

Mission, Vision, Values, and Purpose

Mission Statement

The mission statement is one of the most important parts of your business plan. It sums up your values, vision, and purpose of your business. Many find it helpful to begin by working on each of these segments individually, beginning with values and ending with the Mission Statement. Many companies produce a specific statement on each segment - which is communicated both externally and internally.

Step 1 - Your Authentic Business Values

The values we reflect to our people, prospective clients, and established customers should be the values we already embrace as an organization. While our values proposition may be somewhat aspirational, it must reflect our authentic organizational DNA. Ask yourself, and your key employees (and maybe even clients) these kinds of questions to get you on the right track:

- What are our strengths as a company? Why are they our strengths?
- What are our weaknesses as a company? Why are they our weaknesses?
- What three words best describe the company?
- Ultimately, what one thing will the company be remembered for?
- What makes our company different from our competitors?
- What do we do differently as a team of people?
- What traits and or characteristics make someone fit with our culture?
- What are some of the characteristics of our top employees?

Step 2 - Your Vision

The vision of your business will define and shape its future. Base your vision statement on your business values and where you want the business to be in the future. Review examples of vision statements of companies that you admire, and also those of other companies in your industry. What are you aspiring to? What will you have achieved to be able to look back in 3, 5, or 10 years from now and call it a successful journey?

Step 3 - Purpose of Your Business

You may consider the purpose of your business from two perspectives - internally and externally. Try to integrate your values and vision when defining the purpose of your business together, they will provide the framework for your business concept.

Example: I love worms. The internal purpose of my business is that it will give me a chance to work with worms. The external purpose of my business is to provide composting, soil improvement, and fertilizer services to area gardeners.

Step 4 - Your Mission Statement

A mission statement sums up all of the above elements: values (culture); vision (where are you going); and purpose (what your business does). It should be short and focused, stated in the present tense in positive terms, and without qualifiers.

Example: "Vulpinex Consulting helps its small-business clients to succeed by providing them with honest, ethical, affordable project implementation assistance in such areas as management training, merchandising, and business planning."

Many companies proudly display their mission statement in a place visible the customers and suppliers. Of course, posting it is easy. The challenge is to live up to it.

Making it Real

1. **Develop a values statement that is consistent with your authentic values and communicates to all stakeholders.** This may be a sentence, a paragraph, or a shortlist - you know your audience internally and externally. This is your chance to communicate the real you, to draw your best clients and employees closer to you, and help misfits find the door.

Values Tips:

1. Focus on strengths: Don't assign importance to something you are not good at as an organization!
2. Speak to your stakeholders: Who are your values for? Use words that mean something to them.
3. Evoke emotion: How does your values statement make you feel? What do your stakeholders feel?
4. Less is more: a long list of values will be difficult to recall. Make sure the big things are the big things.

2. *What is your vision for the future of the business?*

3. *What is the purpose of your business, internally and externally?*

4. *My mission statement is:*

*(Write a short mission statement for your business, comprising **no more than 50 words**. If necessary, write a longer statement and cut it down to size by removing adjectives, adverbs, and words between commas.)*
