Mission Statements and Strategic Goals:
Bringing Businesses into Focus

Introduction
FOCUSING A BUSINESS is a challenging but worthwhile pursuit, one that earns dividends as a business matures. Two ways to manage this project is by developing a mission statement and defining strategic goals.

Mission Statements
Forming a mission statement is an important component of leadership and business development because it clarifies and strengthens an organization’s focus. A business vision in written form, a mission statement affirms an organization’s goals and priorities, justifying business practices and identifying values. Essentially, a strong mission statement reminds a business owner why s/he opened for business in the first place.

Although motivational, the declaration needn’t be wordy or long. In fact, the more concise it is the better, because it will be easier to read, remember, or even memorize.

For example, note the succinct statement that Padlock Ranch, a Wyoming ranching operation, offers: “It is our mission to manage the resources and assets of the ranch for long-term sustainability, while conserving and improving our environment and communities.” JBS USA, the world’s largest producer of protein, provides a more assertive one, avowing that “Our mission at JBS has remained the same for more than 60 years: to be the best in all that we do, providing superior products and services to our customers and the opportunity of a better future for all our team members.” AGCO, a global leader in the design and manufacture of agricultural equipment, is straight and to the point in theirs: “Profitable growth through superior customer service, innovation, quality, and commitment.”
Developing Your Own Mission Statement

How do you construct a mission statement? The process should not be difficult. However, because mission statements provide a foundation for a company’s future, first identify the key concepts, particularly your company’s core values, for maximum effect. Brainstorming exercises are especially helpful in this regard, for they can help to build usable ideas prior to completing a rough draft.

Core values are central, powerful drivers of any strong mission statement, so let’s briefly define and discuss them. Core values are principles that guide an organization’s internal conduct as well as its relationship with the external world. Examples include hard work, honesty, integrity, and the desire to provide quality products. They thus form the underlying theme of a mission statement—they come from your passion for business and keep you aligned with who you are—so take care when identifying which ones apply to your business.

Now that you understand the basic idea of a core value, please complete the following exercises.

Step 1

Write down 3–7 core values you think represent your enterprise. Table 1 provides a list of values to help you start brainstorming.

Table 1. Core Value Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Reputation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Step 2**

Use the core values identified in step 1 to start formulating your mission statement. As a brief review, a mission statement defines what a business does for its customers, what it does for its employees, and what it does for its owners. If your business is going to reach outside of your local community, you could include what it does for the nation and world. But remember, keep it simple!

**Strategic Goals**

Another aid that improves your business’ focus involves **strategic goals**. Strategic goals are directives that help business owners realize a strategic plan. You will develop three kinds in this bulletin, all of which reinforce one another: a strategic goal (the larger, overarching objective, like target marketing all dairies), a tactical goal (a short-range planning device that emphasizes current operations and annual goals, like social media marketing), and an operational goal (a specific action, like developing a Facebook platform). The detail work will help you to create a well-constructed strategic plan, a broadly defined outline that sequences the steps you need to take to realize the business vision expressed in your mission statement.

To begin building your strategic plan, first use your mission statement to identify strategic goal(s). State each goal as a fact, then translate it into a tactical or operational activity. That way, your goals can function as only the best-defined ones do, as signposts that clearly reveal a business’ best route forward.

When recording your strategic goals, keep in mind that this process not only defines a direction but is self-reinforcing. Consequently, ask yourself the following simple questions: “What do we do?,” “Whom do we do it for?,” and “How do we excel at it?” For example, if you produce potatoes on irrigated acres, an operational goal could include increasing the use of a cell phone to monitor the center pivot to reduce time spent on its inspection. But a task like this requires so many work hours to set up that a business often ends up devoting lesser time to working on strategic planning and tactical goals, thus harming the realization of both.

Because the concepts are so intertwined, the following basic descriptions may be helpful:

- Strategic planning involves defining the direction and scope of the business in the long run.
- Tactical goals focus on the implementation of the strategic plan.
- Operational goals refer to day-to-day activities.

Additionally, the following template example (Table 2) may be helpful for understanding this process, as well as providing direction as you plan your goals.

**Step 3**

The mission statement will influence decisions and bring focus and direction to your enterprise. Solicit feedback from employees and owners about the statement you have drafted.

**Step 4**

After making any necessary revisions, print your mission statement on high-quality paper and frame it so that you can see it daily. Put it in a strategic position so all your business colleagues will see it too. Review the statement on a regular basis and discuss with staff whether the business is staying true to its guiding values.
Once you have completed writing your strategic goals, schedule time to review them with your team. If your team has proven strong and capable, go over your goals frequently with them. Goals are designed to create focus, so the more you reinforce the former the better for your business. At the very least, review the strategic goals often enough so that team members realize their importance, but not to the degree that it interferes with your team’s ability to execute them.

**Summary**

Mission statements and strategic goals channel the energy of a business in a beneficial direction. Without them, an owner may struggle to implement a strategic plan. Indeed, without spending time thinking about her/his visions for the future and what s/he needs to do to achieve them, a business owner will likely fail to meet most if not all goals set. Putting thoughts in the form of a mission statement and strategic goals, however, can keep this from happening. They are highly useful tools that help to clarify decisions that affect a business enterprise over both the short and long term.

**Further Reading**