



How to write a Mission Statement

Mind Gliding's approach in supporting to create, or rethink, your own mission statement is more than a word-crafting exercise. It is a management thinking process which, if skilfully guided, delivers a range of business benefits beyond the written word.

A mission statement can be described as a descriptive clarity about the purpose of a business, a compelling understandable image of success in typically 1-3 years time, and clear guidance on how people should behave towards each other and customers in particular.

Raison d'être

Every organisation has a mission, a purpose, a reason for being. Often the mission is why the organisation was first created — to meet a need identified years ago. Sometimes, the same problems that the organisation initially tried to address continue to haunt generation after generation. In that case, the organisation's purpose doesn't change — although its vision has probably evolved. Other times, even 10 or 20 years can change the landscape so markedly that the original mission must be updated, altered, or changed dramatically in order to address those new realities.

That your organisation's mission is current, alive, and well, however, doesn't necessarily mean that the organisation has translated that purpose into a clear, concise mission statement. A good mission statement should accurately explain why your organisation exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the organisation's essential nature, its values, and its work. This should be accomplished in a brief paragraph that is free of jargon and "terms of art." In other words, it should avoid the kind of shorthand that you may be in the habit of swapping with others who work in the field, but is unfamiliar to anyone who is outside the organisation or the field in which it works.

Another important consideration is how recently your mission statement was reviewed by board or staff members. If it has been more than three years, now is probably a good time to review and, if necessary, fine-tune or even rewrite your mission statement. All too often an organisation's mission statement, which has been handed down over the years, loses relevance and ceases to speak to staff, board members, or supporters.

An effective mission statement must resonate with the people working in and for the organisation, as well as with the different constituencies that the organisation hopes to affect. It must express the organisation's purpose in a way that inspires commitment, innovation, and courage -- not an easy task!

At the very least, your organisation's mission statement should answer three key questions:

1. What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address?
(the **purpose** of the organisation)
2. What are we doing to address these needs?
(the **vision** of the organisation)
3. What principles or beliefs guide our work?
(the **values** of the organisation)

You can begin the process of drafting a mission statement by creating a worksheet based on these questions. Ask staff, volunteers, and constituents to list any words, phrases, or ideas that come to mind with respect to the organisation and these various categories. Do not edit at this point. Give everyone a chance to be heard. Look for language and concepts that enjoy broad consensus.

Here are two mission statements that do attempt to answer these questions.

Lynstead Children's Services: A Fostering and Residential Care organisation that is dedicated to providing as near as possible a therapeutic family home environment giving the highest standards within a warm and nurturing home for children and young people.

Purpose

to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth so that they'll achieve their highest potential.

Vision

to provide a safe, friendly non judgmental environment to enable and empower children/young people to develop.

Values

to respect each child/young person as an individual and promote equal opportunities.

KPMG is the global network of professional advisory firms whose aim it is to turn knowledge into value for the benefit of its clients its people and communities

Purpose

At KPMG, we turn knowledge into value for the benefit of our clients, our people and the capital markets. We help companies to grow with confidence. We create fulfilling career opportunities. And we help to build trust between investors and organizations-a vitally important job in the current business climate.

Vision

We aim to be recognized as leaders in terms of the services we provide and the industries we serve. This means driving ourselves to be the best in everything we do.

Values

KPMG's global values define us as a firm for ourselves, for our clients, and for the marketplace. They describe who we are, what we do and how we do it. Our values also help us attract and keep the best people, develop relationships with the right clients and protect and enhance our reputation. We aim to incorporate them into our relationships with our clients and colleagues so that they are reflected in the work we do every day and the relationships we have with each other and with our clients.

Your Mission Statement Should . . .

- ✍ Express your organisation's purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment
- ✍ motivate those who are connected to the organisation
- ✍ be articulated in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp
- ✍ use proactive verbs to describe what you do
- ✍ be free of jargon
- ✍ be short enough so that anyone connected to the organisation can readily repeat it

Dr Eddy Kloprogge, 2005