

Developing Vision and Mission Statements

In order to determine where it is going, the organization needs to know exactly where it stands, then determines where it wants to go and how it will get there.

Vision: Defines where the organization wants to be in the future. It reflects the optimistic view of the organization's future.

Mission: Defines where the organization is going now, basically describing the purpose, why this organization exists.

- A **Mission statement:** tells you what the company is now. It concentrates on present; it defines the customer(s), critical processes and it informs you about the desired level of performance.
- A **Vision statement:** outlines what a company wants to be. It concentrates on future; it is a source of inspiration; it provides clear decision-making criteria.

Many people mistake vision statement for mission statement. The Vision describes a future identity and the Mission describes why it will be achieved. A Mission statement defines the purpose or broader goal for being in existence or in the business. It serves as an ongoing guide without time frame. The mission can remain the same for decades if crafted well. Vision is more specific in terms of objective and future state. Vision is related to some form of achievement if successful.

For example, "We help transport goods and people efficiently and cost effectively without damaging environment" is a mission statement. Ford's brief but powerful slogan "Quality is Job 1" could count as a mission statement. "We will be one amongst the top three transporters of goods and people in North America by 2010" is a vision statement. It is very concrete and unambiguous goal.

A mission statement can resemble a vision statement in a few companies, but that can be a grave mistake. It can confuse people. The vision statement can galvanize the people to achieve defined objectives, even if they are stretch objectives, provided the vision is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound). A mission statement provides a path to realize the vision in line with its values. These statements have a direct bearing on the bottomline and success of the organization.

Which comes first? The mission statement or the vision statement? That depends. If you have a new start up business, new program or plan to re engineer your current services, then the vision will guide the mission statement and the rest of the strategic plan. If you have an established business where the mission is established, then many times, the mission guides the vision statement and the rest of the plan. Either way, you need to know where you are, your

current resources, your current obstacles, and where you want to go - the vision for the future. ¹

Features of an effective vision statement may include:

- Clarity and lack of ambiguity
- Paint a vivid and clear picture, not ambiguous
- Describing a bright future (hope)
- Memorable and engaging expression
- Realistic aspirations, achievable
- Alignment with organizational values and culture, Rational
- Time bound if it talks of achieving any goal or objective

In order to become really effective, an organizational vision statement must become part of the agency's culture. Leaders have the responsibility of communicating the vision regularly, creating narratives that illustrate the vision, acting as role-models by embodying the vision, creating short-term objectives compatible with the vision, and encouraging others to craft their own personal vision compatible with the organization's overall vision.

Additional information on this and other planning topics can be located through the RESOURCES section on the main menu.

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