



Vision and Mission Definitions

Vision

A vision is a guiding image of success formed in terms of a contribution to society. If a strategic plan is the “blueprint” for an organization’s work, then the vision is the “artist’s rendering.”

There is one universal rule of planning: You will never be greater than the vision that guides you. The vision statement should require the organization’s members to stretch their expectations, aspirations, and performance.

A vision statement should be realistic and credible, well-articulated and easily understood, appropriate, ambitious, and responsive to change.

A compelling vision lays down the challenge for what the organization aspires to accomplish.

Vision has an external focus that should reflect the idealistic aspirations for the impact the organization hopes to make. In other words, why are we here?

Whereas you might achieve a goal or complete a strategy, you may not ever fulfill your vision. It's like a guiding star -- followed but never reached.

Compelling examples:

Children’s Hunger Relief Fund is saving the world one child at a time.

United Way’s vision is to build a stronger America by mobilizing our communities to improve people’s lives.

Family-to-Family is dedicated to connecting families with more to families with less.

Less compelling examples:

Feed the Children delivers food, medicine, clothing and other necessities to individuals, children and families who lack these essentials due to famine, war, poverty or natural disaster.

Head Start serves the child development needs of preschool children (birth through age five) and their low-income families.

Mission Statements

Mission statements have an internal focus. It's what inspires us to action, determines behavior, and fuels motivation. A mission statement is the expression of the why. It might describe the need and what the organization is doing to meet it.

A compelling mission statement has nine characteristics:

1. The language is bold, clear, and memorable.
2. It conveys the organization's values explicitly and implicitly.
3. There is both an emotional and rational impact.
4. It combines a "why" statement with a "what" statement.
5. The need that is being met is described in positive, not negative, terms.
6. It uses verbs that are active, not passive.
7. It inspires people to act, give, join, serve, and learn more.
8. It is adaptable for both marketing and development.
9. It summarizes succinctly the mission.

Mission Statement examples:

The Wallace Foundation mission is to enable institutions to expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. We do this by supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices.

The Hearing Society helps people connect.

We exist in a world of sound: children's voices, laughter and music, a baby's cry, the echo of fog horns, crunching leaves, a crackling fire, words of love and reassurance, whispered thoughts, soft breathing in the night, the ringing of a phone, signals of danger, and the fun of casual conversation. Hearing loss separates us from these sounds.

(Tagline developed from mission statement: "Reconnecting people with their world".)