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Mission Statements: More Than a Wall Ornament



## Make an Impact With Your Strategy

Many companies spend a lot of time and money creating mission statements to highlight their products and services and align employees around a common vision. But the fact is that many mission statements fail -becoming nothing more than a wall ornament or a bunch of words tucked in a company handbook.

For the most part, the reasons the statements fail are pretty straightforward: They involve fuzzy, non-specific language; poor implementation, interchangeable goals or visions that can be adopted by *any* company, and a lack of long-term leadership support.

Still, every company, big or small, should have a mission statement. Why? It's a compass that lets employees, customers and investors know what the firm stands for and where it's headed. It mobilizes people passionately behind a common cause and defines the company's collective personality. In addition, it provides clear direction and gets results. But only if it's properly written. Here are a few elements to consider when writing a mission statement:

- ⌘ **Target audience** – This might include employees, investors, customers, and the community. The mission statement can be targeted at a combination of these groups or just one of them.
- ⌘ **Length** – Some mission statements are only a single sentence, while others are very long and encompass visions, philosophies, objectives, plans, and strategies. Generally, it's best to come up with something in the middle that's concise, easy to understand and actionable - a document your company

**Studies have found that organizations show consistently higher performance when their mission statements include these six items:**



- ⌘ **A statement of purpose or general non-financial goals.**
- ⌘ **A statement of values.**

will actually use to make decisions.

- ⌘ **Tone** – Establish the correct tone through a process of intentional word selection. If the language is too flowery and cumbersome, a mission statement may not be taken seriously. Use appropriate language that's directed at the target audience and reflects the makeup of the organization.
- ⌘ **Endurance** – A mission statement should be able to withstand the test of time and, ultimately, have meaning in the long-term picture of the company. By the same token, it should also remain current to reflect the company and its competitive environment. A mission statement created years ago may no longer be relevant.
- ⌘ **Uniqueness** – Since every company is different - even those in the same industry - a mission statement should be customized to reflect each individual firm's needs and goals.

- ⌘ **A statement of vision.**
- ⌘ **Specification of behavioral standards.**
- ⌘ **Identification of the company's competitive strategy.**
- ⌘ **Intent to satisfy the needs and expectations of multiple stakeholder groups.**

An effective mission statement can be a great asset to an organization. When everyone is working together toward a shared goal, your company has a better chance of being successful. Mission statements should be developed as part of the company's strategic planning process, starting with development, prioritization of goals and objectives, and an examination of the company's culture. After this process is done, the mission of the company will become clear, making it easier to create a good mission statement.

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