

Why Does This Team Exist?

(Developing a Mission Statement)

 <p>Purpose</p>	<p>To ensure the team has a shared view of its purpose in the organisation, and that individual members understand how they contribute towards it.</p>
 <p>Application</p>	<p>This activity will be particularly useful when a team has just formed, or when organisational changes have caused significant disruption to existing patterns of work.</p>
 <p>What happens?</p>	<p>After some introductory briefing, the team breaks into small groups to decide the key elements which will form the mission statement.</p> <p>The team then discusses and agrees the overall structure and main elements of the mission statement.</p> <p>Sub-groups are then given the task of evolving the precise wording of specific aspects of the mission statement, which are presented back to the main team.</p> <p>The team then agrees the provisional wording of the various contributory elements which, after a period for reflection, will be endorsed as the final statement.</p>
 <p>Resources</p>	<p>Overall time required: 3 hours 30 minutes.</p> <p>Initial session: 2 hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 minutes for introduction and initial briefing• 30 minutes for small teams to develop their initial thoughts• 35 minutes for teams to report back on their ideas• 45 minutes to agree the main elements, and to decide membership of drafting teams. <p>Second session: 1 hour 30 minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 30 minutes to review the individual drafts• 30 minutes to finalise the overall draft• 30 minutes to discuss and agree how the statement will be made widely known, and to discuss any issues arising from it <p>Materials and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flipchart Stand with Blank Pads• Marker Pens• Blue-Tack, etc.• Paper, Pens or Pencils for Participants• Adequate supplies of 'Post it' Notes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of mission statements prepared by other organisations in both similar and unrelated industries (<i>manager to source</i>). • A flipchart poster showing the rules of brainstorming, as defined in the introduction to this Activity Pack.
 <p>How do I do it?</p>	<p>INTRODUCING THE MODULE</p> <p>'If you don't know where you're going, you're bound to end up somewhere else!'</p> <p>One of the pre-requisites for effective team work is a clear understanding by all team members of exactly why the team exists, and the specific results which it is expected to produce.</p> <p>Yet all too often this is sadly lacking, especially if team membership has changed significantly, or if reorganisation has altered the roles and responsibilities of individual sub-units.</p> <p>One major ingredient for success will be for the team to have a clear, concise statement of what it is in business for. Without this, it will be very difficult to ensure that everyone is pulling together for the common good.</p> <p>WHAT DO MISSION STATEMENTS LOOK LIKE?</p> <p>Before asking the team to set to work on their own mission statement, they may ask for examples of what other companies, organisations or departments have produced.</p> <p>If you have examples, you may wish to show them to the team; however, this needs to be handled carefully. Stress that your motive in showing them other mission statements is not to produce a checklist of features, but simply to give them a 'feel' for what could be included.</p> <p>At this stage try to avoid discussion on the detailed elements of the statements - there will be plenty of time to do that later.</p> <p>DEFINE THE OVERALL STRUCTURE</p> <p>The first major piece of work for the team to undertake is to identify and agree the overall 'shape' of the mission statement. In other words, what major themes will strike a first-time reader?</p> <p>There are many different elements which could be included in mission statements, and they include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to customers • Quality and value for money • Bottom-line results

- Competitive edge
- Continuous improvement
- Employee rewards
- Employee involvement
- Safety
- Social and environmental issues

Break the team into smaller teams of 3 - 4 people, and ask each one to formulate a list of the key aspects which they feel should be included in the mission statement.

Give each team a set of blank 'Post it' notes, and ask them to write their ideas, one per 'Post it' note. They should keep the description short and concise.

Remind the team that, at this stage, they're not trying to agree the wording of the statement, simply to agree the overall contents. The teams will probably require 20 - 25 minutes for this activity

Once you can see the discussions ending, ask the team to reform, and for each small team in turn to present their ideas to their colleagues.

As the presentations unfold, the display of 'Post it' notes will gradually develop, and reveal the wide range of thoughts in the team.

AGREEING THE SCOPE OF THE MISSION STATEMENT

Once everyone has reported back, help to facilitate the discussion about which major elements should be included in the mission statement.

Depending on the range of ideas presented, and other factors which may influence the final outcome, you may wish to suggest to the team that they adjourn their discussions to some later time.

This will allow everyone time to consider the ideas which have been suggested, and to give due consideration to what will become a very important document.

If this course of action is adopted, you may wish to have the ideas typed up and circulated to the team members.

Whichever approach is used, you will reach a point when the team have agreed the main elements to be included, and the next task is to formulate the precise wording.

DRAFTING THE MISSION STATEMENT

Most people will accept that there can be few more tortuous experiences than trying to draft a lengthy statement in committee.

You will have much more success by splitting the team into a number of smaller teams, who each accept responsibility for drafting one specific aspect

How you manage this will depend on the range of work to be drafted, the number of people available and personal commitments to specific elements of the statement.

You may wish to show some examples of specific wording, which may prompt some thoughts in the team. It is also worth asking the team to consider the effect which specific phrases may have on customers, employees or other interested parties.

Service to customers

'We employ capable, committed and enthusiastic people who provide the highest standards of service to both internal and external customers.'

'We will meet customer requirements first time, every time at the right cost.'

Quality and value for money

'We are a commercial company and we must succeed in the market place by offering value for money.'

'We will ensure that consumers prefer our brands to competition in both product quality and image.'

'We provide a range of reliable and secure investment and protection products that are designed to match the needs of both our policyholders and intermediaries.'

Bottom-line results

'We promise a 12 percent return for everyone who invests in our future.'

'We will achieve success by concentrating on our business goals.'

'We will become the lowest cost quality supplier thereby providing value to our customers and good returns to our shareholders.'

Competitive edge

'We will be the industry leader in the 21st century.'

'We will focus our resources behind a small portfolio of large, strong products.'

Continuous improvement

'We're going to be a better company tomorrow than we are today.'

'We strive consistently to meet and surpass the reasonable expectations of our customers.'

Employee rewards

'All our people deserve to share in the rewards of superior company performance.'

'We will reward people fairly in support of our business goals.'

Employee involvement

'We can improve our effectiveness by giving people freedom to act.'

'We believe teamwork is the key to improved performance.'

'We will help people to develop the skills which the company needs.'

'We will communicate well and openly with our people so that our ambition, culture and vision are shared.'

Safety

'We will give priority to the safety of our plants, our colleagues and the public.'

'We will apply the highest international standards of workplace safety and environmental concern.'

Social contribution

'We will play a leading role in influencing both social and environmental aspects of our globe.'

'We will have regard for the environment in everything we do.'

'We have a duty to act responsibly in the community, recognising that we are a very large company, operating in many diverse countries and cultures.'

DRAFTING IN TEAMS

Once the allocation of tasks is agreed, the detailed drafting work can proceed. Again this may take some time to conclude, and will probably be best achieved if the team adjourn their formal session, and resume later at an agreed date and time.

It's as well to have the team agree to a specific timetable for completion, otherwise operational pressures could well cause this important, but not urgent, task to end up at the bottom of the filing tray.

In the meantime, you could arrange for each small team to send you their contributions, which you could then collate and distribute to the other team members.

Suggested amendments or additions could be proposed, and so gradually a consensus view on the various elements of the mission statement would evolve.

During this time, many informal discussions will be going on, with different views and opinions being expressed and explored. It will give people the opportunity to consider other views without feeling under pressure.

RESUMED SESSION

You will reach a state when the initial drafts have been circulated, and there is sufficient agreement on the overall 'shape' and 'feel' of the document to resume the formal session.

By now everyone should have had the opportunity to read and comment on the drafts proposed by other team members. This session should really involve little more than a formal endorsement of the statement's content.

However, do ask some probing questions and don't assume that silence means agreement. It really is most important that there is genuine consensus on this statement, and the team must be satisfied that this is so.

DRAFTING COMPLETED - WHAT'S NEXT?

Drafting the mission statement is one thing, deciding what to do with it is something else! Encourage the team to make some conscious decisions about how they intend to implement the worthy thoughts enshrined within it.

How will it be published? Who will see it, and when? What impact will it have on customers, employees, suppliers, or the community at large? When will it be reviewed? How will you know its objectives have been achieved?

What other dependencies will spring from the mission statement? Increased quality of service, better training, or enhanced employee participation, for example, will all have a price.

	<p>What extra resources will be required, and will they be available in the required timescales? What impact will the mission statement have on any already published business plans?</p> <p>Before closing the session, ensure that the team commits to an action plan to handle these and other issues which the team may itself have identified.</p>
 <p>Note</p>	<p>This session looks quite simple in outline, but the discussions touch on many issues which will be dear to people's hearts. So arriving at agreed decisions may be very time consuming and, at times, quite frustrating!</p> <p>The key role you can play is to facilitate the discussions. Help team members to confront conflict, and to talk through the issues involved. Avoiding them will simply postpone troubles.</p> <p>This session must be seen as the first in a linked series, as formulating a mission statement triggers a whole chain of events. The next logical step is for team members to identify their key results areas, and then define specific and measurable goals and objectives.</p>
 <p>When?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a team is formed for a new project • When a team has taken their finger off the pulse and needs to refocus • If a team has to put in a business case to remain viable