

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES - INPUT

INTRODUCTION

What is the philosophy behind your mission and vision statements? What is the difference between mission and vision? How do they connect to each other and why are they central to our works? Why are values relevant for our institution's way of proceeding? Which are these values? Do they relate to my own personal values?

These are relevant questions. We need to know the answer to them when we start working inside an organisation if we want to become effective leaders. To address this issue we need to think on the well known concepts of Why, What, and How. It is highly recommended before you start this section seeing one of the most viewed TED Talks of all time - [How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#) by Simon Sinek)

MAIN IDEAS

You would be surprised how many people are not able to do the simple exercise of expressing the vision and mission statements of their organisation and the values that guide them. Knowing the answer to these three concepts is also essential to be able to explain why and what your organisation does in a simple and structured manner. Think about an "[elevator pitch](#)", you have 30 seconds to explain to another person what your organisation does and why. Would you be able to do it in a way that is true, clear, captivating, and energising? Your goal is to be able to do it without any problem and in any situation.

In general there tends to be a confusion amongst institutions with what purpose the mission and vision statements serve, they are easily interchanged or even worse, they do not work or serve any real purpose. Look into several of the Top Fortune 500 organisations and try understanding if there is any comprehensive criteria that guides every vision and mission statements. More importantly, do they live up to them? To what extent? Are they just "make-up" or decorative devices to make them look prettier to the outside world or are they really a compass for their works?

Here are a few characteristics to help you distinguish them develop by [TopNonProfits](#):

- **Vision Statement:** WHY we do what we do. A short phrase describing the future you are ultimately working towards. A statement that gives 'reach', that stretches, that draws us forward. It generally describes the clear and inspirational long-term desired change. Where do we want to end up? What impact we want to have? It should be clear (easy to understand), memorable, concise (short and to the point), and very important, bigger than you. Answer the following two questions:
 - What would the world look like if the problem was solved?
 - If completed successfully, what would this look like for you and your beneficiaries?

- **Mission Statement:** WHAT we do and WHO/WHAT we do it for. It explains the reason for your institution to exist. It should be clear (easy to understand), concise (short and to the point), and useful (inform, focus, guide). The primary audiences and functions of mission statements are:
 - External: Inform others of what you do
 - Staff and Volunteers: Focus and motivate your team
 - Leadership: Guide Strategic Planning & Decisions

Start writing your mission statement through **building blocks** (each colour is a block). The most simple and straightforward approach is:

ACTION(S) + TARGETED BENEFICIARIES. For example:

- To serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world – CARE
- Lift the spirits of America's troops and their families – USO
- To inspire and empower people affected by cancer – Livestrong

Other building blocks you might want to use:

SERVICE(S) / PROBLEM(S) / CAUSE / PARTNERS

- To connect people through lending to alleviate poverty – Kiva
- To inspire conservation of the oceans – Monterey Bay Aquarium

- **Organisational Values:** HOW you do what you do. Just like you have your hierarchy of values, an institution can and should have one by which to guide its actions and change. Just like mission and vision statements, organisational values need to be seen in practice not only on paper. Management expert Patrick Lencioni already warned us: "Empty values statements create cynical and dispirited employees, alienate customers, and undermine managerial credibility."

They are "important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable" - Business Dictionary.

The good use of organisational values can help us clarify our identity, to guide colleagues,.. but Lencioni also suggests that there are risks in stating organisational values (and mission and vision statements for that matter). "They can make some employees feel like outcasts. They limit an organization's strategic and operational freedom and constrain the behavior of its people. They leave executives open to heavy criticism for even minor violations. And they demand constant vigilance." Lencioni differentiates amongst 4 different types of values:

- **Core values** are the deeply ingrained principles that guide all of a company's actions; they serve as its cultural cornerstones. They are inherent and sacrosanct. They often reflect the values of the company's founders and they are the source of a company's distinctiveness and must be maintained at all costs.
- **Aspirational values** are those that a company needs to succeed in the future but currently lacks. A company may need to develop a new value to support a new strategy, for example, or to meet the requirements of a changing market or industry.

- **Permission-to-play values** simply reflect the minimum behavioral and social standards required of any employee. They tend not to vary much across companies, particularly those working in the same region or industry, which means that, by definition, they never really help distinguish a company from its competitors.
- **Accidental values** arise spontaneously without being cultivated by leadership and take hold over time. They usually reflect the common interests or personalities of the organization's employees. Accidental values can be good for a company, such as when they create an atmosphere of inclusivity. But they can also be negative forces, foreclosing new opportunities

IGNATIAN NOTE

This secular usage of mission derives ultimately from the ecclesiastical, where the term is of more venerable vintage. The apostles spread the gospel on their 'missionary' journeys. Through the centuries 'missionaries' established 'missions'. Until quite recently preachers preached 'missions'. Today 'missioning' ceremonies send ministers on their way - even if sometimes not much farther than across the street. We can hardly speak of Christianity without using the word. - Mission and the Early Jesuits, John O'Malley SJ

Jesus was preeminently the man of the Spirit, led by the Spirit. This is attested to throughout the gospels. He was "made Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rm 1:4). Discernment is the dynamic process of choosing the values of Jesus who was the Christ and of living by the Spirit of Christ. "All who are led by the Spirit of God are Sons of God" (Rm 8:14; Jn 3:5). This decisive and consistent living involves a whole series of choices in the here and now. It is complicated by many things, not the least by the cacophony of our own warring desires, impulses and false defenses, i.e. by what Paul described as the law of the body's members in conflict with the law of his mind (Rm 7:23). Discernment of spirits has to do with the sorting out of these inner impulses, affects, feelings so that we can respond with some degree of freedom to the Spirit of God as He makes Himself known to us through the details of our day-to-day living, through the demands and challenges of the persons, events and circumstances of our life. This is well described by Edward Malatesta, SJ in his introduction to Discernment of Spirits: "...by discernment of spirits is meant the process by which we examine in the light of faith and in the connaturality of love, the nature of the spiritual states we experience in ourselves and in others. The purpose of such examination is to decide, as far as possible, which of the movements we experience lead to the Lord and to a more perfect service of him and our brothers, and which deflect us from this goal." - Choosing the Values of Jesus, Brian Grogan SJ

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Understanding the concepts of organisational mission, vision, and values
2. Developing our own mission and vision statements
3. Detecting what values guide our institution

"If your dreams don't scare you, they are not big enough"

Ellen Johson-Sirleaf