

## Writing a Mission Statement

Here are four key elements found in effective statements: Value, inspiration, plausibility, and specificity. In a couple of short sentences, you should be able to convey the value of your company or why your brand exists, inspire and encourage your employees, sound completely reasonable and plausible, and be as specific and relevant as possible. Find a key theme for your company, and make sure each of these components revolve around it.

### **Keep It Short and Sweet**

Remember: This is a mission statement, not a mission essay. Try to sum up your entire company's mission in one or two sentences. Think of it this way: Your mission statement, at its absolute best, should be able to double as your slogan. Concise mission statements are also more memorable and effective. So there's no need to make it overly complicated; just state the purpose of your company, your reason for starting it in the first place.

### **Consider Long-Term vs. Short-Term**

Mission statements can be wildly different from one company to the next. The idea here is to choose whether you want your company's statement to reflect its short-term goals or its long-term aspirations. Be sure to choose only one; specificity is key to an influential mission. While short-term mission statements allow you to be more specific with your goals, they also need to be updated more often to stay relevant. If you want the statement to be a long-term reflection, use global language indicative of your company's purpose, regardless of how much your company might expand in the future.

### **Test It**

If you're revamping your statement, don't blindsides your employees with the new message; test it out on them first. Distribute drafts of the mission statement to every employee, and ask them what, if anything, should be added or changed. Not only will you get a better, more comprehensive statement, but your employees will be more invested in it because they helped form it. Your mission statement needs to accurately reflect your company, and being transparent with your employees will help create a great message.

### **Revisit It Often**

Evolution is inevitable. However, all too often a mission statement is written around the time of a company's birth and then forgotten about. Your statement ought to be an important representation of your company culture. It's an opportunity to institute an overall sense of identity and should be constantly maintained and referred to. Incorporate the ideas and themes of the statement in how you run your business, and be sure to revisit it regularly to make any necessary changes. No company ever stays exactly the same. Tweaking your statement ensures that it constantly parallels the direction of your company.

From INC

## **Your Mission is Your Core Purpose**

**Knowing your mission will accelerate your brand like nothing else can.**

“I believe that purpose and principle, clearly understood and articulated, and commonly shared, are the genetic code of any healthy organization. To the degree that you hold purpose and principles in common among you, you can dispense with command and control. People will know how to behave in accordance with them, and they’ll do it in thousands of unimaginable, creative ways. The organization will become a vital, living set of beliefs.” –Dee Hock

A well-crafted mission statement can provide the focus and motivation you need to take your business to the next level. These are [the values that drive your business personality](#), customer service, and [marketing messages](#). In fact, your mission is the soul of your brand. It is your *Why*. It is the very reason that your company does what it does.

**Your mission is about getting really clear and staying really focused.** It provides your company with direction. It helps you find the right customers...[your most profitable customers](#). I call this your internal branding. Your mission is something that you should write and post in places where every single member of your staff can see it. As the leader of your company, look at your mission often during the day. Remind yourself of it. Then live it and breathe it. Every. single. day.

**Your mission statement should be the driving force** behind everything that your team does within your company, and externally with prospects, customers, vendors, and associates. It also shapes your internal corporate culture.

**One of the reasons your team needs this anchor** is to stay on track. It is so easy for business professionals to get bogged down in the day-to-day of our business lives. We get our to-do list tunnel vision and lose sight of the big vision. Your mission statement always reminds each person in your company of your overarching *raison d’etre*...where you are going...what you are doing...and why you are doing it.

## How to Develop Your Mission Statement

**To develop your mission, here are some questions to ask:**

- What do we do?
- For whom do we do it?
- Why do we serve our clients in the way that we do?
- How do we serve our clients in the way that we do?
- Why are we in this industry?
- Why did we start this business?
- What image of our business do we want to convey?

**When writing your mission statement, use vibrant, exciting words.** Get really clear about your passion and values for operating your unique business. Create dynamic, visual images and inspire action. Describe your purpose using unusual, colorful verbs and adjectives to spice up your statements. Drop in words like “passion,” “sizzle,” “outrageous,” “fun,” and “marvel” to add zest. Keep your mission statement fairly short and make sure that it feels really good when you read it and say it. It captures, in a few succinct sentences, the essence of your business’s

goals and the philosophies underlying them. It signals what your business is all about to your customers, employees, suppliers and the community.

*And, woweeee!*

**When you live your mission through your business brand**, then amazing, phenomenal things start to happen. Your perfect, dream clients are drawn to you. People get really excited about what you are doing. They spread the word to their friends, they sign up for your services, they give you great testimonials. You get more customers, make more revenue, and your business grows with ease. And best of all – your team is more creative and having more fun than ever before because everyone is in absolute alignment with your *Why*.

## Examples of Mission Statements

**Let's look at some phenomenal examples of other brands and their mission...**their “reason for being.” This should help you get some ideas for developing your own.

**Nike:** *To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world.*

**Starbucks:** *To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.*

**Chevron:** *To be the global energy company most admired for its people, partnership, and performance.*

**Amazon:** *To be the most customer-centric company in the world, where people can find and discover anything they want to buy online.*

**Intel:** *Delight our customers, employees, and shareholders by relentlessly delivering the platform and technology advancements that become essential to the way we work and live.*

**Ebay:** *Provide a global trading platform where practically anyone can trade practically anything.*

**Here is my challenge to you and your company:** Write a mission statement with a goal that's an action, not a sentiment. Make it quantifiable, not nebulous. If you have an old wonky mission statement that sounds like a corporate Hallmark Card (you know what I'm talking about), then take it and rip it to shreds. Then reflect on your true passions and values, and write a mission statement using the guidelines above that reflects the difference your business will make in the world.

After you write your mission statement, your next step is to make sure you have strong company values. We have two articles to help you:

## How to Write Remarkable Company Core Values (Part I)

You've probably read lots of articles about the importance of core values and values-driven companies. Best-selling business writers like Jim Collins and [Tom Peters](#) frequently espouse the importance of core values and highlight companies that leverage their core values to outperform the market.

Despite the credibility of authors like Collins and Peters, you'd be crazy not to be at least *a bit* skeptical about the importance of company values. There are too many platitudes posted on too many placards on too many walls. There are too many leaders paying too much lip service to values that do not inspire, engage, or motivate.

But, for those companies that have succeeded in creating powerful values that engage their employees, the benefits are nothing short of amazing.

Companies that effectively identify and promote their values have less employee turnover, higher customer retention and greater profitability than those that don't. Do we have your attention now? Good, because you're about to learn the first steps towards building a [truly remarkable](#) (and profitable) organization.

### The Problem with Core Values

Unfortunately, most companies typically have values that are very nice, but they're also stale, meaningless company jargon. They're probably written in a physical or electronic document somewhere in your facility. It's even possible that your values are on a poster, on a wall, or in some marketing materials. And, there they slowly die – fading into the background and certainly doing no one in your company any good at all.

problem that I see with the majority of company values is that they're structured in a way that sabotages their effectiveness. And without the right structure for core values, they're practically meaningless and have little impact on a company. Here's why:

Incorrectly structured values are not guiding the decision making and behaviors of your employees on a day-by-day basis. They are not exemplified by management and evangelized by leadership. And, while they are well intended in their formation, when your values live no place but on paper, there is a void between management and most of your people – your team's perception is that this is another out-of-touch management wish list. And it's a wasted opportunity to create the foundation for your company's [deep moat](#).

### The ROI of Engaged Employees

As a leader, you have an incredible opportunity to create and build a workplace that is an amazing environment – your people will have a fulfilling place to come each day that excites them and offers them growth.

And [engaged employees](#) translate into hard numbers that are quite astounding. In an ongoing multi-year study, Gallup has been measuring the impact of employee engagement. Their research includes over 25 million employees across geographies and industries.

In [Gallup's study](#), business units that ranked in the top 25% of their organizations for employee engagement showed:

- 22% higher profitability
- 21% higher productivity
- 10% higher customer satisfaction
- 37% lower absenteeism
- 48% fewer safety incidents
- 41% fewer quality incidents (defects)

Amazing, right? And, a powerful reason to seriously consider what your core values are doing to create an engaged workforce and a thriving culture.

## What's Wrong With Core Values?

Unfortunately, your core values (and 99% of the other companies' out there) lack many or all of the following key elements to be truly powerful:

1. They are not memorable.
2. No one in your company can repeat them consistently.
3. They are too long.
4. There are too many of them.
5. They are not actionable.
6. Your team cannot describe how your values guide their actions.
7. They are platitudes and not unique to your company beliefs.
8. The founders and leadership team are not passionate about them.
9. They are not a part of your daily culture.
10. They are not a tool that is used to attract the best talent.
11. They are not used to set employee goals or measure their performance.
12. They are not part of your sales or marketing goals.
13. They are not connected to your mission and/or vision.
14. Your values are not visibly integrated into the way you do business.
15. Your customers' experiences do not align with your values.

Core values that are powerful enough to shape company culture and contribute to your bottom line will capture all 15 of these essential elements.

## Light at the End of the Tunnel

You may have a bit of a headache at this point. Fifteen is a big number, and you'd be crazy to think that it's easy *or* painless to craft core values that capture each of these elements.

Fortunately, after working with many companies, we've developed a precise formula to help you create values that will do all of the things above, transforming your company into one where your employees live and breathe your core values. It will develop a culture in which members of your workforce are your company's biggest advocates, positively reflecting your business in the myriad of ways they communicate and act every day, month, and year. We call them "Living, Breathing Values" or "LBVs," and you'll learn all about them in our next blog post:

## How to Develop Your Company Values

*"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are."*

*-Roy Disney*

To accelerate your company growth and profitability, you need an [engaged workforce](#).

Your employees have the potential to be your biggest advocates, positively reflecting your business in the myriad of ways they communicate every day. Your team is the un-tapped engine that can catapult your company upward. And your company values are the keystone that will give them their purpose.

In part 1 of this 2-part series on [developing company values](#), I described the slew of problems that plague the core values of many companies.

At Kinesis, we've spent a lot of time studying core values and implementing them in both our own company, as well as helping our clients to do the same. Over the years, we've developed a system that we call Living, Breathing Values (LBVs).

## Why You Should Care About LBVs

LBVs are more than just company values written on a wall or fading away in a binder on a shelf. LBVs are the drivers of your leaders' and employees' behaviors. They are principles and beliefs that form the core of your culture and brand.

Once LBVs are successfully integrated into company culture, the benefits are huge:

- Every single person clearly understands what is most important.
- Employees feel more engaged in your organization – they have more confidence in leadership, and they develop a sense of pride and ownership.
- [Employees become ambassadors of your brand](#).

What makes employee engagement so important? Business guru Tom Peters explains:

*“Employees’ behavior has direct impact on the bottom line, costs, revenue streams, level of productivity, customer satisfaction, even the brand—every aspect of the business is affected. If strategy and culture are not aligned, the culture may support behaviors that conflict with what has to get done—and actually block execution of the strategy.”*

## What are LBVs?

LBVs are decision-making tools, to be used by everyone in your company – from your CEO to your intern. In order to be effective, they must be understood and adopted by your staff. They must be continuously modeled, communicated, and reinforced by your leadership. In every moment, each person should be able to ask themselves “Am I in alignment with my values?” If the answer is “no,” then they should make a different choice.

[At Kinesis](#), we live by the following LBVs:

- Think Big
- Build to Last
- Share the Good
- Do the Right Thing

Every single member of our team relies on these four tenets to guide their decisions and their actions. We weave these ideas into our meetings, employee recognition programs, evaluations, and hiring processes. The values are alive and active in our minds, and *that* is what makes them Living, Breathing Values.

## LBV Rules

We’ve developed three rules to help our clients create impactful LBVs.

1. **Start with a verb:** LBVs are something you *do*. They are actionable, decision-making tools. As such, they must be a sentence that *starts with a verb* so that each person can ask themselves “Am I doing this?” and be able to easily answer *yes* or *no*.
2. **Keep ‘em short and sweet:** Limit each LBV to a few words. Some of our clients have created powerful values with the shortest sentences possible. Short and memorable = powerful.
3. **No more than four.** We recommend no more than 4 LBVs. Don’t be scared of the simple. Three is a great number and we even have a client who has two LBVs that work powerfully for their company.

## LBVs in Action

In addition to serving as a decision-making gauge for your team members and leadership, your LBVs also function as an outward-facing tool that your company uses to attract your dream clients and [A-player job candidates](#). When your marketing materials and your sales team

incorporate your LBVs into the way you talk about your company, it attracts people and organizations that align with them.

Companies that implement LBVs can easily tell existing and prospective employees not only what is expected of them, but what they can expect from the company. This means that you can hire people who are harmonious with your LBVs and a good fit for your culture – your LBVs tell the story of what life is like within your company. They are the drivers of [truly remarkable](#) (and profitable) organizations.

We've seen amazing transformations as a direct result of the integration of LBVs in our client organizations.

For example, one of our clients implemented LBVs a little over a year ago. The CEO enthusiastically integrated Core Values into his company culture – from the highest management functions to incoming newbie tasks. Everything in the company is now shaped by LBVs – job descriptions, evaluations, new hire orientations, annual retreats, employee recognition, sales processes, and the way in which employees interact with their customers.

In the 14 months that our client implemented the values (with minimal focus on external marketing) –revenues have gone up, profit margins have grown, more A-players have joined the team, and our client's company is booked out for months in advance – even during their slowest months. LBVs have been the cornerstone of our client's accomplishments, and the CEO tells me that the change in his employees, the management team, and their clients has been nothing short of transformational.

Given the competitive nature of the marketplace, your company cannot afford to sacrifice any critical success factor. And study after study show that core values drive employee engagement and corporate culture; in turn, these drive performance. Your LBVs are the rocket fuel that will take you to the moon and beyond.

From kinesisinc.com

four essential questions your company's mission statement must answer:

- What do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Whom do we do it for?
- What value are we bringing?

If you have a mission statement, make sure it can answer these questions. It makes all the difference.

From Forbes.com

A mission statement is a key tool that can be as important as your [business plan](#). It captures, in a few succinct sentences, the essence of your business's goals and the philosophies underlying them. Equally important, the mission statement signals what your business is all about to your customers, employees, suppliers and the community.

The mission statement reflects every facet of your business: the range and nature of the products you offer, pricing, quality, service, marketplace position, growth potential, use of technology, and your relationships with your customers, employees, suppliers, competitors and the community.

"Mission statement help clarify what business you are in, your goals and your objectives," says Rhonda Abrams, author of [The Successful Business Plan: Secrets and Strategies](#).

Your mission statement should reflect your business' special niche. However, studying other companies' statements can fuel your creativity. One sample mission statement Abrams developed:

"AAA Inc. is a spunky, imaginative food products and service company aimed at offering high-quality, moderately priced, occasionally unusual foods using only natural ingredients. We view ourselves as partners with our customers, our employees, our community and our environment. We aim to become a regionally recognized brand name, capitalizing on the sustained interest in Southwestern and Mexican food. Our goal is moderate growth, annual profitability and maintaining our sense of humor."

Or consider the statement one entrepreneur developed for her consulting business: "ABC Enterprises is a company devoted to developing human potential. Our mission is to help people create innovative solutions and make informed choices to improve their lives. We motivate and encourage others to achieve their own personal and professional fulfillment. Our motto is: Together, we believe that the best in each of us enriches all of us."

### **The Write Words**

To come up with a statement that encompasses the major elements of your business, start with the right questions. Business plan consultant David Tucker says the most important question is, What business are you in? Since you have already gone through the steps of creating your niche, answering this question should be easy for you.

Answering the following questions will help you to create a verbal picture of your business's mission:

- *Why are you in business?* What do you want for yourself, your family and your customers? Think about the spark that ignited your decision to start a business. What will keep it burning?
- *Who are your customers?* What can you do for them that will enrich their lives and contribute to their success--now and in the future?

- *What image of your business do you want to convey?* Customers, suppliers, employees and the public will all have perceptions of your company. How will you create the desired picture?
- *What is the nature of your products and services?* What factors determine pricing and quality? Consider how these relate to the reasons for your business's existence. How will all this change over time?
- *What level of service do you provide?* Most companies believe they offer "the best service available," but do your customers agree? Don't be vague; define what makes your service so extraordinary.
- *What roles do you and your employees play?* Wise captains develop a leadership style that organizes, challenges and recognizes employees.
- *What kind of relationships will you maintain with suppliers?* Every business is in partnership with its suppliers. When you succeed, so do they.
- *How do you differ from your competitors?* Many entrepreneurs forget they are pursuing the same dollars as their competitors. What do you do better, cheaper or faster than other competitors? How can you use competitors' weaknesses to your advantage?
- *How will you use technology, capital, processes, products and services to reach your goals?* A description of your strategy will keep your energies focused on your goals.
- *What underlying philosophies or values guided your responses to the previous questions?* Some businesses choose to list these separately. Writing them down clarifies the "why" behind your mission.

### **Putting It All Together**

Like anything with lasting value, crafting a mission statement requires time, thought and planning. However, the effort is well worth it. In fact, most start-up entrepreneurs discover that the process of crafting the mission statement is as beneficial as the final statement itself. Going through the process will help you solidify the reason for what you are doing and clarify the motivations behind your business.

Here are some tips to make your mission statement the best it can be:

- *Involve those connected to your business.* Even if you are a sole proprietor, it helps to get at least one other person's ideas for your mission statement. Other people can help you see strengths, weaknesses and voids you might miss. If you have no partners or investors to include, consider knowledgeable family members and close friends, employees or accountants. Be sure, however, to pick only positive, supportive people who truly want to see you succeed.
- *Set aside several hours--a full day, if possible--to work on your statement.* Mission statements are short--typically more than one sentence but rarely exceeding a page. Still, writing one is not a short process. It takes time to come up with language that simultaneously describes an organization's heart and soul and serves as an inspirational beacon to everyone involved in the business.
- *Plan a date.* Set aside time to meet with the people who'll be helping you. Write a list of topics to discuss or think about. Find a quiet, comfortable place away from phones and interruptions.

- *Be prepared.* If you have several people involved, be equipped with refreshments, extra lists of topics, paper and pencils. Because not everyone understand what a mission statement is about, explain its meaning and purpose before you begin.
- *Brainstorm.* Consider every idea, no matter how silly it sounds. Stimulate ideas by looking at sample mission statements and thinking about or discussing the questions in the previous section. If you're working with a group, use a flip chart to record responses so everyone can see them. Once you've finished brainstorming, ask everyone to write individual mission statements for your business. Read the statement, select the best bits and pieces, and fit them together.
- *Use "radiant words."* Once you have the basic idea in writing, polish the language of your mission statement. "Every word counts," says Abrams. The statement should create dynamic, visual images and inspire action. Use offbeat, colorful verbs and adjectives to spice up your statements. Don't hesitate to drop in words like "kaleidoscope," "sizzle," "cheer," "outrageous" and "marvel" to add zest. If you want customers to boast about your goods and services, say so--along with the reasons why. Some businesses include a glossary that defines the terms used in the statement.

Once your mission statement is complete, start spreading the word! You need to convey your mission statement to others inside and outside the business to tell everyone you know where you are going and why. Post it in your office, where you, employees and visitors can see it every day. Print it on company materials, such as brochures and your business plan or even on the back of your business cards.

From entrepreneur.com

A well-developed mission statement is a great tool for understanding, developing, and communicating fundamental business objectives, and should be expressed in just a paragraph or two. If you read it out loud, it should take about 30 seconds. And it should answers questions people have about your business, like:

- Who is your company?
- What do you do? What do you stand for? And why do you do it?
- Do you want to make a profit, or is it enough to just make a living?
- What markets are you serving, and what benefits do you offer them?
- Do you solve a problem for your customers?
- What kind of internal work environment do you want for your employees?

From bplans.com

## 1. Start with a market-defining story

You don't have to actually write the story—it's definitely not included in the mission statement—but do think it through: Imagine a real person making the actual decision to buy what you sell. Use your imagination to see why she wants it, how she finds you, and what buying

from you does for her. The more concrete the story, the better. (And keep that in mind for the actual mission statement wording: “The more concrete, the better.”)

A really good [market-defining story](#) explains the need, or the want, or—if you like jargon—the so-called “why to buy.” [It defines the target customer, or “buyer persona.”](#) And it defines how your business is different from most others, or even unique. It simplifies thinking about what a business isn’t, what it doesn’t do.

This isn’t literally part of the mission statement. Rather, it’s an important thing to have in your head while you write the mission statement. It’s in the background, between the words.

## 2. Define how your customer’s life is better because your business exists

Start your mission statement with the good you do. Use your market-defining story to suss out whatever it is that makes your business special for your target customer.

Don’t undervalue your business: You don’t have to cure cancer or stop global climate change to be doing good. Offering trustworthy auto repair, for example, narrowed down to your specialty in your neighborhood with your unique policies, is doing something good. So is offering excellent slow food in your neighborhood, with emphasis on organic and local, at a price premium.

This *is* a part of your mission statement, and a pretty crucial part at that—write it down.

See Also [Your Business Lives and Dies By Its Differentiator](#)

If your business is good for the world, incorporate that here too. But claims about being good for the world need to be meaningful, and distinguishable from all the other businesses. Add the words “clean” or “green” if that’s really true and you keep to it rigorously. Don’t just say it, especially if it isn’t important or always true.

## 3. Consider what your business does for employees

These days, good businesses want to be good for their employees. If you’re “hard numbers”-oriented, keeping employees is better for the bottom line than turnover. And if you’re interested in culture and employee happiness, then defining what your business offers its employees is an obvious part of your strategy.

My recommendation is that you don’t assert how the business is good for employees—you define it here and then forever after make it true.

Qualities like fairness, diversity, respect for ideas and creativity, training, tools, empowerment, and the like, actually really matter. However, since every business in existence at least *says* that it prioritizes those things, strive for a differentiator and a way to make the general goals feel more concrete and specific. While I consulted for Apple Computer, for example, that business differentiated its goals of training and empowering employees by making a point of bringing in

very high-quality educators and presenters to help employees' business expertise grow. That's the kind of specificity you should include in your mission statement.

See Also [How Some of America's Biggest and Most Innovative Companies Do Culture](#)

With this part of the mission statement, there's a built-in dilemma. On the one hand, it's good for everybody involved to use the mission statement to establish what you want for employees in your business. On the other hand, it's hard to do that without falling into the trap of saying what every other business says. Stating that you value fair compensation, room to grow, training, a healthy, creative work environment, and respect for diversity is probably a good idea, even if that part of your mission statement isn't unique. That's because the mission statement can serve as a reminder—for owners, supervisors, and workers—and as a lever for self-enforcement.

If you have a special view on your relationship with employees, write it into the mission statement. If your business is friendly to families, or to remote virtual workplaces, put that into your mission.

#### **4. Add what the business does for its owners**

In business school they taught us that the mission of management is to enhance the value of the stock. And shares of stock are ownership. Some would say that it goes without saying that a business exists to enhance the financial position of its owners, and maybe it does. However, only a small subset of all businesses are about the business buzzwords of "share value" and "return on investment."

In the early years of my business I wanted peace of mind about cash flow more than I wanted growth, and I wanted growth more than I wanted profits. So I wrote that into my mission statement. And at one point I realized I was also building a business that was a place where I was happy to be working, with people I wanted to work with; so I wrote that into my mission statement, too.

#### **5. Discuss, digest, cut, polish, review, revise**

Whatever you wrote for points 2-4 above, go back and cut down the wordiness.

Good mission statements serve multiple functions, define objectives, and live for a long time. So edit. This step is worth it.

I've been writing professionally all of my adult life. I was a foreign correspondent for a decade, and then I billed more than \$2 million in business plan consulting, and then I wrote books published by Entrepreneur Press, McGraw-Hill, Dow Jones-Irwin and others, and thousands of blog posts for this site and a number of high-profile sites; I've never written anything that wasn't better with editing. And most of what I've written was better after I cut it to half its original length.

As you edit, keep 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.

Read other companies' mission statements, but write a statement that is about you and not some other company. Make sure you actually believe in what you're writing—your customers and your employees will soon spot a lie.

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.

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. Review and revise as necessary, because change is constant.