

## **Some Thoughts from the Experts on Mission, Core Values, and Vision**

### **Mission**

- It tells us why we exist.
- It defines what we're doing.
- It reveals the purpose for our existence.
- It provides strategic vision and direction for our organization.
- It should not have to be revised every few years.

### **Core Values**

- They shape our actions.
- They form the foundation for everything we do in our department/organization.
- They permeate our departmental/organizational environment.
- They describe actions which represent the actions of most individuals in our department/organization.
- They do not change easily or quickly over time.
- They reflect how our department/organization lives and breathes in all its activities, not the values we think we should have.
- They represent the traits or qualities that we consider worthwhile. They represent our highest priorities and should be deeply-held, driving force.
- We can let these fundamental underpinnings of our department/organization develop on their own. Or, we can invest the time to proactively define them to best serve all constituents of the department/organization.

### **Vision**

- It describes what a department/organization wants to look like in the future.
- It is a statement(s) about what a department/organization wants to become.
- It reflects the essence of a department's/organization's mission and values.
- It becomes the cornerstone for developing and shaping future goals and actions plans.
- It should relate to the department's/organization's Core Values and should be specific enough to signal the department's/organization's intentions about its goals and action plans.
- It helps the department/organization answer the question, "What impact do we want to have on society?"
- It helps the department/organization answer the questions, "How should we carry out our mission?"
- The more specific the Vision, the more useable it is.
- It should resonate with as many constituents as possible and help them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than ourselves.
- It should stretch the department's/organization's capabilities and image of itself.
- Embracing a vision is part of what separates a truly exceptional department/institution from others.
- It helps unite the department/organization in a common, coherent strategic direction.
- It helps convey a larger sense of the department's/organizations' purpose.

## **Some Final General Observations from the Expert**

1. Mission, values, vision statements are fundamental to strategic planning and good management, no matter in what kind of organization you are. Additionally, they become responsible for the “culture” of your organization – how people see you and talk about you.
2. Remember that viewing major decisions against these yardsticks is a powerful governance tool. Regular reviews allow those involved to truly understand the goals and objectives of the organization, to make everyday decisions that are consistent, and to buy into new directions.
3. With well-written mission, values, and vision statements, the organization is able to evolve without experiencing chaos because its overall direction and intent are clear. The Board, the employees, volunteers, anyone who comes into contact with the organization, gains a sense of pride in working for or with an organization that stands for something and is united by a common sense of purpose.
4. Well-written phrases are nothing without good execution – Enron’s values statement famously included “respect, integrity, communication, excellence.”
5. Finally, learn it, live it, align it. This means spending time making sure your organization’s goals and action plans are aligned with your mission, values, and vision.
  - Are you serving your clients or your members in all your activities?
  - Are you true to the intent of your mission, values, and vision?
  - Are your departmental objectives, tactics, and strategies supporting your mission and in line with your values?

These are compelling reasons to create meaningful, reflective statements that shine beyond your organization’s annual report and web page, bringing audience and motivation to all your initiatives.