

# Where Are You Going?

How to Navigate Creating, Tweaking or Upholding Your Mission Statement



**A**t an early age, we learn the four cardinal directions north, south, east and west. This early lesson is crucial to helping us understand our location in relation to where we are and where we want to go. Like life, a business needs a directional map, too, that helps navigate its strategic direction, align and guide its culture and establish a value system.

One way to keep your business grounded is by creating a mission statement to lay out your purpose or goals. Mission statements also keep us honest. All components of a business—strategic direction, practice and behavior—should point back to the mission statement.

If the majority of your employees aren't living out the mission statement in their attitude, behavior and decisions, then leadership is failing them and the business. A mission statement is only as strong as the attitudes and behavior allowed, encouraged and exhibited within the business. If leadership isn't living and breathing the mission, employees will have nothing to mirror. If you're a leader in your organization, your actions should lead by example. Your behavior should exemplify the mission statement. It will take you a long way in helping to accomplish the company's goals.

Every leader should be a brand ambassador, protecting the integrity of the mission statement. If a leader has a difficult time living out the mission statement, employees will, too.

When you get your mission statement right and are able to follow it, point to it and use it as a guiding light, your employees will have a feeling of freedom, because the guidelines are set and expectations are clear.

Whether you're crafting a mission statement, tweaking one or upholding one that is long-established, here are some suggestions to help.

- **Clarity.** It should be succinct, easy to understand and simple to execute.
- **Specificity.** Details matter, so be as specific as possible to ensure less chance of ambiguity.
- **Focus.** Center and concentrate the mission on the everyday life of the organization.
- **Sustainability.** Ensure your mission can survive new strategic processes.
- **Communication.** Show the mission in your words and actions, supporting your team to accept and embrace it.

If you think that sounds difficult, consider Facebook's new mission statement. CEO Mark Zuckerberg developed a mission that will lead the social networking company through the next 10 years with five words: "Bring the world closer together."

Mission statements fit businesses of all sizes because you are never too small or too large to create a strategic map of your goals and values. You always want to check your mission statement and use it as a guide. It will be a journey with crossroads, but the mission statement will always point you in the right direction. ●



## Sonya Ruff Jarvis

is an entrepreneur and founder of Jarvis Consultants LLC, marketing, events and branding firm that helps businesses create innovative approaches to navigate the world of marketing. Follow Sonya on Twitter @jarvisconsult or email her at [sonya@jarvisconsultants.com](mailto:sonya@jarvisconsultants.com).