

# How to Write Your Mission, Vision, and Values Statements

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Collectively, your company's [mission, vision, and values statements](#) will serve as steady focal points for you to return to whenever you or your employees get caught up in the day-to-day routines—not to mention the occasional pandemonium—of business. As a collection of principles, beliefs, and ideals your business honors and strives to uphold, they'll remind you of your purpose when you're at a crossroads, and be your integrity check despite the high winds of market forces and labor turnover.

So they're well worth dedicating time and energy to. Of course, there are many ways to go about the process. Some businesses will choose self-directed work groups while others will hire strategic planners to facilitate discussion; and the number of idea-generation tools and strategies you might use is nearly limitless. But here are some steps you'll want to include no matter *what* approach you decide to take:

## **Invite all relevant parties**

This can be the hardest part: determining what the word "relevant" means for your business and finding a time for all players in the conversation to meet. Depending on the size of your business, this may be a board-level process involving only senior-level employees. If your business is smaller or new, consider inviting a broader range of employees. Remember, the more input you have, the greater buy-in you'll get overall. And employees who have a say in your mission and vision will be more motivated by the very statements they helped write. After all, *their* vision of the company will be reflected in those statements, too.

Even if you're a sole proprietor, consider whom else you might invite to sit with you for a few hours to help generate ideas. Someone who knows your business well but has an outside perspective will see strengths, capacities, and aspects of your business that you might otherwise overlook.

## **Choose a suitable environment and an objective facilitator**

Whether you go all-out for a retreat center or gather in an unused room in your company's office, find a comfortable place with as few distractions as possible. Give participants a sense of how long the process will take. (We'd suggest several hours. These statements may be *short*; but they're not *simple*.) Doing these things ensures you'll have the advantage of everyone's full presence.

A good facilitator will be able to drive and guide the conversation *without* influencing its content. They'll make space for all voices, tactfully prompting quieter participants to speak and curbing

monopolizers. They won't let a single suggestion get shut down, and they'll negotiate the conversation amiably if it gets heated.

### **Define what sets you apart**

*No one* should read your mission, vision, and values statements and think they apply to *another* business in your industry. So before you dive in, get clear about what distinguishes you from the crowd. Maybe that means you look at the mission, vision, and values of your competitors, and ask: How is what *we're* doing/envisioning/valuing *different* from what our competitors are up to?

Then again, maybe you run the risk of having your statements sound too much like your competitors' if you use that strategy. If so, use what you've got! Look to your [USP](#), your [About page](#), or any other statements you've put together on [differentiation](#). Consider how your target market has distinguished you from your competitors in their exchanges with you, their product reviews, or [their social posts](#). If you can get to the heart of what makes you different, you're bound to write distinctly unique (and therefore unforgettable) statements.

### **Ask the right questions... and then get brainstorming**

Each of these three statements will entail a different set of questions to get your participants' wheels turning. Here are some worth considering:

#### **Questions to answer for your mission statement:**

- What do we do/offer/create, and for *whom*? *Whose* lives do we enrich, and *how*?
- Why did we choose *this* industry?
- Why does what we do/offer/create matter to *us*? Why does it matter to our customers/clients? What value do we bring to them?
- Why did we go into business to begin with? What did we most want for our customers/community? Why do we keep showing up *today*?

#### **Questions to answer for your vision statement:**

- *Why* does the problem we seek to solve ultimately need to be addressed?
- What measurable changes do we believe our business can make?
- Where do we see our business/customers/community 50 years from now?
- If our company's goals were ever wholly achieved, what would our customers' lives/the community/the world look like?

#### **Questions to answer for your core values:**

- What principles are so important to us that we'd let employees go who couldn't uphold

them?

- What values are so important to us that we'd embody them even if they weren't rewarded? Even if they become a competitive disadvantage?
- What behaviors are important enough to us that we endeavor to embody them *off* the job as well as *on*?

Break participants into groups or have them brainstorm individually. Remind participants that there's no wrong answer, and that this *isn't* the stage for self-editing. Give them permission to write down anything and everything that comes to mind.

### **Discuss, narrow down, and rank**

Now it's sharing time. As the conversation unfolds, you'll notice themes emerging in the form of repeated words or ideas. Write these down on a chalkboard or whiteboard where everyone can see them. As a group, start focusing in on the common keywords and essentials, and let go of any ideas or phrases that come up infrequently.

If your facilitator thinks they can guide the collective into coming up with shared mission, vision, and values statements in conversation, try it! Otherwise, ask everyone to take those common themes and that shared language, and write their own statements. When you reconvene, you'll select the strongest parts of each and put them together.

### **Ask for feedback**

We know... *you just* made the decision amongst yourselves. But these statements are invaluable from a business perspective; and there's nothing wrong with getting a second (or twentieth) set of eyes. Invite colleagues, mentors, marketing professionals, or whomever else you think could give you a strong outside perspective.

If you've made the initial work a board-level process, take your final product to your employees and see what they have to say about it. If you've been more inclusive, take it to your customers. *They* can tell you if your statements are intelligible—and *true*—to people outside the organization. Have *they* experienced behaviors or expressions of value that you didn't even consider naming? Try these questions:

- Are these statements in alignment with what you've experienced when doing business with us?
- If you'd never done business with us before, how would these three statements make you feel about our business? What would they cause you to assume?
- What language would you change? Is there anything you feel is missing?

Once your statements have passed all eyes, they're ready to go live on [your website](#). What's

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more? They're ready to be embodied—day, after day, after day...