



Bulletin

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Do You Really Need a Mission Statement?

Companies whose fiscal year begins July 1 may be deep in the planning process right now, looking at programs and budgets. But before putting specific projects or numbers on paper, it may be a good idea to take a step back and revisit the company's mission statement.

A mission statement may seem like a soft-skill, best-practices nicety, just something to pull out for annual staff meetings or put on the company website. But a good mission statement can actually serve a significant purpose in keeping your business on the right track as it grows and evolves.

In this month's video, Starbucks Creative Director Kristy Cameron explains the role her company's mission statement plays in bringing the worldwide enterprise together and in influencing how it selects those with whom it will partner. (And it doesn't say anything about quality coffee, speedy delivery, or the level of customer service.)*

"A well-developed mission statement is a great tool for understanding, developing, and communicating fundamental business objectives," writes Palo Alto Software, Inc., Founder and Chairman Tim Berry in "[How to Write a Mission Statement in 5 Easy Steps](#)." Berry believes the mission statement should be succinct and answer questions about your business," such as:

- Who is your company? What do you do? What do you stand for? And why do you do it?
- What do you want the business to do for its owners? Profits? Growth? A place you want to come to each day?
- What markets do you serve, what benefits do you offer them? What problems do you solve for your customers?
- What kind of internal work environment do you want for your employees?

How to Get There

According to the Idealliance *WorkPlan for Success: Strategic Planning*, a **vision statement** describes what you want your company to look like in the future, an image "that is so exciting that it would continue to keep the organization

motivated even if the leaders who created the vision were no longer there." A **mission statement** "translates what may be a worthy but obscure vision into a systematic and disciplined process of planning, programming, and measuring an organization's direction." In short, it defines:

- What your company is. Who it serves and what it does for them. What are your specialties? Who are your customers? What markets do you serve? ("Our company is....")
- How you will measure its success. The mission statement should make it clear to everyone how they will know when the vision has been achieved. ("Our future success will be measured by....")
- What the company must do to achieve that success. What it must establish, create, and deliver to achieve the desired future state. ("Achieving that success requires us to....")



Write, Then Listen

Once the statement is written, "discuss, digest, cut, polish, review, revise," says Berry. "Cut down the wordiness. Good mission statements serve multiple functions, define objectives, and live for a long time. So, edit." He advises keeping "a sharp eye out for the buzzwords and hype that everybody claims. Cut as much as you can that isn't unique to your business, except for those special elements that—unique or not—can serve as long-term rules and reminders.

"Then, listen. Show drafts to others, ask their opinions, and really listen. Don't argue, don't convince them, just listen. And then edit again," he says. "And, for the rest of your business's life, review and revise it as needed. As with everything in a business plan, your mission statement should never get written in stone, and, much less, stashed in a drawer. Use it or lose it."

**(That unifying, influential Starbucks mission statement seems to touch all the mission statement bases in a single, succinct phrase: "To inspire and nurture the human spirit, one person, one neighborhood, and one cup at a time.")*



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