

the Western Muslim

WRITING BRIEF

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Project: Western Muslim Content

Client: The Western Muslim Writers

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THE WESTERN MUSLIM STANDARD

The Western Muslim is a quarterly publication, dealing with contemporary issues presented in a smart, thought-provoking and analytical manner. Targeted primarily towards a distinctly Western segment of the Canadian Muslim population, it resonates best with those whose religion and Muslim identities strongly shape who they are. These readers hold progressive views of Islam and spirituality, and have found compatibility and common ground between their religious beliefs and lives in the West.

OBJECTIVES

Our aim is to produce articles that:

1. Are in tune with the WM's vision and philosophy and the interests of its readership. Articles must be up to date with the current events affecting Canadians and Canadian Muslims *today*; deal with contemporary issues, spanning a plethora of topics that cover (but are not restricted to) religion, art, politics, science, history in light of today's context, and much more.
2. Provide content that is balanced, critical, and thought-provoking. It is important that readers are provided with content that challenges not only their perceptions, but our own – remember, your point of view is not the only point of view. Articles should be of an analytical nature as opposed to simple fact-stating or fact-revision.
3. Leave the readers wanting more. Incorporate your personal style and unique elements into your writing along with the aforementioned criteria. Our readership is well-read, and looking for contemporary pieces provided in something other than your run-of-the-mill university essay format.
4. Are transparent, honest and to the point. They appeal to readers irrespective of ethnicity, class and social background.

The Western Muslim Magazine is out there for a reason – to fill a gap we saw in the market long ago. Muslims are looking for a periodical that speaks to them without carrying an overbearing preachy tone. We at the WM believe that we can provide that very service while upholding the level of quality and content necessary to make and hold our niche in today's magazine market. It is important for each WM writer not to lose focus of the objectives, and to always keep in mind what the *readers want*.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Our research to date has revealed that we are targeting a specific psychographic as opposed to a cut-and-dry demographic.
- This segment, as previously mentioned, consists of Canadian Muslims who, while holding their Western identities close, hold their progressive Muslim identities closer. They are balanced individuals who neither reject their Western ties nor their eastern roots, and are in tune with current events affecting Canadians – especially Canadian Muslims – in today's world.
- Much of this segment finds themselves to be more Muslim and Canadian than Indian, Pakistani, Egyptian or anything else. They are a generation that shows cultural maturity and connects positively to differences of opinion, religion and culture.
- Many are young Canadian Muslims who follow major political movements, are largely Left or Liberal, and greatly value freedom of expression and unique perspectives.
- Our readership thus far has proven to comprise both married and single individuals, from varying educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, and a broad range of fields/areas of study.

CURRENT PERCEPTIONS

The standard of WM's (and formerly, Inspire's) quality of content has changed substantially from the beginning up until today. As such, article themes and focus has been a little disjointed, and inconsistent over the magazine's lifespan – the main reason being that we've worked our way through a series of constant improvements, to fine tune the quality of writing and to streamline our focus and direction.

DESIRED PERCEPTIONS

- A professional, hard-hitting magazine that readers know can be relied upon to stay on top of current themes and trends in present day affairs of every nature.
- Comfortable exploring a 'Western' identity while cultivating a healthy understanding of Canadian Muslims, pride in our past, connection to the present and a positive view of the future.
- Well adept with market needs and consumer wants.
- Broad, secured readership.
- Available both online and in print – a household name for Canadian Muslims.

NOTES ON STYLE

- Article format should follow that of popular magazine writers – there is a certain flow that magazine articles have, which is far removed from the detached, stiff nature of academic essays.
- The major difference between essays/newspaper and magazine writing, is that while newspapers typically cover the who, what, when, and where, magazine articles look at the why and the how. A magazine article asks, "what does it mean?"
- Unlike newspaper articles or research papers, which typically present both sides of an issue and leave the reader to draw his or her own conclusion, magazine writing must cause the reader to formulate a reasoned and well-grounded reaction to the subject matter
- Because our readers are well - informed, they may already be aware of the topic you're covering. This means that your article must offer insight that goes beyond a simple recitation of facts. It's up to you to step back, put issues into perspective, and offer guidance to the reader.
- It's your job to include the voices of the people whose lives are actually affected by the issues being covered and convey their experiences in a compelling way.
- A writer's aim is to craft a story that is every bit as entertaining to read as it is informative.
- Narrow the focus and find areas that you can specialize in. Consider how you can mine your own life experience and background to create a lucrative niche of your own.
- Articles should be strongly organized and clearly presented, with a clear beginning, middle, and an end. In a way a WM writer

has all the tools of a novelist - dialog, description, narrative, and point of view at his or her disposal.

- Your writing should have personality.
- The first person should be used only when it truly advances the story. No one cares that you arrived late for the interview or what you ordered for dinner
- Using a reliable style guide can be a wonderful asset if you're looking to sharpen your writing skills – look to The Economist's style guide for further details:
- <http://www.economist.com/research/StyleGuide>

SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE

- Your first step should be to read previous issues or articles from the magazine. Become familiar with the WM style and understand the kinds of articles that are published.
- Submit a written query that succinctly summarizes your idea and explains what the story could bring to our readers
- Propose a story with a specific angle, not just a broad topic. Rather than suggesting a story on nasheeds, tell us that you want to write a guide to the best nasheeds out there
- Along with the article itself, you should submit a list of your sources (including phone numbers) and notes from your interviews (including transcriptions of taped interviews). These will be used for fact-checking purposes.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Increased readership, more subscriptions
- Increased feedback, both positive as well as critical – more feedback always indicates an increase in readership; more people find its content valuable enough to offer some sort of response.
- Interest and submissions from journalists, professional and other strong writers.