



Mission Statements

Define your organization's core purpose.

In this guide, we will cover:

- ◆ **The Power of a Mission Statement**
- ◆ **The Anatomy of a Mission Statement**
- ◆ **Examples of Great Mission Statements**
- ◆ **Checklist for a Great Mission**
- ◆ **Canvas to Develop a Mission**

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Introduction

What Makes a Mission Statement Powerful?

A mission statement acts as an organization's compass: guiding the organization's decisions to achieve its core purpose and reason it exists.

While the vision statement articulates the organization's future state, the mission directly relates to the vision by articulating the greater reason why that vision matters. A powerful mission keeps the organization on track and rallied around the direction the organization is headed. The mission statement is the foundation on which good strategy is based, so it's important to take your mission seriously and to get it right.

As business leaders, we are put under a lot of undue stress to generate a perfect, short, sing-songy mission statement. The result is meaningless drivel, leaving everyone irritated and underwhelmed. Employees don't want to hang back conceptualizing about wishes and dreams. But don't let being pragmatic get in the way of this important stage of building a strong foundation of consensus for the organization.

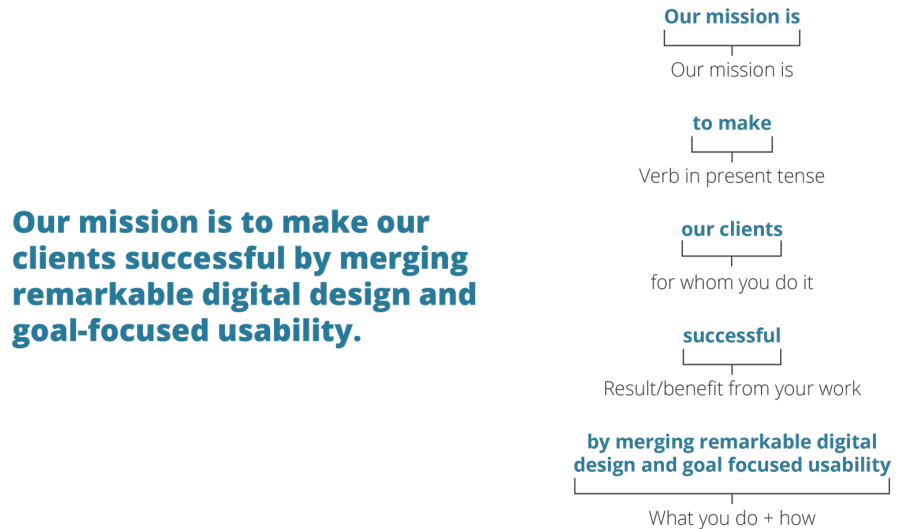
If time isn't dedicated to articulating your mission on the front-end before developing strategy, the result will likely be goals and objectives without a crystal-clear strategic direction.

Mission statements generally answer at least one of these core questions:

- What is our organization's reason for existing?
- Why is it special to work for this organization?
- What is our business and what are we trying to accomplish on behalf of whom?

Anatomy of a Good Mission Statement

The following structure contains the key elements to include in your mission statement:



Our mission is to make our clients successful by merging remarkable digital design and goal-focused usability.

Examples of Great Mission Statements

- ◆ **International Red Cross:** To provide relief to victims of disaster and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.
- ◆ **Fannie Mae:** To provide liquidity, stability and affordability to the U.S. housing and mortgage markets.
- ◆ **Walmart:** We save people money so they can live better.
- ◆ **Marriott Hotels:** To make people who are away from home feel they are among friends and really wanted.
- ◆ **Merck:** To operate a worldwide business that produces meaningful benefits for consumers, our market partners and our community.

When is It Time for a Refresh?

Mission statements are not written in stone—while they are traditionally the longest-standing element of an organization’s strategic plan and typically have a ‘shelf life’ of 15 years, they do need refinement every so often.

Consider your current mission statement: if the answer is “no” to more than 4 of these questions, it’s time to refresh your mission.

Does your mission statement...

- ◆ Explain how the organization will serve its customers?
- ◆ Fit the current market environment?
- ◆ Convey your core competencies? (A core competency is a company strength.)
- ◆ Motivate and inspire employee commitment?
- ◆ Convey a realistic outcome?
- ◆ Articulate a specific, short, sharply focused and memorable outcome?
- ◆ Allow it to be easily understood by prospective customers or employees?
- ◆ Share a unique reason for being (it can’t be used by a competitor)?
- ◆ Define the space in which your organization plays or contributes?

Checklist for a Great Mission Statement

When evaluating the quality of your current or newly drafted mission statement, it's important your mission meets these four simple criteria:

#1 - Your Mission Must Be Foundational

It clearly states why your organization exists.

#2 - It's Original

It's unique to your organization. If you were to read the mission statements of all the organizations in your industry, yours would be different than your competition.

#3 - It's Memorable

Memorable = motivating to employees, prospective employees and customers.

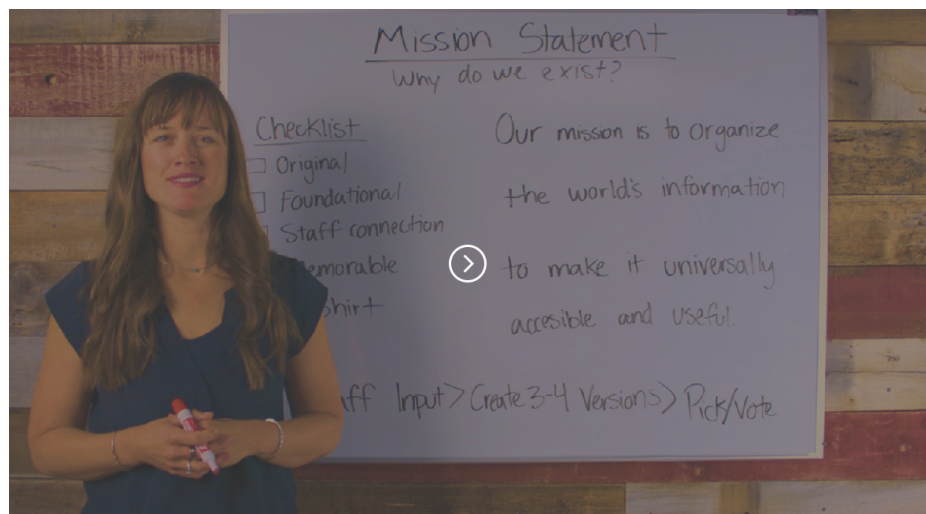
#4 - It Fits on a T-Shirt

Peter Drucker famously advised that your mission statement should be short and compelling enough to fit on a t-shirt your staff would actually wear.

Other Helpful Tips

- ◆ **Mission statements should be developed after [completing the SWOT assessment](#), and before going into the rest of the planning process.** This allows your team to be grounded and in alignment on where your organization is today and what the organization's strengths and contributions are.
- ◆ **The mission statement motivates and inspires staff.** Every single staff member knows that their purpose is defined in the mission statement. (e.g. Starbucks mission: To inspire and nurture the human spirit — one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.)
- ◆ **The mission statement is clearly and easily understood.** Develop the mission statement on a “party level”—it can quickly and briefly be understood by people at a party or on an airplane. The statement gives a profoundly simple focus for everything the team does as an organization. (e.g. Marine Stewardship Council mission: To safeguard the world's seafood supply by promoting the best environmental choices.)

Video - How to Write a Mission Statement that Inspires



[Click Here to Watch the 4-Minute Video](#)

Mission Statement Canvas

Organization Name:

Date:

1 Answer the Questions, "Why Do We Exist?" and "What's Our Core Purpose"

Use the stem completion to draft a mission statement.

The reason _____ exists is...

Organization Name

Tips/Hints for Completing Your Mission

Consider these tips and hints as you draft your mission statement. We recommend your mission conveys **at least one of the following**:

1 Convey Who You Do It For

Hint: Bigger than your organization.

2 Convey A Clear Benefit

Hint: Not just to create revenue.

3 Can Convey What You Do

Hint: We prefer action verbs.

2 Complete the Checklist for a Great Mission

Ensure your new mission statement checks each box. If it does, you can take it to a vote with your executive team. **If it check box item, move on to step 3.**



It's Foundational

It clearly states why your organization exists.



It's Memorable



It's Original

It's unique to your organization. If you were to read the mission statements of all the organizations in your industry, yours would be unique.



It Fits on a T-Shirt

It's short, motivating, and fits on a shirt your staff would actually wear.

3 Answer the Question, "Why Does that Matter?"

If the mission generated out of the above exercise results in a long, complicated mission statement, Patrick Lencioni suggests a simple trick: after each first draft mission statement, ask "why?" or "why does that matter?" Refine and repeat until the statement is distilled down to the core purpose of the organization and checks all the boxes.

Your Drafted Mission Statement

Why Does that Matter?

Your Refined Mission Statement