

Exemplary Muslim PR Personalities

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This article discusses the characteristics of five effective public relations practitioners and communicators personalities in the Muslim world. Five prominent Muslims were selected. It begins with Prophet Muhammad SAW who the International Muslim Public Relations Council (IMPRC) had selected as the founder of Muslim Public Relations (PR) practice and the best ever PR Practitioner. The prophet greatness in PR practice is seen both from Muslims and non-Muslims perspectives. The article discusses not only the words of Muhammad but also his deeds. His PR greatness is seen by his integrity and achievements that lead Michael Hart to choose him as the greatest person having walked this earth. Actually not only Hart had chosen him as the greatest other non-Muslims notables like Alphonse de Lamartine, William Montgomery Watt, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Edward Gibbon, John William Draper and Washington Irving. Some important statements uttered by the Prophet were also discussed as to how it relate to good PR practice. It must be said that Prophet Muhammad SAW is the most quoted person in history. His words and actions have become the guiding lights of Muslims and Islamic nation across the ages. Almost all of his actions and the words he uttered was recorded and being used as a model to every Muslims. Thus, very rightly so he should be guiding light of every Muslim Public Relations professional and to IAMPRC. After him came his four closest companions who practiced excellent PR that lead to the rapid spread of Islam which in no small measures were due to their exemplary public relations characteristics and abilities. For example, all four companions were men of beautiful words as well as deed of which each have their own significant contributions to Islam rapid growth. However, each of these exemplary PR personalities has their own uniqueness that modern Muslim PR practitioners can learn from. The approach to this article has been narrative and anecdotal of which mostly are gathered from literature reviews.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad SAW, Abu Bakr RA, Umar RA, Uthman RA, Ali Ibn Talib RA, public relations, communication, IMPRC, engagement and consultation.

Introduction

In today's fast moving and increasingly challenging world for Muslims globally it is essential to offer the public relations and communication experts with the proper models and understanding of Islam. This is because recently, incidents of perceived Islamic terrorism are

increasingly occurring on a global scale. It happened not only in Muslim dominant countries but also in non-Muslims majority nations, attacking Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

However, although Islamic terrorism existence is not disputed, the blanket usage of the terms "Muslim terrorists" or "Islamic fanatics" is considered unfair or unjust. At best the labels have been considered as "unhelpful", "highly politicized" or "politically motivated". Thus, it has been accused as "intellectually contestable" and "damaging to community relations". In turn, this view has been criticized as an act of evasion. This is because other religious groups also have their own brands of terrorism, may they be Hindus, Buddhists, Christianity and the list continues.

Hence, in today's world it has become extremely difficult to find role models that can guide Muslims communication experts to have a perfect role model as to reach the peak of their PR profession. Nevertheless, it has been said that the chief characteristics great people share across time is that they are credible and very effective communicators .as well as highly skillful public relations practitioners.

Prophet Muhammad SAW

I believe very rightly so, the 1st IAMPRC Global Congress had selected the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the 1st Muslim PR practitioners and the greatest. There is no person in history so much maligned and yet be redeeming always than the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Recently, those who cast aspersions on the Prophet Muhammad SAW are not scholars. Rather, they are people who never take the time to study him carefully and in details. Surely, it will make Muslims worldwide react to such blasphemy. Some can include violence leading to death of innocence people. Whom should we blame for such incidents? Is it the perpetrators of the blasphemy or those who feel that they have been maligned?

The western ideology tends to uphold their principle of freedom of speech even though they know it can lead to dire consequences when they insult other people religions. This is especially so, when they try to impose their will upon others and uphold their self perceived superiority complexes.

For effective public relations to prevail, the personalities must internalize total sincerity and integrity for him or her to be vindicated. Muslims know that due to Prophet Muhammad SAW upright character he acquired the nickname "al-Amin" meaning "faithful, trustworthy" and "al-Sadiq" meaning "truthful". For this, he was often sought out as an impartial arbitrator. Muhammad SAW excellent reputation attracted Khadijah. She was a 40-year-old widow, 15 years older than he and his employer to propose to him and Muhammad consented. Their marriage was blissful and lasted till Khadijah died.

The Prophet Muhammad SWT always practices effective communication and public relations as well as public diplomacy when embarking on his missions. When Muhammad SAW was the virtual ruler of Arabia, he dispatched ambassadors to the Eastern Rome, Egypt and Abyssinia to spread Islam. Some of his communication receives encouraging response while others negative and even violent. However, Prophet Muhammad SAW never stops communicating. His persistent and consistent communication saw the successful spread of Islam despite very strong resistance that sometime can be aggressive and even violence.

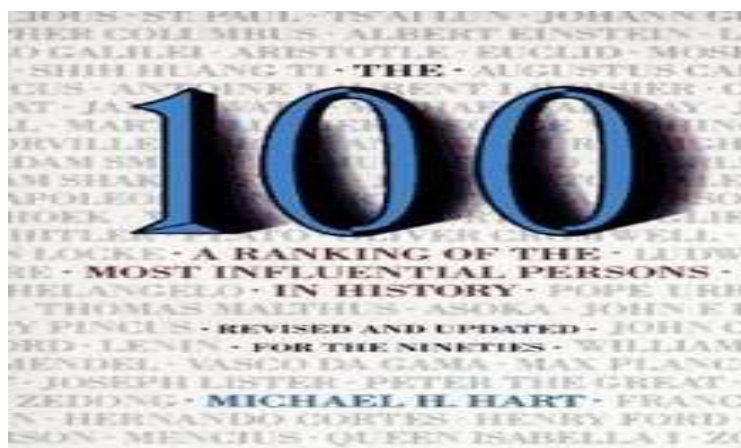


In the 21st century, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, Islam is the world's fastest-growing religion calculated by the large number of conversions annually. Although Islam began in Arabia, by 21st century about 80% of Muslims lived outside the Arab world. In the period 1990-2000, approximately 12.5 million more people have reportedly converted or reverted to Islam than to Christianity (Guinness World Records, 2003 p. 142). This was again shown in the 2005, 50th anniversary edition of Guinness Book of World Records, although the number of conversions was not mentioned this time (Guinness World Records 2005: Special 50th Anniversary Edition). It is without any doubt that Muhammad SAW had the greatest effects and influence on world events and its history.

Thus, some very prominent non-Muslims have only the highest respect for Prophet Muhammad SAW. They included academics, writers, philosophers, poets, politicians, and activists belonging to the East and the West. However, none of them were reported to become Muslims. Their opinions, therefore, reflect their personal views on various aspects of the life of the Prophet and making them very credible PR for Muhammad SAW.

Michael H. Hart (1932-) Professor of astronomy, physics and history of science said that "his choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history

who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level." [*The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, New York, 1978, p. 33]



Thus, in compiling a ranking list of the 100 most influential persons in the history of the entire humanity, in a book entitled "***The 100 most influential persons***", published in 1978 by Hart Publishing Company Inc. he ranked Prophet Muhammad SAW as the number one. Hart asserted that Muhammad SAW was "supremely successful" in both the religious and secular realms. He believed that Muhammad's role in Islam development was far more influential than Jesus' effort in Christianity expansion which was attributed to Paul, one of his disciples.

According to Hart (1978), the Prophet Muhammad SAW was the sole personality in history who was supremely successful on the religion and secular levels plus being a brilliant military leader. In fact, as the driving force behind the Arab conquest, Muhammad SAW may well rank as the most influential leader of all time. The Arab conquests of the seventh century have continued to play a crucial role in human history till today. Thus Hart concluded (1978): "It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence that entitles Prophet Muhammad SAW to be considered the most influential single figure in human history."

Further, William Montgomery Watt, University of Edinburgh Professor (Emeritus) of Arabic and Islamic Studies said of the Prophet: "His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad." [*Mohammad At Mecca*, Oxford, 1953, p. 52]

Earlier, a French poet and statesman, Alphonse de Lamartine (1854), in his book *Histoire De La Turquie* praised the Prophet:

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, which could dare to compare a great man in modern history with Muhammad? He was a philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of spiritual empire that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"



Reverend Bosworth Smith (1794-1884) Late Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, also praised Muhammad SAW, "... he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions and Caesar without the legions of Caesar. Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without fixed revenue, if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right Divine, it was Mohammed; for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports." *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, London, 1874, p. 235]

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) the Indian thinker, statesman, and nationalist leader also had the highest regard for Prophet Muhammad SAW. Gandhi noted: "...I became in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every trouble." [*Young India* (periodical), 1928, Volume X]

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) considered the greatest British historian of his time earlier also wrote: "The greatest success of Mohammad's life was affected by sheer moral force without the stroke of a sword" [*History of the Saracen Empire*, London, 1870]. He added: "His (i.e., Muhammad's) memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid and decisive. He possessed the courage of

both thought and action." [*History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London, 1838, vol.5, p.335]

John William Draper, an American philosopher, historian and scientist also wrote very positively of the Prophet: "Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born at Mecca, in Arabia the man who, of all men exercised the greatest influence upon the human race . . . Mohammed." [*A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, London, 1875, vol.1, pp. 329-330]

David George Hogarth, an English author, archaeologist, and keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, further wrote full of compliments about the Prophet Muhammad: "Serious or trivial, his daily behaviour has instituted a canon which millions observe this day with conscious mimicry. No one regarded by any section of the human race as Perfect Man has been imitated so minutely. The conduct of the Founder of Christianity has not so governed the ordinary life of His followers. Moreover, no Founder of a religion has been left on so solitary an eminence as the Muslim Apostle." [*Arabia*, Oxford, 1922, p. 52]

Washington Irving, well-known as the "first American man of letters" similarly lavished praised of Prophet Muhammad: "He was sober and abstemious in his diet, and a rigorous observer of fasts. He indulged in no magnificence of apparel, the ostentation of a petty mind; neither was his simplicity in dress affected, but the result of a real disregard to distinction from so trivial a source ... In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and poor, the powerful and the weak, with equity, and was beloved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints ... His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vain glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity. So far from affecting regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room, any unusual testimonial of respect were shown to him." [*Life of Mahomet*, London, 1889, pp. 192-3, 199]

Similarly, Annie Besant, British theosophist and India nationalist leader and President of the Indian National Congress in 1917 admitted: "It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher." [*The Life and Teachings of Muhammad*, Madras, 1932, p. 4]

Afzalur Rahman, a renowned Islamic scholar declared that Prophet Muhammad SAW is the greatest educator of humankind. Rahman (1980) wrote; "Muhammad was not educated in any school or university nor did he learn reading or writing in his boyhood. He was totally illiterate. But he was able to teach psychology, philosophy and the principles of education to his companions. He taught them the fundamental principles of morality, ethics and religion and the wealth of eternal values and standards which formed the basis of their culture in all its many dimensions, including education, literature, philosophy, economics, architecture, physics, medicine, astronomy, politics, business science, psychology, physiology, biology, and scores of other fields of knowledge."

Rahman (1980) further described the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "The unlettered prophet, who's Message for the masses, proclaimed the value of knowledge and learning. By the pen, man is to be judged. The pen is the ultimate arbiter of human actions..."

In addition, the most quoted person in history is almost always attributed to Prophet Muhammad SAW. His words and actions have become the guiding lights of Muslims and Islamic nation across the ages. Almost all of his actions and the words he uttered was recorded and served as models to every Muslims. Thus, very rightly so he should be guiding light of every Muslim Public Relations professionals and to IAMPRC.

Six of the Prophet Muhammad SAW sayings or hadiths that I feel would be useful for PR and communications experts are:

1. *"Believers are accessible and mild (easy to reach, to talk to and ever willing to help (Tirmizi).*
2. *Believers are not one who taunts or curses or acts indecently or speaks vulgar languages (Tirmizi).*
3. *Indeed, modesty and faith are companions. Thus, if one of the two is removed then the other is also removed (Tirmizi).*
4. *The best among you is he from whom good is expected and there is confidence (among people) that no harm (evil) will come from him. And the worst of you is he from whom good is not expected and from whose mischief there is no security for the people (Tirmizi: Narrated by Abu Hurayah).*
5. *Believers who have the most perfect faith are those whose manners are the best (Abu Dawood: Narrated by Abu Hurayah).*
6. *A Believer is one who loves. And, he has no good in him who does not love and whom people do not love (Ahmad: Narrated by Abu Hurayah)."*

Abu BakAr Al-Siddig (Ra)

Abu Bakar RA the first Muslim Caliph following Muhammad's death ruled from 632–634 CE. He succeeded to the political and administrative functions previously exercised by Muhammad through a kind of an election. Abu Bakar RA was called *Al-Siddiq* (The Truthful) of which he was also known among Muslims of later generations.

Abu Bakar RA was Prophet Muhammad SAW senior companion (*Sahabi*), father-in-law and a trusted advisor till the Messenger death. He was a very gentle, soft-spoken and kind-hearted person. He was instrumental in bringing Mecca's influential personalities to Islam and saviour of many of the most unfortunate early Muslims, especially the slaves.

However, when occasion demanded, Abu Bakar RA was very decisive in his words and actions. A notable example was when the Prophet died and chaos looming. The news of Muhammad's death shocked the Muslims. How could it be they asked? Muhammad SAW had been ill for some days, the Muslims knew. But death was unbelievable. A huge crowd gathered in the mosque. No one knew what to do. There was utter confusion.

Omar RA, another Sahabi of the Prophet was so overcome with emotion that he drew his sword and declared: "If anyone says that the Messenger of Allah is dead. I will cut off his head!" Things were utterly chaotic when Abu Bakar RA entered the mosque. Finding the holy Prophet better that morning, Abu Bakar had gone a few miles outside of Medina but had quickly returned on hearing the shocking sad news. Abu Bakar RA stood in a corner of the courtyard and called out to the people. All eyes were upon him as he began his most famous address:

"O people! If anyone among you worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead. But those who worship Allah, let him know that He lives and will never die. Let all of us recall the words of the Qur'an. It says, 'Muhammad is only a Messenger of Allah. There have been Messengers before him. What then, will you turn back from Islam, if he dies or is killed?'"

Upon hearing these words, the Muslims crowd realised that death was inevitable even for a Prophet like Muhammad SAW standing. Everyone calmed down.

Abu Bakar RA first address as caliph was:

"I have been given the authority over you, and I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; and if I do wrong, set me right. Sincere regard for truth is loyalty and disregard for truth is treachery. The weak amongst you shall be strong with me until I have secured his rights, if God wills; and the strong amongst you shall be weak with me until I have wrested from him the rights of others, if God wills. Obey me so long as I obey God and His Messenger. But if I disobey God and His Messenger, ye owe me no obedience. Arise for your prayer, God have mercy upon you."

Such was the promise given by Abu Bakar, Islam first Caliph to his subjects, on the first day of his rule, without their asking. Abu Bakar led by example. He showed that in Islam government means government of the people, by the people and for the people and he fully practices it.

Below are a few significant sayings of Abu Bakr that I feel will be useful to PR practitioners and communicators:

1. "No speech is good if it is not directed toward the pleasure of Allah.
2. "There is no benefit from money if it isn't spent in the cause of Allah."
3. "There is no good in a person if his ignorance overcomes his patience. And if a person becomes attracted by the charms of this lower world, Allah will dislike him as long as he keeps this in his heart."

It is noted that when Abu Bakar RA was praised by people he would pray to Allah saying: "O Allah, You know me better than I know myself, and I know myself better than these people who praise me. Make me better than what they think of me, and forgive those sins of mine of which they have no knowledge, and do not hold me responsible for what they say."

Abu Bakr advised to Usama Zayed before leaving on a military expedition is also useful for today's PR professionals. His advice include:

"Look! Be not dishonest. Do not deceive anyone. Do not hide the booty you get. Do not mutilate anyone. Do not kill the aged, the children and the women. Do not set fire to date-palms. Do not cut down fruit trees. Do not slaughter a goat, or a cow, or a camel, except for purposes of food."

Clearly and sadly his sound advice were not heeded by many current Muslim groups who claimed to champion Islam but inevitably projected a very bad image of Islam.

Abu Bakar is reported to have given similar instructions to all his commanders:

1. "Always fear Allah. He knows what is in men's hearts."
2. "Be kind to the men under you and treat them well."
3. "Directions given should be brief. If too long, they are likely to be forgotten."
4. "Improve your conduct first; others will improve when they see your example."
5. "Honour the representatives of the enemy."
6. "Keep your own arrangement a secret."
7. "Be always truthful so you can get good advice."
8. "At night when you are free, sit among your men. This will keep you in touch with

them."

9. "Make good arrangements for the watch and ward of the army."
10. "Keep away from untruthful men. Be intimate with truthful and faithful companions."
11. "Be sincere to all whom you have dealings."
12. "Beware of cowardice and dishonesty."
13. "You will come across people who have given up the world and are spending their days in place of worship. Leave such people alone."

I believe the above advice is equally relevant to today's Muslim Public Relations

Practitioners.

Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (RA)

Umar Ibn Al Khattab (RA), the second caliph of Islam was one of the most powerful and influential Muslim rulers. He was one of the Prophet Muhammad SAW closest companions. Born in Mecca around 581 to the Adi clan of the Quraish tribe, Umar RA belonged to a middle-class family. It was reported he became a literate through his own effort.

Umar RA was well known for his physical strength and a champion wrestler. When Prophet Muhammad SAW first declared his message of Islam, Umar RA believed Islam was heretical rhetoric against the Quraish and his ancestors. He resolved to kill Prophet Muhammad SAW. Umar RA was stopped on his way to Muhammad's house and was told of his sister's conversion to Islam. Umar RA was initially angered by the news. However, after reading a verse from the Quran he was instantly transformed. Rather than killing Muhammad SAW, he accepted Islam and became one of the Prophet closest companions. Umar RA was part of the first emigration to Medina.

Umar RA succeeded Abu Bakr RA (632–634) as the second Rashidun Caliphate on 23 August 634. He was an expert jurist and is best known for his justice, which earned him the title *Al-Farooq* (*The one who distinguishes between right and wrong*).

Umar RA expanded the Islamic empire at an unprecedented rate ruling the whole Sassanid Persian Empire and more than two thirds of the Eastern Roman Empire. His attacks against the Sassanid Persian Empire resulted in the conquest of the Persian empire in less than two years.

According to Jewish tradition it was Umar RA who set aside the Christian ban on Jews and allowed Jews into Jerusalem and to worship. Even though almost all of the Muslims had given their pledge of loyalty, Umar RA, was more feared than loved. The first challenge for Umar was to win over his subjects and members of Majlis al Shura. He was a gifted orator, and used this talent to get a soft corner in the hearts of the Muslims. On Friday prayers Umar RA addressed the people

as follow: "*Brethren, it has come to my notice that the people are afraid of me..... they say that he (Umar) has become the Caliph now, God knows how hard he will be. Whoever has said this is not wrong in his assessment..... know ye brethren that you will feel a change in me. For those who practise tyranny and deprive others of their rights, I will be harsh and stern, but for those who follow the law, I will be most soft and tender.*"

Umar's emphasize on the well being of the poor and underprivileged enhanced his popularity among the people. His general instructions to his officers were: "*Remember, I have not appointed you as commanders and tyrants over the people. I have sent you as leaders instead, so that the people may follow your example. Give the Muslims their rights and do not beat them lest they become abused. Do not praise them unduly, lest they fall into the error of conceit. Do not keep your doors shut in their faces, lest the more powerful of them eat up the weaker ones. And do not behave as if you were superior to them, for that is tyranny over them.*"

Further, Umar RA introduced other strict codes of conduct that were to be obeyed by his governors and state officials. The principal officers were required to travel to Mecca on the occasion of the Hajj, during which people were free to present any complaint against them. In order to minimize the chances of corruption, Umar RA made it a point to pay high salaries to the staff.

Washington Irving in his book *Mahomet and His Successors* evaluated Umar RA achievements as follows: "*The whole history of Umar shows him to have been a man of great powers of mind, inflexible integrity, and rigid justice. He was, more than anyone else, the founder of the Islam Empire; confirming and carrying out the inspirations of the prophet; aiding Abu Bakar with his counsels during his brief caliphate; and establishing wise regulations for the strict administration of the law throughout the rapidly-extending bounds of the Moslem conquests. The rigid hand which he kept upon his most popular generals in the midst of their armies, and in the most distant scenes of their triumphs, gave signal evidence of his extraordinary capacity to rule. In the simplicity of his habits, and his contempt for all pomp and luxury, he emulated the example of his mentor the Prophet Muhammad SAW and Abu Bakar RA. He endeavored incessantly to impress the merit and policy of the same in his letters to his generals.*"

In addition, Sir William Muir in his book *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall* described Umar RA as follows: "Simplicity and duty were his guiding principles; impartiality and devotion the leading features of his administration. The various tribes and bodies in the empire, representing interests the most diverse, reposed in his integrity implicit confidence, and his strong arm maintained the discipline of law and empire. ... Whip in hand, he would perambulate the streets and markets of Medina, ready to punish slanders on the spot; and so the proverb, 'Umar's whip

more terrible than another's sword.' But with all this he was tender-hearted and numberless acts of kindness are recorded of him, such as relieving the wants of the widow and the fatherless."

Further, Professor Philip Khuri Hitti in his book *History of the Arabs*, also positively assessed Umar's achievements as follows: "Simple and frugal in manner, energetic and talented, Umar who was of towering height, strong physique and bald-headed, continued at least for some time after becoming caliph to support himself by trade and lived throughout his life in a style as unostentatious as that of a Bedouin sheikh. In fact Umar, whose name according to Moslem tradition is the greatest in early Islam after that of Muhammad has been idolized by Moslem writers for his piety, justice and patriarchal simplicity and treated as the personification of all the virtues a caliph ought to possess. His irreproachable character became an exemplar for all conscientious successors to follow. He owned, we are told, one shirt and one mantle only, both conspicuous for their patchwork, slept on a bed of palm leaves and had no concern other than the maintenance of the purity of the faith, the upholding of justice and the ascendancy and security of Islam and the Arabians. Arabic literature is replete with anecdotes extolling Umar's stern character."

Even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* positively described Umar as follows: "To Umar's ten years' Caliphate belong for the most part the great conquests. He himself did not take the field, but remained in Medina; he never, however, suffered the reins to slip from his grasp, so powerful was the influence of his personality and the Moslem community of feeling. His political insight is shown by the fact that he endeavoured to limit the indefinite extension of Moslem conquest, and to maintain and strengthen the national Arabian character of the commonwealth of Islam; also by his making it his foremost task to promote law and order in its internal affairs. The saying with which he began his reign will never grow antiquated: 'By God, he that is weakest among you shall be in my sight the strongest, until I have vindicated for him his rights; but him that is strongest will I treat as the weakest, until he complies with the laws.' It would be impossible to give a better general definition of the function of the State." (*Saudi Aramco World*, (January-February 2002); Wikipedia).

Thus, Umar's conduct of the state affairs is exemplary. That is, by his leadership by example approach. He combined innovation with the strict observance of Islamic teaching, firmness with kind-heartedness, and toughness with a keen sense of justice and responsibility for his subjects' welfare.

During his tenure, many vital administrative institutions were established. Most essential was that his people had easy access to him and he personally did his rounds in an effort to gain

feedback and make adequate situation appraisals and the ability to take appropriate and speedy actions based on insights gained. This practice should be emulated by those who desire to achieve the top as communicator or PR professionals, especially in today's very competitive and globalized world.

Uthman ibn Affan RA

Uthman ibn Affan RA was one of Prophet Muhammad SAW closest companion and the fifth person embracing Islam. Uthman RA became the third Caliph at 65 years old succeeding Umar ibn al-Khattab. Under his leadership, the Muslim empire expanded into Fars (present-day Iran), some areas of Khorasan (present-day Afghanistan) and Armenia. Some of Uthman's notable achievements included his economic reforms and the compilation of the Quran into the unified, authoritative text that is known today.

During Uthman RA reign, differences in reading the Quran in different dialects of Arabic language became obvious due to the Islamic empire rapid expansion. A group of companions, headed by Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman came to Uthman and urged him to "save the Muslim ummah before they differ about the Quran". Uthman RA obtained the complete manuscript of the Quran from one of Prophet Muhammad SAW wives, Hafsa. She had been entrusted to keep the manuscript ever since the Quran was comprehensively compiled during Abu Bakar RA reign, the first Caliph. Uthman RA summoned the leading compiling authority, Zayd ibn Thabit, and some other Muhammad SAW companions to make copies of the manuscript. Zayd was appointed to head the task. The style of Arabic dialect used was that of the Quraysh tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged. Hence this style was emphasized over all others.

Uthman RA was famed for his good looks, immense generosity and for his spiritual closeness to Prophet Muhammad SAW. The Prophet included him among the ten personalities who were assured of Paradise. Uthman RA commanded the Muslim armies during an age of miraculous conquest and victory in East and West. However, he remained famously humble. His sermons brought people to tears. He said: *"I am astounded at four people: he who knows the world to be temporary, and still chases after it; he who is certain of death and yet makes no plans for it; he who believes in hell, and yet commits sins; and he who believes in Allah, and yet seeks the help of others."*

During Umar rule there was a severe famine. People of Medina were starving due to food shortages. A caravan made up of a thousand camels loaded with a large stock of food grains belonging to Uthman arrived from Shaam (Syria). Several merchants offered to buy all of it. He asked them what profit they would pay. "Five per cent," they said. He answered: "he could get

higher profit than that." They began to argue with him, saying that they did not know of any merchant who would offer him more than their quote.

He reminded them: "I know of one who repays a profit of more than seven hundred to a dirham (Arabian currency)." He then recited the verse of the Quran in which Allah mentioned this profit: "The likeness of those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah is as the likeness of a grain (of corn); it grows seven years, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to which He pleases. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower." (2:261). "O traders! Bear witness with me that I donate all this to the poor people of Medina!" declared Uthman.

Uthman was well known for his extreme generosity. During Muhammad's time, while in Medina, he financed the project for the construction of the Al-Masjid al-Nabawi and purchased the well *Beer Rauma*, which he dedicated to the free use of all Muslims. Uthman's generosity continued after he became caliph. He perhaps could be a most worthy model of today's corporate captains with regard to social responsibility.

However, one of Uthman failings was he was accused of practicing nepotism which lead to his assassination. It is a very important lesson for all to avoid practicing nepotism as even the best reputation can be tarnished because of it.

Ali Ibn Talib RA

Ali Ibn Talib RA was Muhammad SAW cousin and son-in-law. He ruled over the Islamic Caliphate from 656 to 661. A son of Abu Talib, Ali RA was Islam first male convert. Among Prophet Muhammad SAW closest companions, Ali was the most knowledgeable. He had thorough knowledge of the Qur'an, and its interpretation. He was the best of all judges, and the most eloquent orator.

Sunnis consider Ali the fourth and final of the *Rashidun* (rightly guided Caliphs), while Shias regard Ali RA as the first Imam. The Shias consider Ali RA and his descendants the rightful successors to Muhammad, all of which are members of the Ahl al-Bayt, the household of Muhammad SAW. This disagreement split the *Ummah* (Muslim community) into the Sunni and Shia branches.

Ali RA was famous for his humility and lack of worldliness. When he became Caliph his clothes were very simple and inexpensive. When he was remarked about it his response was: "This takes me furthest from vanity and is an example for Muslims to follow".

Among Muslims, Sunni and Shia alike, Ali RA is respected for his courage, knowledge, belief, honesty, unbending devotion to Islam, deep loyalty to Muhammad, equal treatment of all Muslims

and generosity in forgiving his defeated enemies. Due to this, he is central to mystical traditions in Islam such as Sufism. Ali RA retains his stature as an authority on Quranic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence and religious thought. Ali RA holds a high position in almost all Sufi orders which trace their lineage to Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Ali RA was frequently honoured by being assigned to carry Prophet Muhammad SAW official flag in the battlefields. His bravery is well known in Islamic history. He was always at the forefront of the Muslim army in every battle he participated.

Besides his courage, Ali RA was known for his deep knowledge, wisdom, humility and other-worldliness. After the Prophet's SAW death, Ali RA proved to be sincere advisor and supporter of all three Righteous Caliphs before him. Ali RA offered them counsel and helped them with affairs of the growing Muslim state. Many a Muslim seeking religious advice or official opinion was often referred to Ali RA. This is due to Ali's RA deep knowledge, profound understanding of Islam and his wisdom in the execution of justice.

Among the many stories revealing Ali's RA greatness is the case of dispute between him the Caliph and a Jew over a coat of arms that belonged to him but was taken by the Jew. This Commander of Believers and Head of State himself took one of his citizens to court to settle a dispute. He lost his case. The judge had to favour the Jew since Ali's witnesses were his children and his servant. However, Ali RA the Caliph accepted the judgement gracefully. His attitude and action impressed the Jew so much that he converted to Islam and returned the coat of arms, which he had wrongly taken. Ali RA in appreciating his action gave it back to him as a gift.

Thus, unsurprisingly the United Nations has advised Arab countries to take Ali bin Abi Talib RA as a model in establishing a regime based on justice and democracy and encouraging knowledge. The UNDP in its 2002 Arab Human Development Report, distributed around the world, listed six sayings of Ali RA about ideal governance. They include: "i. Consultation between the ruler and the ruled, ii. Speaking out against corruption and other wrong doings, iii. Ensuring justice to all, and iv. Achieving domestic development."

According to the UNDP most regional countries are still far lagging from other nations in democracy, wide political representation, women's participation, development and knowledge. It quoted the following sayings of Ali RA in its **2002 Arab Human Development Report:**

1. "He who has appointed himself an Imam (ruler) of the people must begin by teaching himself before teaching others. His teaching of others must be first by setting an example rather than with his words, for he who begins by teaching and educating himself is more worthy of respect than he who teaches and educates others."
2. "Your concern with developing the land should be greater than your concern for collecting

taxes, for the latter can only be obtained by developing; whereas he who seeks revenue without development destroys the country and the people."

3. "Seek the company of the learned and the wise in search of solving the problems of your country and the righteousness of your people."
4. "No good can come out in keeping silent to the government or in speaking out of ignorance."
5. "The righteous are men of virtue, whose logic is straightforward, whose dress is unostentatious, whose path is modest, whose actions are many and who is undeterred by difficulties."
6. "Choose the best among your people to administer justice among them. Choose someone who does not easily give up, who is unruffled by enmities, someone who will not persist in wrong doings, who will not hesitate to pursue right once he knows it, someone whose heart knows no greed, who will not be satisfied with a minimum of explanation without seeking the maximum of understanding, who will be the most steadfast when doubt is cast, who will be the least impatient in correcting the opponent, the most patient in pursuing the truth, the most stern in meting out judgment, someone who is unaffected by flattery and not swayed by temptation and these are but few."

A saying of Ali RA that I feel is essential to PR practice is, "A man should never expect anything save from his Lord, and have fear except from his sins. A man who lacks knowledge should not shy away from asking about what he does not know, and a man of learning should never be too shy to admit his ignorance by saying, 'Allah knows best'. Patience and perseverance are to faith what the head is to the body. He who has no patience and perseverance has no faith."

English historian and Member of Parliament, Edward Gibbon in his most important work, ***The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*** wrote this of Ali RA: "The birth, the alliance, the character of Ali, which exalted him above the rest of his countrymen, might justify his claim to the vacant throne of Arabia. The son of Abu Talib was, in his own right, the chief of the family of Hashem, and the hereditary prince or guardian of the city and temple of Mecca. He united the qualifications of a poet, a soldier, and a saint: his wisdom still breathes in a collection of moral and religious sayings; and every antagonist, in the combats of the tongue or of the sword, was subdued by his eloquence and valor. From the first hour of his mission to the last rites of his funeral, the Apostle was never forsaken by a generous friend, whom he delighted to name his brother, his vicegerent, and the faithful Aaron of a second Moses."

Despite the differences between Sunnis and Shia, both groups have the greatest respect for Ali. He is remembered by all Muslims for his humility, courage, belief, loyalty, dedication, and

wisdom.

Conclusion

The exemplary public relations personalities I have chosen were the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his four faithful companions. I strongly believe that by adhering to their positive personalities and attributes they can help us to become more effective public relations and communication professionals as well as a good person. As human beings we can always highlight their perceived or real weaknesses but it is their positive traits that will help us to be an outstanding practitioner and a good person. Any weaknesses that are said they have can also be a lesson for us so that we do not repeat it.

However, if we deem that the allegations are false, it is our responsibility to correct it as we are a body of expert Muslim communicators. To me, Prophet Muhammad SAW will always be my number one role model and his companions next in support of him. So do take the time to read on the Prophet Muhammad and his four companions to help us to become a better public relations practitioner as I am confident that it will inspire us to give our best and be the best PR practitioners.

NOTE

¹ This article is adapted from a paper presented at the Second IAMPRC Congress in Teheran, Iran, December 2012.

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