

# Building a Strategic Framework: Values, Vision and Mission

Both people and organizations need to establish a strategic framework for significant success. This framework consists of:

- values that shape your actions,
- a vision for your future,
- a mission that defines what you are doing,
- strategies that zero in on your key success approaches, and goals and action plans to guide your daily, weekly and monthly actions.

Your organization's success and your personal success depend on how well you define and live by each of these important concepts. In fact:

- Companies whose employees understand the mission and goals enjoy a 29 percent greater return than other firms (Watson Wyatt Work Study).
- U.S. workers want their work to make a difference, but 75% do not think their company's mission statement has become the way they do business (Workplace 2000 Employee Insight Survey).

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## Core Values

Values are traits or qualities that are considered worthwhile; they represent an individual's highest priorities and deeply held driving forces. (Values are also known as core values and as governing values; they all refer to the same sentiment.)

Value statements are grounded in values and define how people want to behave with each other in the organization. They are statements about how the organization will value customers, suppliers, and the internal community. Value statements describe actions which are the living enactment of the fundamental values held by most individuals within the organization.

The values of each of the individuals in your workplace, along with their experience, upbringing, and so on, meld together to form your corporate culture. The values of your senior leaders are especially important in the development of your culture. These leaders have a lot of power in your organization to set the course and environment and they have selected the staff for your workplace.

If you think about your own life, your values form the cornerstones for all you do and accomplish. They define where you spend your time, if you are truly living your values. Each of you makes choices in life according to your most important four – ten values. Why not take the time to identify what is most important to you and to your organization.

## Why Identify and Establish Values?

Effective organizations identify and develop a clear, concise and shared meaning of values/beliefs, priorities, and direction so that everyone understands and can contribute. Once defined, values impact every aspect of your organization. You must support and nurture this impact or identifying values will have been a wasted exercise. People will feel fooled and misled unless they see the impact of the exercise within your organization. If you want the values you identify to have an impact, the following must occur.

- People demonstrate and model their values in action in their personal work behaviors, decision making, contribution, and interpersonal interaction.
- Organizational values help each person establish priorities in their daily work life.
- Values guide every decision that is made once the organization has cooperatively created the values and the value statements.
- Rewards and recognition within the organization are structured to recognize those people whose work embodies the values the organization embraced.
- Organizational goals are grounded in the identified values. Adoption of the values and the behaviors that result is recognized in regular performance feedback.
- People hire and promote individuals whose outlook and actions are congruent with the values.
- Only the active participation of all members of the organization will ensure a truly organization-wide, value-based, shared culture.

The following are examples of values: ambition, competency, individuality, equality, integrity, service, responsibility, accuracy, respect, dedication, diversity, improvement, enjoyment/fun, loyalty, credibility, honesty, innovativeness, teamwork, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, stewardship, empathy, accomplishment, courage, wisdom, independence, security, challenge, influence, learning, compassion, friendliness, discipline/order, generosity, persistence, optimism, dependability, flexibility.

Although important aspects of your life and attention, these are not values: family, church, professionalism. If you define what you value about each of these, you are identifying the core value. As an example, the core value in family might be close relationships; in church, spirituality.

## Value Statement Samples

Want to see samples of values and value statements? These give you an idea of the depth and breadth in which organizations write their values. Search online for values and value statements and you'll find some that stretch to several pages, too.

"To preserve and improve human life." (Merck)

At Merck, "corporate conduct is inseparable from the conduct of individual employees in the performance of their work. Every Merck employee is responsible for adhering to business practices that are in accordance with the letter and spirit of the applicable laws and with ethical principles that reflect the highest standards of corporate and individual behavior...

"At Merck, we are committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity. We are responsible to our customers, to Merck employees and their families, to the environments we inhabit, and to the societies we serve worldwide. In discharging our responsibilities, we do not take professional or ethical shortcuts. Our interactions with all segments of society must reflect the high standards we profess."

Patriot Ledger (SouthofBoston.com): "We have a total commitment to these values, shaping the way we do business for our employees, our customers and our company.

### "Our Employees

- Our employees are the most valued assets of our company, essential participants with a shared responsibility in fulfilling our mission.
- We recognize that the quality, motivation and performance of our employees are the key factors in achieving our success.

"Accordingly, our Human Resources policies and practices are built on:

- Dedication to assisting every employee in reaching his or her full potential in both performance and reward.
- Commitment to diversity, equal opportunity and fair treatment.

- Promotion based on merit, and from within whenever possible.
- We want our organizational structure and culture to promote employee involvement, open communication, teamwork and cooperation."

## **Vision and the Vision Statement**

### **Vision Statement**

A vision is a statement about what your organization wants to become. It should resonate with all members of the organization and help them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves. A vision should stretch the organization's capabilities and image of itself. It gives shape and direction to the organization's future. Visions range in length from a couple of words to several pages. I recommend shorter vision statements because people will tend to remember their shorter organizational vision.

### **Vision Statement Samples**

"Year after year, Westin and its people will be regarded as the best and most sought after hotel and resort management group in North America." (Westin Hotels)

"To be recognized and respected as one of the premier associations of HR Professionals." (HR Association of Greater Detroit)

### **Personal Vision Statement**

Your personal vision for your life can be as simple as a couple of words or as lengthy as 200 or more items you want to attain or accomplish.

## **Mission Statement**

Mission or Purpose is a precise description of what an organization does. It should describe the business organization should be able to verbally express this mission.

Additionally, each person needs a mission for his or her life. The alignment of your life mission with your organization's mission is one of the key factors in whether you are happy with your work and workplace. If they are incongruent, you are likely dissatisfied with your work choice.

### **Mission Statement Samples**

"Our goal is simply stated. We want to be the best service organization in the world." (IBM)

"FedEx is committed to our People-Service-Profit Philosophy. We will produce outstanding financial returns by providing totally reliable, competitively superior, global, air-ground transportation of high-priority goods and documents that require rapid, time-certain delivery." (Federal Express)

"To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same thing as rich people." (Wal-Mart)

"Our mission is to earn the loyalty of Saturn owners and grow our family by developing and marketing U.S.-manufactured vehicles that are world leaders in quality, cost, and customer enthusiasm through the integration of people, technology, and business systems." (Saturn)

"In order to realize our Vision, our Mission must be to exceed the expectations of our customers, whom we define as guests, partners, and fellow employees. (mission) We will accomplish this by committing to our shared values and by achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction, with extraordinary emphasis on the creation of value. (strategy) In this way we will ensure that our profit, quality and growth goals are met." (Westin Hotels and Resorts)

## Strategies, Goals and Action Plans

Strategies are the broadly defined four or five key approaches the organization will use to accomplish its mission and drive toward the vision. Goals and action plans usually flow from each strategy. One example of a strategy is employee empowerment and teams. Another is to pursue a new worldwide market in Asia. Another is to streamline your current distribution system using lean management principles.

A university Human Resources Development department established several broad strategies for growth. These included becoming the training and education resource of choice for all employees by offering one-stop access to any and all existing education and training resources. Additionally, they determined key strategies for expanding their funding base and moving courses online for customer convenience.

A Human Resources department devised strategies to develop a superior workforce. These included eliminating poor performers; hiring from several choices of excellent candidates, not just "settling" on a candidate; developing succession planning; and increasing training and cross-training opportunities.

### Sample Strategies

"The Human Resource Association of Greater Detroit's (HRAGD) efforts to advance its mission will include: The promotion of voluntary member interchange, observance of ethical and professional standards, the conduct of meetings and workshops on relevant human resources topics and issues, communication of our purpose and activities to the broader business community, cooperation with the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), as well as, other SHRM professional and student chapters and related Human Resources organizations and the community involvement of our membership. The Association regularly publishes newsletters throughout the year which cover items such as monthly meeting highlights, future programs, Executive Board announcements, SHRM and legislative updates and general human resources news. In addition, a Membership Directory and member skills listing are published."

The San Antonio Express News developed these strategies.

- "EXPAND our customer base and enhance the franchise by pursuing multimedia opportunities.
- DELIVER an award-winning level of journalistic excellence, building public interest, trust and pride.
- PROVIDE vigorous community leadership and support.
- INSTILL an environment of internal and external excellence in customer service.
- EMPOWER and recognize each employee's unique contribution.
- ACHIEVE the highest standards of quality.
- IMPROVE financial strength and profitability."

### Goals and Action Plans

After you have developed the key strategies, turn your attention to developing several goals that will enable you to accomplish each of your strategies. Goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based.

In the example above, the HRAGD group might consider setting one goal to hold a monthly chapter meeting. Another goal that supports their strategies is to schedule a relevant seminar or workshop quarterly. Another goal might include holding informal dinners and cocktail hours to support voluntary member exchange.

Once you have enabled the accomplishment of your strategies through setting SMART goals, you will want to develop action plans that will help you accomplish each goal. Continuing with HRAGD as the example, to offer a quarterly seminar, you will need to follow an action plan:

- Establish a cross section of professionals as a committee and meet to plan the sessions.
- Determine budget.
- Perform HRAGD member needs assessment.
- Select topics based on member needs assessment.
- Locate exceptional speakers.
- Pick speaker and negotiate workshop length, pay, topic and objectives.
- Determine location and schedule the seminar.
- Plan advertising strategies, and so forth.

Make action plans as detailed as you need them to be and integrate the individual steps into your planning system. An effective planning system, whether it uses a personal computer, a paper and pen system, a handheld computer or a Palm, will keep your goals and action plans on track and on target.

Want to be one of the organizations, whose employees understand the mission and goals, that enjoy a 29 percent greater return than other firms? Involve as many people as you can in charting the road map discussed above for developing a strategic framework for your business. And you will enjoy the greater return. With your vision, mission, values, strategies, goals and action plans developed and shared, you'll all win, both personally and professionally.