

CREATING YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one.”

George Bernard Shaw

What is a Mission Statement?

Your mission is your higher calling. It is the motivating force that underlies everything you do - Your reason for being.

A Mission is a brief statement of your personal purpose. It is a description of what inspires you and motivates you at the deepest levels. Your mission statement answers questions like, “Why am I here?” “What am I here to do with my life?” and “Why do I exist?” “What is it that makes me feel alive?” “What is the essence of my passion and motivation?”

An ideal mission statement offers a greater sense of meaningful direction. Having a clearly stated mission acts as a compass to help you focus your energy into staying on a path that will lead you to success and ultimately happiness.

A strong mission statement has the following characteristics:

- Clear enough to be easily understood and communicated
- Brief enough to be easily remembered
- Inspiring enough to encourage others to want to support you. This means it must contain an element of being of service to others in some way
- Broad enough to encompass your innate talents and abilities
- Authentic enough that anyone who knows you well would agree
- Timeless enough to be accurate throughout your lifetime –there is no deadline on it

The best and most inspiring mission statements are broad, authentic, and capture the essence of what drives you to make a contribution to the world. Your mission statement should include a strong action verb such as “build” versus “try to develop;” it serves as a container of sorts for what sparks your passion in life.

Common Mistakes

Some common mistakes people make when drafting their mission statements are:

- Focusing on money and/or timelines. For example, my mission is to become a real estate millionaire by the time I’m 40 is not an effective mission. A meaningful mission statement should encompass what you

love to do above and beyond any financial gain and for all your life. It should reflect your essence.

- Incorporating what they do frequently, even though they don't really feel energized by it. For example, suppose people are always asking you to help with their computer problems - if you don't enjoy helping them, that shouldn't be in your mission statement.
- Thinking their real passion isn't noble or grand enough so they focus on what they think their mission should be because they want their mission to reflect society's values. For example, a man who states his mission is to design, engineer and invent solutions to problems. But in reality that drains him. What he truly loves is to maintain, repair and restore broken things to working order.

Examples

Some examples of effective personal mission statements include:

- To create beautiful environments for myself and others to blossom in
- To make people laugh and have fun so they can reduce stress
- To serve others and live my spiritual beliefs everyday

Discovering Your Personal Mission Statement

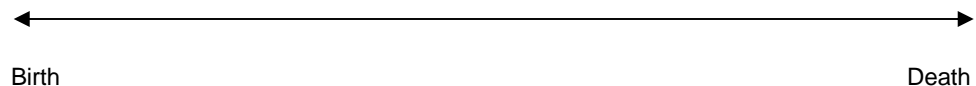
My Life Timeline



The following exercises are designed to help you “discover” your mission. Most people don't have to create one; they just have to do the work that enables them to see it. These exercises will help you see what's been inside you all along.

On the Life Timeline below, note several major events that meant a lot to you in your life.

My Life Timeline



When you finish, take a few moments to reflect on your life. Think back to those times in your life when you have felt most alive or energized by something you were doing.

What were you doing? Perhaps you were writing a song, drawing a picture, working on a class project, helping someone out with a problem, comforting someone, learning something new, initiating something, challenging tradition, winning a race, tending a garden or designing a home.

What Sparks Your Passion?



For Part 2 of this exercise, you may write your answers below, on another sheet of paper, or start a journal file on your computer.

Take a few moments to reflect on each stage of your life that you've lived so far. What were some of the major interests, peak experiences, projects and activities that sparked passion in your soul? Take your time and have fun with this. If you have trouble recalling, ask a family member or colleague to recall when they have noticed you being particularly passionate about something.

Birth – 10 years old

Pre-teen and Teen Years (10 -18)

Young Adult (19 -25)

Adult (26 – 39 years)

Mid-life (40 – 60)

Wise Elder Years (60 and beyond)

**The Three
“What’s” -
Refining Your
Personal Mission
Statement**

One way to dig deeper and get to the true essence of your personal mission is to ask yourself “What” questions that help you get to the core of your mission. For example, you could ask yourself

- “What is motivating me when I do...? “
- “What is important about that?”
- “What is appealing about...?”

Ask yourself at least three “what” questions after you’ve come up with your first draft of your mission statement. For example, let’s look at Susan’s mission statement.

During this exercise, she noticed that she felt most energized and passionate whenever she was decorating spaces. At school, at work, at home and even at friends’ homes she was always decorating and rearranging spaces. She noticed this pattern started in grade school and never stopped! She particularly loved decorating homes. She logically concluded that her passion and mission was to decorate homes for people. But was that her real deep mission? Is there a greater purpose we can uncover?

We guided Susan through “The Three What’s” to get to that deeper, more purposeful mission statement. Here’s how it went.

Susan	Coach
My mission is to decorate homes for people.	What is motivating you when you decorate homes?
I love the process of creating beauty and harmony out of dull, lifeless spaces.	What is important about creating beauty and harmony?
When spaces are beautiful and harmonious people feel happier and more relaxed and hopefully it helps to make their families happier, too	What is appealing about helping people feel happier?
I feel like I’m making a difference in people lives and helping to create positive energy in the world.	So what is your deeper purpose and mission in life?
My mission is to create beauty, harmony and positive energy that make a difference in people’s lives.	Excellent!

The end result of this exercise is usually a more compelling and accurate personal mission. It results in a mission statement that should stand the test of time and be fairly consistent throughout your life.

It's important to get your mission statement defined because it will also serve as a guide to help you make sure you are on track and focusing on what's really important to you in life. If you start to feel out of balance, you will be able to stop and ask yourself, is what I'm doing purposeful for me? Does this really fit with my mission?



By digging deeper, you will reveal a personal mission that will be broad enough and flexible enough to give you room to expand and grow in the ways that you fulfill your mission. Your mission will be purposeful enough and big enough to inspire you and the people around you, even when the going gets tough.

In Susan's case, her mission became much larger than helping people with decorating their homes. She could start there, and later expand her work to include office spaces, schools, community centers, and any activities that create beauty for Susan and the people she helps. Her broader mission statement allows for bigger and more varied things to happen in Susan's life because creating beauty and positive energy doesn't always take the form of interior decorating, it could include landscaping, fashion, feng shui or anything that enhances beauty in people's lives.

**Exercise:
The Three What's**

Review your mission statement again and ask yourself three times "What do I get out of this?"



You	Coach
My mission is to	What is motivating you when you ...?

	What is appealing about ...?
	What is important about...?
	So what is your deeper purpose or mission in life?
My personal mission is to	

Digging Deeper Still

Crafting your personal mission statement is a process of discovery. It reveals itself to you in layers as you reflect on your life. Let's do one more self-assessment to see what layers reveal themselves.



This self-assessment exercise will help you find even deeper insights into what motivates you personally and professionally. Answer the questions below.

Things I like about my life

Things I would change

Current favorite activities

Past favorite activities

Review



Here are some final questions to help you determine if you have gone deep enough and come up with a mission statement that will stand the test of time. If you feel comfortable, consider sharing your mission statement with a few trusted friends, family and colleagues and get their feedback. Review your timeline, self-assessment and mission statement one more time. Ask yourself, does your mission statement:

- Line up with and encompass the things you said were important to you in the self-assessment?
- Hold up through the years when you review your “timeline”?
- Give you room to grow and change throughout your life?
- Inspire you to wake up each day and do your work?
- Sound right to your friends, family and colleagues?
- Why or why not?

Review your mission statement using the characteristics we established earlier. Is your statement:

- Clear enough to be easily understood and communicated?
- Brief enough to be easily remembered?
- Inspiring enough to encourage others to want to support you?
- Broad enough to encompass your innate talents and abilities?
- Authentic enough that anyone who knows you well would agree
- Timeless enough to be accurate throughout your lifetime (there is no deadline on it)?
- Does it contain an element of being of service to others in some way?

If not, review it again and tweak it as needed until it feels right and timeless for you!

Now let’s take a look at the process of developing a mission for your team or organization.

CREATING YOUR PERSONAL VISION STATEMENT

What is a Vision?

Vision is a critical part of Right Focus because it describes your preferred future and becomes your overriding long-term goal. Vision answers questions like: “Where do I see myself going?” and “Where do I want to be in the next five to ten years?”

A vision differs from a mission in that the mission statement describes the essence of the person, team or organization and is not an overriding goal that, once achieved, changes. Mission statements usually last for a lifetime. The vision sets a direction you can track and measure. Once you reach your vision, it's time to create a new one in order to keep growing.

How is a Vision Different from a Mission?

A good example of the distinction between a personal mission and a vision is in the movie, ***Back to the Future***. When the movie opens and Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) enters Professor Emmett Brown's home, we see that the Professor has hooked up clocks and gadgets to move together in synch and precisely at the top of the hour open a dog food can to feed Einstein, the Professor's dog. We know before ever meeting the Professor that he loves to invent things. It becomes very clear over the course of the movie that the Professor's mission or purpose in life is “to invent.”

As the plot expands, we learn that Professor Brown has a clear vision for his next invention – to be the first person to explore the past and the future and be able to come back to the present time - time travel. He accomplishes this vision and he and McFly share some fun and dangerous adventures traveling through time. The Professor used his passion for inventing to fuel his vision of traveling across time. Once he achieved his vision of time travel, he went on to invent other things in the future.

Review



Here are some final questions to help you determine if your vision statement is truly an inspiring and overriding goal. Ask yourself, does your vision meet the following “Vision Fit Test”?

- Is your vision about the future?
- Does your vision create enthusiasm and get you excited about committing to it?
- Is your vision about setting a direction that can be measured or benchmarked?
- Does your vision reflect your uniqueness?
- Can you communicate your vision with passion?

If not, review it again and tweak it as needed until it feels right to you!

CREATING YOUR PERSONAL VALUES STATEMENT

What are Values?

We define values as your core set of guiding principles, a statement of what is so important to you that it cannot be compromised for profits or financial gain in any way — no matter what. “What do I stand for?” “What is most important to me?” are the key questions that values answer.

Knowing your values helps you make better decisions. Knowing what’s really important assists you in assessing alternatives choosing those that are the best “fit” for you.

Getting clarity on your own values is a critical step in becoming a leader. Studies on leadership show that those seen as the best and most inspiring leaders have consistent values that they display everyday. In other words, leaders do what they say is important – they model what they stand for.

Your personal values should align with that of your team’s and your organization’s for you to feel like you belong there. Sometimes your personal values align well with your organization’s; in some cases they don’t. If your personal values are in conflict with the culture at work, you won’t be happy and may stop feeling passionate about what you are doing. For example, one of your personal values may be about quality and achieving a certain standard of excellence in all that you do. If you take a job with a company that values speed and doing the bare minimum to get the product out the door faster, you will get frustrated. Your personal values and the company’s are not aligned --- they’re in conflict.

Getting clarity on your personal values involves examining the relevant importance of the things you hold dear. Some examples of values commonly expressed include:

Examples

LEARNING & GROWTH	BALANCE
ACHIEVEMENT	CREATIVITY
SERVICE	ENJOYMENT
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	SECURITY
OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE	QUALITY
MONEY	RECOGNITION
STATUS	POWER
FAMILY	LEISURE
FREEDOM	AUTONOMY
COLLABORATION	COMPETITION



To further define your personal values statement, narrow your list down to three to five values. When you have completed narrowing them down, write your most essential values in final priority order below.

So often, we don't have a clear definition for what we say is important to us. Taking time to define your values gives you and others that clarity.

For example, I might have identified "creativity" as one of my top five values. I define creativity as "being innovative and using a variety of ideas and techniques to find a new type of solution."

Someone else might select the same value, but define creativity as "expressing myself in a variety of ways from how I dress and decorate things to improvising when I communicate new ideas to others."

Once you've selected your prioritized three to five values, define them by writing exactly what each one means to you below.

How Well Do I Live My Values?



Write your answers to the questions below.

Currently, I would rate myself a ___ on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being poor and 5 being great on how true I am to my stated values (list your prioritized values and give each a rating):

Values:	Ratings:
1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____

Consider the following questions to help you live your values everyday:

1. Which value did I rate myself best on? Why? How can I build on this strength in applying the values I rated lower?
2. Which value did I rate myself lowest on? Why? How can I improve to be more consistent in applying this value in my day-to-day life?



