

Develop a mission statement

Leaders of today's organisations are faced with the challenge of transforming their companies and adapting to increased competition, deregulation, downsizing and the globalisation of markets. The starting point for dealing effectively with such issues is the organisation's mission statement.

By considering the following guidelines, you can develop a mission statement for your business that instils inspiration in your employees and truly reflects their dreams, hopes, aspirations and reasons for being there.

1. Understand the purpose of mission statements

A mission statement is a key component of an organisation's entire planning process. It is more than a slogan or motto – it is the operational, ethical and financial guiding light for your business. It articulates the goals, dreams, culture, behaviour and desired future of a business. Strategically, it is a tool that defines a business and its target market. Culturally, it serves as the “glue” that binds the company together through shared values and standards of behaviour. It must inspire and stretch staff to higher levels of performance.

2. Form a task force to draft the mission statement

Gathering the right words, setting the tone and finding the main theme should involve individuals whose commitment to the final statement is expected. Establish a working party, comprising representatives from different areas of your business. Select wisely – people's hearts as well as their heads are required.

3. Write a first draft

Conduct a situation or SWOT analysis to identify where your organisation stands today, how it came to be where it is, what external forces will probably influence its future, and what it hopes to become. Ensure to get input from the senior people in the business. With this background, the working group can brainstorm to compile a collection of ideas that can be synthesised into a draft statement.

Consider the following when preparing the first draft:

- It can vary in length.
- It must be clearly articulated.
- It should be written in an inspiring tone.
- It must be relevant and current.
- It must reflect your business's uniqueness.
- It must be enduring.
- It must cater for all audiences.



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4. Review, revise, validate and seek acceptance

A mission statement that is hurried or does not reflect the input of those who must carry it as their standard into the community, will rarely inspire or involve those whose input matters most. The process may take a few weeks or months. During that time you should circulate drafts to any stakeholders who were not present at drafting meetings and whose commitment is required. Display the mission statement for employees to see, inviting them to add any minor finishing touches.

5. Operationalise the final version

When you're confident the mission statement has received and benefited from stakeholder input, produce a final version. Hold meetings to gain commitment to the mission and to turn its message into reality. Agree on the other uses to be made of the mission – on posters, publications, business cards, t-shirts, coffee mugs, products, calendars etc.

6. Keep the mission under review

Developing a mission statement is just the beginning. It must continue to have meaning for all employees. So, periodically, refer to it on the agenda at meetings. An annual revisit should occur as part of the review of your organisation's strategic and business plans.

Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Business image
- Business planning
- Business values
- Business vision - introduction