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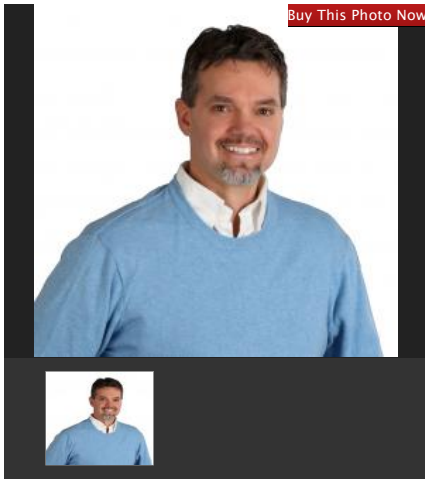
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Another View: Business Corner: The Mission of the Vision part I

By: Scott Alvord, special to the Press Tribune and Placer Herald



When used correctly, mission statements and visions statements are powerful business tools. These statements are often at the center of your company culture, and strategic decisions should be measured up against these statements to ensure they fit. If you are a startup and don't have a company culture yet, this is an opportunity to design one that you can grow into.

Yet all too often, business leaders go through the motions of developing these statements, only to ignore them. Sure, they might post them on a wall in their lobby and on the 'About Us' section of their website, but their business doesn't necessarily live out the mission, and business strategies are not frequently measured up against that vision to ensure they are on the right track.

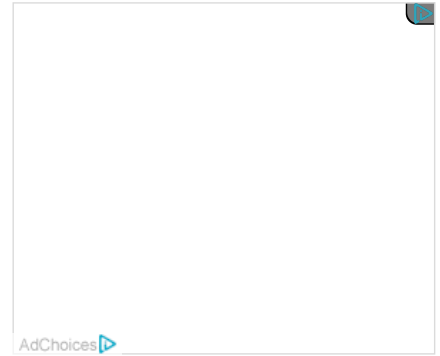
It is important to understand that the vision statement is where you want to be down the road, while the mission statement is who you are and how you behave in order to someday reach the goal of that vision. Mission statements are present-based statements designed to provide a sense of why the company exists to both the company staff and the external community.

Vision statements are future-based statements

that are meant to inspire and give direction to your team, rather than to customers.

You cannot properly develop one of these statements without considering the other in the process. If your team develops them together, you will discover that the process of gathering words and phrases that you want to use in the statements, will be more powerful. You will find that you can swap and move words and phrases between the mission and vision statements. This will save time and keep you focused on connecting the statements synergistically.

The secret sauce to developing the best mission and vision statements is to assemble the right group of people for this important task. Get the right stakeholders to this meeting and consider bringing in an unbiased outsider to help facilitate the discussion. The leaders need to be involved because it is up to them to enforce that everything the company does should directly support their mission. Without this buy-in, you will waste your time. If you are a small, one-man show, then pull in a spouse, close friends, and those whom you respect, to help you with this process. If you have employees, consider



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bringing in key employees and supervisors. Savvy companies even include a key customer or vendor to participate. All participants should have buy in so they will support the statements later.

Before creating your vision and mission statements, it is important that your team agree on your 'Why.' People identify with and follow companies such as Apple, Harley Davidson, Snapple, Tom's Shoes, Starbucks, and Southwest Airlines because these companies inspire people with their reason for existing. Most companies fall into the unfortunate routine of telling us what they do instead of why they do it.

The value of knowing your why and conveying that to others should be a goal of your business. Do not focus on trying to reach people who simply want what you have. Instead, focus on the people who believe what you believe. This type of alignment is extremely powerful because it is emotional. People who believe what your company believes will give you their trust. Trust is extremely valuable. Ensure that as you develop your mission and vision statements, you include your 'Why.'

A great way to start the process of creating or improving a mission or vision statement is to go through a series of questions with your team of stakeholders that will result in a goldmine of words and phrases that might end up in the actual statements.

Some of these questions might be: What does your business do? Why are you in business? What is the difference that you make in this world? Who are your customers? What hurt does your product or service mend? What level of service do you provide? What do you want your business to look like? What is the nature of your products and services? What is your work environment like? What is special about your relationship with your suppliers and partners? How do you compare to your competition? What assets do you have? How are your values special? When thinking back to the owners or founders, what were their interests and dreams that ignited a passion causing the creation of this business?

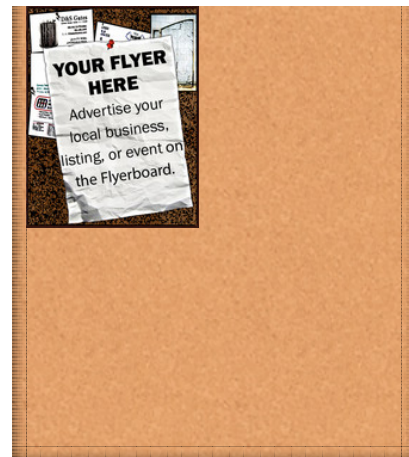
As your team discusses these, consider starting with a brainstorming session to dump as many answers onto a whiteboard as possible before judging them too harshly. Once you make the list, review them carefully and strike out those that don't have much support and really don't seem to fit your culture or business model. Be careful not to trim off too much too early.

In Part 2 we will discuss the Mission Statement. In Part 3, we'll discuss the Vision Statement.

Editor's note: R. Scott Alvord is an award-winning, multi-business owner, and CEO of Advanced Development Concepts, LLC. He can be reached at www.ADCBiz.com

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