

Does Your Business Have a Clear Path?

When used properly, mission, vision and values statements can be very powerful tools that help define the path forward for your in-house agency or department and guide the behaviors of your team so that they're aligned with your and your company's goals and positioning. They are inspiring declarations developed by leadership with team engagement and input to clearly and concisely convey the purpose, direction and driving forces of your organization. By creating clear, meaningful and reflective statements, you can powerfully communicate your and your team's intentions and motivate and inspire your team to ensure they understand and embrace the objectives of your organization, to make everyday decisions consistent with your statements and to achieve buy-in to new directions. Your team members will gain a sense of pride and focus in working as part of an organization that stands for something and they will be united by a common sense of purpose.

Why Do They Matter?

Mission, vision and values statements are crucial to communicating the "who, what, how and why" of your organization to corporate management, team members, new hires and clients. It's not enough to feel passionate about the products and services your organization offers, you and your entire team also have to consciously understand the framework of what drives you and your team. This is essential in order to effectively communicate those drivers to a diverse group of people.

The more clearly you can articulate your high-level goals at the start of a project or initiative, the less time and resources you will spend on trying to fix poor communication, alignment, employee engagement and unwanted cultural behaviors later. Your strategic goals and tactical plans will be more aligned, streamlined and easier to communicate to your stakeholders. They'll gain an understanding of what you do, how you do it and why you do it.

So, what are the differences between mission, vision and values? How are they distinct? The following illustrates those distinctions and offers advice to help you in developing your organization's mission, vision and value statements.

Mission Statement Creation

What do we do, whom do we do it for and how and why do we do it?

Your mission statement should be a concise statement of business strategy. It should be developed from the customer's, key stakeholders' and upper management's perspective and it should align with the vision for the business. Describe the overall purpose of your organization: what we do, whom we do it for, and how and why we do it.

- To create your mission statement, first identify your organization's "winning idea" – it's core reason for being.
- This is the idea or approach that will make your organization stand out and is the reason that your clients will come to you and not go to outside vendors.
- Next, identify the key ways you will measure your success.

- Combine your winning idea and success measures into a tangible and measurable goal – what does success look like?
- Refine the words until you have a concise and precise statement of your mission, which expresses your ideas, measures and desired result.

Vision Statement Creation

Why are we here and who do we want to be?

Once you've created your mission statement, move on to create your vision statement:

- First, identify your organization's mission. Then uncover the real human value in that mission. Reflect the essence of the organization's mission and values.
- Answer the question: What impact do we want to have within the corporation and who do we need to be to have that impact?
- Next, identify what you, your customers and other stakeholders can be expected to value most about how your organization will achieve this mission.
- Combine your mission and values, and polish the words until you have a vision statement inspiring enough to energize and motivate stakeholders inside and outside your organization – one that states who your organization will be in its future state.
- Make sure the words convey a larger sense of organizational purpose, so that your team members see themselves as "important" and relevant to the corporation.

Values Statement Creation

Who are we and how is that expressed?

Once you've created your mission statement, move on to create your vision statement:

- Reflect the core ideology of an organization, the deeply held values that do not change over time.
- Answer the question: How do we carry out our mission – how do we behave and conduct ourselves that is consistent with our stated values?
- Include the values your organization lives and breathes in all its activities.
- This shouldn't be confused with a value proposition which captures the value an agency brings to its company.

Engage Everyone in the Process

Find ways to involve as many people as possible in the mission/vision/values creation processes, because engaging team members will help them to take ownership while also providing more minds to help craft statements that accurately reflect the diversity of your organization. You may even want to consider vetting the statements with clients and upper management for their input and buy-in as well.

Review Periodically

Remember that your mission, vision and values statements are meant to be a general road map for your organization, not to lock you into a particular direction. They need to adapt to and reflect your company's ever-changing business needs and goals. A periodic review with corporate management will enable them to agree on your organization's evolving long-term direction, set a new course if required, get the organization back on track when necessary, or determine whether interim modifications are needed.

How to Live Your Mission, Vision and Value Statements

To be of use, mission, vision and values statements must be assimilated into the organization. For these to pay off the organization needs to:

- Consistently communicate these statements through many mediums and to all levels of the organization.
- Take internal measures to ensure management speaks with one voice about mission, vision and values.
- Hire talent who are aligned with your mission, vision and values statements.
- Include your mission, vision and values statements in your on-boarding process.
- Relate and reinforce success stories that demonstrate the mission, vision and values in action and acknowledge team members who embrace them.
- Embody and enact vision and values in management practices.
- Define short-term objectives that are compatible with the long-range vision.

Summary

The core elements of mission, vision and values statements drive employee behaviors, guide your strategy and are key to your ability to powerfully communicate and collaborate with corporate management, your current and potential clients and team members. Through consciously understanding your organization's values and goals, you can clearly express what brought your organization into existence and how it continues to define, benefit and drive value for the greater corporation.

Source: Andy Epstein, Cella