

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Islamic Relief Australia



“Raiser’s Edge NXT goes far beyond just being a software solution. It’s helping us to change lives.”

—Salwan Ameen
Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Relief Australia

The man behind the Islamic Relief Australia (IRAUS) is a charismatic individual, powering with energy and with the strongest desire to help those less fortunate than himself. He is inspiring with strong points of view, and with every right – he pursues the mission for Islamic Relief Australia with every ounce of determination.

A refugee from war torn Iraq, Salwan Ameen, Chief Executive Officer, has always had a powerful vision for Islamic Relief Australia. Coupled with his strong commercial background this is undoubtedly, a match made in heaven, and has been advantageous to building the future for Islamic Relief Australia.

Islamic Relief Australia started its journey in Australia back in 2010. It’s built up of a community of humanitarian staff, volunteers, affiliates, supporters, partners, and donors who have been working together for a better world. Inspired by Islamic faith and guided by strong values, its core business is made up of the number of beneficiaries in the field that help change lives and fight against poverty. It’s also recognised as one of the top twenty worldwide organisations dedicated to delivering aid to those that need it most.

As with any newly established business Islamic Relief faced challenges from the beginning due to its lack of resources. One of the organisation’s key strategic objectives is to increase its funding, accountability, and capacity.

Islamic Relief Australia is powered by
Raiser’s Edge NXT™

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Salwan Ameen has always been a strong catalyst for change. When he came on board as Country Director his energy focused on two key projects that could help him achieve the above imperative.

The first centred around bringing on board a CRM system to help with donor management and customer service, and the other to automate compliance and finance.

“The reality is that we are here to serve our customers and we had to find a solution that would help us to effectively manage and serve these customers,” said Salwan.

Before embarking on the journey to bring on board an effective CRM solution, he undertook a diagnostic test and analysis for Islamic Relief Australia.

The selection process for a new CRM solution was rigorous and Islamic Relief Australia had several organisations on the table for review.



“Some of the key reasons we selected the Raiser’s Edge NXT solution over the others was because it was customised and built exclusively for the Not for Profit sector whilst other solutions required a lot of customisation.”

— Salwan Ameen
Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Relief Australia

They wanted a solution that could be easily integrated into its other solutions and both the UK and Canada Islamic Relief offices had already used the solution and endorsed it.

A compelling mission that goes above and beyond

As one can imagine there are many risk factors associated with bringing on board any new system let alone a completely new CRM solution. However, Salwan Ameen was confident that the implementation of a new CRM system would change the way and future for Islamic Relief Australia.

“It was definitely a make or break for the organisation - and I am pleased to say that the Raiser’s Edge solution has made our organisation,” boasted Ameen.

But if there was an award for bravery and boldness, then the Islamic Relief team would be in the running for first prize and here’s why.

They took the first leap with Raiser’s Edge in June 2016 for Ramadan, but it was not complete smooth sailing.

With a new system in place by 1st June 2016 and Ramadan only two weeks away, no one could predict what was around the corner – an empty system with no ability to see what was happening across other IP systems.

Ameen commented that “The first week of Ramadan was challenging - it was puzzling for the whole team and we couldn’t understand what was happening – there was total confusion,” he admitted.

Today Salwan confidently but quietly admits that they made the right choice by bringing onboard the Raiser’s Edge NXT solution for their first Ramadan appeal.

“It was the first time the team could see the power of the Raiser’s Edge solution and how the combination of digital, a new way of approaching our donors, the new website, new



CRM and financial system, all combined, helped us in what we set out to achieve – to build our future,” said Salwan.

“This year the team were a lot more organised and more confident on where to concentrate their efforts using the data extracted from Raiser’s Edge NXT.”

Paving a path for success for the Islamic Relief

Data is the critical lifeblood for any organisation and for the Islamic Relief it provided the ammunition to help delve deeper into their data and help them to unlock other opportunities within the donor database.

“We don’t work with gut feel, data is important in our decision-making process,” said Ameen.

It is another pivotal reason they selected Raiser’s Edge NXT - to help empower their employees and lead them to making better decisions.

“We wanted a solution that we could place in the hands of our team to empower them to make the appropriate decisions and be able to set and demonstrate a clear ROI.”

—Salwan Ameen
Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Relief Australia

“The team can now identify the root cause, and then correlate it into how they are helping to change things for the better and even more compelling – how they are helping to change the future.”

Ameen has spent the first few years building the infrastructure for Islamic Relief, so his team could fully understand the field they were playing in, he built his team, and prepared to move the business into the digital era. From his perspective, digital is the way to go particularly from an ROI perspective, and he recognised this from day 1. However, he doesn’t brush aside the importance of traditional methods.

“Traditional is also critical but it just needs to move to the future, we need to talk to the new generation in their own words and that’s why I am committed to building the right team for the future.”

In 2017 with Raiser’s Edge now fully operational and at their fingertips, Ameen is more determined than ever to optimise the solution as best he can, so sent key team members to Blackbaud’s annual flagship conference, bbcon held in August.

“The team gained a tremendous amount of knowledge from attending BBCON – they now understand why we say the things we say, why



we talk about retention, why we talk about communications with customers and why we explain to customers what is happening with their funds.”

Salwan Ameen is the first to point out that his customers are the ones that own his business.

“We don’t own our business; our customers own it.”

Evidently the Qurban relief which followed Ramadan provided the magic moment where Islamic Relief realised the real power of Raiser’s Edge NXT in action.

“The learnings from our Winterisation program is where we started changing our traditional way of thinking, bringing on board new tools, refocusing on the rebirth of a new mentality and a new way of delivering our jobs” claimed Salwan.



Building a sustainable future for Islamic Relief Australia and its communities.

Salwan is committed to building a secure future for Islamic Relief Australia.

“Our goal is to build a sustainable future. We exist for the needy people, the funds are the means to deliver this,” he noted.

That’s why Salwan is a firm believer that you cannot build a secure future leading with a focus on emergency relief services you need to bolster your development and sustainable programs.

Islamic Relief Australia started with a 60% focus on emergency relief services and 40% on sustainable/development projects – but this has now flipped with the number of sustainable new projects increasing from 40% to 82% - more than doubling.

What this means is that it has provided Islamic Relief with a strong foundation to build a secure future.

“Security is critical for our future, it’s not just about a jump in growth – this is not the point,” affirmed Salwan.

Salwan admits he has ambitious targets for the Islamic Relief over the next few years and it’s not surprising coming from a man with a relentless vision.

“Our aim is to improve the lives of people. We help deliver food, shelter for a particular need – if we don’t have this, if we don’t deliver, someone, somewhere, will starve.”

“Raiser’s Edge goes far beyond just being a software solution. It’s helping us to change lives,” he said.

