



Mission Statement

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Ever encounter a business and wonder what they do and why they do it? What is their fundamental purpose?

“The increase and diffusion of knowledge”

That is the mission statement of the Smithsonian. It tells consumers, both internal and external, what the organization hopes to accomplish in a simple and concise way. Not all mission statements are as poignant as that one. Some provide a broader vision of the company. For example, insurance company Aflac’s mission statement is: To combine aggressive strategic marketing with quality products and services at competitive prices to provide the best insurance value for consumers

It says to both employees and potential customers that they value quality products and services at competitive prices. A mission statement articulates the purpose of the business. That makes it an important part of any brand building plan. Consider how the right mission statement can work for your business.

What is a mission statement?

A formal summary of the aims and values of a company, organization, or individual.

Why do businesses need a mission statement?

A well-crafted mission statement focuses the business for both employees and the target audience. It serves as a framework, giving everyone involved a launching point to build from when establishing the brand. For consumers, it sets the company apart from the competition without limiting the business purpose.

You notice Google’s mission statement doesn’t mention running a search engine even though that is their initial claim to fame. It is just broad enough to let the business grow into the conglomerate it is today.

What should a mission statement accomplish?

A mission statement should tell others why the business exists and what makes it different.

Why they exist: To prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies

What makes them different: They mobilize the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors

How is that different from Goodwill Industries?

Why they exist: To advance employment, education and skill-building

What makes them different: They employ and educate

Clearly, the core business model of these two seemingly similar companies is very different.

Finding a Balance for Your Mission Statement

The goal here is to strike a balance between overt realism: We offer quality products and good service

. . . and optimism: We aim to be an industry leader

Neither one of those statements makes the company stand out, but combined they are stronger. What is it about your business that is better than the other guys, though? That is where adding the key elements come into play.

The Key Elements of a Mission Statement

Focus your statement on these four elements.

Value – What is the value of the business to both customers and employees?

Inspiration – Why should people want to work for the company?

Plausibility – Make it sound reasonable

Specificity – Tie it back to the business

Value – To create and promote great-tasting, healthier, organic beverages

Inspiration – To grow our business with the same honesty and integrity we use to craft our products

In their mission statement, Honest Tea is not promising to cure cancer, only to make a healthy product. They also point out they create organic beverages that taste great, tying the statement back to the business brand.

Tips for Creating an Effective Mission Statement

There are many schools of thought on how to go about creating the perfect mission statement, but there are some clear do's and don't's to consider.

Do keep it short and concise. Sum up the company's mission in just a few sentences.

Don't write an essay. That is not the purpose of this brand building tool. You want the mission statement to be tethered to the brand and that means it must be memorable. Long drawn out prose is rarely memorable.

Do think long-term. The mission statement is an investment in your company's future, so keep it open enough to reflect your long-term goals.

Don't make it too limiting. We want to provide the best products ever to the town of Elmwood. Do you only see the business selling to the residents of one small town or do you hope to expand at some point?

Do find out what your employees think of the mission statement. This is a tool designed with them in mind, too, so get their opinion. Ask how they would improve it and what they dislike about it.

Don't be afraid to change it. Things change in the business world. If the mission statement no longer represents the company, it is time for a rewrite.

A mission statement is a declaration of what makes the business important. By design, it guides the actions of the employees and draws in customers by creating direction by explaining what the company intends to accomplish.