

What we did - Quds News Network

- ▶ In 2011, I, Izzeddin, was 16 years old and live in Palestine, the spotlight of events. My home was in the besieged Gaza Strip, in which its residents are not allowed to travel. When the Egyptian and Tunisian evolutions started, the social media network aroused in its effects in delivering news and media.
- ▶ This was an inspiration to take these modern platforms with a group of media fans and general secondary students in the West Bank "the other side of Palestine" . We connected online together to start publishing news and pictures from Palestine despite the siege.

What we did - news for all by the young

- ▶ In March 2011, we began to create a news network through social media specialized in Palestinian News only. Quds News gained much attention and fame because it was the first to start in Palestine by focusing on modern tools of media, and ignoring the traditional media and sites at that time.
- ▶ The founding team of Quds News continued to spread the news voluntarily for two years through social media. Then, we launched a website and accepted ads that led to financial returns.

How we did it

- ▶ Since the establishment of Quds Network, we have had a team of journalists and volunteers who, to this day, are constantly sending field news through the Facebook group that has about 350 Palestinian journalists as members. Many of these members are working with other media organizations. Quds News, however, to them is different. They feel like its founders.
- ▶ After two years of volunteering, we launched a small team of two people earning a very small amount of money, who regularly enriched and published on the page. This came after a small income from advertising Google's commercials and ads across the site.

How we did it

- ▶ In the first month of the website's launch, Quds was classified as one of the top 10 sites in Palestine, despite the modest start and the small flow of posts through the site due to the lack of staff.
- ▶ Currently, the team has expanded and became 7 people. The team is an amazing experience from a lot of people's point of views. Some may consider them unprofessional, but they have proved great achievement. Honesty is our foremost importance.

How we did it

- ▶ - The founding team and the editors haven't met in person for 9 years because of the occupation. Indeed, this was a great challenge for us.
- ▶ Notes:
- ▶ - We have no operating costs
- ▶ - We do not have an office.
- ▶ - The entire team works online from their homes.

QUDS – The Youth Connection

In Quds News Network, we most importantly believe in its continuity through the young spirit it had since it was launched in 2011. By its young staff and managers, it targets the youth with content that suits their interests. We work to focus on youth by engaging them in gathering information and field news, developing young journalists, editors and media professionals who can cope with the requirements of the digital media, in addition to attracting successful and influential young journalists. Moreover, we work on integrating media students in universities in the network environment to ensure their vitality and continuous development.

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A YOUNG STAFF

Quds' seven main staff members are all under age 30, five are under age 25.

In addition, there are 300 volunteers working in the network of correspondents and journalists. 90% of whom are youth, i.e., their ages are between 18-35 .

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A YOUNG AUDIENCE

Young people are the main audience in all Quds's platforms.

Most recent stats are at left:

Instagram (top)

Facebook (bottom).

QUDS – The Youth Connection

CONTENT THAT FOCUSES ON OUR AUDIENCE

1. Success stories and challenges for the Palestinian youth.

Example (in Arabic): the story of the high school student Warda Al-Agha, 18, who faced cancer as she took her last exams.

The network also did a follow-up, in which she said the original story contributed to her self-confidence and pushed her toward overcoming her illness and suffering

The first story

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1615960091814219>

The second story:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1644155388994689>

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2. Content that helps young people overcome the unemployment and education crisis.

Example: In one month this year, we published six stories about people who made their way through a new career and presented them as models that unemployed youth can follow.

Examples (in Arabic):

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2467539666807237>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=333345147556329>

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3. Considering youth issues in the Palestinian society, advocating for their right to express their opinion, and covering the violations they face, whether from the Israeli army or the local authorities.

Example: We participated in a campaign for Palestinian youth against Facebook violations of the Palestinian content. Staff participated in the campaign online and through protests.

As a result, Facebook contacted the network's representatives to help the voice of Palestinian youth reach Facebook.

QUDS – The Youth Connection



Quds members during a protest on Facebook policies



Quds representatives meeting with the Head of Content and Media Partnerships in Europe, the Middle East and Africa at Facebook Patrick Walker (at left)

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WE ALSO TEACH YOUTH ABOUT JOURNALISM BY...

1. Lecturing students about Quds's experience to motivate them to early start their media projects and promote media entrepreneurship. An example is a recent lecture by a network representative at Birzeit University in the West Bank.

2. Working to integrate media students into our work environment through volunteering, training in publishing, helping edit news, and contributing to the production of content suitable to their interests. In the course of 3 years, the network received 12 volunteers assigned by Palestinian universities in the Gaza Strip.

Why we did it

- ▶ We did it to challenge reality. Most of what we work on is to qualify everyone; i.e., we have each individual as a team in him/herself. Each has several skills on his/her own in publishing via Social Media:
 - ▶ 1- Press editing.
 - ▶ 2- Publishing and editing through social media platforms.
 - ▶ 3- Photo designs of pieces of news.
 - ▶ 4- Video editing.
 - ▶ 5 Writing a digital story text for another video.
 - ▶ 6 Writing and editing news for the site.

- ▶ They perform all these tasks during their working day of 7 hours.

Why we did it

- ▶ This experience has made many traditional institutions in my country contact us to hear our experience and bring in their staff to hear about the capabilities of our small and distinguished team.
- ▶ We work vigorously and specialize in digital production; i.e., Digital Videos, Stories & Graphic Designs. We were the first not Palestinian, but Arab producers of digital stories. After us came "AJ+" Arabic

Why we did it

- ▶ Thanks to this initiative in digital production, we achieved the first media cooperation between Facebook, Instagram and Twitter with a Palestinian media organization. We have also defended the Palestinian digital content on Facebook and held several meetings with its managers. In addition, Quds News has private direct contact with Facebook in which it invites us to its activities.
- ▶ Quds News has its own style which is different than the traditional news media. It uses the narrative style which is closer and more preferable to the audience. We believe in maintaining the credibility and professionalism of the media. The belief in the power of youth and the power of social media in their hands is what makes Quds Network very special.

How we know it worked out

- ▶ We have accomplished noticeable achievements in addition to social media figures
- ▶ monitored by annual local reports.
- ▶ These figures are:
 - ▶ - Facebook: 12 million followers "The first in Palestine , News category"
 - ▶ - Twitter: 600 thousand followers "The first in Palestine, News Category"
 - ▶ - Instagram: 1 million followers "The first in Palestine and the sixth among all Arabic media.
 - ▶ - Website: Classified as one of the sixth most visited sites in Palestine, according to Alexa.

What should happen next and advise others who want to try it.

- ▶ Whatever you believe in has to succeed. Persistence and not fearing failure are the greatest factors of success.
- ▶ You can succeed with an integrated team, whose members cooperate efficiently to achieve their goals. Another key point is staying up-to-date and keeping up with the latest tools and developing them. Moreover, it is important to stand out using unique methods and media tools, and that's exactly what Quds News does. Finally, Quds News will always be looking for new opportunities to creatively present its posts and stories. My advice as the manager is to keep believing.