

The Five-Step Plan for Creating Personal Mission Statements

A large percentage of companies, including most of the Fortune 500, have corporate mission statements. Mission statements are designed to provide direction and thrust to an organization, an enduring statement of purpose. A mission statement acts as an invisible hand that guides the people in the organization. A mission statement explains the organization's reason for being, and answers the question, "What business are we in?"

A personal mission statement is a bit different from a company mission statement, but the fundamental principles are the same. Writing a personal mission statement offers the opportunity to establish what's important and perhaps make a decision to stick to it before we even start a career. Or it enables us to chart a new course when we're at a career crossroads. Steven Covey (in *First Things First*) refers to developing a mission statement as "connecting with your own unique purpose and the profound satisfaction that comes from fulfilling it."

A personal mission statement helps job-seekers identify their core values and beliefs. Michael Goodman (in *The Potato Chip Difference: How to Apply Leading Edge Marketing*

Strategies to Landing the Job You Want) states that a personal mission statement is "an articulation of what you're all about and what success looks like to you." A personal mission statement also allows job-seekers to identify companies that have similar values and beliefs and helps them better assess the costs and benefits of any new career opportunity.

The biggest problem most job-seekers face is not in wanting to have a personal mission statement, but actually writing it. So, to help you get started on your personal mission statement, here is a five-step mission-building process. Take as much time on each step as you need -- and remember to dig deeply to develop a mission statement that is both authentic and honest. And to help you better see the process, we've included an example of one job-seeker's process in developing her mission statement.

Steps toward Personal Mission Statement Development

Step 1: Identify Past Successes. Spend some time identifying four or five examples where you have had personal success in recent years. These successes could be at work, in your community, at home, etc. Write them down.

Try to identify whether there is a common theme -- or themes -- to these examples. Write them down.

Step 2: Identify Core Values. Develop a list of attributes that you believe identify who you are and what your priorities are. The list can be as long as you need.

Once your list is complete, see if you can narrow your values to five or six most important values.

Finally, see if you can choose the one value that is most important to you.

Step 3: Identify Contributions. Make a list of the ways you could make a difference. In an ideal situation, how could you contribute best to:

- the world in general
- your family
- your employer or future employers
- your friends
- your community

Step 4: Identify Goals. Spend some time thinking about your priorities in life and the goals you have for yourself.

Make a list of your personal goals, perhaps in the short-term (up to three years) and the long-term (beyond three years).

Step 5: Write Mission Statement. Based on the first four steps and a better understanding of yourself, begin writing your personal mission statement.

Sample Personal Mission Statement Development

1. Past success:

- a. developed new product features for stagnant product
- b. part of team that developed new positioning statement for product
- c. helped child's school with fundraiser that was wildly successful
- d. increased turnout for the opening of a new local theater company

Themes: Successes all relate to creative problem solving and execution of a solution.

2. Core values:

- Hard-working
- Industrious
- Creativity
- Problem-Solving
- Decision-maker
- Friendly
- Outgoing
- Positive
- Family-oriented
- Honest

- Intelligent
- Compassionate
- Spiritual

- Analytical
- Passionate
- Contemplative

Most important values:

- Problem-Solving
- Creativity
- Analytical

- Compassionate
- Decision-maker
- Positive

Most important value:

- Creativity

3. Identify Contributions:

- the world in general: develop products and services that help people achieve what they want in life. To have a lasting impact on the way people live their lives.
- my family: to be a leader in terms of personal outlook, compassion for others, and maintaining an ethical code; to be a good mother and a loving wife; to leave the world a better place for my children and their children.

- my employer or future employers: to lead by example and demonstrate how innovative and problem-solving products can be both successful in terms of solving a problem and successful in terms of profitability and revenue generation for the organization.
- my friends: to always have a hand held out for my friends; for them to know they can always come to me with any problem.
- my community: to use my talents in such a way as to give back to my community.

4. Identify Goals:

Short-term: To continue my career with a progressive employer that allows me to use my skills, talent, and values to achieve success for the firm.

Long-term: To develop other outlets for my talents and develop a longer-term plan for diversifying my life and achieving both professional and personal success.

5. Mission Statement:

To live life completely, honestly, and compassionately, with a healthy dose of realism mixed with the imagination and dreams that all things are possible if one sets their mind to finding an answer.

Final Thoughts on Developing a Personal Mission Statement

A personal mission statement, is of course personal... but if you want to truly see whether you have been honest in developing your personal mission statement, I suggest sharing the results of this process with one or more people who are close to you. Ask for their feedback.

Finally, remember that a mission statement is not meant to be written once and blasted into stone. You should set aside some time annually to review your career, job, goals, and mission statement -- and make adjustments as necessary.

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