use reward and punishment to ensure such compliance. Reward and punishment play an important role in affirming social norms, but they are not the best tools to ensure people's commitment. Over reliance on reward and punishment can be counterproductive as it often gives rise to duplicity and artificial harmony. It, further, erodes social cooperation and encourages a pattern of behavior known as legalism. Under such circumstances, people develop judgmental attitude, as they become more interested in condemning people who deviate from the established norms, and less in educating them or helping them overcome the conditions that led to their deviance.

Many Muslim communities have in recent times developed a legalistic attitude. Very often they privilege the rules of *shari'ah* (*ahkam*) over its purposes and intentions (*maqasid*). This attitude is, unfortunately, reminiscent of those that were prevalent in early religious communities criticized by the Qur'an.

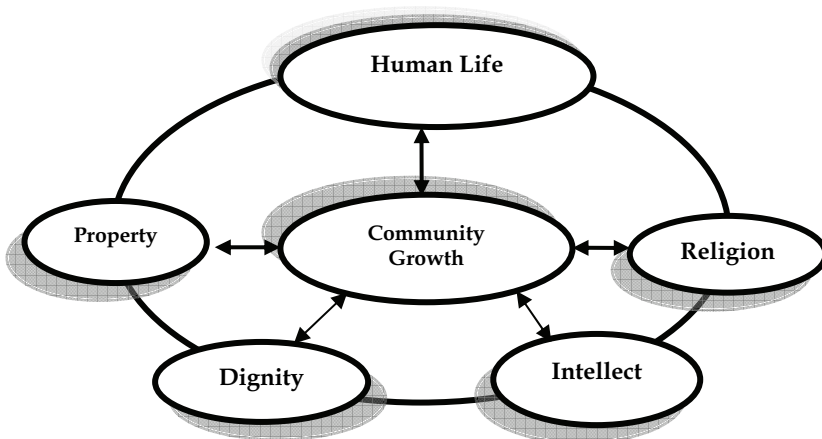


Figure 2.1: Purposes of Shari'ah

This understanding was very clear in the hearts and minds of the Prophet's companions. When famine inflicted the community, Umar ibn Alkhattab suspended the punishment the Qur'an specified for theft. He understood that the punishment was intended to protect individual property from exploitation and abuse, and realized that protecting human life in the time of famine was paramount.

There is a dire need today to reclaim the compassionate spirit of Islam and the compassionate traditions of the Prophet. The culture of judging others must give way to a culture of compassionate engagement. Education, counseling, and support are the right responses to helping people overcome their moral weaknesses and inspire them to lead a moral and positive life.

Compassionate leaders strive to develop their communities through raising expectations and engagement. These efforts include:

- Cooperation, volunteerism, and capacity building (training, networking, etc.)
- Raising expectations and setting standards
- Empowering the community through education and involvement
- Giving hands to neglected and underprivileged neighborhoods

### **Focus on Mission's Priorities and Sphere of Influence**

People who desire positive change must work toward achieving it. It is the responsibility of every human being, particularly those who committed themselves to lead and bring about change, that they should take the initiative. The Qur'an is clear that the dynamics of change lies in human choices and actions.

Verily never God changes the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls). (Raid 13:11)

Sometimes, the needed or desired change is so grand and so far-reaching pushing people to either despair or wishful thinking. Those who fall into despair sit on the side and wait for something

to happen without being part of it, while day-dreamers substitute effective actions for self-asserting statements. Neither reaction is that of effective leaders.

Leaders usually focus their attention and action on their *sphere of influence*. They work with individuals and groups who they believe they can impact positively and with whom they have common purpose and interest. And as they focus their energy on their sphere of influence, no matter how small it is, this sphere begins to expand and grow and take them closer to their far reaching goals.

Compassionate leaders realize that pursuing grand goals and building big dreams require time that may expand far beyond their current capacity or their lifespan. But they also know that they do not have to see the results themselves, and are generous enough to spend their life building the foundation of a building that future generations can complete. This was the attitude of Prophet Ibrahim, who built the foundation of the House of God, leaving it to future generations to complete the building and realize its purpose. Ibrahim and his son Ismail, peace be with them, realized their limitations and their inability to build the entire house. But that did not prevent them from doing their part.

There is no great civilization in the history of humanity that was initiated and brought to its fruition by one generation of people. All great civilizations were the result of the hard work of successive generation. Every generation raise the moral, social, scientific, and artistic capacity of society to greater height, enabling the next generation to start it work from higher level of performance. Building a strong community and society is a multi-generational enterprise in which those who reach its full strengths always stand on the shoulders or those who preceded them.

### **Building Capacity by Raising Expectations**

Improving the performance of both the individual and the community requires raising personal and community expectations. People often strive to do better in response to rising expectations. Raising expectations is the first duty of leaders.

Raising expectations can take several forms, including making constant encouragements and demands. But the most system-

atic and fruitful way to do so is by setting higher standards for the organization and the community.

Before we discuss how higher standards can be set, we need to define standards and set them apart from values and norms. Standards are written agreements that describe with some details specific actions, procedures, or outcomes required from members of an organization or a community, or demanded for achieving a specific task. Norms resemble standards in that they determine the specific ways for behaving in a community. Unlike standards, however, norms are unwritten procedures that are learned by being a member of a particular community. Finally, Values are guiding principles of action that desired by human beings regardless of their particular situations and conditions. While inspiring, they tend to be abstract and general, and need to be expressed in a specific social milieu.

Values are abstract notions, such as justice, compassion, honesty, cooperation, dignity, etc. They represent actions and situations that are deemed desirable by a cultural or religious group. Members of the community are usually drawn to them and expect other members to desire them or respect them. Asserting a value does not mean, however, that people agree as to how to realize it in practical situations. This is what standards do. They take those values and prescribe certain actions and procedures that are anticipated for their implementation. Sometimes standards incorporate a number of values.

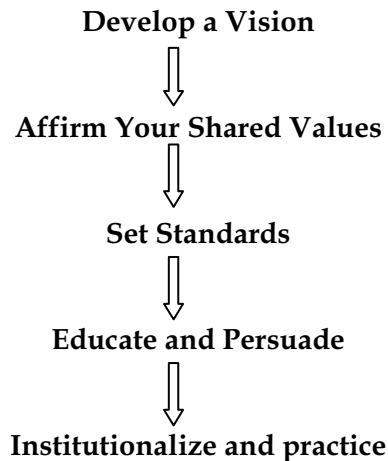
Take for example the value of compassion. Islam demands that its followers show compassion to other human beings. To understand how this important value can be put in the form of a higher standard, let us consider a hypothetical Islamic center which we will call The EZ Islamic Center, or EZIC. EZIC members believe that they must show compassion as a requirement of their faith. This often is expressed by collecting an annual fund and distributing it to other members who are in financial needs. Giving charity to members of their community is therefore a norm in EZIC.

While providing charity to community members is an act of compassion, it is not the only act of compassion that EZIC is capable of. Leaders can extend the application of compassion a little further by raising expectations and persuading members of the community to show compassion beyond their current practice

and beyond the confine of their community. When such consensus emerges, it can be institutionalized by a new and higher standard that can be stated as thus: “Islamic centers should encourage volunteerism and charitable work so as to provide services and support to hospitals, fire departments, public rescue services, food distribution services, and others.”

### **The Process of Empowerment and Growth**

Improving community practices and raising standards cannot be done by engaging in academic discussion in a committee, or by commissioning a study that recommend new standards. Such endeavors should only be used to generate initial ideas to be used as spring board and first step for an engaging discussion among community members and leaders. For new standards and new norms to take hold in a community, they must be a part of shared vision and shared values. The process that leads to developing standards that can be embraced by the organization and the community consists of five steps:



#### **Develop Vision**

Developing vision is the first, and probably most important, role leaders have to play is providing direction to their organization. Indeed the very notion of “leading” derives from one’s ability to guide and direct the actions of others. To do so, one has to identify the specific goals that the group wants to realize and

then develop the appropriate strategy to achieve them. Leaders should not, however, select goals and purposes at random or in an ad hoc fashion. Rather, goals and purposes must be part of a broad vision in order to inspire the commitment of organization members.

The vision should consist of (a) a set of clear goals and purposes, (b) a general statement assessing the group's present state and describing the future state to be attained while pursuing the established goals, and (c) a set of principles to guide the organization members' internal and external interaction.

The vision statement of the group could emerge out of the creative thinking of the leader or in the course of discussion and exchange of ideas and views among members. But in either case, a process of consultation and deliberation aiming at achieving broad agreement or consensus (*ijma'*) through dialogue and persuasion must be put in place.

A well-developed and articulated vision statement:

- Brings constancy to the leader's directives and stability to the organization;
- Inspires and motivates members by relating their well-being and salvation to the organization's mission and activities;
- Eliminates confusion and misunderstanding and facilitates cooperation among group members and between leaders and followers; and
- Reduces any conflict that might result from the absence of common commitments and values among organization members.

In addition to providing direction to the group, the articulated *vision serves as a frame of reference for problem-solving* activities. Solving problems, a crucial aspect of leadership, is not simply a matter of reacting spontaneously to challenges and events in a piecemeal fashion. Rather, problems must be dealt with on the basis of an overall vision that allows the group to provide appropriate responses, whereby problems are neither exaggerated nor underestimated, and whereby the actions

undertaken do not complicate the overall task but ease difficulties and facilitate progress towards the ultimate goal.

Leaders must, therefore, be conceptualists and “people of ideas.” This is true regardless of whether the particular nature of the organization’s task is military, business, political, or otherwise. Good military leaders have always been outstanding strategists, capable of surprising their enemies with new movements and maneuvers. Similarly, good business leaders are usually distinguished entrepreneurs who bring new ideas and methods of doing things to their organizations. Likewise, effective political leaders generate new ideas to overcome persistent problems.

In order for leaders to direct the activities of subordinates, they should have adequate expertise and knowledge of the organization's task as well as a sound understanding of the environment in which they operate. It is true that leaders can always call on the expertise of advisers and assistants, but their ability to utilize the advice received hinges on their capacity to compare and evaluate the opinions provided by their assistants. To do this successfully, leaders must be well grounded in the task of their organizations and well informed about the internal and external work atmosphere. It would be impossible to judge the value of the advice they receive if they are completely dependent on the knowledge of others.

Being competent in the types of activities pursued by the organization does not mean that the leader should be submerged in technical and detailed decisions. While mid-level leaders are expected to provide technical guidance to their subordinates, ranking leaders should concentrate on strategic planning and fix their eyes on long-range goals. Top leaders should ensure that details are given adequate attention by their subordinates while avoiding getting distracted by involving themselves in detailed decisions.

Leaders' responsibilities do not end at planning and making decisions, for they also have to implement plans and execute decisions. The latter requires a deep conviction in one's mission and a great deal of resolve to pursue it despite all difficulties. The profundity of a leader's conviction is often revealed in the extra steps he takes to persuade his team of the wisdom of his decision. It was Abu Bakr's strong belief that his mission was to reinforce



and sustain the political order established by the Prophet that gave him the strength to stand firmly behind his decision to fight the apostates. While his firmness was seen by many of his contemporaries as unnecessary, we can see today with hindsight how crucial this firmness was for the future of the rising Islamic movement.

One important aspect of the leadership relates to their qualities of courage and willingness to take calculated risks. Effective leaders always strive to promote and improve prevailing conditions and are not afraid to challenge the status quo. This explains why leaders are most needed in times of crisis and turbulence, when the impetus for change is quite great. In ordinary times when societal institutions are functional, society can continue to function even in the absence of strong leadership, for many of the emerging problems can be solved by established procedures and rules. But as institutions begin to experience dysfunction, strong leadership becomes indispensable.

### **Standard Setting**

We saw earlier that, unlike values, standards provide specific prescriptions for action and interaction for the members of a community and organization. Setting new standards involves three basic steps:

- Decide on the areas of community life that needs special attention and improvement.
- Identify specific duties and practical procedures to ensure that principles and values are practiced in the Islamic center.
- Institutionalize Islamic values and practices in ways that would establish the Muslim American community firmly within American culture and society.

Using these points, ISNA Leadership Development Center (ILDC) developed a set of standards to improve services and social environment at Islamic centers. The document that came out of that exercise is titled "Guidelines for Best Practices of Islamic Centers." (See chapter 9) The document identifies the following nine areas for attention, and provides a set of guidelines to improve performance in these areas.

1. Good governance
2. Community Development
3. Conflict Transformation
4. Women's Participation
5. Youth Involvement
6. Public Relations and Services
7. Interfaith Programs and Activities
8. Sound financial Base
9. Safety and security

Along with the guidelines, the document also identifies resources that can be used in support of implementing the guidelines. The document is included in its entirety in Part II under the title Best Practices of Islamic Centers.

### **Empowerment through Involvement**

The acid test of leaders lies in their ability to ensure the involvement and cooperation among community members and to keep the momentum going. For involvement and cooperation to be maintained, a culture of devotion, satisfaction, and trust must be created. This requires that special attention be given to empowering the members by giving them the opportunity to develop their skills and contribute to the development of the organization. Good leaders are usually exemplary members of the organization who inspire others by their words and actions, and who take interest in the well-being and maturation of those who work with them.

Empowerment does not end with inspiring and moving people, but naturally includes channeling their energies and utilizing their skills. Leaders are expected to empower their subordinates by assigning responsibilities and delegating to them enough power to allow them to execute those responsibilities successfully. Leaders who neglect to delegate authority to subordinates

### **Standard Setting**

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are guilty of not only failing to utilize available resources and skills, but of undermining their organizations. Giving subordinates the opportunity to face problems and difficulties and to learn how to overcome them is an important aspect of developing their skills and capabilities.

Despite the fact that people who occupy leading positions in an organization tend to be more experienced, and hence better decision makers than their subordinates, any attempt on their part to monopolize power and decision making can only lead to lowering the level of efficiency in their organizations. If they try to speed up work, they become susceptible to making frequent mistakes because they are forced to make hasty decisions. If they try to deliberate and do a more thorough job in studying issues and examining consequences, important decisions are delayed and the opportunity to take decisive actions are lost.

The leader who wants to empower others must be generous, humble, and people oriented, genuinely concerned about the well-being and development of subordinates. A self-centered, power-hungry, or envious individual is not capable of true leadership, because he or she is interested mainly in the aggrandizement of personal power and not the development of others.

Finally, mobilizing a community behind a new vision requires a great deal of determination, patience, and perseverance. The leader's patience is crucial for overcoming the group's inertia and resistance to change, and the greatest resistance to change should be expected from those who control the power centers of the organization. Leaders who are not prepared to persevere and to hold their ground in the face of stiff resistance will fail to implement their vision, no matter how brilliant it is.

**Box 2.1**  
**Essential Tasks of Leaders**

**1. Monitor internal and external environment**

- Is aware of major issues in the larger environment and their impact on decisions
- Critically synthesizes information from internal & external sources
- Encourages diverse inputs and perspectives when developing plans and making decisions
- Considers possible outcomes and alternative actions when creating strategies
- Takes calculated risks to transform the organization

**2. Cultivate good relations and strong alliances**

- Cultivate relationships and alliances with teams and leaders to meet community needs
- Build networks of colleagues to create learning environment
- Views mistakes as learning opportunities for leadership development
- Participates regularly in community development as a leader and learner
- Provide a learning environment to all members of organization and community

**3. Create vision and Set Standards**

- Engaging community members in creating a clear vision and articulates it powerfully
- Set standards for action and performance
- Helps individual define personal visions and roles consistent with the organizational vision
- Revisit the organizational vision regularly to refine it and to align strategies to the vision

**4. Communicate vision with meaning and Clarity**

- Practices empathetic listening and honest dialogue with colleagues
- Is willing to confront conflict and pursue solution of all issues
- Seeks feedback and changes behavior based on what is learned
- Constructively uses disagreements and to develop collaborative solutions

**5. Maintain trust through integrity**

- Has clear values and communicates them through commitments and behavior
- Provides opportunities for others to demonstrate and expand their skills
- Provides others the opportunity to learn from mistakes and problems
- Demonstrate behavior that is consistent with values, ethics, and standards for integrity

**6. Realize purposes through actions**

- Gets results and add value to efforts by transforming strategies into actions
- Assumes personal responsibility for improving community performance and conditions
- Evaluate results to improve work processes
- Is able to credit others and publicly acknowledge their contributions

### Summary

- To empower a person or a group is to help them to realize their full potential.
- Compassionate leaders are agents of change, whose more basic task is to help their community to develop and grow, and to help community members to realize their potential and contribute to the wellbeing of their communities.
- Leadership is not simply a matter of individual qualities, but is also derived from: (1) one's ability to bring the right balance to the application of personal capacities to the task performed by the group, (2) the prevailing values and norms among the leader's group, and (3) the overall cultural and structural conditions.
- Most important leadership tasks include:
  - Analyzing the internal and external environment
  - Create vision and set standards
  - Communicate his/her vision with meaning
  - Overcoming friction and structure conflict to bring agreement
  - Realize intentions through strategic planning and action
  - Cultivate good relations and build team spirit
- Empowering a community requires the development of a culture of respect, nourishment, and cooperation. In the absence of such a culture no meaningful community growth is possible.
- Many Muslim communities have developed in recent times a legalistic attitude. Very often they privilege the rules of *shari'ah* (*ahkam*) over its purposes and intentions (*maqasid*).
- Compassionate leaders strive to develop their communities through raising expectations and Engagement. These efforts include:
- Cooperation, volunteerism, and capacity building (training, etc.)
- Raising Expectations and Setting Standards
- Empowering the community through education and involvement

- Giving hands to neglected and underprivileged neighborhoods
- Compassionate leaders realize that pursuing grand goals and building big dreams require time that may expand far beyond their current capacity or their lifespan. But they also know that they do not have to see the results themselves, and are generous enough to spend their life time building the foundation of a building that future generations can complete.
- Improving the performance of both the individual and the community requires raising personal and community expectations. People often strive to do better in response to rising expectations. Raising expectations is the first duty of leaders.
- We saw earlier that, unlike values, standards provide specific prescription for action and interaction for the members of a community and organization.
- Leaders are expected to empower their subordinates by assigning responsibilities and delegating to them enough power to allow them to execute those responsibilities successfully.

### Questions and Exercises

1. Do the cultural ethos in your communities encourage cooperation or do they lead to frequent conflict and discord? Describe the dominant organization culture and propose possible remedies based on the discussions in this chapter.
2. What important values you think are not being fully respected in your community? Write a set of standards to ensure that those values are respected and practiced.
3. Do you or your organization rely on reward and punishment to ensure compliance with its own norms? How does your community deal with dissension and abnormality? Do you think there can be a better way to address dissension? Give examples.
4. Write a vision statement for your community, and identify a set of standards that you would like to recommend for discussion the then adoption.



# 3

## Communicate Effectively in Diverse Settings

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### Chapter Topics

- Personal experience and shared meaning
- Elements of communication
- Maintain your cool: focusing on the message
- Maintain mutuality and stay open to dialogue
- Nurture trust and promote dialogue
- Active listening

### Learning Objectives

- Discover the relationship between understanding and personal Experience, and learn the concept of “pool of shared meaning”
- Examine the elements of communication and the communication process
- Learn how compassionate leaders maintain their Cool and focusing on the Message
- Examine effective ways compassionate leaders use to maintain mutuality and stay open to dialogue
- Discuss the skills leaders needs to nurture trust and promote dialogue
- Learn the importance of, and the skills needed for, active listening

**A** Texan farmer met a Japanese farmer while he was vacationing in Japan with his family. The Japanese farmer who grew rice in his 30 acre land invited the Texan farmer who raised cattle in a 3000 acre land to visit his farm. The proud Japanese farmer wanted to impress his guest so he took him on a tour around the farm driving his new tractor. When they reach the middle of the farm, the Japanese farmer pointed to two lines of trees at some distance and told the Texan farmer: “do you see these two lines of trees? My land stretches from the first to the other.” The Texan farmer was, of course, not impressed and wanted to illustrate the vastness of his land. “To reach the end of my farm around noon,” the Texan farmer bragged, “I would have to start driving my tractor early in the morning.” The Japanese farmer looked at him with pity and said: “I used to have a tractor like yours before I bought this new one!”

The above funny tale reveals the importance of perception in communication. Understanding the intended meaning of the speaker depends on the perception and experience of the listener. The experience of the Japanese farmer failed him, and he misunderstood what the speaker was talking about. Given the fact that his farm was one of the largest in his community, the long time the Texan farmer took to drive through his farm could only be attributed to a dysfunctional tractor!

Communication is essential for social life, as it is the only way to ensure that one’s intentions are understood by others. People communicate meaning by various means, including language, body gestures, and signs. Although people often assume that messages they communicate are received by their audiences and interlocutors, the reality is more complex as the above humorous story illustrates. The ability of the recipient (receiver) of the message to grasp its meaning depends on the ability of the speaker (sender) to communicate with clarity, but also on the receiver’s grasp of the language of communication and his or her life experience.

### **Personal Experience and Shared Meaning**

The purpose of communication is to convey a specific meaning to the people with whom we interact with the hope of creating

understanding or soliciting cooperation. Conveying meaning is not simply a matter of speaking a common language, but sharing a *sphere of common meaning*. This sphere of common meaning is what is often referred to as "culture." Social groups share common culture, because they share a collective experience bequeathed to them by older members of their group or community. Culture, though, is not limited to social groups, but can be experienced in different organizations and communities. Organizations, like social groups, develop their own cultures and spheres of shared meaning.

Yet beyond the meaning shared through culture, individuals who work closely to advance shared goals need to develop their own sphere of meaning, by sharing their own personal experiences. To improve understanding and strengthen cooperation, organization members need to develop their own sphere of shared meaning. Organization members must bring their personal experiences to the sphere of shared meaning by expressing their own ideas, feelings, and stories. The more the personal and collective meaning is shared by the organization members, the more they would be able to enjoy mutual trust and respect, and the more they can function as a team.

Adding to the sphere of shared meaning can be well illustrated in the Prophet's approach to the rumors that was spread after the Battle of Hunayn that he favored his own tribe of Quraysh in dividing the spoils of war over the Ansar. The Prophet commanded Sa'd ibn `Ubadah to call the Ansar for a meeting. When they were assembled, the Prophet said "O Ansar! It has been reported to me that you were unhappy with my distribution of the booty. Do tell me, when I came to you, did I not find you misguidance and did not God guide you to the truth through me? Did I not find you in a state of need and did not God make you affluent through me? Did I not find you enemies of one another and did not God reconcile your hearts through me?" The Ansar answered: What would we say O Prophet of God: "Indeed! God and his Prophet have been very generous and very loving;" and they fell into silence.

The Prophet replied: "By God, if you wanted you could have said: Did you not come to us belied by your people and did we not believe in you? Did you not come to us vanquished and defeated and did we not come to your rescue? Did you not come

to us banished and repulsed and did we not give you shelter? Did you not come to us in want and need and did we not give you of our bounty?" Had you replied to me in this vein you would have said nothing but the truth and I would have had to agree! O Ansar, are you angry because I have given away some goods to those whom I sought to win to faith? I did that because I deemed their faith confirmable by material goods whereas I deemed yours to be based on solid conviction, to be candid beyond all dissuasion? Are you not satisfied, O Ansar, that all the people return home loaded with goods and camels whereas you return with the Prophet of God? By Him who dominates Muhammad's soul, except for the fact of my birth, there is no people to whom I would rather belong to beside the Ansar. If all mankind went one way, and the Ansar went another, I would certainly choose the way of the Ansar. O God, bless the Ansar, their children, and their grandchildren. Show your mercy to them and keep them under your protection."

By sharing with the Ansar his feelings and thoughts, the Prophet was able to bring comfort to them, and remove the doubts that were introduced by the malicious rumors that were planted by the Prophet's enemies in the community to undermine internal solidarity and create mistrust and doubts.

The Prophet always recognized that it is not enough to maintain moral integrity, but that it is also important that one should dispel even the appearance of impropriety. He once stopped two of his companions whom he encountered near the door of the mosque to inform them that he was in the company of his wife Safiya bint Huyay. Imam Bukhari reported on the authority of Safiya that she visited the Prophet during his *I'tikaaf* (mosque retreat) in the masjid during the last ten days of Ramadan and sat for an hour talking to him. When she turned to leave, the Prophet accompanied her until she reached the door of the masjid. There two men from the Ansar passed them by and gave salam to the Prophet. Realizing that they started walking in fast pace he spoke to them: "Slow down, she is Safiya bint Huyay." They said, "Subhanallah! O Messenger of God!" And they were distressed by it. Then, the Prophet said to them: "Verily, Satan reaches into the heart of a person like his blood and I feared that he may cast something into your hearts."

A well known American Muslim leader and fundraiser once told me that he conducted a very successful fundraising event in Chicago. When he boarded the plane and took up his first class seat on his way back home, a major donor who paid generously during the event passed him by to take his seat in the economy class. Aziz who was a frequent flyer on that airliner booked an economy class flight but received an automatic upgrade because of his frequent flying status. Although he could have kept the information for himself, Aziz decided to communicate with the donor the reason for flying first class. He went to the economy class cabin, greeted the donor, and let him know in the context of their conversation that he received an upgrade to first class for his economy class ticket.

Aziz who was keen on keeping the cost of operation down, and would not have bought a first class ticket to fly to the fundraising event, felt strongly that he should add to the sphere of meaning he shared with the donor. Communicating the reason for taking a first class seat had an additional unintended consequence. A week later, Aziz informed me, he received an additional donation of \$10,000 to be added to the charitable project he came to Chicago to raise fund for. Indeed, adding to the sphere of meaning makes wonders!

### **Elements of Communication**

Good communication is essential for developing good relations of any kind, but it is crucial for those who play a leadership role in their communities.

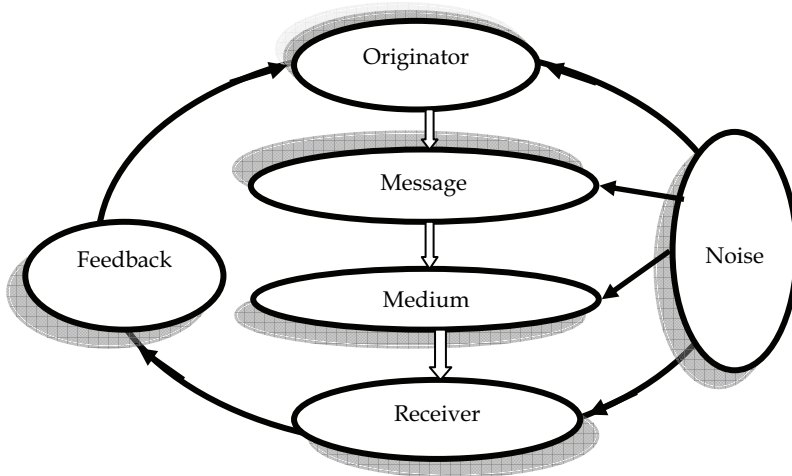
The goal of communication is to generate understanding between the one who originate the message and the one who receives it. The desired understanding hinges on seven elements: originator, receiver, message, medium, context, feedback, and noise.

**Originator:** the composer of the message who want to share the meaning he or she has with others. Originator is the most important element of all, and the success of the communication hinges on his or her ability to communicate effectively and control other elements of communication.

**Message:** the conveyed meaning the originator wants to share with the receiver. The message is usually expressed using an

appropriate communication medium. The originator uses various symbols to convey the meaning.

**Receiver:** the target of the message, the person or the group of people in whose understanding and cooperation the originator is interested. The receiver's linguistic and cultural background is crucial for grasping the message. Also crucial is the feelings and emotional state of the receiver. Not only the intellectual capacity of the receiver, but also his or her motions, such as Love, hate, anger, fear, have profound effect on the way the message is received and internalize.



**Elements of Communication**

**Medium:** the way the message is delivered: verbal (TV, Radio, Lecture, Telephone, video, etc) or written (article, letter, book, mail, poster, brochure etc.). The originator should always use the most appropriate medium—or a combination of media—to convey the desired meaning and effect the desired emotion and impression.

**Context:** the environment and setting in which the communication takes place. Communication might take place in friendly environment or hostile environment; it might take the form of negotiation, debate, dialogue, etc. Each of these settings requires

different approach and preparation. Giving a public speech to a friendly audience requires different preparation and attitude than debating a contentious issue with an adversary.

**Feedback:** the comments, written notes, questionnaires, etc. which help the originator understand the impact of his communication on the receivers of his or her message. Feedback is an important element of communication as it provides the affirmation that the message has reached its intended audience, and would otherwise help the communicator to sharpen his message and clarify aspects of his communication that remain unclear. Originator must seek feedback from their audience and encourage them to communicate back their feelings and understanding.

**Noise:** constitutes the communication barriers to understanding the message and could become so disruptive that communication is impossible. Noise take different forms, as it could stem from the receivers (internal), the environment (external), or the language use (semantic).

**Internal** noise may take the form of day dreaming or occupation with issues irrelevant to the communication that distracts the receiver. It could also take the form of irritation caused by pain or emotions, exhaustion, or lack of interest that make it difficult for the receiver to follow through.

### Elements of Communication

**Originator:** the composer of the message

**Message:** the information conveyed

**Receiver:** the target of the message

**Medium:** the way the message is delivered: verbal (TV, Radio, Lecture, Telephone, video, etc) or written (article, letter, book, email, etc.)

**Context:** the environment and setting in which the communication takes place. Friendly environment, hostile environment, negotiation, debate, dialogue, etc.

**Feedback:** comments, written note, questionnaire, etc.

**Noise:** communication barriers  
-Barrier to understanding

**External** noise may arise from frequent interruption because of a bad location, frequent phone calls, traffic, loud voice from adjacent room, etc.

**Semantic** noise may emanate from using language inappropriate to the audience, including the use of jargon and abstract talk. People who are not familiar with the concepts used by the speaker will lose focus and interest in the communication.

### **Maintain Your Cool: Focus on the Message**

Emotional balance is crucial for keeping the focus of communication on achieving understanding and generating agreement. In the absence of emotional balance communication could well deviate from its intended goal and degenerate to an occasion for massaging the individual ego. The key for fruitful communication is therefore one's ability to develop a moral and spiritual discipline to keep the ego in check.

Communicating one's ideas with clarity is not simply a function of one's ability to master the language of communication, but depends also on one's emotional maturation and his or her ability to stay focused on the message. This capacity is well illustrated in the exchange between Ja'far bin Abutalib, the spokesman of the Muslim immigrants in Abyssinia, and Negus (Najashi), the king of Abyssinia.

Prophet Muhammad directed the Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia to escape Quraysh's persecution. When Quraysh learned about the migration of Muslims, they sent two emissaries with gifts to try to bring them back. The two ambassadors, `Amr bin Alas and `Abdullah bin Abu Rabi'ah, presented to the Abyssinian King Negus and his bishops their precious gifts and asked for permission to have the Muslim emigrants extradited and sent back to Makkah. They said to the Negus, "O King! A number of

#### **Media and Delivery**

- Create a speakers bureau and bring order to chaos
- Media Kit
- Press Conference
- Media Relations and Media kit
- Townhall Meetings
- Website and Blogs
- Friday Khutbah
- Seminars and Lecture Series



ignoble plebeians from Makkah have taken refuge in your county. They have renounced the religion of their people and have not joined your religion. They follow a new religion, known neither to us nor to you, which they created. The leading noblemen of Makkah, who are their parents, uncles, and relatives, have sent us to you to ask for their return. Their elders at home are better judges of the differences between them." The two emissaries had already obtained the approval of the archbishop for extradition without prior reference of the matter to the Negus. The Negus, however, refused to concur in the judgment of his archbishop until he had had a chance to hear the refugees plead their own case. He sent after them and asked, "What is this new religion which caused you to separate yourselves from your people, a religion which is different from mine as well as from any other of the known religions?"

Ja'far ibn Abutalib rose and said in response, "O King! We were in a state of ignorance and immorality, worshipping idols, eating carrion, committing all sorts of iniquity. We honored no relative and assisted no neighbor. The strong among us exploited the weak. Then God sent us a prophet, one of our own people, whose lineage, truthfulness, loyalty, and purity were well known to us. He called us to worship God alone and to repudiate all the stones and idols which we and our ancestors used to worship. He commanded us always to tell the truth, to remain true to trust and promise, to assist the relative, to be good neighbors, to abstain from blood and things forbidden, and to avoid fornication, perjury, and false witness. He commanded us not to rob the wealth of the orphan or falsely to accuse the married woman. He ordered us to worship God alone and never to associate any other being with Him, to hold prayers, to fast, and to pay the zakah and fast Ramadan. We believed in him and what he brought to us from God and followed him in what he enjoined and forbade. Our people, however, tried to sway us away from our religion and persecuted us and inflicted upon us great suffering that we might reenter into the immoral practices of old. As they vanquished and berated us unjustly and made life intolerable for us in Makkah, we chose you and your country and came thither to live under your protection in justice and peace."

Listening to Ja'far's explanation, the Negus asked, "Will you show me some of the revelation which your Prophet claims to have come to him from God?" Ja'far answered, "Yes!" and recited to the Negus the Surah Mary from its beginning until the following verses: "Mary, therefore, pointed to the child as her only answer. Her people asked, 'How can we inquire of an infant in the cradle?' At this, Jesus spoke, 'I am the servant of God to whom He has given the Book and whom He has blessed and commissioned with prophethood; whom He has enjoined with holding the prayer and giving the *zakah* as long as he lives. My mother is innocent and I am neither unjust nor evil. Peace be upon me on the day I was born, on the day I shall die, and on the day I shall be resurrected.'" [Qur'an, 19:29-33]

When the bishops heard this statement confirming as it did the message of the Evangel, they were pleasantly surprised and said: "These words must have sprung from the same fountain-head from which the words of our master Jesus Christ have sprung." The Negus then said, "What you have just recited and that which was revealed to Moses must have both issued from the same source. Go forth into my kingdom; I shall not extradite you at all."

In responding to the accusations by Quraysh's emissaries, Ja'far stayed focused on the core of the message. The emissaries portrayed the Muslims as a religious cult, who adopted an extremist religious tradition that does not relate to any religious tradition. Ja'far was able, without being defensive, to clarify the core of the teaching of Islam that demonstrated that Islam espouses a set of values that embrace family and community life, and respect religious diversity.

Ja'far was also aware of the religious beliefs of the Abyssinians and spoke in ways that made clear sense of the religious foundation of Islam. He steered away from discussing theological differences and subtleties, and communicated the Islamic understanding of Christ by citing the Qur'anic verses that described his outstanding character and great mission.

On the following day, `Amr bin Alas returned to the Negus and pleaded, "There is another side to the Muslims' new religion in which they judge Jesus, Son of Mary, in totally different but condemnable terms." The Negus sent after the Muslims, brought them back into his presence and asked them to tell him more

about Jesus. The same Ja'far bin Abutalib answered for them, "Our judgment of Jesus is exactly the same as that which was revealed to our Prophet; namely, that Jesus is the servant of God, His Prophet, His spirit, His command given unto Mary, the innocent virgin." The Negus drew a line on the floor with his cane and said with great joy, "Between your religion and ours there is really no more difference than this line."

In an attempt to incite Najashi against the Muslim migrants, `Amr again requested to have audience with him. When they met, `Amr said: "Those whom you have given protection and shelter talk improperly about Jesus. You may ask them to be sure." When the Muslim migrants learned about that they were greatly perturbed and wondered what should they say to Najashi. However, they agreed to say what they believed in, no matter what would be the result. When they were summoned by Al-Najashi, he asked them about their belief in Jesus. Jar'far replied: "Our belief in Jesus relies on what our prophet has told us about him." Najashi asked: "What has he told you?" Ja'far replied: "He told us that Jesus is God's servant and messenger and His Word which he bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from Him." No sooner Najashi listened to these words than he stroke the earth with his hands several times and said: "By God, the description of Jesus does not differ from what you have said, even with an atom." The patriarchs protested on this description, but Al-Najashi paid no attention to their protest.

Najashi turned to the Muslim migrants and reassured them of their safety in his land. He returned the presents to `Amr and his companions.

Ja'far did not distort the Qur'anic description of Jesus as the servant and messenger of God. He did not dwell on the Qur'anic condemnation of the Christians who intentionally elevated Jesus to the level of divinity, but made sure to describe him in his unique creation among the children of Adam.

Ja'far succeeded in alleviating the fear of the Abyssinian king because he was clear, sincere, and focused. He kept his cool all through and controlled his emotion. Instead of attacking Quraysh emissaries and venting his anger against his mischievous enemies who wanted to deprive him and other Muslim immigrants from their new-found freedom to worship in peace, he decided to educate his host about the true nature of the religious teachings of

Islam. Rather than being defensive, angry, or quarrelsome, he responded calmly and made sure that his response is focused on bringing clarity and understanding to the Abyssinian king and his bishops.

Keeping one's cool and responding to the question rather than the questioner is the habit and practice of compassionate leaders. Even when the question suggests impropriety, a compassionate leader has the humility and focus to steer away from personal quarrels. During a general body meeting, Jameel was confronted by a member of his community who questioned why the executive committee he chaired signed a contract to build a multipurpose room with an acquaintance of his. Speaking loudly with an accusatory tone the community member suggested that the executive committee as a whole, and the committee chair in particular, may have personally benefited from the deal. Jameel looked the man in the eyes for seconds and then smiled and proceeded to answer the question. He first thanked the questioner for his concerns for the wellbeing of the community, and then went on to explain that the contractor was a member of the community, and that he volunteered to do the project for free. He referred the general body to the annual report that showed that the project was done with no cost to the Islamic center. The questioner then stood up and apologized for the inappropriate tone and direction of his question, and thanked the chair for his clarification.

Jameel was, undoubtedly, insulted by the questioner as his character was unduly called to question in public. But his ability to avoid the urge of responding to the attack on his person by a counterattack and to stay focused on the issue was essential for avoiding an open conflict which would have hurt everyone present. Rather than seeing the question as a personal attack, he decided to take the opportunity and dispel any doubts about the reason for giving the project to a close friend.

### **Maintain Mutuality and Stay Open to Dialogue**

Communication around important and crucial issues often generates emotions and complicates people's ability to stay in dialogue. People who are faced with difficult issues very often succumb to the natural tendencies people have to resort to either silence or violence: they would either chose to respond with

anger and aggression or completely withdraw from the conversation and elect to remain silent. This often repeated reaction can be illustrated by examining the following exchange between two members of an Islamic center; one is charged with the responsibility of organizing an interfaith event and the other with a youth program.

Salma has been active for years in interfaith dialogue, and was asked recently by the executive board of her Islamic center to organize an interfaith program. Amir is active with the youth group in the same Islamic center and has been tasked with organizing a youth program to coincide with the interfaith event. Both Salma and Amir are competitive and have worked together as part of the volunteer group at the center in different projects.

Salma was able to secure the overhead projector for her interfaith program, as several speakers expressed their desire to use slide presentation. When Amir went to the main office to borrow the projector he was told that Salma had already borrowed it for her event. Realizing that he could not rent a projector on a weekend, he went to Salma to see if he could share the projector in her position.

*Amir:* I need the overhead projector for the youth program. This is the only projector we have at the center, and we need to share it together.

*Salma:* I'm sorry! I secured the projector yesterday as it will be needed for the interfaith dialogue. Rather than waiting till the last minute, you should have indicated that you need the projector for the youth program yesterday so we could have secured one for you as well. You always wait till the last minute to prepare for programs.

*Amir:* You always have this attitude! I'm not sure when you will learn to cooperate. Your program and mine are for the benefit of the community. You have no right to keep the projector for yourself.

*Salma:* Listen! I'm not going to ruin my program because you failed to make early preparation. Grow up and act like an adult.

### SEES Principles

1. State your facts
2. Explain your purpose
3. Explore possibilities
4. Seek mutuality

*Amir:* (walks out)

Both Salma and Amir failed to *maintain mutuality* on the level of both purpose and respect. Maintaining mutuality on the level of purpose means that the two interlocutors need to search for mutual purpose and common ground, while maintaining mutuality on the level of respect means that both need to avoid personal attacks and demeaning remarks.

The dialogue has broken down between Salma and Amir mainly because both were focused on their own needs and displayed little respect to the other person's needs. Given the stakes both have in the success of their own events, they both took the attack mode from step one and their emotional tempo escalated with spirited exchange.

The possibility of *staying in dialogue* would have increased tremendously if any of them maintained the SEES principles: stated the facts, explained purpose, and explored possibilities, and decided on mutuality.

**State your facts** – by stating the facts, a person avoid drifting from the relevant questions of the conversation to opinions and emotional statements that reveal one's prejudices and self-centered concerns.

**Explain your purpose** – knowing the purpose behind the request helps each party to the communication better understand the need of the other. This also helps to find common ground.

**Explore possibilities** – identifying alternative actions that could satisfy the other party and help ease their concerns.

**Seek mutuality** – seek, whenever possible, a course of action that bring mutual purpose and respect the dignity and choices of others.

It would greatly help if mutuality is a goal of all persons who are involved in a dialogue, but this may not always be practicable. Compassionate leaders are often the ones who seek mutuality even if the other person appears to be self-centered and not cooperative.

Returning to the exchange between Salma and Amir, we can clearly see that both were at fault. Salma could have avoided laying the blame on Amir, and should have stated her needs and inquired about how the projector is needed. Amir should have, similarly, avoided personal attacks and stated his facts and explored whether the needs of both could be accommodated.

Let us examine how the exchanged could have developed if Amir respected both the mutuality and SEES principles.

*Amir:* I need the overhead projector for the youth program. This is the only projector we have at the center, and I hope we can share it together.

*Salma:* I'm sorry! I secured the projector yesterday as it will be needed for the interfaith dialogue. Rather than waiting till the last minute, you should have indicated that you need the projector for the youth program yesterday. You always wait till the last minute to prepare for programs.

*Amir:* I know I should have brought this matter up yesterday (*acknowledge the other party concerns*), but I received a last minute request this morning by a speaker who needed the projector to show a 15 minutes video clip (*state the facts*). Do you need the projector for the whole day?

*Salma:* Last minute changes make things difficult, don't they? Unfortunately, the projector is needed during both the morning and afternoon sessions.

### Public Speaking Tips

- Make sure your voice volume is too low to be heard.
- Keep your message clear and simple. Don't raise too many issues or use complex argument.
- Prepare the points you want share and write them on a piece of paper so you don't forget them.
- Body language must correspond with the message. You must not smile, for instance, when anger or hurt is being expressed.
- Don't pay too much attention to how audience might react to you message.
- Speak to several members of your audience in person prior to giving public talk whenever you have a chance.

*Amir:* Do you think I can borrow the projector during the lunch break? I'll propose that the video be shown right after the lunch, since participants would have a full hour after the lunch before the afternoon program is resumed.

*Salma:* Fine with me! I don't need the projector during that time.

*Amir:* Thanks for your cooperation. I really do appreciate it.

The change in approach might seem to be effortless, but it requires a great deal of self-discipline and focus. Assuming the modes of attack or silence are more natural, as they are direct response to the spontaneous emotions of anger and fear, maintaining mutuality and staying in dialogue require a deliberate control of emotions. Very often, though, people take milder forms of the natural responses of violence or silence. These instinctive responses may take the form of controlling, labeling, attacking, while silence may take the form of masking, avoiding, withdrawing.

**Masking** – sarcasm, sugarcoating, etc.

**Avoiding** – refusing to address the real issue

**Withdrawing** – changing the subject, finding excuses not to talk

**Controlling** – forcing one's opinion e.g. no one with this kind of budget has ever succeeded in building a school

**Labeling** – putting label on people or idea to discourage a particular action

**Attacking** – you always like to disagree with me

Compassionate leaders, who obviously share with others human imperfection, may fall into the trap of responding with some of the above modes. Their first order, whenever they do that, is to move away from the brink and express regrets or apologize for any mistake they may have committed. This is the only way for them to return into the frame of dialogue.

### **Nurturing Trust and Promoting Dialogue**

Leaders' ability to garner support for their message depends on their capacity to communicate their vision to others in ways designed to generate the strong commitment necessary for



achieving the desired goals. In mobilizing the resources needed to achieve the organization's goals, the first responsibility leaders have is to persuade the organization's members to commit themselves to the proposed vision.

Persuasion should take place on different levels and through various means. For this reason, leaders should be good communicators who can speak with vigor and clarity and convey their message to different groups of people via a language that can be understood easily by a variety of audiences. Muhammad ibn al Hasan al Muradi (d. 489 A.H.) emphasized in his *al Isharah fi Tudbir al 'Imarah*, which was written at the request of the Murabitun leader Yahya ibn 'Umar, the importance of the leader gearing the language to be used to the audience's intellectual level. Instructing Yahya on the manner of effective communication, he wrote:

Your speech should be clear, intelligible, and succinct to the people of letter, elaborate to simple-minded people, and in between to the moderate. Every uttered word should have some utility and should contain some benefit. [Further,] your voice should neither be loud nor faint, but moderate in expressing the successive letters. You should [also] avoid vernacular terms which are overused by the public, as well as unfamiliar jargon which is distasteful even to the educated.<sup>3</sup>

The statements of effective leaders should not only be convincing, but moving and inspiring as well. These leaders usually combine eloquence and skillful use of words with passion and sentimental expression throughout their message and thus touch the hearts of their audience and inspire their imagination. The inspiration emanating from effective leaders does not come merely from the tone of their message, but from its content as well. Their message is challenging, inspires people to exert themselves, and calls upon them to strive towards higher grounds. In their attempt to motivate their followers to undertake the proposed mission, effective leaders manage to address the

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<sup>3</sup> Abu Bakr Muhammad bin al Hasan al Muradi, *Al Isharah fi Tudbir al 'Imarah* (Casablanca, Morocco: Dar al Thaqifah, 1401/1981), 1 19.

latter's various interests and concerns and to inspire people with different motives and needs.

Communication should not, however, be limited to public speeches, and leaders should not rely exclusively on writing memoranda and issuing directives, for such a situation would produce an impersonal and one-sided communication. Public talks and written instructions are not conducive to creating a close and personal interaction between leaders and followers, since these forms of communication make it possible for leaders to ignore or remain unaware of the views of their audience. Lacking the ability to look the recipient of their message in their eyes and read their body language, they cannot gather feedback information to help them refine their message or incorporate it into their plans and decisions. The absence of two-way communication makes it impossible for leaders to respond to the grievances and concerns of community members. It is incumbent on leaders, therefore, to mingle with the people with whom they work and whom they serve.

While communication skills and the leader's ability to put forth a powerful and moving message is very crucial for motivating followers, their mobilization cannot be achieved merely by oratorical skills. Leaders must present an example of exemplary behavior to their followers. They must uphold their vision through their actions and maintain unwavering commitment to the principles and values they promote. A leader who asks his community to sacrifice time or money while exempting himself cannot lay any claim to leadership.

### **Communicate Vision and Create Agreement**

- Articulate the humane and uplifting principles of Islam with clarity, and create agreement
- Provide opportunity for open discussion and honest dialogue
- Transform conflict and pursue solutions through fair process
- Seek feedback and change behavior based on what is learned
- Provide capacity building and leadership development programs

Nothing could be more damaging to an organization than to prevent an adequate flow of information or to suppress discussion and the exchange of ideas and views. Without an honest and open discussion and exchange of views between leaders and followers within the organization, many of the positions taken and the views developed would be based on rumor and speculation, and an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust would take over. To develop trust, leaders must keep their followers informed about the nature of the decisions made and the reasons for making them. Whenever possible, followers should be consulted on important issues and encouraged to participate in the analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation of important policies. Al Muradi enumerates four reasons for a leader to engage subordinates in decisions:

First, the inadequacy of the knowledge available to the one seeking counsel for making a decision; second, his fear of committing mistakes in assessing (the situation) even when he is not lacking (in knowledge); third, the possibility that despite his intelligence and skills, the (emotions of) love and hate could prevent him from making the right decision... and fourth, when the person consulted is partner or supporter in an action, his involvement in decision would encourage him to render his utmost effort and support, because the decision reflects his choice.<sup>4</sup>

As al Muradi points out, the commitment of the group members to their organization's objectives and goals can be enhanced greatly when decisions reflect their consensus. For this reason, the group's overall unity and harmony should be dialogical – i.e. a harmony obtained through discussion and exchange of views with the intent of achieving agreement.

Only true harmony achieved through open communication and discussion should be sought, because it is rooted in mutual respect and understanding. Artificial harmony resulting from the lack of discussion and questioning may ensure short-term peace within the group but would lead inevitably either to stagnation or disintegration: stagnation occurs as fewer community members show enthusiasm or take initiatives, and sudden disintegration

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<sup>4</sup> Al Muradi, *al Isharah*. 1401/1981, pp. 61-62.

could happen when the level of discontent reaches the level of crisis.

Leaders must encourage two-way communication, which ensures a steady flow of information between leaders and members, and listen to the views, ideas, and complaints of their organization's or community's members. To do this, they should not rely on public speaking and general discussions alone, but should utilize one-on-one communication with individual members of their organization. A compassionate leader has to be easygoing and possess a healthy sense of humility so as to have a genuine desire to listen to others' views. In addition, he or she should have a sense of humor in order to overcome the barrier of distance and hierarchy. To have genuine communication, it is not enough for the leader to have an occasional discussion with those who stand on the receiving end of the line of command. Rather, he must be able to break the ice and convey a sense of genuine interest in the people and, through the right attitude and gestures, stimulate a sense of security and togetherness so that the climate is set for an honest and candid expression of opinions.

A good example of the importance of an open and candid communication may be seen in the way the Prophet cleared misunderstanding and alleviate resentment on the part of the Ansar that stemmed from the way he divided booty after the battle of Hudaibia. The Prophet decided to give a big portion of the booty to the people of Makkah who recently joined the nascent community of Islam. This decision caused the Ansars to murmur that the Prophet had done what he did because the people involved were his own tribesmen and people. Sa'd ibn `Ubadah reported this murmur to the Prophet but sided with them and justified their complaint. The Prophet directed him to bring the Ansar together, and made them aware of his intentions and thoughts. His willingness to honestly and openly discuss a sensitive issue restored the confidence of the Ansar, cleared the air, and alleviated their misgivings (see pages 57-8).

The importance of honesty and openness in communication may be illustrated in the following exchange between Abu Bakr al Siddiq and Khalid ibn al Walid. Receiving disturbing news about Khalid's conduct, Abu Bakr neither acted on rumors to

discipline his army's commander nor concealed his dissatisfaction with what was supposed to have happened.

Rather, he chose to communicate with Khalid and give him the opportunity to clarify his position. Similarly, Khalid chose to respond candidly to his superior's query.

In a letter addressed to Khalid, Abu Bakr inquired about his marriage to the daughter of the chief of the tribe to which he had been sent to discipline and with which he and his soldiers had engaged in a ferocious battle:

O Khalid! ... You are enjoying yourself with your bride, while the blood of twelve hundred Muslims (which was spilled in the battle) right at your doorstep has not dried yet. Muja'ah [the tribe's chief] was able to deceive you and entice you to a treaty after you had defeated his people."<sup>5</sup>

Responding to these accusations, Khalid wrote back:

I assure you that I did not take my bride until I was satisfied (with the results of the battle) and my mission was completed. And I have chosen to marry (the daughter of') a person whom I would have traveled from Medina to seek his relation, but my engagement to his (daughter) was prompted as I am present here. If you disapprove of my marriage for (any) temporal or religious (reasons), I would desist.

As to my mourning of the deceased, by God if grieving protects the living or brings back the dead, my grieving would have done that. I have indeed ambushed until I had no more hope in life, and became certain of my death.

As to Muja'ah's deception, I do still even now believe that I have made no mistake, and I do not know what the future would bring. But I do believe that God has brought

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<sup>5</sup> Sadiq Ibrahim 'Arjun, *Khalid bin al Walid* (Jeddah: Dar al Sa'udia li al Nashr. 1983), p. 201.

goods to the Muslims, made them the inheritors of the land, and conferred the final triumph on the pious.<sup>6</sup>

Abu Bakr's decision to communicate his concerns and Khalid's decision to be open and candid were crucial for clarifying misgivings and dispelling suspicion. These attitudes prevented the development of an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, which undoubtedly would have affected relations among the two leaders. While communication is essential for facilitating understanding and exchanging ideas and views, the unity and integration of group members hinges on the attitude and actions of the leadership. Not only should leaders ensure that the requirements of fairness and justice are met, but they must project an attitude of caring and sharing to their subordinates.

The demands for loyalty to the organization and for devotion to the task at hand must be reciprocated by a true concern for the well-being and growth of followers. Appropriate rewards must be provided, both in terms of material compensation and moral recognition of contributions. Opportunities for improvement in status should also be given. In short, organization members must feel that they are full partners in improvement and growth if they are to be forthcoming when their contribution and sacrifice is required.

Nurturing trust and promoting dialogue requires that leaders seek, whenever possible, mutual understanding and respect. They should recognize the interests and be cognizant of the concerns of the people they work with. They should, similarly, show respect to others by respecting their choices and protecting their wellbeing and privacy. They should, most importantly, seek common ground and find mutual purposes.

### **Active Listening**

Active listening is an important element of communication, because it aims at creating a two-way communication. Expressing our ideas, concerns, and feelings clearly and effectively is only half of the communication process. The other half is listening and understanding the values, interests, and concerns of our inter-

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

locutors. When a person decides to communicate with another person, he or she does so to fulfill a need. Active listening is crucial to make sure that the recipients of the communication message have understood the message the way it is intended and that the meaning has not been distorted by the conceptual framework of the receiver. It also helps the person who originates the communication to understand the interests and concerns of the target audience and the intended receivers. (See box 3.1)

There is a real distinction between merely *hearing the expressed communication* and really *listening to the intended meaning*. Active listening help us understand the thoughts and feelings of the person with whom we communicate and appreciate his or her own perspective. Our own experience and perspective may be different and listening actively helps us understand their point of view even when we disagree with them. Such an understanding is crucial for affecting the views of others, or short of that identifying a common ground for mutuality.

Active listening is the deepest of the three modes of communication that people employ:

**Competitive Listening** is one-way communication, and occurs when communicators are primarily interested in promoting their own point of view and have little interests in understanding the views of others. They only listen to find an opportunity to refute their interlocutors and find weaknesses and flaws in their views. People engaged in competitive or combative listening may pretend to pay attention as they wait impatiently to attack and refute. Rather than understanding the concerns of other, they work internally to formulate their rebuttal.

**Attentive Listening** involves efforts by persons genuinely interested in hearing and understanding the point of view of others. Still persons who listen attentively are passive listeners. They assume that they have heard the message and understood it correctly, just by being attentive.

**Active Listening**, on the other hand, involves the efforts by persons who are not merely satisfied with attentive listening, but want to understand the other person's thoughts, feelings, and

needs. To make sure that the meaning is really understood, active listening requires that we reiterate or paraphrase our understanding of the message we received. Active listeners, therefore, seek to get feedback from those who are intended by the communication to help them verify that they correctly understood their interlocutors. It is this effort to verify or obtain feedback is what distinguishes active listening from other modes of listening.

**Box 3.1**  
**Active Listening Tips**

- Paraphrase and use your own words in expressing your understanding of the message.
- Don't focus only on the meaning of the words. Pay attention to the feelings and emotional state of the speaker.
- Do not use active listening to avoid expressing your views. You should end active listening and respond when the message becomes clear.
- Ask questions if you do not understand what the speaker is talking about or you feel he has left important information out.
- Active listening is particularly important when the other person is angry, hurt or mentally excited.
- Maintain eye contact and avoid bodily expressions that imply you are not interested, such as looking at your watch or yawning.
- Be empathic and nonjudgmental. You can be accepting and respectful of the person and their feelings and beliefs without invalidating or giving up your own position, or without agreeing with the accuracy and validity of their view.



### Summary

- The purpose of communication is to generate understanding between the one who originate the message, and the one who receives it. The desired understanding hinges on seven elements: the originator, the receiver, the message, the medium, and the context, feedback, and noise.
- Conveying meaning is not simply a matter of speaking a common language, but sharing a sphere of common meaning. This sphere of common meaning is what is often referred to as “culture.”
- To improve understanding and strengthen cooperation, organization members need to develop their own sphere of meaning. Organization members must bring their personal experiences to the sphere of shared meaning by expressing their own ideas, feelings, and stories. The more the personal and collective meaning is shared by the organization members, the more they are able to enjoy mutual trust and respect, and the more they can function as a team.
- Communicating with clarity is not simply a function of one’s ability to master the language of communication, but depends also on one’s emotional maturation and his or her ability to stay focused on the message. Emotional balance is crucial for keeping the focus of communication on achieving understanding, and generating agreement. The key for fruitful communication is therefore one’s ability to develop a moral and spiritual discipline to keep the ego in check.
- Communication around important and crucial issues often generates emotions and complicates people’s ability to stay in dialogue. People who faced with difficult issues very often succumb to the natural tendencies of resort to either silence or violence: they would either choice to respond with anger and aggressive language or completely withdraw from the conversation and chose silence.
- Nothing could be more damaging to an organization than to prevent an adequate flow of information or to suppress discussion and the exchange of ideas and views. Without an honest and open discussion and exchange of views between

leaders and followers within the organization, many of the positions taken and the views developed would be based on rumor and speculation, and an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust would take over.

- Leaders must encourage two-way communication, which ensures a steady flow of information from top to bottom, and listen to the views, ideas, and complaints of their organization's or community's members.
- Active listening is crucial to make sure that the recipients of the communication message have understood the message the way it is intended and that the meaning has not been distorted by the conceptual framework of the receiver.

### **Questions and Exercises**

1. Recall one example in which a conflict hurt the community and could have been avoided by proper communication. Discuss the example with your group, and suggest solutions.
2. What is the difference between active and attentive listening? And what it takes to change attentive listening active?
3. How does the attitude of compassionate leaders impact the process of communication?

# 4

## Manage Conflict and Effect Positive Change

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### Chapter Topics

- Nature of conflicts
- From structured to open conflict
- Conflict defined
- Dealing with conflict
- Conflict prevention
- Prophetic approach to conflict resolution
- Conflict resolution process

### Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between constructive and disruptive conflicts
- Learn how compassionate leaders managing their emotions when dealing with conflict
- Prophetic approaches to conflict resolution
- Identify ways to deals with different types of conflict
- Explore when conflict prevention ends and resolution begins

**C**onflict is considered negative by most people as it connotes hurtful and disconcerting situations including disagreement, clash, divergence, difference, argument, quarrel, discord, contradiction, dispute, tension, controversy, fight, war, etc.

This conceptualization of conflict is inaccurate as it fails to appreciate the important role conflicts play to rectify imbalances and injustices in the community, and to bring about needed change that would have not otherwise been possible. Conflict is often the motor of change, and it is essential for the growth of both the individual and the community.

Conflict can be seen at the foundation of every important change in the history of human society. It took a conflict to liberate people from every tyrannical rule and from foreign occupation and control, to emancipate the slaves, to establish democratic rule, to recognize the right of workers to organize in labor unions, and so on.

Conflict does not always lead to positive change, as the outcome of conflict is often determined by the way conflict is managed. For conflict to result in individual and collective growth, it takes an act of a visionary and compassionate leadership. It is in the way conflict is managed that growth and positive transformation of relations are possible.

### **The Nature of Conflict**

The best way to gain insight into the nature of conflict is to examine the human condition that gives rise to it. Sami and Rana are board members in their local Islamic center. They disagree over how to utilize a building donated to their center. Sami proposes that the building be used as an extension facility for prayers and programs, while Rana advocates remodeling the building to be used as a full-time Islamic school. Both request the secretary to place their proposals on the next board meeting's agenda.

Is this a conflict? Well, this is simply a situation in which two members of a decision-making body disagree over the use of an asset that belongs to their organization. This disagreement can potentially turn into conflict when the two attend next board

meeting and try to persuade other board members to support their conflicting positions.

During a regularly scheduled board meeting, Sami and Rana argued their cases. Sami passionately argued for the use of the building as an extension facility for interfaith programs on weekends, and to provide convenient access to a large number of community members who work in offices located around the building. Rana for her part, reminded the community members of an early commitment they made to the community to provide new facilities for weekend school. She shared with the meeting statistical figures documenting long waiting list of students who could not join the school for the lack of space. She stressed the important of weekend school to inculcate the moral values and beliefs of the Islamic faith.

Ali, another board member, proposed to use the facility as a weekend school, and to remodel the largest room in the building and turn it into a multipurpose room to be used for prayer. The Board listened to the presentations of Sami and Rana, and voted to use the building as a weekend school per Rana's recommendations and with the modification proposed by Ali, therefore satisfying Sami's demands.

What appeared for a while as a passionate disagreement and a potential conflict between two board members proved to be an enriching disagreement and creative tension that allow the board

#### **Box 4.1** **Creative Resolution**

Three farm workers discovered that their deceased farm owner named them in his will to be the recipients of 17 cows of his heard. He stipulated in his will that Hazim gets  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the cows, Said  $\frac{1}{3}$  and Basil  $\frac{1}{9}$ . When they used the ratios to divide the cows they found that Hazim can claim  $8\frac{1}{2}$  cows, Said  $5\frac{2}{3}$  cows, Basil  $1\frac{8}{9}$ . Every single one of them insisted on getting his fair share. To end the impasse and to help the group to resolve the conflict, the farmer son, Kareem, decided to donate one more cow, making the total of cows designated for the workers 18. Using the same ratio, Hazim got 9, Said 6, and Basil 2. When all workers got their fair share, one cow was left unclaimed, and Kareem got his cow back.

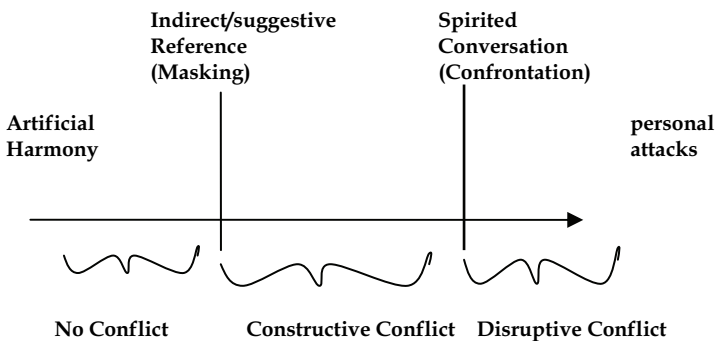
to make an informed decision as to how to better use the facility to satisfy the community needs.

### From Structured to Open Conflict

The ability of the community leadership to resolve the conflict resulted evidently from well defined rules of decision making that allowed the board to deliberate on the proposal and then vote to accept or reject a particular motion proposed by one of its members. The availability of the rules created a structured disagreement and prevented the disagreement from turning into an open conflict.

Yet, even with the presence of meaningful and well thought rules, disagreements can escalate to become open conflicts. Consider the following scenario. Sami was unhappy with the board decision, and decided to use additional rules to ensure that he would have it his own way. Sami knows that the bylaws require 2/3 vote for approving any project that exceeds \$50,000. Rather than accepting the compromise, he persuaded two other members to support his proposal. On a second vote, Rana's revised proposal fails to obtain 2/3 vote. The impasse fractured the board into two rivaling groups, and the friction in the Board was soon duplicated in the community, leading into tension among members and paralysis among community leaders.

### Finding the Happy Middle



### Conflict Defined

Conflict is an expression of differences that sets individuals and groups on the opposite sides of an issue. These differences can be either real or artificial. Differences are real when they relate to values, interests, or needs, and are artificial when they stem from semantic, miscommunication, or misunderstanding. Artificial conflicts can be as harmful as real one, for perception is reality for those who are convinced the distorted views they hold are true.

Conflict might arise in a community over the recognition of the rights of a minority group in their midst. Should the majority extend the rights enjoyed by the majority to minority groups, including the right to hold public office? Or should the right of holding public position be confined to those in the majority? This is a conflict over values and often inspires very spirited and heated disagreement, and can be very explosive and decisive.

Conflicts often arise from rivalry over power and available resources. This usually happen when the community is divided into groups with varying interests or visions as to how the resources should be used. A conflict might arise, for instance, if a community is divided into groups who disagree over whether the community resources should be used to develop an Islamic school, or to expand programs and activities intended to build bridges with the larger society. This of course is not an either-or choice, as both interests could be pursued simultaneously. The challenge lies in allowing the contending groups to see that they

#### Box 4.2 Conflict and Growth

- Conflict is unavoidable, even desirable, in any healthy and vibrant community. They create opportunity for change and growth.
- Structured conflict allows for open dialogue generates ideas, permits a more thorough examination of issues facing the community, and help generates better solutions.
- Open conflict can polarize the community and often lead to waste of resources.

both could have a mutual purpose, and that these two interests complement and feed one another.

Given the facts that people often differ in their values, interests, perceptions, and needs, conflicts are intrinsic part of social life and can only be eliminated at the expense of arresting the vibrancy and growth of the organization. Conflict help in rectifying unhealthy or unfair relations:

- Enhances understanding of the issues at hand by expanding the community's awareness of the situation, allowing community members to explore different aspects of the issue.
- Improves community cohesion since community members are likely to develop stronger mutual respect upon resolving the conflict.
- Develops self-awareness of true needs and shared goals, and therefore forces community members to sharpen their focus and their social skills.

Conflict must, however, be managed creatively to bring about positive – and often direly needed – changes. Managing conflict and using it for community transformation require good grasp of basic factors and forces at work in any conflict.

In addition to value and interest differences, very often conflicts result from semantic differences, or misunderstanding among community members triggered by miscommunication. Misunderstanding does not always result from the use of language, but may stem from failure to understand the intent of a particular decision or action. This misunderstanding may result in bad feelings, and could lead into a serious conflict unless it is addressed adequately. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Prophet realized the need to clear any misunderstanding about the reason for giving a big portion of the booty after the battle of Hudaibiyah. His ability to recognize the source of resentment on the part of the Ansar for his decision, and willingness to deal with this resentment in a head-leveled way prevented the maturation of harmful friction and possibly a serious outburst.



## Dealing with Conflict

Conflict is intrinsic to social life and no one is immune from experiencing it. People experience conflict more often than they would like to admit, and therefore we often reserve the term in reference to very serious confrontations. Conflict happens in the family, business, and community on a daily bases, and many have developed the skills to overcome it spontaneously.

Three sets of skills are essential for dealing with all conflicts, whether small or big, and are particularly crucial for dealing with serious conflicts:

- Thinking creatively about the best way to resolve the conflict
- Managing emotions so they do not cloud judgment
- Analyzing conflict dynamics and power relations

Let us examine each of these skills to see how they can help in dealing with conflict.

### 1. Conflict and Creative Thinking

The ingenious way Kareem, the farmer's son, solved the conflict among the farm workers without himself losing anything or forcing a compromise among those who involved in the conflict represents an instance of humorous yet creative conflict resolution (see Box 4.1). Creativity does not, however, imply magic or trickery. It rather requires keen awareness of human nature, cultural tradition, value system, and competing interest in the community. It also requires a set of good habits and norms.

**Open mindedness:** Arriving at creative solution to conflict requires a person to keep an open mind and listen attentively to words, gesture, and signals. It might also require someone to read between the lines particularly if the parties to the conflict are try to mask their purpose of concerns.

**Consult:** Coming up with creative solutions to conflict may also require getting input from different members of community and engaging them in discussion about future plan.

**Brainstorm:** organize brainstorm session to explore new ideas and examine different alternatives to deal with concerns, grievances, and tensions.

**Think win-win:** Show empathy to people with different views and interests, and think of solutions that have positive outcomes for all who are involved.

## 2. Managing Emotions

The two great emotions that need to be managed the most in times of conflict are anger and fear. Controlling these emotions is essential for making prudent decision. Nothing can cloud judgment more than anger and fear. Angry persons who have not learned to control their anger can only strike and attack to resolve conflicts. Similarly a person overcome by fear can only run away. These are the worst action for anyone to take to deal with conflict, particularly when conflict involves partners, co-workers, spouses, relatives, colleagues, or friends. No fair and sustained resolution of differences that give rise to a particular conflict can be achieved if these emotions get out of hand.

### *Controlling Anger*

When a companion of the Prophet asked for an advice, the Prophet told him repeatedly: don't get angry.

On the authority of Abu Hurayra: a man asked the Prophet, God's peace and mercy with him, for an advice. The Prophet told him: do not get angry. The man repeated his questions several times and the Prophet repeatedly answered: do not get angry. (Bukhari)

The Prophet understood the importance of controlling one's anger, and he therefore recognized that it is a mark of strong personality.

On the authority of Abu Hurayra that the Prophet, God's peace and mercy with him, said: The strong is not the one who can overpower others, but he who can exercise self-restrain in a moment of anger. (Bukhari)

Those [righteous] who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for God loves those who do good. (Aal Imran 3:134)

### ***Controlling Fear***

The Qur'an often stresses that the ability to control fear is a crucial element of the success of Prophets in accomplishing their missions. Truth does not triumph over falsehood on its own. Nor does justice overcome injustice without a fight. The first thing the people who benefit from distortion and injustice do is to dismiss, intimidate, and demonize those who stand for truth and justice. Fear is therefore the most employed tool in the toolbox of the corrupt. For the advocates of true and just change to prevail, they must persist in the face of intimidation and fear tactics.

How should I fear what you associate with God, when you fear not to give partners to God without any evidence having been given to you? Which of (us) two parties has more right to security? (Tell me) if you know. (Al An'am 6:81)

The Prophet realized that controlling fear stems from both deep faith and good habits, and therefore promotes courage among young people. It was reported by Tirmidhi on the authority of Ibn Abbas that the Prophet gave him the following advice when he was in his youth:

Ibn Abbas related: One day I was riding behind the Prophet and he said to me: 'Young man, I shall teach you words. Be mindful of God and God will protect you. Be mindful of God and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of God. If you seek help, seek help from God. And know that if a large group of people were to gather together to benefit you with anything it would benefit you only with something God had already prescribed for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried'. (Tirmidhi)

Early Muslim scholars understood intelligence to involve the emotional discipline that allows people to have self-control over their actions. Intelligence does not end at one's ability to understand and display wit, but presupposes one's ability to use knowledge and understanding to guide one's action. The latter can only be done when one is capable of controlling his emotions. Intelligence for early Muslim scholars encompasses what we refer to today as emotional intelligence.

Ibn Hazim summarized this concept very eloquently in his important book titled *Al-Ihkam fi usul al-Ahkam*.

You meet a bright, smart, and clever person yet still lacking in intelligence. The intelligent is the one who obeys God the Almighty. (Ibn Hazim, *al-Ihkam fi usul al-Ahkam*.)

This is why the moral discipline characteristic of compassionate leaders is the best hope for dealing satisfactorily with conflicts. Compassionate leaders have the moral discipline necessary to meet the issues at the roots of the conflict head on, and to respond to them on the basis of clear values and principles, foremost among them are the principles of justice, fairness, honesty, and integrity. Compassionate leaders do not succumb to intimidation and aggression. Nor do they run away for the challenges brought about by conflict. Nor do they pursue selfish ends unrestrained by a just law. Rather, they assert their principles and values as they face the challenges raised by the conflict.

### **3. Understand conflict dynamics and power relations**

Resolving a conflict presupposes mutual respect between the parties involved and a commitment to dialogue. In the absence of these two conditions a conflict can either persist indefinitely or is suppressed for a long time.

Conflict is not an intellectual contest in which competing parties discuss their differences calmly and logically, but a life drama involving high stakes, real needs, emotions, and interests. The parties are frequently willing to use whatever power and resources they can muster to realize their objectives. Power is

always a factor in conflict, whether it is the power of the contesting parties or the power of third party that can bear on its outcome.

Power may be defined as the capacity to mobilize the necessary human and financial resources for affecting a desired outcome. As long as those who have authority in the community use it to advance the common good, authority and power will be viewed as a positive force. When power is misused or abused, say for example to advance narrow interests and concerns, it will be seen as negative. Negative power often gives rise to conflicts. Power is positive when it empowers all parties and used in accordance with fair principles. Power is negative when used to disempower (control) others or to gain unfair advantage over them (arbitrary).

Power can be used by the dominant party to either ensure fair outcome or suppress the demands of opponents and drown their voices. When the two parties enjoy equal powers, however, no one can use its own power to prevail over the other, and they could either agree to a fair resolution or make the conflict chronic.

Suppressing or delaying resolution of outstanding conflicts comes at a high cost that includes:

- Generating bad publicity and negative image
- Diverting valuable community resources to deal with conflict – i.e. wasting of resources
- Losing membership
- Lowering motivation as feelings of anger, frustration, and helplessness take over
- Undermining moral authority

The extent to which power is decisive in a conflict depends on the social dynamics and settings. There are two distinct conflict dynamics: power contests and rights contests.

***Power contests*** characterize conflicts in which the contending parties rely on their ability to mobilize human, technical, and financial resources to force their adversaries into compliance. Power contests in which one party depends purely on power

disparity and their ability to overwhelm their opponents can be nasty and long, particularly if the powerful party ignores the legitimate interests and grievances of others.

*Right contests*, on the other hand, take place in social milieus in which a system of law and rights is already in force. In such situations, the contending parties appeal to an established authority to prevail. That is, the contending parties assert their rights and use the established procedures for adjudicating the contested rights. Power, though less important in this type of conflicts, still plays a limited role.

### **Responses to Conflict**

Resolving conflicts requires making a change in attitude, perception, or demands. Fair resolution of conflicts also requires emotional maturation and an honest broker to help the parties find an acceptable middle ground.

There are five major responses to any conflict, but only one of them can lead to a satisfactory resolution.

*Confrontation* – is the expected response by individuals and groups angered by the action of a rival or competitor. It can also be used as a strategy of choice by a party who feels confident of their power to prevail over their opponents.

*Avoidance* – is the usual response by those who are disinterested in the issue at hand. Avoidance may be triggered by a fear of getting involved in difficult decision or action, but could also be the right response to a provocation that would result in wasting invaluable time and energy.

*Withdrawal* – often happens when one of the parties to the conflict (typically the weaker party) dreads the pain and anguish that may result from any confrontation, or is intimidated by opponents. Withdrawal is, in most cases, a bad decision as it results in privileging individuals and groups that resort to bullying and intimidation, and hence contribute to undermining the sanctity of human dignity and the rules of a just law. Withdrawal, though, can be effective if used as a tactical response, and

as part of a strategic plan that calls for temporary withdrawal in preparation for later engagement at more opportune time.

**Submission** – is the outcome of confrontation in which one party gives up their interests and rights, and succumb to fear or exhaustion. Like withdrawal, submission privileges intimidation and power over individual rights and fair dealing.

**Resolution** – is the best and most dignifying and enriching response to conflict and involves dialogue (negotiation or mediation), compromise, and mutual respect. This response to conflict is more fitting particularly when the two parties have legitimate interests and concerns.

These responses are rooted in the most intrinsic human instincts: anger, fear, and empathy. When the predominant emotion provoked is anger, the response is to confront the actor. However, when the predominant emotion is fear, then the response is to avoid confrontation at any cost, or to submit to the opponents demand if avoidance is untenable. It follows that the first step for effectively managing conflicts is to manage human emotions.

### **To Confront or not to Confront**

The question that most people who are involved in conflict face is to decide on the best and most appropriate response among the above five strategies. A person who is involved in a conflict should decide based on his or her values and the prevailing conditions. As a general rule, compassionate leaders stand firm in defense of moral principles and values, but are willing to compromise when it comes to methods and procedures.

Generally speaking, conflict resolution should be the main focus, and submission must always be avoided. Still other responses to conflict, including avoidance, might be the right response. There is no rule of thumb to be used for picking a response, as each conflict has to be analyzed individually before an appropriate response is chosen. Still, if I am pressed to suggest a rule of thumb, I would pick a repeatedly cited quote attributed to Thomas Jefferson: “In matters of principle stand like a rock; in matters of taste swim with the current.”

The Qur'an encourages Muslims to avoid confrontation and conflict if the response is triggered by the needs and demands of the human ego, including ignorance or envy.

Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant. (A'raf 7:199)

Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after you have believed. From selfish envy, after the Truth has become manifest to them: so forgive and overlook, till God accomplishes His purpose: for God has power over all things. (Baqara 2:109)

*When Avoidance is a virtue*

Not every provocation or attack deserves a response in kind. Even when people are justified in fighting back against personal attacks, it might be wiser to avoid the conflict all together. This is particularly true when responding does not help in advancing one's mission, but only serve in massaging one's ego. The Qur'an encourages Muslims to avoid conflict that advance no good end.

Whether you publish a good deed or conceal it or cover evil with pardon, verily God does blot out (sins) and has power (in the judgment of values). (Nisa 4: 149)

O you who believe! Truly, among your wives and your children are (some that are) enemies to yourselves: so beware of them! But if you forgive and overlook, and cover up (their faults), verily God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Taghabun 64:14)

Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant. (A'raf 7:199)

The Prophet was true to the teaching of the Qur'an, and his biography is full of examples that show how he avoided conflicts that were complete waste of time and those that served no good purpose. One such a conflict was provoked by Zayd bin Sa'na from whom the Prophet took a loan. Two days before the loan



was due he came to the Prophet and roughed him as he demanded that the Prophet repay a loan to him. He pulled his garment from his collar and asked him rudely when he will pay the debt. 'Umar chased him off and spoke harshly to him while the Prophet listened calmly. The Prophet turned to Umar and said: "We needed something other than this from you, O Umar. You should have commanded me to repay the man quickly and command him to ask for his debt gracefully." Then he directed Umar to collect money and pay Zayd back.

***When confrontation is a virtue***

While the Prophet was quick to pass over the faults of people and forgive mistakes, he was as quick to stand up for right and just. The story of the trader who was, mockingly, directed to Prophet Muhammad by Quraysh's elders when he sought their help against Amr ibn Hisham is a case in point. The Prophet did not hesitate to confront Abu Jahl and demanded that he pay the man his due. Even though the Prophet was not in a position to force Abu Jahl to pay the money and was himself often abused by the same man, he made sure that he responded to the trader's plea for help and tried his best to right the wrong and confront injustice and exploitation. (for a detailed account of this incident, please see the section titled "Exemplary Leader" in Chapter 1, pages 14-5).

**Understanding Differences**

Differences that lead to conflict drive from four factors:

**Needs** - conditions critical for the wellbeing and development

**Perceptions** - differences in perception stem from the diversity of interests and experiences

**Values** - priorities for action. incompatible values increases the possibility of conflict

**Interests** -relationships that bring benefit or advantage.

**Prophetic Approach to Conflict Resolution**

In addition to urging the believers to control their emotions that stand in the way of achieving fair resolution of conflict, Prophet Muhammad displayed keen interest in bringing about fair and dignifying resolutions of all the conflicts he was involved in. His

balanced and positive moral character and attitude, combined with a prudent and deliberate judgment and strong commitment to sublime values, made him a fair and effective negotiator, mediator, and problem solver. He always heeded the Qur'anic directive that emphasized openness, fairness, and reconciliation. Below are sample of the *ayahs* (verses) relating to the issue of conflict resolution:

There is no good in most of their private counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people; and whoever does this seeking God's pleasure, we will give him a mighty reward." (Nisa 4:144)

The Qur'an considers the act of reconciling differences as a noble and righteous act, of the rank of urging support to the needy.

"If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for God loves those who are fair (and just)." (Alhujurat 49:9)

Although this *ayah* (verse) focuses on an open conflict that has already escalated to violent confrontation, the principle is clear: when two groups are involved in conflict, the general body must mediate the conflict on the basis of fairness, and should work together to bring the aggressive party into compliance with a just resolution.

If a wife fears roughness or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if you do good and practice self-restraint, God is well-acquainted with all that you do. (Nisa 4:128)

The reference in this verse is to conflict resolution that involves family dispute. It urges the wife to request reconciliation in cases involved the husband's ill treatment, and points out to meanness and selfishness as the main obstacle in resolving conflicts.

As a compassionate leader, the Prophet worked diligently to transform community culture and structure to operate under the sublime values of revelation, and to limit social conflicts to the Right Contest model. In many occasion, the Prophet turned conflicts into opportune moments for realizing social transformation, and to institutionalize better principles and practices. When such transformation was premature, unnecessary, or impossible, he was keen to maintain the peace and achieve an amicable resolution of conflict. Following are two situations that illustrate instances of conflict transformation and conflict resolution.

### **Conflict Resolution**

An often repeated example of the Prophet's moral character is his mediation of a conflict among the clans of Quraysh. Although the instance took place long before he was commissioned as Prophet, and despite the fact that he was put in the mediator's position by accident, the event provides a great example of conflict resolution.

Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet's biographer, reported that Makkans fiercely disagreed over who would place the black stone as they were involved in rebuilding the Kabah. When the quarrel escalated into a conflict, Abu Umayyah, son of Mughirah al Makhzumi a respected clan leader, said to the Mak-

kans, "while we are all standing here, let the first one to pass through the gate of al Suffah be our arbitrator in this dispute."

### **Conflict Prevention**

- Establish clear and fair rules for using the community resources.
- Establish authority lines that are based on the principle of community consent and consultation.
- Ensure that leadership embraces the ethic of compassion in the service of community.
- Ensure transparency in decision making and finance management
- Schedule regular general body meetings to invite suggestions and communicate important decisions.

The first one to pass through the gate was Muhammad. Upon seeing him they said, "that is the trustworthy (*al-amin*); we will agree with his verdict." Realizing, as he listened to them, that the contenders had worked themselves up into a passion, Muhammad thought for a moment and said, "bring me a robe." He took the robe they brought, spread it on the ground, and placed the black stone on it and then said, "Let the elders of each clan hold onto one edge of the robe." They all complied and together carried the stone to the site of construction. There, Muhammad picked up the stone with his hands and laid it in its place. Bloodshed was thus averted and the dispute was solved."<sup>7</sup>

The Prophet could have taken the easiest and more self-serving route. He could have asked individuals from the Hashemites (his clan) to carry the stone, but he decided to involve all the clans of Quraysh. By so doing he satisfied every clan, avoided envy and resentment, and enhanced social cohesiveness and solidarity.

### **Conflict Transformation - Peace of Hudaibiyah**

The Peace of Hudaibiyah provides us with many insights as to how to arrive at an amicable resolution of a deadly conflict that would have led to great bloodshed. The Prophet worked hard to achieve a peaceful resolution even though he was well prepared for confrontation and have already received a solemn pledge from 1400 strong men. The Peace was signed in the eighth year of Hijrah (Islamic calendar). Early in that year, the Prophet left Medina accompanied with 1400 Muslims to perform *umrah* (the small pilgrimage). As the caravan drew near Makkah, the Prophet learned that Quraysh mobilized an army to prevent their entering the sanctuary. He ordered the caravan to take a different route to avoid Quraysh army, continued travel towards Makkah, and set a camp at Hudaibiyah on the outskirts of the city.

Quraysh's army pursued the Muslim caravan and set up a camp at Kara' al Ghamim to prevent Muslims to enter Makkah. Upon learning this, Prophet Muhammad said: "Woe to Quraysh!

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<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Husyn Haykal, *Life of Muhammad*, trans. Isamil al Faruqi (Islamic Books Publisher, 1986), pp. 60-61

Their hostility is undoing them..." The two parties exchanged emissaries who expressed the demands of the communities they represented. This led to long and difficult negotiation between Quraysh and the Muslims that culminated in the Peace of Hudaibiyah.

The Peace Treaty was signed after tough negotiations and declared a ten-year truce between the parties. The Muslims were to return to Medina without performing *umrah*, but in the following year they would be free to perform the pilgrimage, and Quraysh promised to evacuate Makkah for three days to allow Muslims to perform Hajj. Deserters who leave Quraysh and join the Muslims during the period of the truce were to be returned; not so deserters from the Muslims to Quraysh. The treaty permitted all tribes or clans to freely ally themselves with either the Muslims or Quraysh.

There was dismay among the majority of Muslims as they viewed the terms of the treaty to favor Quraysh. There disagreement was so strong that they almost defied the command of the Prophet to abandon their *umrah* plan. But the Prophet refused to force a confrontation knowing that the Muslims would be able to visit the Kabah without resorting to force, even if that meant they have to wait one more years. Establishing peace and saving life through a peaceful resolution of the conflict was all worth the wait.

### **Conflict Prevention**

Well led organizations allow room for differences in opinion to play themselves out, as these differences enrich decision making and drive the process of growth and positive change. Organizations, however, prefer structured conflicts and work hard to avoid and prevent open conflicts as these have the tendency to undermine cohesion and split the the community.

Preventing open conflict is, therefore, an important responsibility of leaders. The key here is to establish clear and fair rules of operation, including rules to address any grievances that might emerge. The leaders must all the time be fully accountable to the organization general body and the community at large, and should accommodate genuine demands for fairness and accountability.

Leaders can take a number of actions and precautions to prevent open conflicts, including:

1. ***Establish Fair Rules:*** Compassionate leaders are always keen to establish clear and fair rules for making decisions and using the community resources. These rules must be rooted in the values and generally accepted tradition of the community.
2. ***Practice Engaging Authority:*** Establishing authority lines that are based on the principle of community consent and consultation reduces dissatisfaction, frustration, and hence reduce the potential for open conflict.
3. ***Serve the Community:*** Ensure that leadership embraces the ethic of compassion in the service of community. Leaders who see their mission as serving the community, and avoid self-serving actions and transactions are more likely to generate confidence and trust and reduce the possibility of conflict.
4. **Ensure transparency:** Leaders who embrace accountability in decision making and finance management do minimize corruption instances. When stakeholders are better informed about decisions, actions, rationale, and the use of resources, speculations and misrepresentations that aim at mobilizing opinion and sentiments are rendered ineffective.
5. **Schedule regular general body meetings** to invite suggestions and communicate important decisions. People who are not involved in the decision making tend to shift responsibility to decision makers.

### **Conflict Resolution Process**

Conflict prevention reduces the incidents of open conflict, but does not eliminate them altogether. Structured conflicts can occasionally get out of hand and escalate to the level of open conflict. Learning how to resolve conflicts is something that compassionate leaders will need to master.

**Step One: Establish ground rules for resolving the conflict**

Make sure that the two parties agree to a set of fair ground rules for resolving the conflict. Ground rules are guidelines for discussion among the parties. It is helpful to have a mediator trusted by the two parties to enforce the agreed upon ground rules. Ground rules are variations of three guiding principles: *Be Calm, Be Patient, and Be Respectful*.

Below is sample of ground rules.

- Limit the discussion to only the issue at hand and avoid reference to past conflicts
- One party speaks the other listens without interruption
- Focus on issues and not intentions and character
- Priority to needs over interests
- The two parties must be willing to compromise when it comes to interests

**Step Two: Gather Information and Establish the Facts**

- Understand the nature of the differences that gave rise to the conflict. These differences are usually over one or more of four elements: perceptions, interests, needs, and values.
- Practice active listening to ensure that each party can articulate the interests, needs, and concerns of the other party.
- Identify issues clearly and concisely
- Clarify feelings

**Step Three: Agree on the Problem**

This sounds like an obvious step, but often different underlying needs, interests and goals can cause people to perceive problems very differently. You'll need to agree on the problems that you are trying to solve before you'll find a mutually acceptable solution.

Sometimes different people will see different but interlocking problems - if you can't reach a common perception of the prob-

lem, then at the very least, you need to understand what the other person sees as the problem.

#### **Step Four: Brainstorm Possible Solutions**

If everyone is going to feel satisfied with the resolution, it will help if everyone has had fair input in generating solutions. Brainstorm possible solutions, and be open to all ideas, including ones you never considered before.

#### **Step Five: Negotiate a Solution**

Negotiation at this stage aims at articulating a solution acceptable to parties based on ideas developed in step 4. Agreement on an articulated solution helps bring both sides to better understand the position of the other, and a mutually satisfactory solution may be clear to all.

In resolving conflict using this approach, you should follow these rules:

- **Listen to the two parties** of the conflict, no matter how much you trust the first party.
- **Make sure that good relationships are the first priority:** As far as possible, make sure that you treat the other calmly and that you try to build mutual respect. Do your best to be courteous to one-another and remain constructive under pressure;
- **Keep people and problems separate:** Recognize that in many cases the other person is not just "being difficult" – real and valid differences can lie behind conflictive positions. By separating the problem from the person, real issues can be debated without damaging working relationships;
- **Pay attention to the interests that are being presented:** By listening carefully you'll most-likely understand why the person is adopting his or her position;
- **Listen first; talk second:** To solve a problem effectively you have to understand where the other person is coming from before defending your own position;



- **Set out the “Facts”:** Agree and establish the objective, observable elements that will have an impact on the decision; and
- **Explore options together:** Be open to the idea that a third position may exist, and that you can get to this idea jointly.

### Summary

- Conflicts are expression of differences that sets individuals and groups on the opposite sides of an issue.
- Given the facts that people often differ in their values, interests, perceptions, and needs, conflicts are an intrinsic part of social life and can only be eliminated at the expense of arresting the vibrancy and growth of the organization.
- Conflict is often the motor of change, and it is essential for the growth of both the individual and the community.
- Conflict does not always lead to positive change, as the outcome of conflict is often determined by the way conflict is managed. For conflict to result in individual and collective growth, it takes an act of a visionary and compassionate leadership.
- Well led organizations allow room for differences in opinions to play themselves out, as these differences enrich decision making and drive the process of growth and positive change. Organizations, however, prefer structured conflict, and work hard to avoid and prevent open conflict as these have the tendency to undermine cohesion and split the organization of the community.
- The two great emotions that need to be managed the most in times of conflict are anger and fear. Controlling these emotions are essential for making prudent decisions.
- Resolving a conflict presupposes mutual respect between the parties involved and a commitment to dialogue. In the absence of these two conditions a conflict can either persist indefinitely or is suppressed for a long time.
- Resolving conflicts requires making a change in attitude, perception, or demands. Fair resolution of conflict also requires emotional maturation and an honest broker to help the parties find an acceptable middle ground.

## Questions and Exercises

### Case Study 1

Ahmed returns home to find his two sisters, Sahar and Sarah, arguing over the last three oranges left in the refrigerator. Each insists that she needs the oranges for a school project that is due the next day. It is already late and no grocery store is open in his small town. What should Ahmed do to deal with this conflict?

Can Ahmed resolve this conflict?

### Case Study 2

Group A and B are competing to borrow their school bus. The school allows student groups to use the bus for half a day free of charge on weekends.

Group A needs the bus to receive a delegation of international students scheduled to arrive at the airport at 5:30 pm.

Group B, on the other hand, wants to use the bus to send a visiting basketball team to the airport to take a flight back to St. Lewis. They leave from the same airport at 3:30 pm.

Use the conflict resolution procedure you learned in this workshop to negotiate a satisfactory resolution to this conflict?

### Answer for Case 1

Ahmed decides to ignore the conflicting positions of his sisters, and to probe into their real interest by asking “why?” Why do they need the oranges? Ahmed learns that Sahar wants to peel the oranges to make a cake, while Sarah wants to use the orange juice to make a milk shake.



# 5

## Think Strategically and Realize Your Full Potential

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### Chapter Topics

- Essential elements of planning
- Planning and faith
- Assessing the internal and external environment
- Developing vision and mission statements
- Setting strategic goals and identify specify objectives
- Develop appropriate structure for implementation

### Learning Objectives

- Explore essential elements of planning
- Relate faith and planning and reviewing lessons from Islamic sources
- Assess present capacity and analyzing environmental challenges and opportunities
- Develop a clear vision of the future
- Establish priorities and developing strategies
- Set the necessary structure for implementation

**P**lanning is intrinsic to human life. Humans of all ages and persuasions instinctively plan. Every action involves an instinctive planning process. Consider a simple action of escaping a nearby forest fire. People who are faced with such threat instinctively assess the situation before fleeing their location. How close is the fire? In what direction is it moving? Is it moving closer or farther?

When people realize that the situation is threatening and they need to move away from the fire, they identify a safe location to which they should escape: a farther removed town or a hill across a nearby river. And as soon as the new location is identified, people look for the shortest and most convenient road to take and the fastest means of transportation available to use. These three elements, the situation, the target, and the path, are the essential elements of planning.

Planning, whether involving simple or complex actions, can be broken to three essential elements or steps:

- **Assess the Situation** - evaluate the current situation and how it came about.
- **Identify the Target** - define goals to be realized
- **Determine the Path** - map a possible route to the goals

Strategic Planning retains the above elements of planning, but place them within a broader vision that contemplates a long term view of the path. Strategic planning is, particularly, essential for compassionate leaders because they do realize that they are duty bound to work for the betterment of the communities and peoples they serve.

Building on the above essential elements of planning and taking vision into account, strategic planning involves the following sets of activities:

- Vision** - Develop the vision and set a mission statement
- SWOT** - Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by the community

**Goals** – Identify the goals that organization need to pursue and order them in terms of priority

**Strategies** – Determine the actions to be taken for realizing the goals

**Objectives** – Identify the intermediate point or events that must be realized first for the goals to be achieved and make sure that they are measurable.

### **Planning and Faith**

People of faith who have a strong belief in the caring quality of the Divine, and whose faith encourage them to place their trust in God's mercy and wisdom often feel that they should rely more on God's protection rather than on their own preparation and planning. This, I would like to illustrate, is a faulty assumption and a wrong reading of the teaching of divine revelation.

Prophet Muhammad understood that placing one's trust in God's protection and help does not negate taking precautions and planning for the future. Rather, his teachings and actions show that he believed that God helps those who help themselves. When a Bedouin came to the Prophet asking him whether he should tie his camel when he is away from it or leave it loose and put his trust in God, the Prophet rejected the dichotomy and asked the Bedouin to combine both. "Tie it and put your trust in God," he responded.

Prophet Muhammad's life is full of examples that show that he was never complacent and that he did everything in his power to plan and prepare for the future. The story of his migration from Makkah to Medina is quite telling. When the Prophet became aware of Quraysh's design to assassinate him, he informed his closest companion to ready himself for a long trip. He made an elaborate plan to ensure the success of his journey from Makkah to Medina as he was quite sure that Quraysh would not spare any effort to track him down. He decided, therefore, to surprise his enemies by leaving under circumstances and at a time hardly conceivable to them. The young men whom Quraysh had prepared for performing the assassination had blockaded his house during the night in fear that he might run away.

On the night of the Hijrah (migration), the Prophet confided his plan to Ali ibn Abutalib and asked him to sleep in his bed and to cover himself with his green mantle. He further asked him to

tarry in Makkah until he had returned all things left with Muhammad to their rightful owners. The assassins waiting to kill the Prophet felt reassured whenever, looking through a hole in the door, they saw somebody sleeping in the Prophet's bed. Just before dawn, The Prophet left without being noticed, picked up Abu Bakr at the latter's house and from there they proceeded through a back door southward toward the cave of Thawr. The southerly direction of their flight was intended to confuse Quraysh who expected him to flee northward in the direction of Medina.

Nobody knew of their hiding place in the cave except Abdullah, the son of Abu Bakr, his two sisters, A'ishah and Asma, and their servant Amir ibn Fuhayrah. Abdullah spent his day in Makkah listening to what Quraysh said and plotted about Muhammad and then reported it to the pair at their hideout under cover of night. Amir grazed the sheep of Abu Bakr and passed by the cave in the evening in order to give them some milk and meat. Upon Abdullah's return from the cave, Amir would follow him with his flock to conceal any trace of his steps. For three long days, the pair remained in the cave as Quraysh looked frantically for them. Ultimately, the Prophet and his companion were able to reach Medina safe, but it took both trust in divine providence and elaborate planning to reach the goal.

The Qur'an reveals the importance of planning in the success of the missions of early prophets, beginning with the mission of Noah. After spending the bulk of his exceptionally long life calling his people to pursue a life of justice and faith, he came to the realization that the continuation of these extremely corrupt people can only bring more corruption. He was therefore informed that all the corrupt members of his community would be destroyed by a flood, and was directed to build an ark to save the believers from destruction. Here is how the Qur'an describe Noah's situation.

"So We inspired him (with this message): "Construct the ark within our sight and under our guidance: then when comes our command, and the fountains of the earth gush forth, take on board pairs of every species, male and female, and your family - except those of them against whom the word has already gone forth - and address Me not in favor of the wrong-doers; for they shall be drowned (in the Flood)." (Mu'minun 23:27)



Not only was Noah a person of deep faith and devotion who put his trust in God, but was also a person of diligence and wisdom who understood the importance of planning and preparation for future events. Noah started building a huge ark long before the flood took place. He assessed the situation and realized that the corruption was on the rise and the corrupt leaders of his community were ready to use force and intimidation against the people of faith. He knew that he has an obligation to save the believers, and to save with them the means they need to live and prosper after the flood, and set plan to achieve the goal: to build the ark.

### **Strategic Planning Process**

Strategic planning takes a long term view of the organization's activities and incorporates two important facts: (1) that change is an intrinsic aspect of human life and (2) that individual and group activities must contribute to advancing the most important goals of the collectivity. People involved in strategic planning must, therefore, be keen observers of changes that take place internally within the organization, and externally in the surrounding environment.

While all leaders are concerned about the future and plan their work and activities to meet future challenges, compassionate leaders have the wellbeing of people as the paramount concern in the planning process. This means, in practical terms, that while compassionate leaders are always interested in improving structures and processes, and do their best to increase efficiency and productivity in their organizations, they would not do that by degrading the quality of life or denigrating human dignity.

#### **Strategic Planning**

- Assess the Situation
- Develop vision statement
- Develop mission statement
- Setting strategic goals
- Identify specific objectives
- Develop appropriate structure

The Strategic Planning is a process that consists of six distinctive stages:

1. Assessing the Situation
2. Developing vision statement
3. Developing mission statement
4. Setting strategic goals
5. Identifying specify objectives
6. Developing appropriate structure for implementation

By the end of the day, the strategic planning process produces a document called Strategic Plan.

### **Assessing Internal and External Environments**

Assessing the overall situation of an organization is the first essential step for identifying its priorities and developing the best strategies for achieving them.

Such an assessment must look into both the internal and external situation of the organization and analyze the impact of the internal and external factors on the community.

Many organizations today use the SWOT analysis to assess their organizations. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It is the first phase in the strategic planning process, and a powerful tool for auditing an organization and its environment.

Strengths and weaknesses are factors internal to the organization. Strengths involve any unique services that the organization can provide or special expertise and assets available to it. Weaknesses, on the other hand, may include deficiency in crucial expertise for the realiza-

#### **Situation Assessment Procedure**

- Select a facilitator to lead the SWOT analysis.
- Form a SWOT team of stake holders.
- Brainstorm to identify the organization strengths.
- Record ideas on a flip chart
- Clarify and consolidate ideas, and then select the top 3 to 5 strengths.
- Repeat steps 2 to 5 for weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

tion of important goals, or inadequacy in the number of people needed to do a crucial work, such as a small membership or staff.

Opportunities and threats are factors external to the organization. Opportunities include rising needs for organization services, or a new development that brings more attention to the organization. Threats, on the other hand, include the formation of a new coalition of competitors or hostile groups, or a smear campaign targeting the organization.

SWOT analysis has the tendency to become too complicated. Keep it simple and use it as guide and never as a prescription. You need also to keep in mind that the exercise is important insofar as it help formulate the most important goals of the organization.

The best practices for conducting SWOT analysis can be summarized in a six-step procedure:

**Select a facilitator** to lead the SWOT analysis. Selecting an experienced and knowledgeable facilitator is crucial for the success of SWOT analysis. The facilitator will oversee the execution of the steps outlined below and ensure orderly conduct. He or she should allow the smooth interaction among members involved in the assessment and should not be imposing or overbearing.

**Form a SWOT team** of stakeholders. Stakeholders include members of the board of trustees, the executives, volunteers, community leaders, partner organization, and any other individuals interested in the growth and development of the organization.

**Brainstorm** to identify the organization strengths. Make sure that ideas are not discussed, criticized, or analyzed at this point. All ideas, even those that are deemed unimportant by some participants should be listed for further discussion. By allowing uninterrupted flow of ideas, everyone is encouraged to share all ideas, and the team will end up with a significant list of ideas. Brainstorming should be limited to 10-15 minutes for each of the SWOT four elements.

**Record ideas on a flip chart.** This will allow all to view the list of suggested ideas, and have visual preview of them as they are brought back for discussion and consolidation.

**Clarify and consolidate ideas,** and then select the top 3 to 5 strengths. In this step all participants will have the opportunity to discuss proposed ideas, criticize them, and ask individuals who proposed them to provide additional clarification. The discussion will allow the participants to eliminate many of the ideas that would not stand criticism, and only the important ideas that receive the broadest support should be kept. If the number of ideas that remained on the chart exceeds 5, a selection process to identify the top 5 should be adopted, including voting on the top five.

**Repeat steps 2 to 5** for weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

To understand how SWOT analysis impacts on the development of goals and priorities, let us consider the following outcomes of a SWOT analysis conducted by a major Muslim organization in the United States. By the end of the day, the organization leaders who were involved in the exercise identified the following factors:

**Strengths**

1. Large Annual Convention
2. Long history and broad name recognition
3. Diversity in membership and leadership

**Weaknesses**

1. Waning appeal to younger generation
2. Diminishing presence at local community level
3. Broad focus with few staff
4. Lack of focus on indigenous Muslims

**Opportunities:**

1. Increase interests in interfaith activities
3. Rising media interest in Islam and Muslims
4. Focus on the women status in Muslim communities

5. Increase interests among Islamic communities to reach out to the larger society

**Threats:**

1. Islamophobia
2. Religious extremism
3. Misrepresentation by certain media outlets of Islam and Muslims

**Developing the Vision and the Mission**

Vision and mission are important elements for developing a good strategy and ensuring that resources are used wisely and effectively. The two are very often confused. The organization's vision represents a view of the future state of the organization and what its leaders and members hope to achieve through their collaborative work. Its mission is what it can do best on a daily basis so it can realize its vision. Both are essential elements of any successful organization.

Visions are dreams about the future. The language is borrowed from a long established prophetic tradition in which certain dreams provide clues about future happening. One such interesting dream is that of the king of Egypt during Prophet Yusuf's (Joseph's) times.

Yusuf understood that the seven bulky cows in the King's dream represented seven years of prosperity to be followed by seven years of draught signified by the seven skinny cows. His plan was to save large portion of the crop produced during the years of prosperity in anticipation of the years of draught. The king agreed with Yusuf's plan and the Egyptian society was saved from the prospect of going through overwhelmingly rough times that could have resulted in its complete collapse.

By deciphering the king's dream, Prophet Yusuf transformed it into a vision that was translated into a strategic plan to overcome a serious challenge that threatened the Egyptian society. The realization of the vision involved a great deal of planning and management of resources.

Luckily, modern society is spared the need to rely on dreams to develop visions and plans, as it has a tremendous amount of information to help people develop better ways to deal with

future events. Strategic plans are today based on a deep sense of how the future should look like and the skills to analyze the present and determine the desired goals and the best possible paths that could lead to them.

*A vision is a statement about what the organization wants to become.* It should inspire the organization members and make them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves. A vision should inspire the organization to expand its capabilities and set it on clear direction to the future.

The vision statement should include a clear and inspiring description of the organization once it has effectively realized its strategic plan. In other words, the vision of an organization should paint a very compelling image toward which the organization was attracted and guided by the strategic plan. Visions range in length from a couple of words to couple of pages. A good vision statement is often brief so it could be easily memorized by the organization members.

A mission statement provides, on the other hand, a summary of the organization's priorities and strategies. Unlike vision statement, it has to wait until the organization's priorities and strategies are developed. And unlike the vision statement, it likely to be modified every time the organization comes up with a new set of priorities and strategies.

Good vision and mission statements should meet the following criteria:

- *Brief and succinct* so they can be easily memorized and recalled.
- *Clear and expressed* in a simple language to avoid any misunderstanding
- *Inspiring and appealing* to the community's shared values and ideals.

To understand how vision and mission statements are articulated, let us consider few examples from Islamic centers and organizations. Irving Islamic Center, located in Dallas, Texas,

provides an informative example. Below are the vision and mission statements as published on the center's website.

*Example 1:* Irving Center's vision reads: "To become the minaret of Islam in the West." Its mission statement's reads: "To provide a Central Islamic Center for all people in the Irving and DFW Area, utilizing all avenues for *Dawaa*, while providing an Islamic Environment and Comprehensive Islamic Education to the next generation."

The center's vision is brief and inspiring but lacks clarity as it does not help the community members envision any specific state of the future, and can therefore be interpreted in too many ways. The ambiguity might be intended to accommodate membership diversity and keep the focus broad on Islam, but this is done at the expense of providing direction and inspiration. The mission statement reinforces the ambiguity evident in the vision. The mission emphasizes three broad goals: (1) gathering all Muslims in the Dallas-Fort-Worth area, (2) undertake outreach activities, and (3) educate Muslim youth.

*Example 2:* Another example of vision and mission statements developed by an Islamic center is that of the Islamic Center of Minnesota. The center's vision statement read as thus: "To be a model Muslim Community that invites to all that is good (Islam), enjoins what is right (that Islam orders one to do) and forbids what is wrong (that Islam has forbidden), so that we may attain success."

The center's vision statement describes a community of excellence and activism in support of Islamic values. The mission statement explains how that vision is to be attained: "The Islamic Center of Minnesota proclaims the universal message of Islam that enables us to foster the development and well-being of Muslim individuals, to empower the Muslim Families and to establish our Muslim community." The emphasis in the mission statement is placed on building individual and family capacity, but does not explain how the activism stressed in the vision statement is to be realized.

The center elaborates its mission by identifying six goals, or what the center's call "objectives." While the terms "goal" and

“objective” are often used interchangeably, they are often given more specific meanings by strategic planning experts. The term “goal” is often reserved for general directions to be pursued by the organization, while the term “objective” is reserved to measurable steps or signposts on the way to achieving a particular goal. We will return to discuss goals and objectives in the next section. Bellow is the list of goals identify by the Islamic Center of Minnesota that underline its mission.

The center’s goals are:

1. Carry out Islamic educational, cultural, social, athletic, civil and charitable activities to provide the Muslim community in Minnesota with an Islamic environment.
2. Develop a deeper understanding of Islam and enhance the commitment to Islamic ethics, and moral standards.
3. Inculcate and instill the spirit of Islam and the teaching of the Qur’an and the Sunnah (Traditions) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) especially among youth and the new generation of Muslims.
4. Further cooperation and strengthened relations among Muslim individuals, families, and organizations.
5. Perform Islamic Da’wah (invitation to Islam) among Muslims and non-Muslims
6. Pursue mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation with other faith organizations

Let us review too more Islamic organizations whose vision and mission were drafted with particular attention to the *three criteria of writing vision and mission statements: brevity, clarity, and inspiration.*

*Example 3:* The All Dulles Area Muslim Society, otherwise known by its acrynom, ADAMS, has developed vision and mission that meet at least two of the three criteria and match one another. ADAMS’ Mission statement reads: “ADAMS believes that, service to humankind is an important part of devotion to God (swt) and that all Muslims are enjoined to be good neighbors. Thus, ADAMS’ mission is to serve God (swt) through service to the Muslim community by providing religious education and social services in the best professional manner as embod-



ied in the Quran and Sunnah. Further, ADAMS is dedicated to representing the eternal truths of Islam to the broader community through positive contributions to the society at large.”

ADAMS’ VISION statement reads: “ADAMS aspires to be the anchor of a model community of practicing Muslims of diverse backgrounds, democratically governed, efficiently served, relating to one another with inclusiveness and tolerance, and interacting with neighbors in an Islamic exemplary fashion.”

*Example 4:* In addition to meeting the criteria of clarity and inspiration, the vision and mission statements developed by the Muslim Political Action Council (MPAC) are brief and succinct. MPAC’s vision is “To establish a vibrant Muslim American community that will enrich American society through promoting the Islamic values of Mercy (21:107), Justice (4:135), Peace (8:61), Human Dignity (17:70), Freedom (2:256), and Equality for all (49:13).”

Its mission is expounded as thus: “MPAC is an American institution which informs and shapes public opinion and policy by serving as a trusted resource to decision makers in government, media and policy institutions. MPAC is also committed to developing leaders with the purpose of enhancing the political and civic participation of American Muslims.”

The mission statement of MPAC provides clear understanding as to what the organization plans to do to realize its vision. It does that by stating its most important priorities, and making reference to the strategy to achieve them. The mission statement points particularly to two strategic goals: (1) to “inform and shapes public opinion and policy” and (2) “developing leaders with the purpose of enhancing the political and civic participation of American Muslims.” It also states the organization strategy for achieving the first goal, namely “by serving as a

### Raising Strategic Questions

Three questions are essential for identifying goals, strategies, and objectives.

**Goals:** Where we want to be?

**Strategies:** How can we reach the state we want to be in?

**Objectives:** What are the steps needed to get there?

trusted resource to decision makers in government, media and policy institutions.”

Because the mission statement of an organization underscores its goals and strategies, its formulation must wait until the latter are articulated and defined. Setting strategic goals and the methods of their realization is the focus of the next section.

### **Setting Strategic Goals**

The development of goals, strategies, and objectives is the focus of this section. Let us begin with defining these important concepts.

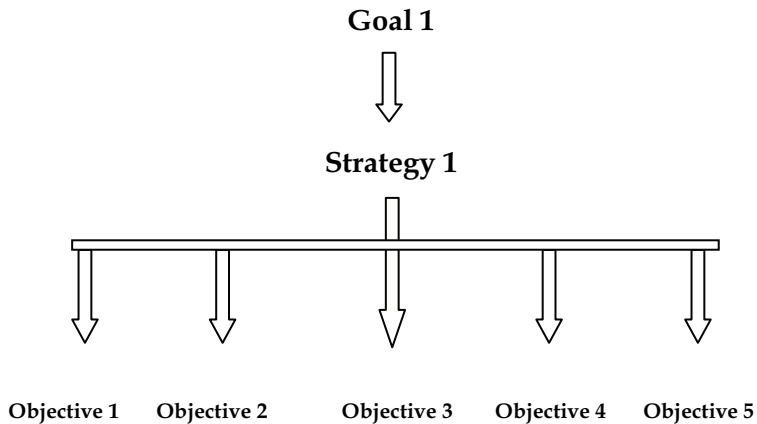
Goals are the end that a plan is intended to achieve. They are the projected state of affairs a person or a group intends to achieve. The term goal is used in the language of strategic planning to indicate the highest and final end the organization aspires to achieve.

The term “objective,” on the other hand, refers to a measurable outcome to be achieved within a specific period of time. Unlike goals, objectives should be stated in specific, well-defined, measurable terms and should be achievable within a specific timeframe.

Strategy involves an action or a sequence of actions to achieve a long term goal of the organization. It usually emphasizes the method an organization employs to achieving a strategic goal.

The goal is defined by asking the question “where we want to be?” The strategy is outlined by asking the question: “how do we get there?” And the objectives are determined by asking “what are the steps needed to get there?”

In strategic planning, the three terms form an interlinked and interconnected hierarchy of desired outcomes and methods. Bellow is a diagrammatical representation of how the three concepts relate to each other:



Well articulated objectives must be SMART. They must, that is, meet the SMART criteria. They must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Tractable.

- S – specific
- M – measurable
- A – attainable
- R – relevant
- T – tractable

To see how the Goal-Strategy-Objective approach to planning works, let us consider the strategic plan developed by the largest Muslim National Organization in the United States and Canada, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). ISNA identified the following five goals after undertaking a comprehensive SWOT analysis:

- Goal 1:** Enhance public image of Islam, and improve media, and government relations
- Goal 2:** Enhance youth development and empowerment
- Goal 3:** Enhance interfaith work and build coalitions
- Goal 4:** Build Leadership Capacity in the American Muslim Community
- Goal 5:** Short-term and Long-term financial stability

The Goal-Strategy-Objective relationship can best be illustrated by focusing the third of the five goals identified.

### **Goal 3: Enhance interfaith work and build coalitions**

To achieve the above goal three strategies were outlined and each of them was further expounded by identifying a number of objectives, or steps, for its realization.

Below are the strategies and their objectives:

**Strategy A:** Strengthen the interfaith office with appropriate resources

#### **Objectives:**

1. Create directory of other potential partners
2. Map internal resources
3. Standardize the content of the dialogue and the potential outcome
4. Build capacity through manuals, resources, and training
5. Hire a full time person in community relations
6. Gather information on interfaith activities.

#### **Critical Issues for Muslim Leadership**

- Building Leadership Capacity
- Women's participation
- Youth Involvement
- Interfaith dialogue
- Islamophobia and misrepresentation

**Strategy B:** Build alliances on issues of social justice and civil rights (partnering with organizations with similar objectives)

#### **Objectives:**

1. Work with organizations in USA on issues such as the uninsured, drunk driving, domestic violence, etc.
2. Work with organizations outside USA on issues such as Kashmir, Palestine, Darfur, AIDS in Africa

3. Associate with initiatives to be implemented at local levels by MCI-WMD/NRCAT

**Strategy C:** Create awareness of the organization's activities through enhanced internal and external communication

**Objectives:**

1. Establish two-way linkages between ISNA website and other appropriate websites
2. Create a website that talks about current issues and events, open to posting by anyone for organizations to take advantage of it
3. Map all resources

Notice that all the objectives meet the SMART test. They are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and traceable.

The objectives are used by the organization units to develop action plan, with detailed actions, timeframes, and responsibilities. We will elaborate on this point when we discuss the implementation of the strategic plan, and will discuss it in details in Chapter 7.

**Strategic Plan**

At the end of the strategic planning exercise, a document titled "strategic plan" is produced. The strategic plan is used by an organization to align its organization resources and structure with organizational priorities, missions, and objectives. A strategic plan should include a mission statement, a description of the organization's long-term goals and objectives, and strategies or means the organization should use to achieve these general goals and objectives. The strategic plan may also identify external factors that could affect achievement of long-term goals.

**From Strategy Development to Implementation**

Implementation of a strategy involves the activities necessary for translating the plan into actions and activities. This is far more challenging and demanding element of the planning process than

developing strategy. Many Strategic plans fail because the organization lacks the necessary skills for good implementation.

*Essential Values for Implementation*

Implementation is key to the success of any strategic plan, and is often where the strength and preparedness of an organization is tested. The team charged with the implementation of a strategy must display strong commitment to four essential values to succeed in their mission:

- Time consciousness
- Responsibility
- Empowerment
- Flexibility

**Time** – compassionate leaders use their time effectively. They assign high value on time knowing that their ability to achieve their goals is directly linked to how they manage their time. Time is life, and respect for one’s own life and that of other human beings demands that one do not waste one’s own time and that of others.

Without due respect for time and knowledge of time management skills, no plan can be completed on time, and most important endeavors would fail. Therefore, the first order of business after formulating a strategic plan is to work on action plans whereby the overall task is broken to specific action, and each action is assigned to a person to execute and given a specific time to complete.

**Responsibility** – assigning different tasks to different individuals and empowering them with the authority to undertake these tasks and the resources necessary is essential. No matter how many individuals are involved in achieving a particular task the overall responsibility for the completion of this task must be assigned to one person with sufficient authority and resources.

To ensure effective implementation, the organization leaders must give primary attention to developing an effective structure. The structure of an organization involves the different offices and departments created to undertake the various tasks that comprise the overall mission of the organization. Assigning too many or

too few tasks to an individual often disturbs the work of an organization, and makes accountability difficult.

**Empowerment** – Compassionate leaders do not just assign responsibilities and stay aloof, but continue to provide support and motivation to those they enlist for help. Support involves acknowledging positive efforts and providing appropriate rewards and incentives, including promotion and recognition. Compassionate leaders can do that with ease because they genuinely care about the wellbeing of people around them.

**Flexibility** – No strategy or plan can anticipate beforehand all the actions in sufficient details, and many times new factors and events that are not anticipated in the original strategy require new consideration. This would often require an adjustment in the original plan to meet new factors.

*Effective practices to ensure timely and satisfactory implementation*

1. **Evaluate performance** and assess progress at interim periods. This can be best done through a combination of written reports and interviews.

*Reports:* written reports must be required at interim periods, preferably every three to four months. The reports must: (1) describe achieved targets, (2) identify problems and obstacles that require particular attention, and (3) point out any additional resources needed for achieving the desired goals.

*Interviews:* written reports should be followed by interviews to explore different elements of the report and explore solutions and alternative courses of action.

2. Provide **support structure** to help the implementation team to maintain high level of motivation and keep their eyes on the goals. There must be a persistent effort to align personal and organizational goals by making the mission morally and financially rewarding. Acknowledging outstanding contributions, both in private and public, reinforces the commit-

ment of those who contribute with deep devotion and sends a strong message that the organization values excellence.

3. Provide **regular training and counseling** opportunities. Training and counseling are not only needed for new volunteers and leaders, but also for self-improvement and capacity building of the organization. Training is particularly crucial when the organization experiences fast growth or starts taking on new tasks.
4. **Communicate** with clarity, as communication for any organization or team is analogous to the nerve system for the human body. The nerves allow the human body to function harmoniously, so does communication allow an organization or a community to move forward with cooperation and harmony. Below is a list of elements that should be communicated to the team involved in implementing the strategy.
  - Explain the purpose of the new strategy.
  - Discuss expectation and measures of success.
  - Explain the consequences of failure.
  - Describe incentives and rewards.



## **Analyzing American Muslim Situation Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities**

To fulfill their historical mission, American Muslim organizations should undergo a deep self-examination, and understand both their strengths and weaknesses. Without an honest and penetrating look at their present state of affairs, and a strong desire to overcome shortcomings and to build on strengths, no serious achievements would be possible.

While self-examination requires more elaborate efforts on the part of Muslim intellectuals and scholars, I intend to briefly identify some of the salient elements of strength and weakness.

### **Strengths and Weakness**

On the strength side, the American Muslim community is made of diverse and vibrant groups. American Muslims drew their ranks from a greatly diverse ethnic background sharing the cultural heritage of every major ethnic community in North America and the World. American Muslims share the cultural heritage of the Arab, African, European, East and South East Asia, Indo-Pakistani, Persian, Latino, Turkic, and Slavic cultures. Although cultural frictions continue to plague the community, American Muslims have made major strides to maintain a sense of commitment to the Islamic ideals to which they all subscribe.

But regardless of ethnic divisions, American Muslims are, by and large, well educated, resourceful, and have strong sense of purpose and determination. African American Muslims continue to be a source of inspiration in the pursuit of civil liberties and political activism, and in carrying the legacy of the civil liberties movement that brought the United States closer to its declared ideals of liberty, equality, and due process of the law. African American Muslims face, though, more challenging social and economic conditions. Great many of them live in financially deprived areas, with limited access to educational and economic opportunities. African American Muslims, particularly those who live in inner cities, feel more alienated from mainstream America, and are discontent with the eagerness of many immigrants to embrace suburban community.

Immigrant Muslims who form the other main division within the American Muslim community consist mainly of professionals and business people, and fall on the higher end of the socio-economic ladder of the American society. Their education and financial resources have helped build hundreds of Islamic centers, schools, and national organizations.

They, however, continue to be more politically passive, and lack deep grounding in American culture and society. Immigrants also tend to have

limited understanding of their historical and strategic positioning within the American context.

### **Threats and Opportunities**

Islam as a social organization and a religious community has made new inroads into American public life over the last few decades. A host of Islamic centers, schools, and national organizations have made local and international impacts. The impacts American Muslims made generated positive responses, and many people of other faiths developed positive relationships with their fellow Muslims, having had the opportunity to interact with them as neighbors, coworkers, volunteers, students, teachers, and concerned citizens. Muslims have also become active politically, using their voting power to influence issues and events.

The rapid increase of Muslim numbers and growing influence of Muslim individuals and organizations have alarmed few small but powerful groups within the American political spectrum. The Religious Right and supporters of Israel's Likud party coalesced to disfranchise Muslims and stop the growth of Islam in the United States. These ultra conservative groups embarked on an anti-Islam campaign that was started in the mid-nineties, and intensified after 9/11. Taking advantage of the misguided and violent acts of Muslim extremists, and of the rampant misunderstanding of Islam in the West, these groups have made wild claims and unfounded allegations against Islam and Muslims.

While the efforts and designs of Islam's detractors present an immediate and clear challenge, the true challenge American Muslims face comes from within. It comes from the cultural quietism – even fatalism – that prevent many Muslim communities from providing an adequate response to happenings that effect their well-being and the future of their children. It comes from the weakness of community spirit, the rivalry and internal frictions, and wasteful competition that prevent meaningful cooperation. It also results from the lack of articulate vision shared by Muslims, and the failure to understand the context in which American Muslims live, and the historical mission they must fulfill.

The real challenge for American Muslims lies, therefore, in articulating their values and faith, and developing the necessary institutions and community structures for the realization of their mission. The challenge is to express Islamic principles of moral integrity, justice, compassion, cooperation, and respect of religious diversity in ways that can help relate those values to the issues and concerns of the time.

### Summary

- Strategic planning is, therefore, essential for compassionate leaders because they do realize that they are duty bound to work for the betterment of the communities and peoples they lead.
- Prophet Muhammad understood that placing one's trust in God's protection and help does not negate taking precautions and planning for the future. Rather, his teachings and actions show that he believed that God helps those who help themselves.
- The Strategic Planning is a process that consists of six distinctive stages:
  - Assessing the Situation
  - Developing vision statement
  - Develop mission statement
  - Setting strategic goals
  - Identify specify objectives
  - Develop appropriate structure for implementation
- Assessing the current situation of an organization is the first essential step to identifying the priorities and developing the best strategies to achieving them. Many organizations today use the SWOT analysis to assess their organizations.
- Vision and mission are important elements for developing a good strategy and ensuring that resources are used wisely and effectively. The organization's vision represents a view of the future state of the organization and what its leaders and members hope to achieve through their collaborative work. Its mission is what it can do best on a daily basis so it can realize its vision. Both are essential elements of any successful organization.
- Strategy involves an action or a sequence of actions to achieve a long term goal of the organization. It usually emphasizes the method an organization employs to achieving a strategic goal. The goal is defined by asking the question "where we want to be?" The strategy is outline by asking the question: "how can we reach the state we want to be in?"

And the objectives are determined by asking “what are the steps needed to get there?”

- The strategic plan is used by an organization to align its organization resources and structure with organizational priorities, missions, and objectives. It is the final outcome of the strategic planning exercise and should include a mission statement, a description of the organization’s long-term goals and objectives, and strategies or means the organization should use to achieve these general goals and objectives.

### Questions and Exercises

1. Write a vision statement for your organization
2. Analyze the mission statement provide below

Our aim in the Darul Arqum Islamic School is to cultivate tomorrow’s leaders in an enriching Islamic environment. Darul Arqum Islamic School provides an Islamic education and teaches Islamic concepts based on the Quran and Sunnah. By teaching the students Quran, Islamic studies and Arabic in a pleasant and stimulating environment, this prepares the students to meet the challenges of our changing world. Our goal is to also prepare our students to conduct themselves as Muslims in the society and to help them become proud, practicing Muslims, insha'Allah.

2.1 Can this mission statement be improved? And if the answer is yes, what improvement would you suggest.

2.2 What are the main goals of the organization?

# 6

## The Power of Team Work

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### Chapter Topics

- Teams and teambuilding
- The Power of team spirit
- From dependence through independence to interdependence
- Essential elements of teamwork

### Learning Objectives

- Understand the concepts of team building and team work
- Examine the essential elements of teamwork
- Explore the importance of mutual accountability for collective failure and success

The “army mobilized by Quraysh moved in the direction of Medina under the general leadership of Abu Sufyan. After they had reached the outskirts of Medina and encamped, the leadership of the army revolved among the leaders of the various tribes. When news of this tremendous mobilization reached Muhammad and the Muslims in Medina, it struck them all with panic. Salman al Farisi, who was well acquainted with the Persian techniques of warfare proposed that the people of Medina should dig a trench around the city and that its buildings fortified to withstand attacks. The Muslims hurried to implement this plan. The trench was dug and the Prophet, peace be with him, worked with his hands alongside his companions lifting the dirt, encouraging the Muslim workers, and exhorting everyone to multiply his effort. All the Muslims picked up their digging tools, and borrowed more tools from the Quraysh Jews who remained true to their covenant with Muhammad. With tremendous effort and enthusiasm, the whole trench was dug in six days.”

### **Teamwork in Action**

The above account of how the Prophet and his companions were able to overcome an existential challenge through faith, determination, and mutual support provides an informative example of the power of teamwork and team spirit. The threat was tremendous and serious. Never in the history of Arabia could any tribe or a coalition of tribes able to raise an army of 10,000 fighters. This huge mobilization of Quraysh and its allies underscored also the determination to finish once and for all the nascent Muslim community. The response of Muslims to the challenge revealed similar determination on their part to repulse the attack and protect their city and their community. The Muslim response also reflected all the elements of teamwork. Everyone was eager to contribute to the success of the mission with ideas, actions, and personal resources. Mutual trust and support was remarkable, and accountability was on the mind of everyone. Salman al Farisi presented a new and creative idea that was considered by the community leader and was quickly put to action.

The Prophet provided an excellent example of an engaged leader who wanted to energize his community by participating in

digging the trench. The exemplary teamwork and the high team spirit allowed the people of Medina to dig a long and huge trench around their city in six days. Of course time was of an essence and their ability to complete the task in record time proved to be crucial in preventing the sacking of Medina and the defeat of the burgeoning Muslim community.

Embracing team spirit was not difficult for the community of Medina as this spirit reflected a set of deeply held values stressed by the divine revelation and Islamic ethics the community embraced. Working together in support of a good cause is a value strongly stressed in the Qur'an:

Help one another in matters of goodness and care, but don't support one another in matters of wrong and aggression. (Ma'ida 5:2)

And the type of leadership required to bring people to work together as a team was characteristic of the Prophet's attitude and demeanor, as the Qur'an has made it clear in various *ayahs* including in the *ayah* cited below:

It was with mercy of God that you dealt kindly with them: were you sever of hardhearted, they would have broken away from you: So pass over their faults, ask God's forgiveness for them, and consult with them in the affairs; then we have taken decision, put your trust in God... (Aal Imran 3: 159)

The Prophet's kindness and compassionate approach to dealing with people around him is the real secret, the Qu'ran points out, of his success. Not only does the Qur'an approve this approach, but also directs the Prophet and those who follow his example to pass over the little mistakes people often make and to engage them in consultation in matters that have impact on them. Individuals who are able to follow this advice are bound to become great team players.

**Team, Teamwork, Teambuilding,  
and the Power of Team Spirit**

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." These are the words of the renowned cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead.

A team may be defined as a group of people who enjoy mutual trust and support, and share the reward and responsibility for achieving a common goal. The ability of team members to work in harmony to achieve a set of goals is what is intended when the term teamwork is uttered. Teamwork refers to the attitude and working relations among a group of people who are entrusted with achieving a set of goals.

Some individuals join an organization with this capacity to work with others in harmonious and effective ways. Still many have to learn the attitudes and skills they need to become team players. The efforts needed to develop teamwork capacity are often referred to as teambuilding. Teambuilding involves the development of mutual trust, collaboration, and mutual support among a group of people.

There is something extraordinary about working in a team that espouses team spirit, and whose members truly exhibit teamwork. Team spirit makes team members want their group to succeed, and teamwork helps them multiply their impact and the outcome of their work many folds. The animal world provides us with numerous examples that illustrate the power of teamwork. One such an example comes from the world of geese. Geese travel in flocks, and fly in v-shape formation. As each goose in the flock flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the birds that follow. Scientists found that this particular formation helps the flock add 71% more flying range than if the geese were to fly individually. In fact the goose that falls out of formation immediately feels the drag that forces it to quickly rejoin the flock. In this formation, the greatest lift fall on the leading goose. For this reason the folk rotate the lead position among themselves to ensure that the burden is shared. Even the geese know, leadership is a burden and sacrifice, and not simply an opportunity for self-gratification or self-aggrandizement.

The geese story reaffirms a general principle: the whole is greater than the sum of its part. We are often reminded of this



principle when we realize that doing certain acts in the company of a group improves our motivation and resilience. The Prophet signified the power of teamwork when he encouraged Muslim to pray in congregation pointing out that the reward of praying in a group is 27 more times than if a person does the same prayer alone. Even the act of praying together brings a multiplier effect. Praying five times a day in a group is no more subject to simple multiplication rule of  $1 \times 5 = 5$ . With the power “team mathematics” and the multiplier of 27 rewards:  $1 \times 5 = 135$ .

### **Interdependence and Mutual Support**

Learning to work with other people as a team member does not always come natural, and often requires a great deal of cultivation that starts at home. Young people who are exposed to working in groups in their schools and communities acquire first hand experience that teaches them the power of teamwork. Others might be exposed to the importance of teamwork in the practical life. Regardless of how and when the appreciation of teamwork is developed, it is always a sign of maturation.

For a person to be able to depend on others, he or she must be able to embrace the reality of interdependence. Individuals are limited in their resources and, hence, need others to achieve important and far-reaching goals. To understand this simple fact of human life is to acknowledge the priority of interdependence. Interdependence is an advance stage of the maturation of all humans. Human beings begin their life by being dependent on their parents and guardians. As they grow into their adolescence, they take the opposite position of wanting to be completely independent.

It is only with maturation and experience that people realize the needs to depend on others, and overcome the psychology of adolescence that insists on claiming complete independence. It takes moral discipline and emotional balance and maturation for leaders to realize that they depend for their success on the support and cooperation of others. Only mature people recognize their limitations and are at ease to supplement their weaknesses with the strengths of others. Such maturation could be seen in the response of Musa to the divine call on him to confront the tyranny of the Pharaoh and to lead his people out of Egypt. Musa

recognized his communication limits and asked that his brother Harun (Aaron) be included in his mission.

(Musa) said: "O my Lord! Release my stress; ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech, so they may understand what I say; and give me a minister from my family, Harun, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my mission: That we may celebrate your praise repeatedly, and remember you repeatedly: For you are ever watching over us." God said: "Granted is your prayer, O Musa!" (Baqara 21:25-36)

Again:

He said: "O my Lord! I have slain a man among them, and I fear lest they slay me. And my brother Harun, he is more eloquent in speech than I: so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me: for I fear that they may accuse me of falsehood." (28:33-4)

### **Essential elements of Team-work**

Teamwork is precisely what compassionate leaders aim to achieve in their communities and for their communities. It is the whole approach and natural outcome of leading with compassion. Not only are compassionate leaders good team players, but

### **Characteristics of Good Team Building**

- High level of interdependence among team members
- Team leader has good people skills and is committed to team approach
- Each team member is willing to contribute
- Team develops a relaxed climate for communication
- Team members develop a mutual trust
- Team and individuals are prepared to take risks
- Team is clear about goals and establishes targets
- Team member roles are defined
- Team members know how to examine team and individual errors without personal attacks
- Team has capacity to create new ideas
- Each team member knows he can influence the team agenda

they also work to build team spirit in their community and encourage and help others to engage teamwork.

The essential elements of teamwork are in many ways the essential elements of compassionate leadership. Below is a list of these elements:

- Building Trust
- Mastering Conflict
- Achieving Commitment
- Communicating with clarity
- Embracing Accountability
- Focusing on Results

### ***Building Trust***

Trust is the foundation of teamwork. Trust is derived from several factors: good will, consistency, honesty, transparency, sharing of information, reliability, character, confidence, and competence.

Trust is not simply the ability to predict the behavior of others and have hope in their capacity to meet expectations. It also involves the ability to open up and admit limitations and vulnerabilities in front of teammates. Admitting limitations is essential for a person to be able to depend on others.

To achieve quick openness in newly formed teams, a technique known as “ice breaker” may be used in the very first session the new team meets. An ice breaker is designed to create familiarity, comfort, and trust among a group of people who have not worked together in the past and to encourage them to open

#### **Team Leader Responsibilities**

- Regularly communicate progress and problems with the organization/community
- Periodically assess team progress, outlook of members, and how each members view his or her contribution
- Make sure that everyone contributes and everyone’s voice is heard
- Do a share of the work
- Resist the urge to act like a boss

up to one another in a short time. Ice breaker is very useful in the following situations:

- Participants come from a diverse backgrounds;
- The team is recently formed and need to bond quickly to start its assigned mission,
- You are the team leader and you need to know participants and have them know you better.

Ice breakers are meant to make people more comfortable with one another, and more trusting of each others. When designing an ice breaker make sure that this end is the intended outcome of the exercise. Examples of ice breakers are provided in the exercise section at the end of this chapter.

Ice breakers and similar techniques are useful in helping team members open up to one another, and in putting them on a path to building trust, but they do not work if some of the team members are not trustworthy. Technical skills are not intended to, and indeed can never, substitute for moral clarity and commitment.

### *Communicate with Clarity*

Communicating purposes, values, and relevant information is vital for maintaining team spirit. Failing to communicate purposes and values would invariably lead into confusion and lack of direction. Failure to keep all team members informed about decisions and happenings, even if it does not directly relate to their individual tasks, lead some to develop a sense of isolation from, and possibly resentment of, other team members.

All communication aim at creating understanding, but understanding does not mean accepting. Team members should always feel that it is okay to disagree, but they must then embrace the

#### **Team Member Responsibilities**

- Complete all assigned tasks on time.
- Communicate dissatisfaction and concerns with leaders and others.
- Support the leader and other members.
- Help others when they need help, and ask for help when you need it.

principle of commitment to the overall mission even when they disagree with individual decisions along the way. That is, disagreement must immediately disappear whenever a decision is taken, and all must be willing to commit to its implementation.

Active listening is key for understanding, and team members should make sure that they understood the intended meaning of their teammates by restating their personal understanding of the meaning expressed by other team members. This will give their interlocutors the opportunity to confirm that their meanings have been correctly understood, or clarify any aspects of the communicated meaning that they believe it was misunderstood.

### *Mastering Conflict*

Direct and unfiltered dialogue that pushes team members from their comfort zone is essential for effective teamwork. Team members should always welcome frank and honest disagreements, and be willing to express their disagreements in these meetings.

Productive meetings allow people to engage in honest debate and open sharing of views and perspectives. Team members must realize that disagreeing is okay, and that bringing disagreements to the open is the best way to create real harmony.

To keep conflict under control and make sure that it is constructive, team members should avoid making the conflict personal. Differences should always be over ideas and methods, and never over intentions and personalities. At any point the disagreement is turned into a mean-spirited personal attacks and name calling, the team leader must immediately inform whoever is engaged in such an attack that his or her comments are out of order and must be instantly stopped and withdrawn.

Teams, particularly those involved in decision making, must welcome a contrarian in their midst. A contrarian is a person who often takes an opposite position and disagrees with the main motion. The contrarian is invaluable, as he or she helps the team to think out of the box, and therefore prevent the formation of a like-minded group, a situation known as group think. When a contrarian is not available to join the group, the leader should assign a member to challenge ideas and assumptions.

### *Achieving Commitment*

Every member of the team must be completely committed to their team goals, and their commitment must be clearly expressed.

To ensure that the expressed commitment is real, team leaders must make sure that there is a reasonable alignment between values and interests of individual members of the group and that of their organization and community. That is, the leadership must ensure that individual's self-interest promoted in the context of advancing the organization interest.

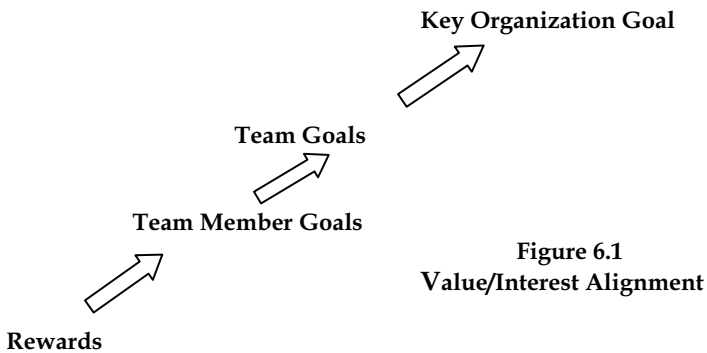


Figure 6.1  
Value/Interest Alignment

Commitment can be greatly enhanced through delegating responsibilities and empowering members by giving them the authority and resources needed to complete their tasks.

A reward and promotion system that recognizes achievements and rewards contribution goes a long way toward making team members feel that they are appreciated and strengthening their commitment to the successful completion of the project they are assigned to.

### *Embracing Accountability*

Team members should have a healthy sense of mutual accountability. Each of them, including the leader, is accountable to the others, as the ability of every teammate is crucial for the overall success of the mission.

Compassionate leaders should establish clear and timely measures of success, and holding individual members account-

able for the mission success. In a similar fashion, the leader should be held accountable by the rest of the team members.

To enhance mutual accountability, a team charter that spells out goals and procedures for making decisions should be the first step in forming teams. Team charter is a concise written document that contains some or all of the following:

- Name of the sponsor organization or community
- Team goals and their relationship to the sponsor goals
- Concise description of the project deliverables
- Team authority and decision-making procedures
- Project Schedule Expected time frame for the work
- Budget allocation and resource available to team

#### **Team Charter Outline**

- Name of the sponsor organization or community
- Team goals and their relationship to the sponsor goals
- Concise description of the project deliverables
- Team authority and decision-making procedures
- Project Schedule Expected time frame for the work
- Budget allocation and resource available to team

Decision making procedure should be identified. The team may adopt one of the following modules, or a combination of them.

**Majority rule** – after debating an issue, a vote is taken and those with a simple majority decide.

**Consensus** – requires that a decision is arrived at only after all members agree to specific proposal. If a member continues to object the proposal, it must be rejected.

**Small group decide** – this is important when the team has a large membership and the decision requires an in-depth examination. The overall group tasks a

smaller one with the responsibility of examining the issue and making a decision.

**Leader decides with input** –is such case, everyone agree to follow the leader's decision, who listen to various views and them make decision.

### **Skill Assessment and Development**

Accountability involves the need to ensure that the team is in it full strength and readiness to complete its mission. Team members must periodically assess their skills and be willing to develop their attitude and skills to be able to meet their mandate.

Skill assessment involves four areas:

*Technical skills:* Knowledge and experience in a specialized area of activities, such as knowledge of hotel industry group rates and procedures.

*Problem-solving skills:* Ability to analyze complex situations and come up with appropriate solutions.

*Interpersonal skills:* Ability to work effectively with others.

*Organizational skills:* Experience with decision-making, planning, etc.

### **Focusing on Results**

Focusing on results means that the team should devote time and energy to achieving the goal it sets out to achieve. Activities that do not contribute to achieving the goal should not be undertaken. Individual members of the team must have clarity of overall team mission.

Focusing on results and developing the collective discipline to work in harmony is the subject of the next chapter.



### Summary

- A team may be defined as a group of people who enjoy mutual trust and support, and share the reward and responsibility for achieving a common goal. Teamwork refers to the attitude and working relations among a group of people who are entrusted with achieving a set of goals.
- The essential elements of teamwork are in many ways the essential elements of compassionate leadership. Below is a list of these elements:
  - Building Trust
  - Mastering Conflict
  - Achieving Commitment
  - Communicating with clarity
  - Embracing Accountability
  - Focusing on Results
- Compassionate leaders should establish clear and timely measures of success, and holding individual members accountable for the mission success. In a similar fashion, the leader should be held accountable by the rest of the team members.
- Team members must realize that disagreeing is okay, and that brining disagreements to the open is the best way to create real harmony.

### Questions and Exercises

There are many varieties of ice breakers that are used to achieve different goals. Below is a selection of popular ice breakers exercises.

- **Guess the False Fact:** The facilitator asks each group member to introduce himself or herself and make several statements about themselves, including one that is false. Another member will then be asked to guess the false fact. Alternatively, the rest of the group may be asked to vote on which fact is false.
- **Little Known Fact:** The group members are asked by a facilitator to share their name, expertise, affiliation, family status, and an additional fact that very few people know about themselves. The "little known facts" shared by the groups open up the individuals to one another and help create a little bond among group members and break down "cultural" and status differences for future interaction.
- **Introduce Partner:** Divide participants into groups of two. Then each person interviews his or her partner for a set time while paired up. When the group reconvenes, each person introduces their group partner.
- **Name Catcher:** The facilitator begins with a ball. Pass the ball to a participant and have him or her introduce his or her name and role in the organization. Once this person has made their introduction, he or she should pass the ball on to another person in the group. The person handing over the ball must describe how he or she relates to the other person. The process continues until everyone is introduced.

## Attain Excellence by Managing Details

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### Chapter Topics

- The Nexus between excellence and attention to details
- Key terms and definitions
- Project management defined
- The processes of project management
- Project initiation and authorization
- Zooming in on project planning
- Task listing, sequencing, and scheduling techniques
- Project execution, monitoring and control
- Project closure

### Learning Objectives

- Examine the connection between morality and efficiency
- Distinguish between operations and projects
- Understand the process of managing projects
- Learn scheduling techniques
- Learn how to assign responsibilities, develop quality control, risk response, and communication plans

Literature on leadership often contrasts the temperaments and skills of leaders and managers. In many ways the distinction is relevant. Leaders who are charged with the overall responsibilities of large organizations need not be themselves experienced managers as they can always rely on the assistance and support of individuals with good managerial skills. This is not true, however, for leaders of small and medium size communities.

In many small and mid-size communities, leaders must have, or work on developing, good managerial skills. They must pay attention to details, and must nurture the culture of excellence and develop the capacity for successful design and execution of events and projects. This assertion is in many ways intuitive and obvious, yet management of events and projects continues to be a challenge in many Islamic centers. The problem arises when either community leaders do not see the importance of good organization to community growth and prosperity, or fail to develop the necessary skills, both in them and around them, to manage the community assets and affairs effectively.

Still, regardless of whether a person is charged with leading a big or small organization, a good leader will need to have a general understanding of the managerial process to make sure that his or her organization is run in accordance with the best managerial practices. This chapter aims at providing an overview of the project management process and of the most effective techniques available to using available human and financial resources to effectively advance the mission of the organization and achieve its goals.

### **Excellence and Attention to Details**

Paying attention to details is often overlooked when moral and religious values are discussed. The Qur'an, however, places a great emphasis on detailed measures as being essential for the wellbeing of humanity and the overall creation in general.

“Verily, all things have we created in proportion and measure. And Our Command is but a single (Act), like the twinkling of an eye. (Qamar 54:49-50)

Everything is created in accordance with a clear measure and everything is created pursuant to a detailed plan.

“And everything we have accounted for in a book.” (Naba’ 78:29)

Divine planning and calculation is so thorough that every dispensation and movement is done in accordance with a grant plan.

“There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on God: He knows the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit: all is in a clear Book” (Hud 11:6)

The Qur’an uses the term “book” to signify both the book of revelation and the book of creation. The book of revelation prescribes directions for human behavior, while the book of creation prescribes directions for the natural order. In both worlds, the human and the natural, directions are decided by criteria and principles that guide human freedom and govern natural necessity.

Divine planning, while thorough, is nonetheless flexible and accommodates variations.

“We did send Messengers before you, and granted them wives and children: and it was never the part of a Messenger to bring a Sign except as God permitted (or commanded). For each deadline is a Book. God does blot out or confirm as He wills: with Him is the Mother of the Book.” (Ra’id 13:38-9)

In the above *ayahs*, we see the conversion of the two worlds. God brings to existence his signs (*ayahs*), or removes them in accordance with precise measures. What is being prescribed

and planned (recorded in a book) can be changed in accordance with a set of immutable laws (the Mother of the Book).

The Prophet, God's blessing and mercy with him, drew a direct link between the value of *ihsan* (moral excellence) on the one hand, and giving attention to details and being meticulous in work on the other.

"God has ordained excellence in everything, including in the slaughtering of animals. So when you slaughter do it with excellence. You should sharpen your knife and relieve the slaughtered animals."

Excellence here is linked to paying attention to details, including sharpening the knife before slaughtering the animal. The term *ihsan*, which bridges the concepts of morality and excellence, is used here to underscore the need to take every tiny element of an action into account. The animal will be killed anyway, but the believer is being asked to ensure that he or she pay attention to how the actual killing of an animal is done so as to take extra measures (sharpening of the knife) to avoid cruelty.

The emphasis on paying attention to details has also been underscored by the Prophet by using the concept of "meticulousness" or *itqan*.

"God loves it when one of you does a work that he does it with complete precision."

The need to perfect the operational aspects of the moral elements of social life can also be realized when one recognizes that the ability to serve the community well is not independent from the ability to use the available resources efficiently.

### **Project Management Defined**

The first step in defining the project management process is to appreciate the difference between projects and operations. An *operation* is a set of routine activities performed by an organization to sustain its activities and promote its programs and ser-

vices. Operational tasks tend to be predictable and repetitive, and are required to keep the community and organization functioning. Operations include maintaining financial records, providing a hotline to respond to questions, holding Friday prayers, maintaining the organization offices, responding to communication, etc.

A project is, on the other hand, a set of planned activities for achieving a unique product, service, or result. Development and execution of an advocacy campaign is a good example of a project. So is the organization of events in an Islamic center, including planning an interfaith dialogue event, building a new home for a needy family, or organizing an educational conference.

*Projects* are set apart from operations by two distinguishing components: duration and nature.

Projects are temporary and every project has a definitive beginning and a definitive end, and projects are unique, dealing with activities, participants, communities, or services that have not been previously encountered or produced. For this reason, projects involve a degree of uncertainty and run higher risks.

At the heart of managing a set of time-sensitive tasks effectively is the ability to organize them as a process, i.e. as a series of interrelated actions that bring a desired outcome. Systematizing the execution of the tasks and the creation of a process is important in that it contributes to improving the quality of the project and bringing consistency to the efforts that aim at achieving the planned outcome.

### **What is project management?**

- The utilization of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to plan and execute a set of activities.
- Project management helps organize project activities into a set of organizational structures and processes.
- Project management emphasizes:
  - The efficient use of human and financial resources
  - The involvement of stakeholders in planning.
  - Identification of requirements through needs assessment
  - Quality control
  - Employing iterative process

*Project management* may be defined as the utilization of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to plan and execute a set of activities. Project management helps organize project activities into a set of organizational structures and processes. It emphasizes a number of factors including (1) the efficient use of human and financial resources, (2) the involvement of stakeholders in planning, (3) identification of requirements through needs assessment, (4) quality control, and (5) the employment of iterative process.

The iterative aspect of project management refers to a wide range of techniques that use successive approximations to improve the process and obtain more accurate solutions. This represents the capacity to learn from mistakes and experiences and to ensure that the process is as perfect as humanly possible.

### **Project Management Process**

The project management process consists of five interrelated phases.

1. **Initiating:** Aims at authorizing and defining the scope of a new project.
2. **Planning:** Aims at elaborating the project scope, developing the project management plan, and identifying and scheduling the project activities within the project.
3. **Executing:** Aims at implementing the project management plan and realization of the objectives defined in the scope statement.
4. **Monitoring and controlling:** Aims at monitoring implementation, controlling the quality of execution, and taking corrective actions when necessary.
5. **Closing:** Aims at finalizing all activities across all of the project process groups to formally close the project or phase.

Project management consists of sets of processes that aim at the systematization of project design and implementation by developing procedures, check lists, templates, schedules, and plans. The systematization of planning and execution activities



also allows for improving the management process through reiteration. Reiteration results in modifying the processes and adding missing elements to ensure that the next time around a similar is undertaken, that limitations and flaws that were experienced in previous projects are overcome. Reiteration is about learning from previous mistakes and incorporating previous experiences into future projects (see figure 1).

Although every project is unique, the processes of project management are not. They can be applied to different project, and any improvement in these processes, therefore, impact the other projects positively.

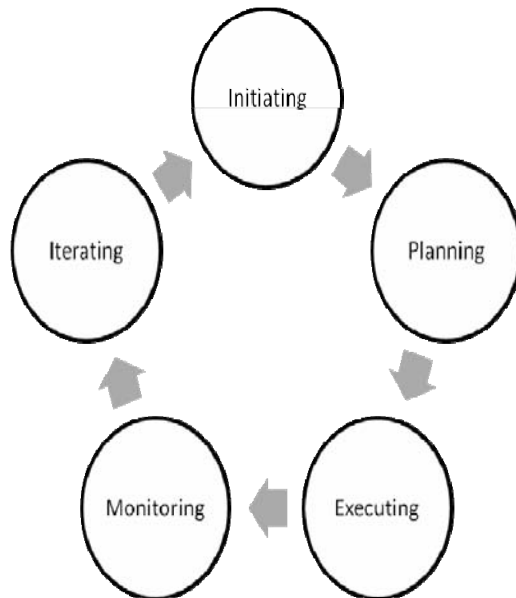


Figure 7.1

Let us now review how the above phases and steps add to raising the efficiency of project design and implementation.

### Project Initiation

Project initiation is performed to acquire authorization for a new project and define its scope. During this phase, the proponents of the project describe the project's purpose and define its outcomes. They answer the question, "How does this project help our organization achieve its strategic goals?" The answers to these questions and the concept of the proposed services (or products) are usually provided in two documents known as the concept paper and the Scope Statement. The concept paper, which gradually matures to become the scope statement, is developed through a process that involves discussions and brainstorming by stakeholders. The process consists of the following steps:

1. Stating the basic idea in clear and succinct terms.
2. Identify stakeholders, i.e. all individuals whose actions and decisions influence the performance of the organization. These include directors, officers, members of partner organizations, recipients of services, and others.
3. Hold brainstorming sessions with stakeholders and persons with expertise in the project to refine the concept.
4. Create a context diagram identifying human and financial resources, services, beneficiaries, main players, etc.
5. Draft the scope statement and project overview.
6. Prepare the end of stage proposal.
7. Hold formal meetings to decide on the idea

#### Concept Formation Process

- Write down the idea
- Identify stakeholders
- Hold brainstorming sessions to refine the concept
- Create a context diagram
- Draft the scope statement and project overview.
- Prepare the end of stage proposal
- Hold formal meetings to decide on the idea

The Scope Statement should provide enough details, including purpose, deliverables, timeline, and budget to enable individuals involved in decision-making to either authorize the project or a turn it down (Figure 7.1).

## Project Scope Statement

### I. General Information

Project name: \_\_\_\_\_ Project Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Project Overview:** Describe the product or service of the project, the reason the project was undertaken and the purpose of the project.

**III. Project Objectives:** Describe the project's objectives using the SMART formula.

**IV. Project Deliverables:** Deliverables are specific, measurable, and verifiable outcomes.

**V. Comprehensive List of Project Requirements:** Requirements are the specifications of the deliverables

**VI. Exclusions from Scope:** List all deliverables or requirements that are not part of the project

**VII. Time and Cost Estimates:** Are initial estimates of time and resources.

**VIII. Role and Responsibilities:** Include a roles-and-responsibilities chart, detailing project responsibilities

**IX. Assumptions:** List all project assumptions

**X. Signatures:** Include signature lines for the project sponsor, manager, and key stakeholders

Figure 7.1

## **Project Planning**

As soon as the project is approved, detailed plans must be prepared. Planning is at the center of project management and consists of a number of processes. These processes define the project scope, time, and cost. They answer the question, "who is doing what and when?" Typically, planning involves the following processes:

- Developing a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)
- Creating a Project Schedule
- Elaborating Responsibilities and Assignments Matrix
- Developing a Risk Response Plan
- Creating a Quality Control Plan, including orientation and training plan whenever needed.
- Developing a budget and a cash flow chart.

## **Work Breakdown Structure**

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) refers to a method of dividing a project into deliverables, tasks, and milestones.

- Deliverables are tangible outcomes produced by the project.
- Tasks are actions necessary for realizing the project deliverables.
- A milestone is reached when a key task is completed.

A task is an assigned action that has a specific duration. A task must be assigned to either a single person or a team. It is important that all tasks are identified prior to developing the project schedule and that only tasks that relate to the project at hand are identified. The various tasks are organized for easy review in either a tree chart format or outline format.

**WBS Chart** is a tree chart that provides an overview of all tasks in a particular project. The chart provides a visual presentation that helps organize the various tasks into groups of deliverables and activities. The second level of the tree chart displays some of the deliverables (figure 7.1).

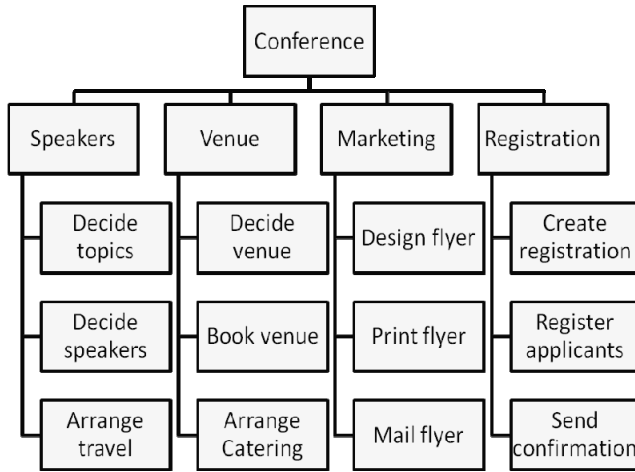


Figure 7.2

To illustrate how the WBS chart is constructed, let us take the example of organizing a conference (figure 7.2). The WBS chart in this example consists of three levels. The “Conference,” the main event of the project, represents level 1, while level two consists of the four main deliverables of the project “speakers,” “venue,” “marketing,” and “registration.” The rest of the tasks belong to level 3. It is not advisable to break the project down beyond four levels, as this could make the schedule complicated and cumbersome. For very large projects, a good planning approach would be to divide the project into subprojects and develop separate WBS charts for each.

**WBS Outline** is another representation method some managers prefer over tree chart. In this case, primary and secondary numbers are used to distinguish deliverables and action tasks, as shown below:

1. Speakers
  - 1.1. Decide topics
  - 1.2. Decide speakers
  - 1.3. Arrange travel
2. Venue
  - 2.1. Decide venue
  - 2.2. Book venue

- 2.3. Arrange Catering
- 3. Marketing
  - 3.1. Decide flyer
  - 3.2. Print flyer
  - 3.3. Mail flyer
- 4. Registration
  - 4.1. Create registration
  - 4.2. Register applicants
  - 4.3. Send confirmation

Although project managers can single-handedly develop the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), they should get in the implementation team involved in the process to ensure that no significant task is left out of the WBS chart or outline. Organizing brainstorming sessions is probably the best approach to develop a thorough WBS in a short time.

### **Precedence Diagram and the Critical Path**

Sequencing the project's tasks and creating a precedence diagram (also known as the network diagram) is the next step in the planning process. The purpose is to arrange the tasks along a timeline. The Sticky Note Method is a simple and effective way to do the sequencing in small to medium size project. Task names are written on sticky notes and arranged on a paper board in the sequence of their implementation. Tasks whose implementation is contingent on the completion of other tasks are placed down the line, while tasks that are independent can be sequenced on a parallel line (see figure 7.3). The numbers given below the task names indicate the number of days needed to complete the tasks.

Deciding the sequencing of tasks is essential not only for developing a good schedule, but also for deciding the critical path of the project. Any delay in any of the tasks that lies in the critical path would lead to delaying the whole project. In the conference example, delaying "flyer design," for instance, by a single day results in delaying the entire project by the same amount, while delays in tasks that are not located on the critical path does not necessarily result in overall delay, unless the delay exceeds the number of floating days.

The number of floating days can be calculated by subtracting the total number of days needed for completing the tasks on the critical path from the number of days needed to complete the tasks on parallel paths. In the example presented in figure 7.3, the floating time for “deciding speakers,” for instance, is 3 days. The 3 days are obtained by subtracting the total number of days in the two possible paths between the tasks “Decide topics” and “Design flyer”:  $[(5+2+5) - (5+2)]$ . This means that a delay of up to 3 days in deciding the speakers would not have a negative impact on the subsequent event. Only when the delay exceeds 3 days, the number of floating days, the overall period will be negatively impacted. Similarly, a delay of up to 11 days in setting the registration would not lead to any negative impact on subsequent tasks.

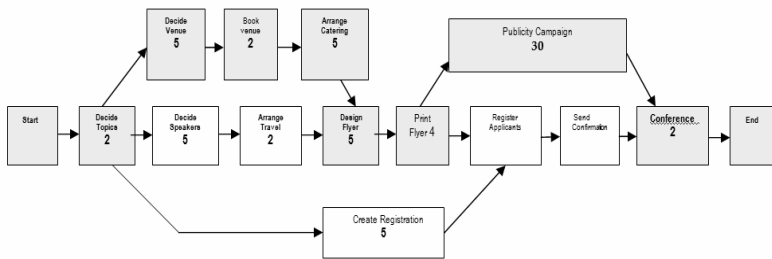


Figure 7.3

Most projects undertaken by small or mid-size organizations can be calculated manually. For large projects, Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) should be used. Several computer applications are available to facilitate the development of a precedence diagram, including the PERT Chart Expert ([www.criticaltools.com](http://www.criticaltools.com)) and Minute Man ([www.minuteman-systems.com](http://www.minuteman-systems.com)).

### Project Schedule

As soon as the BWS and the sequencing charts are completed, the schedule can now be constructed. The schedule is a representa-

tion of the various tasks in relation to the time of their implementation.

The project schedule is commonly presented in a bar chart, whereby the project's tasks are listed vertically in a table format, and the time of implementation is presented by horizontal bars that expand to correspond with the days, weeks, or months of their implementation. The project schedule is an excellent tool for tracking progress and communicating among persons involved in implementation. Many organizations use computer applications to create the project schedule. Figure 7.4 shows a print out of a bar chart presentation (Gantt Chart), using an open source software known as the DotProject.net. Other softwares are available including the widely used Microsoft Project.

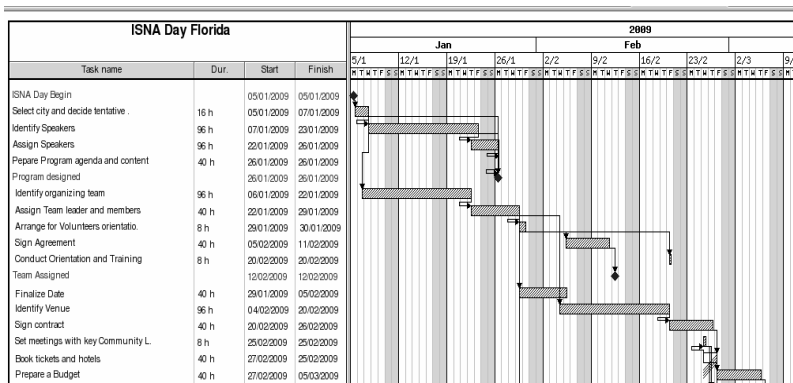


Figure 7.4

Developing a schedule is crucial for ensuring that the project will be completed on time and that sufficient time is allocated to the different tasks that comprise the entire project. Ensuring smooth cooperation among the implementation team and other stakeholders, and maintaining high quality of service, requires the development of four additional documents and plans:

- Roles and Responsibilities Matrix
- Communication Plan
- Quality Control Plan
- Risk Response Plan
- Budget and Cash Flow Schedule



**Roles and Responsibilities Matrix**

Roles and Responsibilities Matrix helps all the parties involved in the project understand what aspects of the design and implementation they are responsible for.

<b>Roles and Responsibilities Matrix</b>		
Project Name: IC Conference		Project Number: 12052008
Project Manager: Sami Jabir		Date: 12/17/2008
<i>Roles</i>	<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<p><b>Local Sponsors of the conference</b></p> <p>(The officials representing the local community where the conference is held.)</p>	Ahmed, Omar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicize the conference in local and nearby communities</li> <li>• Provide a suitable venue for the conference</li> <li>• Organize the registration and provide ILDC with registration record</li> <li>• Help with audio-visual equipment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project Manager</b></p> <p>(Person responsible for running the project on a day-to-day basis within defined authorities for cost and schedule as agreed with the Project Sponsor/ Board)</p>	Sami Jabir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and scheduling of the program</li> <li>• Overseeing successful implementation</li> <li>• Ensure the overall coordination between sponsors and staff</li> <li>• Ensure timeliness and quality</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project Team Members</b></p> <p>(Staff who will be working on the Project)</p>	Salma, Sahar, and Adam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide copies of the training agenda</li> <li>• Prepare flyers and/or posters for publicity</li> <li>• Contact speakers and book their flights and hotels</li> </ul>

Table 7.1

### Communications Plan

Communication among people involved in a project is crucial to its success, and communication plan is a useful tool to maintaining good communication. If a project involves many actors or stakeholders, or if there might be political conflict about it, prepare a communications plan. List each stakeholder, and write down how often you will talk to each one, what you will say, what you will ask, and what you will do with the information you get.

<i>Communications Plan</i>				
<i>Project Name: IC Conference</i>		<i>Project Number: 12052008</i>		
<i>Project Manager: Sami Jabir</i>		<i>Date: 12/17/2008</i>		
Information	Recipients	Medium	Date	Responsibility
Conference Proposal	Steering committee	Letter	10/2/2009	Saeed
Invitation letter	Speakers	Letter	25/2/2009	Salma
Program draft	Implementation team	Email	3/3/2009	Saeed
Approval of Schedule	Steering committee and implementation team	Conference call	3/15/2009	Sahar

*\*partial list*

Table 7.2

### Quality Control Plan

Quality control plan aims at ensuring that the project is implemented in pursuant with the highest standards. Community members who place a high premium on punctuality, efficiency,

harmony, excellence, and other values expect these values to be respected when an event or project is planned.

Even when the expectations are not so high, community leaders might want to raise performance by allowing community members to experience the uplifting effects of a well planned and executed program.

<b>Quality Control Plan</b>		
Project Name: IC Conference		Project Number: 12052008
Project Manager: Sami Jabir		Date: 12/17/2008
<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Quality Criteria</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationally recognized</li> <li>• Schooled or experienced in the topic</li> <li>• Sign the agreement</li> </ul>	Salma
Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central location accessible to all communities</li> <li>• Main lecture hall to accommodate 70 persons</li> <li>• 4 break up rooms to accommodate 15 person</li> </ul>	Saeed
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise in one major local paper</li> <li>• Prepare flyer 60 days before event</li> <li>• Involve publicity team</li> </ul>	Sahar
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only pre-registered persons will be allowed</li> <li>• All participant to fill need assessment survey</li> <li>• Confirmation message</li> </ul>	Sahar

\*Partial list

Table 7.3

A Quality control plan should also include an Orientation and Training Plan whenever needed. Every stakeholder who is asked to participate in the project work must be thoroughly briefed on the various aspects of the project, particularly on his or her individual responsibilities. Those who have no previous experience must be given proper training to be able to do the job at the expected level of performance.

### Risk Response Plan

Risk response plan is important to anticipate problems and issues that could undermine the event or the project, and to prepare contingencies that address the identified risks. The plan involves an assessment of issues that might arise during implementation along with a recovery strategy and possible remedies.

<b>Risk Response Plan</b>				
Project Name: IC Conference		Project Number: 12052008		
Project Manager: Sami Jabir		Date: 12/17/2008		
<b>Risk</b>	<b>Prob-ability</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Adverse weather	low	high	In the event of rain, the open meeting will be moved indoor to the nearby Cordoba Hall	Saeed
Flight Delay	low	high	A panel of speakers of the morning session will be invited to discuss the topic in the event the keynote speakers are delayed.	Salma

Table 7.8

**Project Execution and Monitoring**

Implementing the project plans and executing tasks according to the schedule requires communication, monitoring, and control. During implementation, the project manager issues regular Status Reports. The Status Reports are sent to all stakeholders to keep them informed and to ensure that all are on the same page. Whenever necessary, Change Requests are issued to get authorization from sponsors and to alert all involved in the project of the changes.

Monitoring the project execution by the project manager is crucial so that corrective measures can be taken when necessary to control the execution of the phase or project.

**Cash Flow Management**

One important outcome of using project management techniques is a better control over cash flow through the use of cash flow estimates and schedule.

Project schedule provides a high level of predictability of cash inflows and outflows, thereby allowing the development of cash flow schedule. This is done today with relative ease as most computer applications used to develop Gantt chart incorporate cost and income estimates, making the development of a cash flow schedule a relatively simple process (figure 7.5)

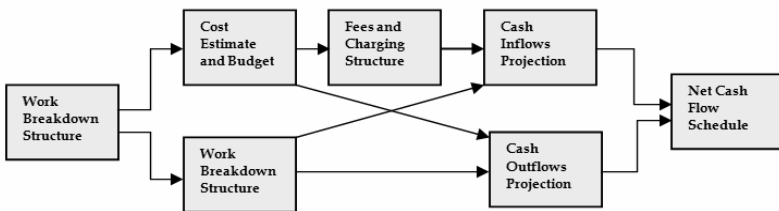


Figure 7.5

Cash flow estimates can be used to forecast the cash flow situation in the organization, thereby allowing the organization leadership to prepare for the period when the net cash flow is negative. In the example below, the cash flow forecast for the

small budget training organization (see Table 7.8) shows that the net cash flow will be in the red (negative cash flow) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. It also shows that the organization will recover by the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter and will achieve a positive cash balance.

Although cash flow forecast is an estimate that may not correspond to actual situation, it is very useful tool to predicate cash flow situation. The predication can be improved by observing historical patterns of pervious-years cash flow.

Cash Flow Schedule	2008			
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<b>Fees</b>	\$15,000	\$8,000	\$2000	\$20,000
<b>Investment</b>	\$2000	\$2,000	\$2000	\$3,000
<b>Book Sale</b>	\$500	\$1,000	\$200	\$1800
<b>Sponsorship</b>	\$1500	\$2,000	\$0	\$5,000
<b>Cash Inflows</b>	<b>\$19,000</b>	<b>\$13,000</b>	<b>\$4,200</b>	<b>\$29,800</b>
<b>Payroll</b>	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>Advertisement</b>	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$500	\$800
<b>Bills</b>	\$1,200	\$800	\$1000	\$1250
<b>Rent</b>	\$800	\$800	\$800	\$800
<b>Cash Outflows</b>	<b>\$13,000</b>	<b>\$14,600</b>	<b>\$12,300</b>	<b>\$12,850</b>
<b>Net Cash Flow</b>	<b>\$6000</b>	<b>(\$1000)</b>	<b>(\$8,100)</b>	<b>(\$6,950)</b>
<b>Cash Balance</b>	\$6000	\$5000	(\$3,100)	\$3,850

Table 7.9

### Project Closing

Closing finalizes all activities across all of the project process groups to formally close the project or phase. The closing process focuses on reviewing performances and lessons learned, usually in the form of a project retrospective meeting. A final report is produced and circulated to summarize sessions and document main conclusions and outcomes.

**Essential Project  
Management Documents**

- Scope Statement
- Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)
- Project Schedule and Critical Path (Gantt Chart)
- Roles and Responsibilities Matrix
- Quality Control Plan
- Communications Plan
- Risk Response Plan
- Budget and Cash Flow
- Status Report
- Change Request
- Final Report

### Summary

- Regardless of whether a person is charged with leading a big or small organization, a good leader will need to have a general understanding of the managerial process to make sure that his or her organization is run in accordance with the best managerial practices.
- Project management emphasizes a number of factors including (1) the efficient use of human and financial resources, (2) the involvement of stakeholders in planning, (3) identification of requirements through needs assessment, (4) quality control, and (5) the employment of iterative process.
- Project management consists of sets of processes that aim at the systematization of project design and implementation by developing procedures, check lists, templates, schedules, and plans. The systematization of planning and execution activities also allows for improving the management process through reiteration. Reiteration results in modifying the processes and adding missing elements to ensure that the next time around a similar is undertaken, that limitations and flaws that were experienced in previous projects are overcome.
- The project management process consists of five interrelated phases including: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing.
- Planning is at the center of the project management and consists of a number of processes that define the project scope, time, and cost. They answer the question, "who is doing what and when?"
- Developing a schedule is crucial for ensuring that the project will be completed on time and that sufficient time is allocated to the different tasks that comprise the entire project.
- Ensuring smooth cooperation among the implementation team and other stakeholders, and maintaining the quality



of service, requires the development of four additional documents and plans:

- Roles and Responsibilities Matrix
- Communication Plan
- Quality Control Plan
- Risk Response Plan
- Cash Flow Schedule



## Part II - Resources for Community Leaders

8. An Ethical Pledge for Muslim Community Leaders
9. Model Bylaws for Islamic Centers
10. Guidelines for Best Practices of Islamic Centers
11. Parliamentary Procedure
12. Arbitration Panels and Grievance Procedures
13. Interfaith Dialogue



## An Ethical Pledge for Community Leaders

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*This ethical pledge in particular is intended for people working full time in Islamic centers, and are entrusted in serving the community. Board and committee members, imams, youth director, interfaith coordinator, and others should be asked to read the auth and sign to it. The auth serves as a promise made by the Islamic center leaders and staff to conduct themselves in accordance with Islamic values and principles, to continue Islamic education, to engage people of other faiths, and to keep confidentiality.*

I pledge to serve God in accordance with sound Islamic principles: compassion, service to humanity, sincere advice, equity, respect for human dignity, and justice; I will obey the Islamic teachings, love the Compassionate God with all my heart and soul, and serve the people who seek my help, counsel, and advice with compassion, sincerity, and integrity.

To affirm this commitment, I will abide by the Code of Ethics for Muslim leaders by faithfully supporting its principles and purposes. As further affirmation of my commitment, I pledge to hold myself and my fellow Muslims accountable for all public actions set forth in this Code of Ethics.

### **Competency and Learning**

- I recognize that I have a responsibility to read, understand, and follow the Standards and Code of Ethics outlined herein, and consider them as an important step to relate Islamic teachings to leadership responsibilities.
- I look to the Qur'an, the Prophetic model, authentic traditions, and established scholarly opinions to promote spirituality, goodness, compassion and justice. I will do my best to relate Islamic values and teaching to daily events.
- I am committed to continue my Islamic education to be better equipped to serve people and perform my duties. I will maintain high standards of educational and professional competence, and will actively strive to develop my knowledge and skills as a Muslim leader.
- I recognize the boundaries of my competence, and will refer questions and matters that fall outside my religious and office competency to others. I will seek the advice of competent scholars and experts in matters that have implications to the larger Muslim American Community

### **Personal Integrity, Development, and Trust**

- I will actively pursue my Islamic faith development and enrichment. I will seek not only personal integrity but also an integration of faith, work, and lifestyle.
- I will maintain self-discipline as a Muslim in such ways as establishing regular prayer and required worship obligations, endeavoring to maintain wholesome family relationships, and engaging in educational and recrea-

tional activities that promote professional and personal development. I will seek to maintain good health habits.

- I will hold in trust Islamic traditions and practices, and pledge to not exploit my authority and position to advance my own interests at others' expense.
- I will show personal love for, and fear of, God in my life and work, as I strive together with my colleagues to preserve the dignity, maintain the discipline, and promote the integrity of the office I assume and the mission assigned to me by my community.
- I recognize the special power afforded me as a leader and board member. I will never use that power in ways that violate the personhood of another human being, religiously, emotionally or sexually. I will use my office only for that which is best for the persons in my care.

### **General Attitude and Relationships**

- I understand as a Muslim leader in a multi-religious society that I must work with other leaders in my community and with the community members as a whole, to promote a fair and pluralistic environment.
- I will reach out to leaders and representatives of other faith traditions, and will work with them to promote better understanding of Islam, to identify common grounds, and to promote the common good.
- I will promote dialogue rather than monologue in my teaching and counsel, understanding that the nature of counsel and advice is interactive, done with people rather than to people. I will invite engagement with others in my care, rather than passive receptivity, by asking for and listening to feedback. I will seek to ensure equity of treatment and the well-being of those entrusted to my care.
- I will strive to understand and recognize the diverse cultural backgrounds of the people soliciting or receiving my counsel and advice. I will not condone or engage in discrimination based on age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, or socio-economic status.
- I recognize my Islamic obligation to refrain from any sexual relationship outside the institution of marriage, and will not engage in sexual intimacies with persons seeking my counsel and assistance. I will avoid situations that might lead to a sexual relationship or result in sexual harassment.

### **Confidential Counseling**

- I will hold in confidence any privileged communication received by me during the conduct of my services. I will not disclose confidential communications in private or in public.
- I will obtain permission from persons to whom I provide counsel before taking notes or electronically recording confidential information. I understand that I am responsible for securing the safety and confidentiality of any records I create, maintain, transfer, or destroy whether the records are written, taped, computerized, or stored in any other medium.

## Model Bylaws for Islamic Centers

*These bylaws are designed for Islamic Centers operating in North America. They must be adapted to fit into the specific situation of the Islamic center that intend adopt them. The bylaws are adapted from the bylaws of Islamic centers, including ISNA affiliates, All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) and Urbana-Champaign Islamic center.*

We, the Muslims of \_\_\_\_\_, have agreed to and have adopted the following constitution and do hereby establish an organization to be known as \_\_\_\_\_

### **ARTICLE I: PRINCIPAL OFFICE AND REGISTERED AGENT**

#### **Section 1.01 Name and Principal Offices**

The name of the corporation shall be \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter referred to as "the association"), a non-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_, and its principal offices shall be in the State of \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Section 1.02 Registered Agent**

The association shall have and continuously maintain a registered office in the State of \_\_\_\_\_ and the Board of Trustees of the association shall appoint and continuously maintain in service a registered agent in the State of \_\_\_\_\_, who shall be an individual resident of the State of \_\_\_\_\_.

### **ARTICLE II: PURPOSES**

The purposes for which the association is formed are to arrange and hold congregational prayers; undertake and engage in religious, charitable, educational and cultural activities; promote friendly relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and to foster a Muslim community based on Islamic principles of brotherhood, equality, mutual help and Islamic teachings of peace, love and justice.

The association shall be empowered to cooperate with other Islamic organizations in achieving these goals and engage in such other activities as may be desirable or required to fulfill its purposes and objectives.

The foregoing purposes of the association are made in furtherance, and not in limitation, of the powers conferred upon the association by law and is not intended, by the mention of any particular purpose, in any manner to limit or restrict any of the powers of the association, other than as provided below. The association is formed upon the articles, conditions and provisions relative to non-stock corporations which are contained in the general laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_. The association is organized and shall be operated exclusively for religious, educational and charitable purposes within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code.

No part of the net earnings or assets of the association shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to the members, Trustees, Officers, other private individuals, or organizations organized and operating for profit except that the

association shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services or to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes as hereinabove stated.

No substantial part of the activities of the association shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The association shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, the association shall not carry on any activities not permitted by law.

### **ARTICLE III: GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

#### **Section 3.01 Membership**

The membership of the association shall consist of "Regular Members", "Life Members", "Youth Members" and "Honorary Members". The General Assembly shall consist of "Regular Members" and "Life Members" only, who shall be eligible to vote for and hold any office(s) of the association.

#### **Section 3.02 Regular Members**

A Regular Member shall be a Muslim of at least eighteen (18) years of age, who files an application with the required dues, as may from time to time be set by the Board of Trustees, and agrees to abide by the Articles of Incorporation and the constitution of the association. All applications are subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. Each member shall be entitled to one vote in all matters coming before General Assembly meetings.

Persons granted regular membership in the Association shall remain regular members while they continue to maintain eligibility and current membership records, including payment of applicable membership dues. Any regular member may pay applicable membership dues in advance. No other dues shall be required for the purpose of enjoying membership privileges of the Association.

Regular members of the Association shall advance to voting membership two months after being granted regular membership and shall continue thereafter to be members of the Association while they remain regular members.

All voting members of the Association shall comprise its General Assembly which shall, in a manner consistent with this Constitution, fill all vacancies in the Association's Board of Directors and shall assemble at least once a year to review the association's affairs.

#### **SECTION 3.03 Youth Members**

Any person of at least 12 years of age who is otherwise eligible for regular membership in the Association but fails to satisfy the age requirement shall, upon completion of such application procedures as shall be established by the Association's Board of Directors, granted youth membership in the Association.

Persons granted youth membership in the Association shall remain youth members while they continue to maintain eligibility and current membership records, and they shall such rights and privileges within the Association as shall be determined by its Board Directors, consistent with this Constitution.



Youth members shall not advance to regular membership without completion normal application procedures for regular membership and payment of applicable dues.

**Section 3.04 Life Members**

A Life Member shall be a Muslim having qualifications under Section 3.02 above, who files an application with the required life-time dues, as may from time to time be set by the Board of Trustees, subject to the approval of application by the Board of Trustees.

Regular and Life Members shall be hereinafter referred to as Members.

**Section 3.05 Honorary Members**

Any person who is deemed to have rendered distinguished service to the Muslim community in general and service to the association in particular. Honorary Membership shall be an honor bestowed by the General Assembly of members at the recommendation of the Board of Trustees and shall not be by application.

**Section 3.06 Membership dues and Fees**

The membership dues of the association may be revised by the Board from time to time. Dues for family membership shall be less than double those for a single membership. A family membership is defined as husband and wife. An individual member shall have one vote; family members shall have a maximum of two votes. Children above the age of eighteen and living with the family can become individual voting members by paying dues at half the rate set for individual members. The Board may also authorize the remaining adults living with the family to become regular voting members by paying dues at a rate substantially lower than those for single members.

The annual dues shall become payable on the first day of each calendar year. At the time of first application, dues shall be reduced by fifty percent for membership applications submitted during the second half of the year. A payment for the appropriate amount must accompany the application. Honorary members shall not be required to pay any dues.

**Section 3.07 Expulsion of Members**

No member shall be expelled from the association or be otherwise deprived of the rights or privileges of membership without due process. Any person who is extended any right or privilege within THE CENER or who is granted access to any facility shall, as a condition of said right, privilege, or access, comply with all requirements of this Constitution and of any regulations, policies, or practices adopted by the association pursuant thereto.

**Section 3.08 Annual General Assembly Meeting**

The Annual General Assembly Meeting of the members shall be held once each year in the month of \_\_\_\_ between two to four weeks before the election. The purpose of the meeting shall be the introduction of candidates during the forthcoming election, for the transaction of other business as needed and for such other business as may come before the meeting. The Board of Trustees may postpone the Annual Meeting and the elections for a maximum period of thirty

days due to extenuating circumstances. There shall be an overlap period of at least four weeks between the outgoing Officers and Trustees and the newly elected Officers and Trustees. During this overlap period, the new and the outgoing officers and trustees shall jointly meet to go over any future planning or any outstanding business. The newly elected Officers and Trustees shall have no voting privileges during such meetings.

### **Section 3.09 Special Meetings**

Special meetings of the members may be called either by the Board of Trustees, or the Executive Committee. A special meeting may also be called by at least fifteen percent (15%) of the voting members of the full General Assembly through a petition to be filed with the Board of Trustees.

### **Section 3.10 Place of Meeting**

The Board of Trustees may from time to time designate any place, within a convenient distance, as the place of meeting for any annual meeting or for any special meeting of the Members.

### **Section 3.11 Notice of Annual and Special Meetings**

Written or printed notice stating the place, day, and hour of the meeting, and, in the case of a special meeting, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called, shall be delivered not less than fifteen (15) nor more than thirty (30) days before the date of the meeting, either personally or by mail. Additionally, the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee, may designate any person(s) to call and inform each Member, who is entitled to vote, for such meeting.

If mailed, such notice shall be deemed to be delivered when deposited in the United States mail, with postage prepaid, and addressed to the member at his address as it appears on the records of the association. Each Member shall be responsible for informing the association promptly of any change of his/her address.

### **Section 3.12 Waiver of Notice**

Whenever any notice is required to be given to any Member under any provision of law, the Articles of Incorporation or this constitution, a waiver thereof in writing signed by the Member entitled to such notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be the equivalent to the giving of such notice. The presence of any Member at a meeting, in person without objection to the lack of notice of such meeting, shall also waive the requirement of notice by such Member.

### **Section 3.13 Quorum**

At the annual or special meeting of the General Assembly, members having at least one tenth (10%) of the votes entitled to be cast, represented in person or by proxy shall constitute a quorum. If a meeting cannot be organized due to the lack of a quorum, those members present may adjourn the meeting once. If the quorum is not present in the second consecutive meeting, presence of at least \_\_\_\_\_ members shall constitute a quorum for that meeting at which time any business may be transacted that may have been transacted at the meeting as originally called.

To be represented by proxy, a Member must have submitted by fax, postal mail or hand-delivery, before the quorum is called, a signed proxy form issued by the Board of Trustees. A member may not represent more than three other members by proxy.

### **Section 3.14 Vote**

Each Member, who has been in good standing for at least sixty (60) days prior to election day, shall have one vote. Whenever any action is to be taken by vote of the Members, except as otherwise required by law or by the Articles of Incorporation, it shall prevail by a majority of the votes.

### **Section 3.15 Appeal**

Any Member whose membership was revoked may arbitrate the matter, in accordance with the provisions of Article VIII of this constitution.

## **ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

### **Section 4.01 Powers**

The duties and powers of the Board of Trustees of the association (hereinafter referred to as "Board") shall be the following:

- a. To manage, supervise and control the business, property and affairs of the association
- b. To approve or disapprove any financial transactions relating to the association' real estate and other assets. No sale, assignment, transfer, or any other action involving the disposition of the association' real estate can be authorized without the written consent of two-third of the existing number of Trustees (rounded to the next higher number).
- c. To determine the policies of the association and execute its purposes, to appoint and remunerate agents and employees.
- d. To review, amend or approve the annual budget proposed by the association Executive Committee.
- e. To approve the financial transactions and disbursements of the association funds (including borrowing, lending and investing for and in behalf of the association).
- f. To adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of its business, and to delegate the responsibility and authority as shall be deemed advisable, insofar as such delegation of authority is not inconsistent with or repugnant to the Articles of Incorporation or the constitution of the association or to any applicable law.
- g. To provide guidance for the execution and development of long-range plans for the association.
- h. To adopt rules for the association conforming with Islamic principles.

### **Section 4.02 Chairperson of the Board of Trustees**

The Board shall meet within fifteen days after the election to elect a Chairperson of the Board from among the Trustees as defined in Section 4.03 of this constitution. The Chairperson shall hold office for one year but shall be eligible for reelection to \_\_\_\_\_ consecutive terms, provided he/she is a Trustee at the time of such reelection. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Board shall elect a chairperson for that meeting.

**Section 4.03 Election and Term of Office**

The Board of Trustees shall consist of four officers and at least five members at large. Board members shall be elected by the General Assembly for 2 year term. No board member shall serve for more than three consecutive terms.

**Section 4.04 Qualifications**

To be eligible for election as a Trustee, a person must (1) have been an active member in good standing for the past twenty four (24) months;(2) have successfully performed voluntary service to the association for a minimum of one (1) year, (3) be at least 25 years old, and (4) practice Islamic behavior.

**Section 4.05 Vacancies**

Any vacancy occurring in the Board of Trustees may be filled from the pool of members qualified under Section 4.05 of this constitution, by the affirmative vote of the majority of the trustees then in office. The vacancy must be filled within sixty days after it becomes vacant, through a regular or a special meeting of the Board of Trustees. A trustee elected to fill a vacancy will serve the unexpired term of his/her predecessor in office or until his/her successor is elected and shall have qualified.

**Section 4.06 Removal of Trustees**

Any Trustee may be removed from the office by a two-third vote of the members of the Board at any regular or special meeting of the Board of Trustees at which a quorum is present, with cause for: (1) violation of this constitution, (2) failing to attend three meetings of the Board in a calendar year without justifiable reason for which the Board is timely informed, (3) performing acts repugnant to the Articles of Incorporation or the constitution of the association, or (4) becomes disqualified under Section 4.05 above. Such removal may occur only if the Trustee involved is first provided (1) with adequate notice of the charges against him or her in the form of a statement of such charges by the Board of Trustees, sent by certified or registered mail to the last known address of such Trustee. The Trustee involved shall have the right to respond to these charges. Each member of the Board shall review any response independently. The Board then shall act on the basis of reasonable and consistent criteria, always with the objective of advancing the best interests of the association.

**Section 4.07 Resignations**

Any Trustee may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Chairperson of the Board or in his/her absence to any member of the Board. Such resignation shall take effect at the time specified therein, or, if no time is specified, at the time of acceptance thereof as determined by the Board. The successor to a resigning Trustee shall be selected in accordance with Section 4.06. In the event all the members of the Board resign it shall be the obligation of the Chairperson to hold a general election within two (2) months of this resignation. However, should the Chairperson be incapacitated or unable to conduct such elections, the responsibility of holding such elections shall then be transferred to the Chairperson of the Election Committee, or, in the absence of the latter, the president.

**Section 4.08 Arbitration**

Any Trustee, who has been removed from the Board of Trustees, may arbitrate the matter in accordance with Article VIII of this constitution.

**Section 4.09 Regular Meetings**

A regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the association shall be held at least once every four (4) months, at such time, day and place as shall be designated by the Board of Trustees, for the purpose of transacting such business as may come before the meeting. The Board of Trustees may, by resolution, provide for holding of additional regular meetings.

**Section 4.10 Special Meetings**

Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be called at the direction of the Chairperson of Board of Trustees or President or by a majority of the voting Trustees then in office, to be held at such time, day and place as shall be designated in the notice of the meeting.

**Section 4.11 Notice**

Notice of the time, day and place of regular meetings of the Board of Trustees shall be given at least five days, previous thereto by notice sent by mail, messenger, telex, fax, telegram or telephone to each trustee at his or her address as shown in the records of the association. Such notice for special meetings shall be given anytime by telephone or fax to each Trustee. If mailed, such notice shall be deemed to be delivered when deposited in the United States mail in a sealed envelope so addressed, with postage thereon prepaid. If notice be given by messenger, telex, fax, telegram, such notice shall be deemed to be delivered when the message, fax, telex, or telegram is delivered to the messenger service or the telegraph company. The purpose or purposes for which a special meeting is called shall be stated in the notice thereof. Trustees may waive notice of any meeting. The attendance of a Trustee at any meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of such meeting, except where a Trustee attends a meeting for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened.

Notice of the special meetings should also be posted on the special Bulletin Board of the association for public viewing. Any member of the association, who wants to attend the regular or special meetings, may be allowed to participate as an observer. The Board of Trustees may, in its absolute discretion, hold a closed door meeting when the subject matter of the meeting so requires.

**Section 4.12 Quorum**

Sixty (60) percent of all members of the Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board. If less than a quorum of Trustees is present at a meeting, a majority of the Trustees present may adjourn the meeting without further notice.

**Section 4.13 Manner of Acting**

The act of a majority of the total members of the Board shall be the act of the Board of the Trustees. Each Trustee shall have one vote. Meetings may be held by telephone conference to the extent permitted by law. Voting by proxy shall

not be permitted. In the absence of a quorum, any action taken shall be recommendatory only, but may become valid if subsequently confirmed by a majority vote, in compliance with the quorum requirements, of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees may adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of its business in accordance with this constitution.

#### **Section 4.14 Compensation**

Trustees shall not receive compensation for their services as members of the Board of Trustees and the Board may authorize payment by the association of the out of pocket expenses of Trustees for their services to the association.

### **ARTICLE V: OFFICERS**

#### **Section 5.07 Powers and Responsibilities of Officers**

All Officers shall have the powers and authority expressly assigned to them by the Trustees or by the constitution. Any power not expressly conferred to the Officers by this constitution or a duly adopted resolution of the Board shall belong to the Board of Trustees. The responsibilities and duties of the Officers include the following:

a. Submit to the Board of Trustees for their review and approval, within two months after the election, a work plan, in accordance with the guidelines laid down by Trustees, for implementation during the course of two years term and to furnish the progress report of Committees for review and approval of the Board of Trustees.

b. Plan and implement activities consistent with the objectives and policies of the association.

c. Maintain and operate the association and other facilities, if any, and establish the rules and regulations for their use. The management of the property and day to day affairs of the association as may be provided in this constitution or by resolution of the Board of Trustees and, to the extent not so provided, as generally pertain to their respective offices. All rules and regulations of the association shall be approved by the Board of Trustees.

d. Prepare the annual budget for review and approval of Board of Trustees.

e. Process the membership applications, resignations, suspensions or revocation of memberships or offices for action by the Board of Trustees.

f. Perform any other functions that are needed for proper management of the association and its assets.

g. The officers shall collectively comprise the executive committee

#### **Section 5.08 President**

The President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the association, serve as the Chairperson of the Executive Committee and shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee, shall perform all duties customary to that office and shall supervise and control day to day affairs of the association, in accordance with policies and directives of the Board of Trustees. The annual budget and working plan for day to day operation as well as long term plan shall be prepared under the direction of the President within two months after taking over the office and shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees for their approval. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the President of the association shall have the following specific powers and duties:

1. He/she shall be the Chairperson of the Executive Committee.
2. He/she shall review the agenda (prepared by the Secretary) for the meetings of the Executive Committee.
3. He/she shall appoint such standing or special committees, or subcommittees, as may be required by this constitution or as may be necessary, and shall be an observing member without vote, as the appointment shall state, of all such committees of the association. All such committees shall be approved by the Board.
4. The President of the association shall also perform such other duties as the Board of Trustees may designate from time to time.

#### **Section 5.09 Vice-President**

The Vice President of the association shall have powers and duties as the Board of Trustees of the association shall determine, including serving as acting president in the absence of the President or during such time as the President of the association is unable to carry out the duties of that office. He/she shall also be a member of the Board of Trustees and of the Executive Committee. The Vice-President shall exercise such other powers and perform such other duties as the Board of Trustees or the President may assign from time to time.

#### **Section 5.10 Secretary**

The Secretary of the association shall have all powers and perform all duties commonly included in the office of secretary, including the following duties and responsibilities:

1. He/she shall be member of the Executive Committee.
2. He/she shall attend all meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee, and prepare and distribute minutes of all such meetings to the Board of Trustees as well as the Executive Committee.
3. He/she shall ensure that all notices are given in accordance with this constitution.
4. He/she shall prepare agenda for the meetings of the Board of trustees, and the Executive Committee.
5. He/she shall process the applications of new members, the resignations, and the suspensions or revocation of memberships, for the approval of the Board. He/she shall also maintain a current list of members of the association.
6. He/she shall help in preparing the semiannual reports describing the achievements, present status, future plans, proposed budget and other matters of interests.
7. He/she shall perform such other duties as the Board of Trustees or the President of the association may, from time to time, prescribe.

The Secretary shall be the custodian of the association' meeting records and the seal and shall have the authority to affix the seal of the association, if required, to attest the instrument by affixing his/her signature. The Board may authorize any other Officer to perform such tasks.

#### **Section 5.11 Treasurer**

The Treasurer of the association shall have all powers and perform all duties commonly incident to and vested in the office of the treasurer of a corporation, including the following duties and responsibilities:

1. He/she shall be a member of the Executive Committee.
2. He/she shall be responsible for developing and reviewing the fiscal policies of the association for the approval of the Board.
3. He/she shall keep complete and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements of all amounts. He/she shall deposit all monies and other valuable property of the association in the association's name to the credit of the association in such banks or depositories as the Board may designate.
4. Besides maintaining the monthly accounts and semiannual reports, whenever required by the Board, the treasurer shall prepare a financial report which shall include the balance sheet, detail statements of income and expenses for the auditors. The treasurer shall also be able to exhibit the books and accounts to any officer, trustee or the members of the association at any reasonable time.
5. He/she shall render a report of the finances of the association at the General Assembly meeting or whenever requested by the President or the Board showing all receipts and expenditures for the current year.
6. He/she shall provide assistance for filing all tax returns.
7. He shall also perform such other duties as the President or the Board may, from time to time, designate.

## **ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES**

### **Section 6.01 Executive Committee**

The four Officers, within a month of their election, shall nominate coordinators for the approval of the Board, who shall chair a number of standing committees. These chairpersons together with the four Officers shall constitute the Executive Committee, except that only Officers shall have voting rights. The Board can increase or decrease the number of committees. These committee chairpersons shall nominate, within four weeks of their nomination, members of their respective committees in consultation with the Officers for approval of the Board. Any active member, including a Trustee, may be a member or a Chairperson of the above committees.

### **Section 6.02 Duties and Responsibilities of Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee shall have the responsibilities and duties needed for proper functioning of the association, within the powers expressly granted by the Board of Trustees. The duties and responsibilities of the Executive Committee shall include the following:

1. Develop a plan of work for their respective Committees in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Board of Trustees.
2. Submit the plan of work to the Board for its approval within forty five (45) days of the complete formation of the Executive Committee.
3. Implement the approved plan of work and furnish the quarterly progress report to the Board of Trustees.
4. Plan and implement other activities consistent with the objectives of the association, and prepare the status reports for the Board of Trustees.

### **Section 6.03 Meetings**

The Executive Committee will meet on at least a monthly basis at a scheduled time, date and place, to evaluate the progress of different committees, resolve



the problems, if any, and transact the business of the association. A simple majority of the members shall determine the quorum for such meetings.

**Section 6.04 Notice**

The schedule for meetings of the Executive Committee shall be prepared in advance and each member of the committee shall be notified at least seven (7) days before a meeting. It shall also be posted on the Bulletin Board of the association for public viewing. Members of the association are encouraged to participate as observers in all such meetings.

**Section 6.05 Election Committee**

Every year during the month of November, the Board shall appoint from the pool of regular voting Members, a three-member Election Committee. The three members will elect, within fifteen days of their nomination, one of them as a chairperson of the Election Committee. The chairperson and the members of the Election Committee shall neither be candidates in the upcoming election of the Board of Trustees, the Officers, or members of the Arbitration Panel nor be paid agents or employees of the association.

**Section 6.06 Responsibilities and Duties of Election Committee**

The Election Committee shall follow the election procedures set by the Board. These procedures shall be made available by the Board to the Members before the solicitation of nominations for elections. The Election Committee shall scrutinize the validity of the nominations in accordance with Sections 4.05 and 5.03 of this constitution, prepare the listing of the eligible candidates and the ballot papers to be mailed to each voting member, conduct the election, tabulate the results and submit the report to the Board of Trustees for announcement to the General Assembly.

**Section 6.07 Finance Review Committee and Auditors**

Each year within thirty (30) days of the election, the Board shall appoint a Finance Review Committee from the Regular Board members (Non-Officers). The Committee shall review the quarterly finance reports presented to the Board and submit the results of its reviews to the Board.

Each year The Board of Trustees shall also appoint a licensed accounting firm to audit the accounts of the association. The Board shall present the audited financial statement to the General Assembly at the Annual meeting.

**Section 6.08 Bulletin Board**

The Board of Trustees shall post on the association bulletin board one detailed copy of the audited financial statement at least twenty four (24) hours before the General Assembly meeting.

**Section 6.09 Removal**

Any Coordinator or a Committee Member may be removed by the Executive Committee/Board at any regular or special meeting of the Executive Committee/Board, for (1) engaging in conduct prejudicial to the best interests of the association, (2) failing to attend three meetings of Executive Committee or their respective committee without justifiable reasons, during a one-year period, (3)

becomes disqualified under Section 4.05 above or (4) failing to perform repeatedly their responsibilities in a timely and satisfactory manner.

#### **Section 6.10 Vacancies**

In case of a vacancy created as a result of resignation or for any other reason including ineligibility or removal, the Officers/Board shall elect, within thirty days after it becomes vacant, a successor to complete the unexpired term.

### **ARTICLE VII: AGENTS AND EMPLOYEES**

#### **Section 7.01 Agents and Employees**

The Executive Committee may nominate agents and employees who shall have such authority and perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Board. The Board of Trustees shall approve all nominations. The agents or paid employees are required to abide by the policy and guidelines set up by the Board and follow the instructions of the Executive Committee for day to day operations. In no circumstances any agent or paid employees can assume or exercise the power and authority vested in the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee. The Board may remove any agent or employee at any time with or without any cause. Removal without cause shall be without prejudice to such person's contract rights, if any, and the appointment of such person shall not itself create contract rights. No agent or employee of the association shall hold any elected office of the association or serve on the Election Committee, on the Finance Review Committee, or on the Arbitration Panel.

#### **Section 7.02 Compensation of Agents and Employees**

The association may pay compensation in reasonable amounts to the agents and employees for services rendered, in the amounts to be fixed by the Board or, if the Board delegates power to any officer or officers, by such officer or officers. The Board may require agents or employees to provide security bonds for the faithful performance of their duties.

### **ARTICLE VIII: ARBITRATION**

#### **Section 8.01 Arbitration Panel of the association**

There shall be an Arbitration Panel of the association (hereinafter referred to as "Panel"), composed of three (3) to five (5) members.

#### **Section 8.02 Appointment**

The members of the Arbitration Panel shall be nominated by the Board and elected by the General Assembly. The Board of Trustees shall take into consideration the knowledge, integrity, character and maturity of the nominees to serve as arbitrators. Members of the Panel shall not concurrently occupy any other elected or non-elected office of the association.

#### **Section 8.03 Term**

Each arbitrator shall be elected for a term of three (3) years. Any vacancies arising in the Panel shall be filled by the majority of the remaining members of the Panel for the unexpired term thereof.

**Section 8.04 Chairperson**

The members of the Panel shall select a Chairperson within thirty days of the election from among themselves every year. The Panel shall develop rules and regulations for their operations.

**Section 8.05 Matters to be Submitted to Arbitration**

Any claim, demands, disputes, controversies, and differences arising out of or related to the association between any member (in any category), officer, employee, trustee, or member of a committee of the association, among themselves or between any of them and the association, shall be exclusively settled by arbitration as set forth in this Article.

**Section 8.06 Procedures**

Any controversy or issue shall be determined by arbitration in the following manner:

a. Either party may, by written notice to the Chairperson of the Panel, within 45 days after a controversy has arisen that is subject to arbitration, request the appointment of an arbitrator.

b. The Chairperson shall, within 30 days after receipt of said request, inform, in writing, the parties to the dispute, of the pending request and ask for their selection of one member from at least three possible arbitrators from among the members of the Panel.

c. If all parties agree on one arbitrator, within fifteen (15) days of the request of the Chairperson referred to in Section 8.06 (b) above, then the Chairperson shall appoint him/her as arbitrator for the controversy.

d. If parties cannot agree on a single arbitrator, then each side to the dispute shall select one arbitrator from among the members of the Panel referred to in Section 8.02 above, within twenty one (21) days of the request of the Chairperson, and the such two arbitrators shall, thereafter, agree on a third arbitrator and shall appoint him or her by written notice, within thirty (30) days, signed by both of them and a copy mailed to each party to the dispute.

e. If both arbitrators fail to appoint the third arbitrator, the Chairperson of the Panel shall appoint the third arbitrator within ten days after the expiration of thirty days notice as provided in Section 8.06(d) above.

f. On appointment of three arbitrators as provided for above, such arbitrators shall hold an arbitration hearing at the association premises, or any other location agreed by all parties, within thirty (30) days after such appointments. At the hearing, the single arbitrator or the three arbitrators, as the case may be, shall allow each party to present that party's case, evidence and witnesses, if any, in the presence of the other party and shall render their decision, within fifteen days of the conclusion of the hearing, as the arbitrator(s) deem just.

g. The decision of the arbitrator, if single, or the majority of the arbitrators, if more, shall be binding on the parties to this constitution, and judgment may be entered on such decision in any court having jurisdiction.

h. With respect to any dispute or controversy that is made subject to arbitration under the terms of this Article, no suit at law or in equity based on such dispute or controversy shall be instituted by either party, except to enforce the decision of the arbitrators or on the ground only of malicious, willful and

flagrant violation of law and intentional miscarriage of justice by the arbitrator(s).

I. No party to the arbitration shall have a right to sue an arbitrator if it is not satisfied with the decision or the manner in which the arbitration was conducted.

j. All parties to the arbitration shall take part in the arbitration proceedings in good faith and shall abide by the decision of the arbitrator(s) in the conduct of the arbitration as well as the final decision.

## **ARTICLE IX: MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Section 10.01 Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the association shall be the calendar year.

### **Section 10.02 Corporate Seal**

The corporate seal of the association shall be circular in form, shall have the name of the association inscribed thereon and shall contain the words "Corporate Seal" and "State of \_\_\_\_\_" and the year the Corporation was formed in the center, or shall be in such form as may be approved from time to time by the Board of Trustees. The Secretary of the association shall be custodian of the Corporate seal.

### **Section 10.03 Checks, Notes and Contracts**

The Board of Trustees shall authorize, from time to time appropriate Trustees and/or Officers to sign checks, drafts, or other orders for payment of money; to sign acceptances, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness; to enter into contracts; or to execute and deliver other documents and instruments. The Treasurer, President, or the Chairperson of the Board can authorize a check for a maximum amount of (\$ \_\_\_\_\_) dollars (\$ \_\_\_\_\_) and any two (2) of them together can authorize a check for a maximum amount of five thousand dollars (\$ \_\_\_\_\_). However, no more than five checks over two thousand dollars (\$) can be issued in a three-month period without prior approval of the Board. All checks above five thousand dollars (\$) shall be pre-authorized by the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall submit a written statement to the Board on a quarterly basis listing all checks issued during the quarter.

### **Section 10.04 Books and Records**

All the books and records of the association shall be kept at its principal offices in the State of \_\_\_\_\_ or at any other place in the State of \_\_\_\_\_ designated by the Board, including: (1) correct and complete books and records of financial accounts, (2) minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee and any other committees established or appointed by the association, and (3) an updated record of the names and addresses of the voting and non-voting members. All books and records of the association may be inspected by any member having voting rights, or his agent or attorney, for any proper purpose at any reasonable time with a proper written notice.

**Section 10.05 Indemnification and Insurance**

Unless otherwise prohibited by law, the association shall indemnify any trustee, arbitrator, or officer, any former trustee, officer, or any person who may have served at its request as a trustee or officer of another corporation, whether for profit or not for profit, and may, by resolution of the Board of Trustees, indemnify any employee or former employee against any and all expenses and liabilities actually and necessarily incurred by him/her or imposed on him/her in connection with any claim, action, suit, or proceeding (whether actual or threatened, civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including appeals) to which he/she may be or is made a party by reason of being or having been such trustee, arbitrator, officer, or employee; subject to the limitation, however, that there shall be no indemnification in relation to matters as to which he/she shall be adjudged in such claim, action, suit, or proceeding to be guilty of a criminal offense or liable to the Corporation for damages arising out of his own gross negligence or misconduct in the performance of a duty to the association.

Amounts paid in indemnification of expenses and liabilities may include, but shall not be limited to, counsel fees and other fees; costs and disbursements; and judgments, fines, and penalties against, and amounts paid in settlement by, such trustee, arbitrator, director, officer, or employee. the association may advance expenses to, or where appropriate may itself, at its expense, undertake the defense of, any trustee, arbitrator, officer, or employee; provided, however, that such trustee, arbitrator, officer, or employee shall undertake to repay or to reimburse such expense if it should be ultimately determined that he is not entitled to indemnification under this Article.

The provisions of this Article shall be applicable to claims, actions, suits, or proceedings made or commenced after the adoption hereof, whether arising from acts or omissions to act occurring before or after adoption hereof.

The indemnification provided by this Article shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which such trustee, arbitrator, officer, or employee may be entitled under any statute, Bylaw, agreement, vote of the Board of Trustees, decision of the Panel or otherwise and shall not restrict the power of the association to make any indemnification permitted by law.

The Board of Trustees may authorize the purchase of insurance on behalf of any trustee, arbitrator, officer, employee, or other agent against any liability asserted against or incurred by him/her which arises out of such person's status as a trustee, officer, employee, or agent or out of acts taken in such capacity, whether or not the association would have the power to indemnify the person against that liability under law.

In no case, however, shall the association indemnify, reimburse, or insure any person for any taxes imposed on such individual under Chapter 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as now in effect or as may hereafter be amended ("the Code").

**Section 10.06 Loans to Trustees and Officers**

No loans shall be made by the association to its Trustees or Officers.

**Section 10.07 Gender Equity**

As a matter of standing policy, the association shall provide for the full and unrestricted participation of all members of the association community, men and women, in all of the association's activities and services.

**Section 10.08 Coordination Between the Board of Trustees, Officers and Executive Committee**

The Trustees and Officers will make every effort to perform their respective duties and use their respective powers in complete harmony with each other. There shall be at least two joint meetings of the Board of Trustees and the full Executive Committee in a year, to be held at the request of either body, within fifteen days of such request or mutually agreed upon schedule.

**Section 10.09 Use of Terms**

As used herein, words in any gender shall be deemed to include the other genders and the singular shall be deemed to include the plural, and vice versa.

**Section 10.10 Severability**

If any provision of this constitution shall be held invalid, illegal or unenforceable, the validity, legality and enforceability of the remaining provisions of this constitution shall not be impaired thereby, nor shall the validity, legality or enforceability of any such defective provision be in any way affected or impaired.

**Section 10.11 Amendment of the Constitution**

This constitution may be amended, from time to time and in as many respects as may be permitted by law, by two-third (2/3) of the General Assembly.

**ARTICLE X. DISSOLUTION**

If the situation arises which makes the dissolution of the Association inevitable, any surplus assets, after meeting all liabilities, shall be distributed to one or more of Islamic organizations which shall have an exempt status under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and then to an Islamic organization organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, educational, or scientific purposes as shown at the time qualified as an organization or organizations under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law, as the Board of Trustees shall determine. Any of such assets not shown as disposed of, shall be disposed of by the Court or Common Pleas of the county of which the Principal Office of the Organization is then located, exclusively for such Islamic organizations as said Court shall determine.

## Guidelines for Best Practices

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The Guidelines for Best Practices of Islamic Centers underscore attitudes and actions needed to empower the Muslim community and to allow it to make better use of the tremendous human and financial resources it possesses. The Guidelines aim at improving leadership effectiveness, harmony, and compliance with Islamic principles. Setting the Islamic center on firm footings is essential for allowing American Muslims to focus their energies on building their communities, enhancing public relations and interfaith understanding, and contributing to the advancement of services and charitable work.

The guidelines presented here are based on both the practices adopted by some of the most organized and vibrant Islamic centers in North America, as well as on discussions with, and the recommendations of, Muslim scholars, leaders, and persons involved in the hard work of building the leadership capacity of the American Muslim community.

The document should be considered a work in progress, as we will continue to refine it on the basis of the evolving experiences of the Muslim community, and the feedback we receive from Muslims throughout North America.

The Guidelines cover eight important areas that need the immediate attention of community leaders. Each set of guidelines is preceded by an overview to provide context and underscore the need that gave rise to their annunciation. The overview also points briefly to their Islamic roots.

Developing the leadership capacity of the American Muslim community is not only necessary to overcome the many challenges we all confront, but is part of the duty and responsibility we all have to make sure that Islam stands on strong footings for future growth and development in North American.

### List of Focus Areas

1. Good Governance
2. Community Development
3. Conflict Prevention and Resolution
4. Women's Involvement
5. Youth Involvement
6. Public Relations and Services
7. Interfaith Dialogue and Activities
8. Sound Financial Base
9. Maintaining Security and Preventing Illegal Activities

### 1. Good Governance

#### Overview

Leading an Islamic center is a solemn responsibility that entails great consequences for both the community and the individual leader. The Qur'an stresses the importance of leading with wisdom and justice, and warns against complacency in conducting one's leadership duties.

*O you who believe! Betray not the trust of God and the Messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you. (Anfal 8:27)*

*God commands you to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners; and when you judge between people, to do so with justice. (Nisa 4:58).*

Muslim communities that leave decisions to the whims of individual leaders are in violation of divine commandments. Communities should strive to institutionalize their practices, by setting specialized committees, adopting sound procedures, and establishing due process to ensure fairness.

Many resources are wasted in quarrel because the community has no clear and transparent rules to guide actions and relations. A great deal of confusion and friction can be avoided when the community adopts a well-developed constitution and bylaws, and when community leaders embrace a code of ethics that sets parameters for using their authority judiciously.

Decision making should be based on consultation, and should always be guided by established principles and the collective wisdom of the community. The American Muslim community is very diverse, and community leaders must strive to accommodate various practices recognized by various schools of *fiqh* or rooted in established cultural traditions, as long as the latter do not contravene established Islamic principles.

### **Guidelines**

- ❑ The leadership of the Islamic center should ensure that the center is governed by clear and fair rules and guidelines rooted in Islamic teachings and approved by the general body.
- ❑ Islamic center leaders should closely and reasonably adhere to established policies and procedures.
- ❑ Decisions that fall within the mandate of the governing body should be taken after proper consultation with elected leaders. Elected leaders should, however, consult with the general body in matters that fall outside their constitutional authority.
- ❑ Community leaders must ensure that the rules and procedures that govern conducts in the Islamic center respect the diversity of the Muslim community. Enforcing limited interpretations of Islam, or practices specific to a particular Muslim culture or tradition, are bound to exclude important segments of the Muslim community, alienate Muslims who would otherwise add to the strength of the community, and inhibit the growth of Islam in North America.
- ❑ Islamic centers should strive to hire full time imams and administrators, and ensure that they are well qualified and well paid to do the work assigned to them.
- ❑ Imams, and other individuals involved in teaching Islam and providing religious and moral guidance, must be well versed in Islam and reasonably acquainted with American culture and institutions. The community should provide learning opportunities for its imams and public speakers.
- ❑ Imams and community leaders should adhere to a code of ethics developed by the community pledge to uphold it, and adhere to its stipulations.



- Islamic centers must set a due process for handling all grievances. The due process must ensure fairness and be clear and sufficiently transparent.

### **Resources**

#### **Model Bylaws for Islamic Centers**

Defines the organizational structure and procedures needed for fair and effective running of the Islamic Center. Model Bylaws are informed by the unique experience of Islamic centers in North America.

#### **Code of Ethics for Masjid Officials**

Ethical principles every Muslim leader and imam should adopt to ensure that the Islamic principles of compassion, fairness, and leadership are carried out and integrated in the work of Muslim leaders in charge of running the affairs of the community.

#### **Qualifications and Duties of Imams**

Tips and guidelines to help communities select an imam, define his rights and duties, and identify criteria for evaluating his performance.

#### **Sample Forms and Procedures**

Forms to help facilitate the interaction between community members and masjid officials.

## **2. Community Development**

### **Overview**

Developing the community morally and spiritually, and empowering its members through knowledge and involvement so that they can contribute to the improvement of life conditions around them, is the paramount mission of the Islamic center. As the Qur'an makes it clear, a true Muslim is a person who purifies his/her soul and refines his/her character through knowledge and service. *"Who is better in speech than one who calls to God, works righteousness, and says: I am of those who bow in Islam?" (Ha Mim 41:33) "And say: O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge." (Ta Ha 20:114)*

The masjid is the center of moral and spiritual growth, and must provide an environment conducive to learning and experiencing the spirit of Islam. Masjid leaders should, therefore make it a priority to provide members of their community with opportunities to increase their knowledge of Islam and engage in spiritually uplifting practices. They must also attend to the needs of new Muslims to learn the faith and to receive the support they need while adjusting to life as converts to Islam.

Equally important is the issue of family counseling. The community should have trained volunteers to help resolve issues relating to family disputes whenever the need arises. It is also important to identify professionals who are familiar with Muslim practices to help when situations are too difficult or complex for volunteers to handle.

### Guidelines

- ❑ Islamic centers should provide community members with regular opportunities to learn about Islam and to be informed about issues of concern to the community.
- ❑ Islamic centers should organize panels on Islam that help enlighten the community and reflect diverse views and approaches. This can be best done by inviting nationally recognized Muslim scholars to speak on issues.
- ❑ Islamic centers should organize awareness programs to inform community members about internal and external challenges facing American Muslims.
- ❑ Islamic centers should organize training programs to help community members develop organizational skills and empower them to undertake community projects.
- ❑ Islamic centers should establish pre-marital, family, and marriage counseling, and periodically sponsor parenting courses.
- ❑ Islamic centers should provide special classes to new Muslims and develop support systems to help them overcome challenges they face as the result of going through a major transformation in their lives.

### Resources

#### Activities Roster

A list of various educational and social activities to be organized by the community for the purpose of increasing knowledge of Islam and helping develop moral character.

#### Speakers Bureau

List of speakers who can address various themes of relevance to the American Muslim community.

#### Muslim Professional Organizations

List of Muslim organizations that can provide educational material and programs.

#### Resources on Counseling

List of professional Muslims who can act as resource persons in matters of consultation and counseling.

#### Manual for Networking with New Muslims

Information and tips as to how the community can set up programs and help establish support networks for new Muslims.

### 3. Conflict Prevention and Resolution

#### Overview

Conflict is experienced among individuals in all social settings. Given the cultural and ideological diversity of the Muslim community, conflict can hardly be avoidable. Still, the masjid must take measures to reduce instances of conflict

and train its officials to both prevent conflict from happening as much as possible, and to handle conflict in a proper way when it does.

By following proper guidelines, providing proper training, and setting appropriate procedures, conflict can be transformed from a negative experience in the life of the community into a positive one that can provide a mechanism for self-correction and self-improvement.

### **Guidelines**

- ❑ The best way to prevent conflict is by accommodating the needs and demands of the various individuals and groups that constitute the general body.
- ❑ When the needs and demands of some community members cannot be accommodated for ethical or theological reasons, a structured dialogue should be instituted to allow for the exchange of views and the development of common ground. Alternatively, mediation and arbitration sessions should be organized with the help of professional conflict resolution experts.
- ❑ Community leaders should plan seminars and workshops to address issues that polarize the community.
- ❑ Islamic centers should develop local expertise for dealing with conflict by organizing conflict prevention and resolution seminars. They should also establish arbitration panels to resolve conflicts among community members, center management, and board members rather than relying on civil litigation in a court of law.
- ❑ When local resources becomes ineffective, community leaders should enlist the help of national Muslim experts and consult with professional Muslim organizations.

### **Resources**

#### **Arbitration Panels and Grievance Procedures**

A set of procedures and necessary steps to be adopted by the community to address grievances, and hence prevent them from escalating into an open conflict. Arbitration Panels are essential to deal with conflict when it erupts, and to handle it in fair way that would allow for effective remedy and general satisfaction by the larger Muslim community.

#### **Grievance Report Form**

The form facilitates the proper documentation of grievances and identifies essential information to be requested for use by the Arbitration Panels.

#### **Professional Muslim Organizations**

A list of organizations that can provide both consultation and training in conflict resolution.

## **4. Women's Participation**

### **Overview**

The masjid is a place for spiritual growth and development for all Muslims, and should be equally accessible to both genders. The Qur'an has set the spiritual and moral equality of men and women in explicit and unequivocal terms: "*God*

*has prepared forgiveness and great rewards for the Muslim men and women; for the believing men and women; for the devout men and women; for the truthful men and women; for the men and women who are patient and constant; the men and women who humble themselves; for the men and women who give charity; for the men and women who fast, for the men and women who guard their chastity; and the men and women who are exceedingly mindful of God.”* (Ahzab 33:35). Both men and women, the Qur’an stresses, have the obligation to develop themselves morally and spiritually, and to fulfill their social responsibilities. The masjid is, and has always been, the center of moral and spiritual learning and growth.

Likewise, the masjid is a public place in which discussion of issues of public concern and responses to the challenges facing the community take place. The Qur’an is also clear on the equal responsibility of both men and women for developing public good: *“The believing men and women are protectors and helpers of each other. They (collaborate) to promote all that is good and oppose all that is evil, establish prayers and give charity, and obey God and his Messenger. Those are the people whom God would grant mercy. Indeed God is Exalted and Wise.”* (Al-Tawbah 9:71) Promoting public good and opposing evil are public duties equally required from men and women, and the masjid is the place where Muslim men and women can meet to plan community development and devise strategies for promoting public good.

Assigning women a separate and secluded space not only goes against Qur’anic injunctions and the practices and directives of the Prophet, peace be with him, but also is detrimental to the spiritual and moral growth of women and the development of the community. Preventing women from gaining direct access to the main hall of the masjid, where lectures and study circles take place, deprives them from taking an active role in learning. In addition to the psychological and emotional impact of not taking an active part in the meetings, the ability to interact with the speakers, to ask questions and offer comments, is impeded.

Furthermore, Islamic centers where women are integrated into the leadership of the organization have displayed higher level of performance, and are more efficient in outreach programs and activities.

### **Guidelines**

- ❑ Women are equal partners of men in building the community, reforming practices, and providing services.
- ❑ Islamic centers should help Muslim women acquire leadership skills, and ensure that they are well represented on the governing body.
- ❑ Women should be given direct access to the main hall, particularly during public lectures and study circle sessions. Walls and barriers that separate women’s and men’s areas should be avoided and removed, as they often lead to isolating women and reduce their participation in programs and involvement in activities. The community should, however, accommodate Muslim women who desire private quarters and choose to stay away from the main hall.
- ❑ The community must ensure that babysitting services are provided during prayers and lectures, to allow Muslim women and others to concentrate on prayer and learning.

**Resources****Women Friendly Mosques and Community Centers: Working Together to Reclaim Our Heritage**

Brochure explaining the various aspects of women's participation in the masjid, and discussing the Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic practices on this important issue.

**Professional Muslim Organizations**

List of organizations that provide counseling and training on issues relating to women's participation.

**Leading Muslim Women**

List of leading Muslim women in North American, and the services they provide to the Muslim community.

**5. Youth Involvement****Overview**

Youth are the future of Islam in North America and they deserve the utmost attention of the Muslim community. Many Muslim youth, particularly those who have completed their post-secondary education, have difficulty integrating into the masjid as they find themselves cut off from decision making processes, and find the community uninterested in the capabilities, talents, and services they can offer.

The Prophet paid close attention to youth and assigned to them important responsibility. One can find numerous instances of incorporating the youth into the leadership of the community, including the appointment of Usama bin Zid a general in the Madina army. At the age of 18, Usama had a commanding authority over Abu Bakr and Umar.

This problem is compounded in many communities with an immigrant majority where the style of management and preferred activities often do not correspond to the style and interests acquired by Muslim youth growing up in North America.

**Guidelines**

- ❑ Islamic centers are the best place to build the confidence of Muslim youth and help them gain the experience they need to live Islam in their daily life.
- ❑ Islamic centers should provide programs for both youth education and entertainment.
- ❑ Persuasion and setting moral examples, rather than compulsion, should be the essential mode for imparting Islamic values and beliefs to Muslim youth.
- ❑ Muslim youth should be allowed to elect their representative(s) to participate in decision making bodies, either as full members or youth consultants.
- ❑ Muslim youth should be allowed to organize their own programs and activities in consultation with the Islamic center executives.

### Resources

#### Manual for Muslim Youth Extra-Curricular Education

A detailed plan for organizing a comprehensive weekend and after-school youth education program, with goals, sessions, topics, activities, resources, focal Points, and reading material.

#### Administration Structure for Youth Program

An organizational chart and roster of functions for developing a youth council and executive committee.

## 6. Public Relations and Services

### Overview

There is no better way to live Islam and develop an Islamic character than to translate belief into actions and services that benefit humanity. The Qur'an time and time again reminds us that faith cannot be complete without righteous deeds to accompany it. *"Surely Mankind is at a loss except those who believe and do good..."* (Asr 103:2-3) Prophet Muhammad (may peace be with him) told us that we are not true believers until we want for our neighbors what we want for ourselves.

Public relations and services encompass improving relations and developing friendships with members of the larger community around Islamic centers, as well as getting involved with local government and service organizations (e.g. shelters, hospitals, orphanages, etc.). Commitment to Islam and its beauty flourish when Islamic principles are put into action through public interaction and service.

### Guidelines

- ❑ Islamic centers should endeavor to foster good relationships with other faith groups, charity organizations, media groups, and local governments.
- ❑ Islamic centers should join other groups, and should build coalitions with organizations that work on projects advancing shared goals and promoting shared values.
- ❑ Islamic centers should organize seminars and workshops to help community members develop a positive attitude in dealing with outside organizations and groups, and to improve their public relations skills.
- ❑ Islamic centers should establish media and public relations committees, and ensure that committee members are well qualified to work on public relations, providing training as needed.
- ❑ Islamic centers should encourage volunteerism and charitable work so as to provide services and support to hospitals, fire departments, public rescue services, food distribution services, etc.
- ❑ Community leaders should ensure that their Islamic center joins any councils of Islamic organizations, or helps set up one, in their area.

### Resources

- ❑ Manual for establishing food and clothing bank
- ❑ Manual for dealing with media kit

## 7. Interfaith Programs and Activities

### Overview

Interfaith activities provide the Muslim community an opportunity to introduce Islam to the surrounding non-Muslim communities, and to correct misconceptions about Islam. They also allow the Muslim community to build coalitions with other people of faith, and thereby increase the ability of the Muslim community to promote good values and practices, to provide needed services in the local community, and to wield greater influence by standing in solidarity with other people of faith. The Qur'an tells us *"There are those among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations during the night, who bow down in worship, who believe in God and the Last Day, who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds. These people are among the righteous."* (The Family of Imran 3:113-115) Prophet Muhammad (may peace be with him) while delivering his message did not hesitate to rely on the Christian King of Abyssinia when his people needed assistance, or to make treaties with the Jews and Christians of Medina.

### Guidelines

- ❑ Islamic centers should establish an interfaith committee and provide the necessary resources.
- ❑ The purpose of interfaith programs should be to inform and educate people of other faiths about Islam, rather than attempting to convert them. God alone can change the hearts of people; the responsibility of the Muslims involved in interfaith programs is only to present Islam in a friendly and articulate manner.
- ❑ Muslims should reject bigotry and racism, and speak up against bigoted statements and gestures, whether these are directed at them or at followers of other faiths, particular races, or different ethnic groups.
- ❑ Muslim leaders should help community members understand the beliefs and views of people of other faiths. They should arrange for special training for those involved in interfaith programs and activities.
- ❑ Islamic centers should seek common ground and friendship with religious groups in their neighborhoods and towns, and should periodically invite neighbors and people of other faiths to visit their centers by organizing open houses.
- ❑ Islamic centers that have the means should develop joint community service programs with other religious groups.

### Resources

- ❑ Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue
- ❑ Muslim Organizations and centers experienced in interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

## 8. Sound Financial Base

### Overview

The guidelines for a sound financial base are designed to ensure the masjid or Islamic center will be able to develop and maintain a stable financial base in order to sustain operations, fund programming and activities, and nourish the growth of the organization. The guidelines cover the areas of good practices in

bookkeeping and due diligence in making sure that money is acquired and used in an Islamically proper way. They also offer guidance in keeping within American laws and government regulations.

The Qur'an tells us "Let him who is trusted deliver his trust." (Baqara 2:28) and numerous verses deal with the legalities of financial transactions, so the responsibility to handle money conscientiously is not one to be taken lightly.

#### **Guidelines**

- ❑ Islamic centers should rely, as much as possible, on local financial resources, and encourage members to make regular contributions.
- ❑ Islamic centers should set up endowment funds, and make long-term financial planning and investments.
- ❑ Islamic centers should establish fundraising committees, and invite successful entrepreneurs and business leaders to serve on these committees.
- ❑ Islamic centers should partner with national Muslim organizations in joint fundraising events to align local and national projects.
- ❑ Due diligence policy should be established to ensure the propriety of the donors and recipients of donations. A due diligence policy should be established in consultation with professional experts and consultants.
- ❑ Care and meticulous bookkeeping methods should be devised to ensure that all donations are accounted for and all expenditures are approved.

#### **Resources**

Due Diligence Policy Guidelines

Fundraising Structures and Methods

## **9. Maintaining Security and Preventing Illegal Activities**

### **Overview**

Terrorist attacks against mainland United States by followers of the Islamic tradition has placed additional burden on the Islamic center to ensure that it is not being used by individuals and groups who mean harm to fellow citizens.

Although no Islamic center has been implicated in aiding and supporting terrorists groups, the prospect of such events places additional responsibility on the leaders and members of Islamic centers to prevent such possibilities. Below are some guidelines to help keep the Islamic center safe and secure.

### **Guidelines**

- ❑ Muslims have moral and religious obligations to promote public safety, and prevent misuse of the Islamic center's facilities by anyone who intends to harm the public. The Qur'an is unequivocal on this point: "Help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression."
- ❑ Islamic centers/mosques should adopt a due diligent approach to collecting funds and dispensing payments, and should keep accurate records of all transactions. They should keep records of business meetings, and establish clear and fair procedures for using the Islamic center's premises and facilities.
- ❑ Mosques are not intended as overnight lodging facilities, and visitors should not be allowed to stay overnights, except for authorized religious



worship (Qiyam or night prayer). The use of the mosque's facilities should be regulated in clear and fair manners. The mosque administration should designate specific members to open the mosque during the day and close it at night.

- ❑ Mosque leaders should always ensure the safety and security of mosque members and visitors. Mosque leaders should designate volunteers during high traffic events to ensure the safety of participants. This often can be done discretely so that guests do not experience very intrusive security measures. The volunteers should be given training to act in an effective but courteous way.
- ❑ Talks, lectures, and education programs must correspond with the basic guidelines of the Islamic teachings. Teachings that are intended to incite hatred and instigate and disturb social harmony must be rejected and stopped. Similarly calls to resort to illegal means or to incite hatred are in clear violation of the basic tenets of Islam, and must not be allowed in the Islamic center. If a problem involving security issues that cannot be rectified quickly and satisfactorily, it must be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- ❑ To ensure that educational programs are not used to promote activities that violate broadly accepted Islamic values, all study circles, lectures, and education programs should be supervised by the mosque leadership. The process should not be cumbersome or too restrictive so as to prevent reasonable and meaningful disagreements in interpretation, but should aim at preventing lectures and talks whose intent is to incite hatred, disturb social harmony, or promote violence against public institutions and fellow citizens.
- ❑ Mosques should develop good relationships with their neighbors, and invite them to open houses at least once a year. Open houses should be used to acquaint the neighbors with the mosque members, listen to any issues or concerns the neighbor may have, and provide them with helpful information about the Muslim community and the Islamic faith.
- ❑ Mosques should periodically interact, and organize public meetings, with local law enforcement agencies, including the Police Department, Sheriff's Department and the FBI. This interaction should aim, on the one hand, to educate mosque members as to how to detect criminal activities, and give the community the opportunity to share their concerns with law enforcement officials. The interaction should also aim at educating law
- ❑ The Islamic center should develop a good rapport with local media and public officials. An experienced and articulate spokesperson should be designated to issue statements and give interviews on behalf of the mosque officials.
- ❑ Mosque leaders should organize regular meetings with civil rights organizations, engage in civic alliances, and help mosque members participate in interfaith dialogue and community services.



# 11

## Rules of Order

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*This chapter provides a summary of the parliamentary procedure developed by Henry M. Robert and adopted by many governmental and private organizations for their meetings.*

*The discussion is followed by a practical example of the use of the rules of order and can be practiced in the form of a simulation by boards and committees.*

What would happen if you were to drive your car in a town that has not established rules for using public road? Most likely you will be very frustrated, and, in a large community, you will be frequently paralyzed and constantly threatened by head on crashes!

Parliamentary procedure, such as Robert's Rules of Order, are the "rules of the road" for the meetings of deliberative bodies, including general bodies and board of directors.

### **Why Parliamentary Procedure?**

Parliamentary procedure facilitates interaction among members of deliberative bodies, and preventing confusion and waste of time.

Three main reasons have made parliamentary procedures the common practice of both profit and nonprofit organizations:

- ❑ To expedite business
- ❑ To ensure fairness
- ❑ To ensure legality

The courts have asserted over the years that all deliberative groups, except state, national, and international governmental bodies, must follow general parliamentary law whenever they meet to transact business. Even small groups, such as the finance or personnel committee, must observe parliamentary law.

*Legal Issues:* The improper use of parliamentary procedures has brought lawsuits on different grounds, including the following:

- ❑ Lack of proper notice – Notices must state the purpose of the meeting, and allow sufficient time for preparation, and provide the date, time, and location of the meeting.
- ❑ Improper calling for adjournment
- ❑ Violation of members' rights to speak or vote
- ❑ Failing to establish or maintain a quorum
- ❑ Using improper method of nomination

### **The Hierarchy of Governing Documents**

Parliamentary procedure, established through a parliamentary authority, such as *Robert's Rules of Order* or *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* of the American Institute of Parliamentarians, are an essential part of the governing documents of any deliberative group.

These documents must be readily available for examination and reference by the governing bodies of deliberative groups. The documents are listed below in the order of precedence.

1. Federal laws
2. State statutes
3. Articles of incorporation
4. Constitution
5. Bylaws
6. Special rules of order
7. Parliamentary authority
8. Standing rules
9. Policies and procedures

### **Fundamental Concepts**

All rules of orders of deliberative bodies stem from a number of fundamental concepts. A good understanding of these concepts provide safeguard against violations of the “fair and equal” standard anticipated by the rules of order.

*Equality of Rights* – All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations. Any member can initiate action, enforce the rules, or challenge the rulings of the chair.

*Majority Decision* – The majority vote decides.

*Minority Rights* – The rights of the minority must be protected. Decisions that affect debate (prevent, close, or limit debate and suspending rules) require absolute majority.

*The Right of Discussion* – Full and free discussion of every question presented for decision is an established right of every member.

*The Right to Information* – Every member has the right to know the meaning of every question before the board or assembly and what its effects will be.

*Fairness and Good Faith* – meetings must be conducted fairly and all presentations must be made with good faith.

### **Responsibilities of Presiding Officer**

The presiding officer is first among equal. Here are the most important responsibilities

- Ensuring Prior Notice
- Calling the meeting to order
- Establishing and Maintaining a quorum
- Securing the approval of the agenda and following the order of business.
- Recognizing members who are entitled to the floor

- ❑ Processing all motions
- ❑ Expediting business
- ❑ Ruling on points of order
- ❑ conducting the meeting in a fair and orderly manner

### **Agenda and Order of Business**

Order of business is the sequence of activities to be conducted during a business meeting. The order of business should be followed, but should be reasonably flexible.

To save time, the order of business can be planned and distributed in the form of an agenda ahead of the meeting. When the agenda has many items and the time is limited, the agenda should be divided into *consent agenda* and *priority agenda*. Consent agenda lists routine and non-controversial matters on which no debate is expected, and may be dispensed with in a short time, leaving the bulk of time to consider the priority agenda.

Parliamentary law has established the following pattern:

1. Call to order
2. Approval of minutes
3. Report of the Executive Committee or Council
4. Report of Secretary General
5. Directors Report
6. Reports of standing committees
7. Reports of Special committees
8. Unfinished business from previous meeting
9. New business
10. Announcement
11. Adjournment

### **Minutes**

Minutes for a meeting conducted under the Robert's Rules of Order typically are records of the decision made as specific motions, amendments and votes taken, rather than a transcript of the discussions. Such meeting minutes are thus shorter, and will have the actual decisions made by the members, with less interpretation of what happened by the organization's secretary, or the by the Chair of the meeting.

### **Types of Motions**

The term motion refers to either the question considered by the board or to the action it takes with regard to that question. Below are the most fundamental classification of motions:

*Main motions* – motions that brings before the meeting a question from the agenda.

*Subsidiary motions* – motions that relate to the main motion and help the board dispose of them. They are in order after the main motion is stated by the chair (step 3).

*Incidental motions* – motions that relate to the business or conduct of the meeting

*Privileged motions* – motions that relate to members and the organization. They are of highest priority and, without debate, can interrupt the consideration of anything else.

### **Main Motion Procedure**

Debate on the main motion begins when the presiding officer states

*Making a motion* – After obtaining the floor, the member should say: "I move that we adopt Robert's Rules as our parliamentary authority." It is not correct to say, "I make a motion that ..."

*Seconding a motion* – A member does not need to be recognized to second a motion but just states, "I second the motion" or simply "Second".  
*No second, no debate.*

*Stating the motion* – The Chair then reads aloud the motion (with a friendly amendment or otherwise). To do this the Chair announces: "It is moved and seconded that we adopt Robert's Rules as our parliamentary authority. Is there any discussion?" From this point the motion belongs to the board

*Debating the motion* – Rules of debate applies

*Putting the motion to vote* – Are you ready for the question. The question is on the adoption of the motion that we adopt Robert's Rules as our parliamentary authority. All those in favor please raise their hands. Please lower your hands. All those opposed please raise your hands. Please lower your hands. The affirmative has it and the motion is adopted.

### **Rules of Debate**

The debate or discussion of the main motion is a core of the board meeting, and begins when the presiding officer states the main motion. From now on the motion is owned by the entire board, and is subject to the following debate rules:

- Interrupting the member who has the floor without parliamentary authority constitutes a breach of the rules, unless this was done by the chair.
- Side conversations are not allowed and constitute breach of rules.
- All things being equal, the one who seeks to speak on the motion first should be recognized first.
- The member who introduced the motion is entitled to speak first.
- A member who has not spoken on a motion gets recognized before anyone who has.
- To ensure fairness the chair should alternate recognition between the motion proponents and opponents.
- A member may speak on a motion only twice and for up to 10 minutes.
- Members should direct all comments and questions to the chair.

### Obtaining the Floor

Members may only speak during a meeting when they *obtain the floor* by being recognized by the chair. After a member has been assigned the floor he cannot be interrupted by a member or the chair.

The most effective and customary way to request the floor is to say “Mr. Chair” or “Madam Chair.” The Chair recognizes a speaker by calling his/her name. The speakers may not be interrupted by another member, except by motion of privilege, but may be interrupted by the chair to ensure fair allocation of time. A member does not need recognition to introduce a motion of privilege.

Interruption of the member who obtained the floor is only permitted through one of the following subsidiary motions:

- Question of privilege
- Call for the orders of the day
- Point of order or appeal
- Objection to the consideration of the question
- Motion to reconsider

### Seconding the Motion

All main motions must be seconded to be valid. A motion that has not been seconded by another member of the board is not in order and must not be entertained. Some subsidiary motions also require seconding. However several subsidiary motions do not require a second to be valid. Below is a list of subsidiary motions that do not require a second:

- Question of Privilege
- Questions of Order
- Objection to the Consideration of a Question
- Call for Orders of the Day
- Call for Division of the Question (under certain circumstances)
- Call for Division of the Assembly (in voting)
- Call up Motion to Reconsider
- Filling Blanks
- Nominations
- Leave to Withdraw a Motion
- Inquiries of any kind

### Subsidiary Motions

Subsidiary motions relate to the main motion and help the board dispose of them. They are in order after the main motion is stated by the chair.

- Postpone temporarily (lay on the table) – places a motion in the care of the secretary until it is taken up again.
- Close debate (the previous question) – closes debate on a specific question.
- Limit or extend debate

- ❑ Postpone to a certain time
- ❑ Refer to a committee – sends a main question to a committee.
- ❑ Amend
- ❑ Postpone indefinitely

### **Incidental Motions**

Incidental motions relate to the business or conduct of the meeting. They may interrupt the speaker (except 4 & 6), and have not order of precedence. They need no seconding and are not debatable.

Point of order – requires the chair to make a ruling and enforce the rules

Appeal from the decision of the chair – takes the decision from the chair and places it with the board.

Object to the consideration of a question

Suspend the rules

Division of the assembly – forces vote counting

Division of the question – forces reading a document by paragraph

Parliamentary inquiry – clarifies rules

Point of information – clarifies main motion

### **Privileged Motions**

Privileged motions relate to board members and to the organization. They are of highest priority and, without debate, can interrupt the consideration of anything else.

- Fix the time to which to adjourn – Sets the time for another meeting to continue the business of the session. Does not adjourn the meeting.
- Adjourn – Closes the meeting.
- Recess – provides short break.
- Question of privilege – brings for an immediate consideration requests relating to the rights of board members.
- Call for the orders of the day – requires the board to follow the order of business.

### **Precedence and the Ladder of Motions**

When more than one motion is pending, the motion that has the highest “precedence” will be addressed first. Rules of Order stipulate the following order of precedence (ladder of motions):

- Fix the time to which to adjourn
- Adjourn
- Recess
- Raise a question of privilege
- Call for the orders of the day
- Lay on the table
- Previous question
- Limit or extend debate



- Postpone to a certain time
- Refer to a committee
- Secondary amendment – amend an amendment
- Primary amendment – amend a motion or resolution
- Postpone indefinitely
- Main motion

**Motion Expressions**

What to say when making a motion? Here are some standard motion expressions:

Fix the time to which to adjourn – *I move that when the meeting adjourns, it adjourns to meet tomorrow 9:00 am in this room*

Adjourn – *I move that the meeting adjourn*

Recess – *I move to recess for 15 minutes*

Raise a question of privilege – *Question of privilege*

Call for the orders of the day – *I call for the orders of the day*

Lay on the table – *I move to lay the motion on the table (or I move to table the motion)*

Previous question – *I move to close debate (or I move the previous question)*

Limit or extend the limits of debate – *I move to limit debate to a total of 30 minutes*

Postpone to a certain time – *I move to postpone this motion to our next regular meeting*

Commit or refer to a committee – *I move to refer the motion to the Finance Committee.*

Secondary amendment – amend an amendment –

Primary amendment – amend a motion or resolution – *I move to amend the motion A by [inserting, striking out, substituting, etc.] as follow:*

Postpone indefinitely – *I move to postpone motion A indefinitely*

Point of order – *point of order*

Appeal from the decision of the chair – *I appeal from the decision of the chair*

Objection to the consideration of a question – *I object to the consideration of the question*

Suspension of the rules – *I move to suspend the rules so we can we consider motion A [placed at the end of the agenda.]*

Division of assembly – *Division*

Division of the question – *I move that the motion be divided and we consider each of the recommendations separately.*

**Rules of Order in Action  
(Simulation)**

President       The meeting will come to order. [pause] Let us begin our meeting with recitation of Al-Fatiha.

The minutes of the previous meeting have been distributed. Are there any corrections to the minutes?

Member A       The first sentence of the third paragraph on page 2 should read "the Finance Committee met on October 15."

President       Are there any further corrections?

If there are no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected.

The next item of business is the Secretary General's report. The Secretary is recognized for 5 minutes.

Secretary       [highlights important points]

President       Are there any questions on the report?

Member B       Br. President.

President       Br. B

Member B       [puts the question to the Secretary]

Secretary       [respond to the question]

President       Are there any further questions?

If there are no further questions, the report will be filed.

The next item of business is the motion by Sr. C on attendance of Board meetings. Sr. C please state your motion.

Member C       I move that any Board member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings be considered to have abdicated his/her seat and shall be replaced by a new member to be appointed by the Board.

Member D       I second the motion.

Member A       Br. President, I wish to make a friendly amendment.

President       Br. A

Member A       I move to amend the motion by adding the following sentence: "The replacement shall become effective upon a simple majority vote conducted during a regular Board meeting."

Member C       I accept the amendment.

President       It is moved and seconded that "any Board member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings be considered to have abdicated his/her seat and shall be replaced by a new member to be appointed by the Board. The replacement shall become effective upon a simple majority vote conducted during a regular Board meeting."

Is there any discussion?

Member B       Br. President

President       Sr. B

Member B       This motion makes a lot of sense. A member who is not able to attend a single meeting in a whole year is no more an effective member of the Board, and has, for all practical purposes, forfeited his/her rights and duties.

Member D       Br. President

Member E       Br. President

- President Since the last speaker spoke in favor of the motion, who wishes to speak in opposition of the motion?
- Member E Br. President
- President Br. E
- Member E I don't think this is a good idea. A member may have compelling reasons not to attend three consecutive meetings, but may be able to attend all subsequent meeting and make substantial contributions to the Board.
- Member D Br. President
- President Br. D
- Member D I do see the need to take the circumstances of the member who is subject to replacement, and we should be willing to consider reasons for absenteeism. I move to amend the motion by inserting the following sentence at the end: "The Board shall entertain oral and/or written explanations by the member prior to considering replacement."
- Member E I second the motion.
- Member A Point of privilege!
- President State your point.
- Member A There is too much noise coming from the next room, and I can hardly hear the discussion.
- President Can someone find out what is going on in the next room?
- Secretary Members of the Youth Committee are using that room. I will make another room available to them.
- President It is moved and seconded that the motion be amended as stated. The question is now on amending to the main motion by inserting at the end of the motion that "the Board shall entertain oral and/or written explanations by the member prior to considering replacement." Those in favor, please raise your hands. Those opposed, please raise your hand. Please lower it. The affirmative has it and the motion is amended.
- Member B Br. President
- Member C Br. President
- President Sr. C
- Member C I move to close the debate [the previous question]
- Member A I second
- President It is moved and seconded to order the debate closed. Those in favor, please raise your hands. [pause] Please lower your hands. Those opposed [pause] please lower them. There are 2/3 in the affirmative, and the debate ordered closed.
- The question is now on the adoption of the motion that "any Board member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings be considered to have abdicated his/her seat and shall be replaced by a new member to be appointed by the Board. The replacement shall become affective upon a simple majority vote conducted during a regular Board meeting. The Board shall entertain oral and/or written explanations by the member prior to considering replacement."
- Those in favor, please raise your hands. [pause] Please lower your hands. Those opposed [pause] please lower them. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted.

- Member E I request vote count [call for a division]  
 President Vote count is requested. ...  
 Member B Parliamentary inquiry!  
 President State your inquiry.  
 Member B Br. President. It seems to me that the question of vote count is a main motion that requires seconding and voting, can you clarify this issue?  
*[The president may answer the question, or else refer the question to the organization's parliamentarian or to an expert]*  
 President I put the question to the parliamentarian (expert).  
 Expert Request of vote count is an incidental motion formally known in Robert's Rules of Order as "call for division of assembly." The motion requires an immediate attention, but no seconding, debate, or vote.  
 President The question is on the adoption of the motion that "any Board member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings be considered to have abdicated his/her seat and shall be replaced by a new member to be appointed by the Board. The replacement shall become effective upon a simple majority vote conducted during a regular Board meeting. The Board shall entertain oral and/or written explanations by the member prior to considering replacement."  
 Those in favor of the motion, please raise your hands. [count] Please lower your hands. Those opposed please raise your hands. [count] Please lower your hands. There are 12 in the affirmative and 10 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted.

# 12

## Arbitration Panels and Grievance Procedure

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There is no good in most of their private counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity, goodness, or reconciliation between people; and whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a mighty reward. (4:144)

Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, said that "all humans make mistakes, and the best of them are those who seek repentance. (*at-Trimidhi* 2499 and *Ibn Maajah* 4251)

Every human being is susceptible to making mistakes that could encroach into the rights of others. There is, therefore, a need to establish an adequate process by which such mistakes and grievances are rectified and the parties involved and/or the community at large is saved from any adverse effects.

The process provided here addresses the resolution of grievances among members of the Islamic center in general, or between members and the center's officers.

### **Pre-Arbitration Steps**

The initial efforts to resolve the conflict should encourage the contending parties to informally resolve the conflict themselves with the help of a mediator. The formal process of conflict resolution should be activated only when the parties fail to arrive at a resolution they themselves can accept.

When the parties are unable to resolve the conflict themselves, an Arbitration Panel should be named by the Board of Trustees, and each of the parties to the conflict/dispute should be asked to fill out and submit to the Board of Trustees Grievance Report Form.

### **The Arbitration Panel Procedures**

"BEHOLD, God commands you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with to their right claimers, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice. Verily, most excellent is what God exhorts you to do: verily, God is all-hearing, all-seeing!"  
(Al-Nisa 4: 58).

The following procedure shall be followed by any Arbitration Panel formed by the Board of Trustees to resolve any conflict or dispute among members of the Islamic Center that cannot be resolved through other mutually agreed upon means.

In choosing an Arbitration Panel to adjudicate a particular conflict, the Board of Trustees must observe the following:

1. The Arbitration Panel members must be fair and acceptable to all the parties in the conflict.

2. Each party to the conflict must sign a written statement stating that they have full confidence in the fairness of the Arbitration Panel members and its procedures and that they will abide by its decisions.

3. The Arbitration Panel members must be sworn in before the Board of Trustees, given all the documents relating to the dispute (including the signed statements by the parties in conflict that state their commitment to abide by the committee ruling), and asked to resolve the problem in a timely manner.

The Arbitration Panel should follow the following procedure in resolving the issue at hand:

1. All the proceedings of the Arbitration Panel must be conducted in confidence and all records of its activities must be protected from all others except the Arbitration Panel members. The contents of any session held with any party to the conflict and/or witness must not be divulged to any other party and/or witness.

2. All the proceedings of the Arbitration Panel must be written while they are taking place.

3. Initially the Arbitration Panel must meet with every party and witness to the conflict/dispute separately; inform each participant of the purpose; and ask each to give a complete, accurate, and written report of what has happened. The statement by each person must be signed and dated by that person with the members of the Arbitration Panel signing as witnesses.

4. The Arbitration Panel must then study in detail all the documents handed to it by the Board of Trustees and the signed statements of the previous step.

5. The Arbitration Panel must then meet with every party and witness to the conflict/dispute separately to depose each in detail in light of the study of the previous step. Every deposed party must take a testimony oath in the traditional Islamic manner. In this deposition process questions must be asked of the deposed to clarify and ascertain the facts in view of what others (parties and/or witnesses) have said. During this process everything must be written. At the end of each session the deposed must be given the chance to thoroughly read what is recorded and change anything that does not accurately state what he/she has said. Then the deposed must sign the record testifying that it is accurate. The record must also state the time, place, and the people in attendance.

6. The Arbitration Panel must then conduct study sessions to analyze the case and determine the course of action it needs to take. It may be necessary to depose some or all of the parties and/or witnesses again on new or previously covered issues, in which case the deposition must be conducted as outlined above. The process can be iteratively repeated until all the facts are ascertained.

7. The Arbitration Panel must then summarize the case and determine who, if any, is at fault and decide the course of action that needs to be taken to remedy the situation. The Arbitration Panel could take an arbitration route to settle the issue unless all or some of the parties refuse such course of action. As a final resort it should render its judgment in writing and in the presence of all the disputing parties.

8. The Arbitration Panel must then submit a written report to the Board of Trustees that summarizes what it did and attach all the interim documents that it generated.

9. The Board of Trustees must then take any necessary action that needs to be done and file the Arbitration Panel report and its attachment in a secure and confidential venue.





### **Dialogue in the Qur'an**

"So if they dispute with you, say: I have submitted my whole self to God and so have those who follow me. And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned: Do you (also) submit yourselves? If they do, they are in right guidance. But if they turn back, your duty is to convey the message; and in God's sight are (all) His servants." (Al Imran 3:20)

"O you who believe! Guard your own souls: If you follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is God: It is He that will show you the truth of all that you do." (Ma'idah 5:105)

### **First Christian-Muslim Dialogue**

Alnajashi (Negus) summoned the Muslims in his court and said, "What religion that led you to leave the religion of your people and stay away of my religion or religions?" Ja'far bin Abu Talib stepped forward and said: "O king of Abyssinia! We were a people of ignorance, who worshipped idols, ate un-slaughtered animals, committed sin, broke family ties, disregarded neighbors, and the strong among us abused the weak. Then God sent to us a messenger from among us, whose lineage, honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity were well known to us. He called us unto God, that we should testify to His Oneness and worship Him and renounce what we and our fathers had worshipped in the way of stones and idols; and he commanded us to speak truly, to fulfill our promises, to respect the ties of kinship and the rights of our neighbors, and to refrain from crimes and from bloodshed. ... Our people turned against us, and have persecuted us to make us forsake our religion and revert from the worship of God to the worship of idols."

The king once again summoned the Muslims and asked them about what they say about Jesus. The Muslim met together and then they agreed to be frank and tell the king what the Qur'an says about him. Again, Ja'ffar stood before the king and told him: "We say what the Prophet taught us: He is the servant of God, his messenger, and his spirit and word he gave to Mary. The king picked a straw from the ground, extended forward and said: Jesus didn't exceed what you said the magnitude of this straw."

### **Definitions**

**Debate:** a discussion between individuals with opposing view in which reasons are advanced for and against some proposition or proposal

**Dialogue:** An exchange among individuals and groups that aims to develop shared understanding and learn about each other's beliefs, feelings, interests, or needs in a non-adversarial setting and open atmosphere.

**Purpose**

The purpose of dialogue is to learn and increase one's own understanding. Participation in interfaith dialogue leads to:

- ❑ Understand our similarities and differences through theological and philosophical discussion on an intellectual level.
- ❑ Relearn the art of listening to each other.
- ❑ Value other people's spirituality by learning about different religions through stories and narratives.
- ❑ Work together on joint projects at multiple levels to bring greater justice, humanitarian aid, and peace to society.
- ❑ Operate in a peaceful atmosphere so that charitable and human service programs can be provided to everyone, regardless of religion.

**Dialogue aims at affirmation of one's values and beliefs, not denying the others.**

Engaging in interfaith dialogue does not in any way mean undermining one's own faith or religious tradition. Indeed, interfaith dialogue is constructive only when people become firmly grounded in their own religious traditions and through that process gain a willingness to listen and respect the beliefs of other religions.

**Principles**

- ❑ Participants should be engaged in dialogue within each religious community and with other religious communities. These should take place simultaneously.
- ❑ Participants should be honest, sincere, and desire to learn and grow together with respect.
- ❑ Do not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with the other's ideals and our practice with the other's practice.
- ❑ Each dialogue partner has the right to define his or her own religion and beliefs. The rest can only describe what it looks like to them from the outside.
- ❑ Participants should abandon all of their preconceptions in order to listen to others with sincerity and openness.
- ❑ Dialogue can take place only between equals. Therefore, do not try to dominate or treat others as inferior.
- ❑ Dialogue must take place in an atmosphere of mutual trust.
- ❑ Participants entering into dialogue must be willing to reflect upon themselves and their own religious tradition.
- ❑ Participants in dialogue should attempt to experience how others' traditions affect them holistically.

**Ethical Guidelines**

**Practice Fairness:** When speaking for or about another faith, speak in a way that people of that religion can affirm as accurate.

**Express Empathy:** Each side must make an honest effort to appreciate the appeal of the other religion to those who are attracted to it and to understand its meaning and functions for them and how it makes sense to them.

**Avoid Misusing Scripture:** No one shall attempt to use one's own religion to dismiss another religion as invalid.

**Show Reciprocity:** Each side should apply the same standard to itself that it applies to others.

**Stay Open to Being Changed and Challenged:** Each participant shall stay open to all suggestions and be ready to accept a collective opinion that contradicts any participant's belief.

**Steer Clear of Denunciations or Debates:** Dialogue is not a debate, and no dialogue can take place when one side seeks to denounce the other.

**Be Cautious of Making Sweeping Generalizations:** Broad generalizations obscure the ambiguities within religions and the differences among them.

### Types of Dialogue

Two major types of interfaith dialogue can be identified

- Dialogue on religion – undertaken by communities
- Dialogue on theology – involving religious scholars and leaders

### Interfaith Programs

- National Muslim-Christian Initiative in North America
- Midwest Regional Muslim-Catholic Dialogue
- Muslim Christian Initiative on Nuclear Weapons Danger
- Jewish-Muslim Dialogue
- House of Abraham

### Muslim Christian Dialogues

#### *National Muslim-Christian Initiative in North America*

This initiative launched early this year aims at facilitating greater understanding between the two religious communities through dialogue, education and sustained visible encounters that foster and nurture relationships. The initiative was sparked by concerns from both Christians and Muslims over the misrepresentation of Islam and stereotyping of Muslims in North America.

#### *Midwest Regional Muslim-Catholic Dialogue*

An Annual meeting organized by US Catholic of Bishops and the Islamic Society of North America. The Midwest dialogue involves religious leaders and

scholars, and aims at explaining theological and spiritual aspects of Islam and Catholicism.

Website: <http://www.isna.net/Interfaith/pages/Midwest-Dialogue.aspx>

### **Muslim Christian Initiative on Nuclear Weapons Danger**

A joint effort by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy (CTTPP) to enable Muslims and Christians in the U.S. to work to end the nuclear weapons danger.

Website: <http://www.mci-nwd.org/>

### **Muslim-Jewish Dialogue**

The dialogue announced in late 2007 is organized by the major Jewish and Muslim organizations, the Union of Reform Judaism and the Islamic Society of North America.

The two organizations unveiled an interfaith dialogue curriculum in February and are urging their hundreds of thousands of members to use it. It is the broadest Jewish-Muslim interfaith effort in the continent's history.

### **Interfaith Cooperation**

#### *House of Abraham*

Muslims throughout this country are involved with non-Muslims in building homes for Habitat for Humanity. Members work together to raise funds and renovate or build new homes for the less fortunate.

### **Interfaith Themes**

- Social Justice and Civil Rights
- Religion and Race
- Women's Rights
- Humanitarian Aid
- Crime, Gambling, and Other Issues
- Family and Traditions
- Extremism and Fundamentalism
- Forgiveness and Mercy

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## **About the Author**

Louay Safi is the executive director of ISNA Leadership Development Center and a recognized authority on Islam and the Middle East. He writes and lectures on issues relating to Islam and modernity, American Muslims, democracy, human rights, leadership, and world peace. He is the author of eight books and numerous papers, including *The Qur'anic Narrative* (Praeger 2008), *Tensions and Transitions in the Muslim World* (University Press of America 2003), and *Peace and the Limits of War* (International Institute of Islamic Thought 2001).

## **ISNA Leadership Development Center**

ISNA Leadership Development Center (ILDC) was established in 2004 to help develop leadership capacity in the American Muslim community. It does that by publishing guides and other resources, and by offering leadership training. ILDC offers full program of intensive leadership training. Please visit our website at [www.ILDC.net](http://www.ILDC.net) or contact us at (317) 839-1807

For further information or to schedule "Leading with Compassion" workshops, please visit [www.cLeaders.org](http://www.cLeaders.org)