

IRWA Staff Spotlight

In an effort to further increase transparency between IRWA Headquarters and the dedicated members of this Association, we are excited to introduce the **IRWA Staff Spotlight**. In each issue of Right of Way Magazine, a different staff member will introduce themselves and give some insight into their role at Headquarters.

Tell us a fun fact about yourself or something that might surprise us.

I've met or interviewed dozens of professional athletes during my days as a sportswriter including LeBron James, Kareem-Abdul-Jabbar, Mike Tyson, Emmitt Smith, Alex Morgan and Evan Longoria, among others.

What is your name and your job title at IRWA Headquarters?

Amir Vafamanesh — Education and Instructional Development Manager

Tell us about your background and why you chose to work at IRWA.

I graduated from Cal State Long Beach with a bachelor's degree in journalism. I was pursuing a master's degree in mass communications at Cal State Northridge while working as a freelance sportswriter for the Torrance Daily Breeze and Long Beach Press-Telegram before I started working for the IRWA. I secured an interview for the job through a recruiting agency, which informed me that IRWA was a membership association that specialized in delivering right of way education and was looking for someone who can become a jack-of-all-trades and help assist multiple departments on staff. They were specifically looking for someone who had a sharp eye for editing, a strong customer service background, experience working under tight deadlines and could handle several responsibilities at once. I saw this as a great opportunity for me to not only gain some valuable experience in a different field of work and environment, but also utilize my skillsets to help the organization enhance the quality of its education and service to its members.



How long have you been with Headquarters?

I've been with headquarters for seven years.

Describe your role. What are your primary responsibilities?

I oversee IRWA's curriculum and instructor development programs. I collaborate with the International Professional Education Committee (IPEC) to develop and employ policies and procedures that enable us to work with our subject matter experts and implement course revisions, develop new courses and make any necessary updates to our instructor development and credentialing programs based on the needs of the Association. I also manage and maintain the IRWA University website, which houses all of our asynchronous courses. In addition, I assist with setting up all of IRWA's virtual classes and provide the necessary technical training and support to our IRWA course instructors and students so that they are comfortable using our virtual class platform.

How has your career grown since you first joined the team? What have you gained?

I've gained extremely valuable experience and knowledge working with some of the most passionate, dedicated and driven volunteer leaders and staff. Over time, I've worked in



collaboration with them to create new courses and update several of our existing ones both in person and online. I've also been afforded the opportunity to help build and manage our IRWA University website, which now houses over 25 online courses that I tested and worked on updating with the help of our SMEs and third-party programmers when we converted all of them from Flash to HTML5. I've also learned, over time, how to better utilize software within the Adobe Creative Suite such as InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop to help design our course manuals, email updates, education brochures and promotional flyers.

What are some of the reasons members typically contact you?

Members usually contact me when they need assistance with accessing an online or virtual class they registered for, when they want to sign up for an IRWA class or our education conference, or have questions about becoming an IRWA instructor. Instructors usually contact me to collaborate on revising a course, when they need a demo or refresher of our virtual class platform, need copies of the most recent course materials for a class they're approved to teach, want to add a course to their list of approved classes and need to submit a request to the IPEC, or want to submit course feedback for a particular class.

What are the best ways members can reach you?

By email at vafamanesh@irwaonline.org or by phone at 310-538-0233 Ext. 142.

What is your favorite part of working at IRWA?

So many things. I love working with our IPEC Committee to improve the quality of our curriculum, instructor development and credentialing programs as well as collaborating with our instructors to facilitate successful virtual course offerings and updating our course curriculum. I also love working the conference every year, seeing familiar faces and even meeting new ones who I've assisted over the phone or by email over the years. It's also fun to visit new cities that I hadn't already been to before.

What are some of your hobbies outside of work?

Working out at the gym, walking my dog at the marina, cooking at home and trying new restaurants with my wife, watching classic Hollywood films as well as rooting for the Los Angeles Lakers and Dodgers.

Where would you travel to for your dream vacation?

Anywhere along the French Riviera but specifically, Nice, France. If you've seen Alfred Hitchcock's "To Catch a Thief," you'll know why. The scenery is incredible!

What is something on your bucket list?

Becoming a father one day. 🌟

