

Developing a Mission Statement

A mission statement can help your team, group or organization anchor itself with the values you share. It defines why you do what you do — your purpose. A well-developed mission statement is brief and to the point, absent of flowery language or jargon. When developed carefully and with consensus, a mission statement can also keep your group focused — regardless of its size. This worksheet outlines some common steps teams and organizations take to develop a mission statement. Use it to facilitate a group brainstorming, and to draft your group's mission.

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A WRITING TEAM.

If your team or organization is more than just a few people, it's a good idea to select a smaller group of 3-6 people to serve as your writing team. The writing team works together to draft the mission statement (using the process outlined below or one modified to meet your needs). The team also facilitates sharing the draft with the remaining team, gathering feedback, obtaining consensus, and if necessary, redrafting the mission to incorporate all feedback. It's not important that your team be comprised of professional writers, though having at least one skilled writer on board is helpful. Instead, consider diversity in your team selection — to incorporate different viewpoints and backgrounds.

STEP TWO: AGREE ON YOUR MISSION DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA.

Below is a list of suggested criteria for developing an effective mission statement. Work with your writing team to review the criteria, and vote if all agree to the criteria listed. Consider adding or omitting criteria that doesn't seem to resonate with your organization or team.

A MISSION STATEMENT (check all criteria you agree to):

- Is short and sharply focused
- Is clear and easily understood
- Defines why we do what we do; why the organization exists
- Does not prescribe means
- Is sufficiently broad
- Provides direction for doing the right things
- Addresses our opportunities
- Matches our competence
- Inspires our commitment
- Says what, in the end, we want to be remembered for
- OTHER: _____

STEP THREE: DEFINE YOUR TEAM or ORGANIZATION.

If you haven't already done so, consider using the worksheet below to gather some important information about the overall purpose of your organization. This information will help you gain clarity on paper on some key areas. Once gathered, this information will help facilitate your mission statement brainstorming. Depending on the size or structure of your team or organization, you may choose to leave some questions unanswered or consider modifying the question to better fit with your group.

TEAM or ORGANIZATION DEFINITION WORKSHEET

1. Name of organization and date team/organization was established: _____

2. Check one — the team/organization is:
 - Small Organized Team
 - Grassroots Community Organization
 - Nonprofit organization (as defined by our state in U.S.)
 - Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization (as defined by the federal government in U.S.)
 - Partnership (partner with an established nonprofit or community organization)
 - OTHER (list here): _____

3. Check one — Our customers are primarily:
 - Individuals
 - Institutions
 - Corporations
 - OTHER (list here): _____

4. Current services and/or products we provide include: _____

5. Our three closest competitors are:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

6. Possible competition could come from:
 - a. Other organizations (like-minded organizations)
 - b. Other teams (such as other area NVC teams)
 - c. Other self-help trainers and authors / conflict-resolution trainers and authors
 - d. OTHER (list here):

7. Demand for our services or products is:
 - Increasing
 - Decreasing
 - Unsure

8. Services or products we may consider discontinuing are (if applicable): _____

9. Services or products we may consider introducing are (if applicable): _____

10. Our team/organization is unique because: _____

11. Right now our team/organization s biggest obstacle is: _____

12. Our overall team/organization goals and growth plan is: _____

STEP FOUR: COMPLETE THE MISSION STATEMENT WORKSHEET.

The worksheet below can help your writing team gather important information and language that can then be drafted into a mission statement. Complete the worksheet below as is, or consider modifying the questions to better fit your team or organization. Use your completed team/organization definition sheet (or other team organization materials your group has used) as your guide for completing the worksheet below. Once completed, highlight or circle key words or phrases you used. Using this language, write down the single most important goal for your team or organization. Then, condense what you ve written into 1-2 short sentences. This will serve as your draft mission statement.

CUSTOMERS (PEOPLE WHO MAY NEED OR USE OUR SERVICES AND/OR PRODUCTS):

SERVICES OR PRODUCTS WE PROVIDE:

OVERALL TEAM/ORGANIZATION GOAL:

OUR BELIEFS, VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS:

WHAT ARE WE REALLY GOOD AT?

CONCERNS WE SHARE FOR EMPLOYEES OR VOLUNTEERS:

MISSION STATEMENT (DRAFT):

STEP FIVE: GATHER FEEDBACK.

If you have other members of your organization apart from your writing team, present your drafted mission statement to them. Gather feedback on the mission statement using whichever method you and your team are most comfortable with. Determine if additional writing team drafts are needed, or if simple adjustments on the mission can now lead to final approval.

STEP SIX: REVISE OR FINALIZE MISSION.

STEP SEVEN: SHARE AND POST FINAL MISSION STATEMENT.

Once finalized, it's important to post your mission so it remains a constant reminder of your group's purpose.