



RAMADAN FACT SHEET 2008

Why have we done these notes?

These notes are intended for managers and staff that work with individuals who are Muslim and will be fasting during the month of Ramadan. It is intended to increase understanding about the month of Ramadan and offers advice on how to be supportive of colleagues among you who are fasting. The notes also offer some guidance on dealing with customers during the month of fasting.

When is Ramadan, and what do Muslims do?

This year Ramadan starts on 2nd September, 2008. It will last for 29 or 30 days, depending on the sighting of the new moon.

During the 29/30 days of Ramadan all adult Muslims must give up the following things during the hours of daylight:

- Food or drink of any sort.
- Smoking (and preferably avoiding passive smoking).
- Sexual activity.

However, some groups like those with illness, those that are travelling, pregnant and breast-feeding women may be exempt.

It is important to know that fasting is about more than just not eating and drinking. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him [pbuh]) said, "There are many who fast and gain nothing from their fast except hunger and thirst". Muslims must also refrain from things such as verbal abuse, fighting, eavesdropping, backbiting, lying and slander as these acts severely reduce the worth of a fast. In essence Muslims must try to be model human beings during the fast with the aim of retaining some of these virtuous qualities thereafter. It is hoped that having performed these acts for a whole month they will become habits for life.

During Ramadan Muslims will awake before dawn for a meal called "Suhur". When daylight is over, most Muslims will break the fast with dates or water. This is followed by a meal. This is called "Iftar" (the breaking of the fast). During Ramadan Iftar is an occasion for family, friends and the community to get together.





I manage and/or work with staff that are fasting, what do I need to know?

The fasting combined with disturbances in normal sleep pattern can leave individuals feeling a little bit more tired than normal particularly towards the end of the day. Also towards the latter part of the day some individuals that are fasting might feel a little light headed.

An agreement to requests for slight adjustments to the working day during Ramadan will be appreciated by Muslim staff members and should be able to be accommodated under our work life balance and flexible working policies. For example, many Muslims like to finish early so that they can get home in time to end the fast with their families. To be able to finish early they prefer to start earlier and/or have a shorter lunch break.

It is very considerate to avoid holding events, such as staff meals, away days and get togethers, during Ramadan. If it is unavoidable please do not be offended if Muslim staff members are unable to participate in such events. If an away day or staff conference is unavoidable any special arrangements for Muslim staff that are fasting will be greatly appreciated.

It is not necessary for individuals that are not fasting to abstain from eating or drinking in the presence of Muslims that are fasting. If you make a point of asking to be excused for eating whilst your colleague is fasting this will be appreciated.

Please refrain from smoking in the presence of someone who is fasting.

During the month of Ramadan it is not appropriate to require a staff member who is fasting to join you and/or take a client for a business meal. In any event it might appear odd to your client or cause him/her discomfort if he/she is eating whilst your staff member sits there but abstains from the food.

Muslim staff enjoy sitting down together and sharing their food when they end the fast (Iftar). They welcome non-Muslim staff participating in this. This is totally appropriate and will please the individuals concerned rather than cause offence.

To fast along with Muslim colleagues, even for part of the day, is a good way of enhancing understanding.

If you want to make a good gesture towards Muslim staff buy them a packet of dates. When daylight is over, most Muslims will break the fast with dates or water, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), before having a proper meal later. Many Muslims will practice their faith more during Ramadan than they might for the remainder of the year. As a consequence of this Muslim staff might wish to offer prayers during the day. This will normally be 2/3 times a day for a few minutes each for which the staff member (s) will require a small private area.

We have Muslim customers, what do I need to know?

Showing your Muslim customers that you know it is Ramadan and that they are fasting is likely to please them. Therefore posting an acknowledgement on your website, in newsletters or simply a notice in your reception area is a good idea. Something like the message below is appropriate.

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www.emas4success.org





“Ramadan Mubarak to all our Muslim customers. Best wishes to you and your family for this the holy month of Ramadan. We hope that you find joy, peace and happiness and achieve all your objectives for the month. ”

It is not advisable to carry out visits to Muslim customers around the time that they will be preparing to end the fast (Iftar).

Visits very early in morning should also be avoided as many Muslims stay up late engaged in acts of worship during Ramadan and therefore might prefer to sleep in.

Major events, in the month of Ramadan, through which you are trying to engage with Muslim clients are likely to be ineffective and therefore should be avoided.

What happens when Ramadan ends?

The end of Ramadan is marked by the festival of **Eid-UI-Fitr** for which Muslim staff members will wish to take leave from work. The actual day that Eid falls on will depend on when the new moon is sighted. For this reason it might not be possible for the staff member to be very specific about the day he/she would like to be away from work and therefore some flexibility is necessary. This year Eid is anticipated as falling around 2nd October.

The appropriate way to express best wishes to a Muslim for Eid is to say “Eid Mubarak”.

