

Mission to Vision

Defining Your Nonprofit's Purpose
Stating Its Intention

Oliver Tessier & Associates www.otessier.com February 1, 2008

Understand the drivers

- The issues are likely to have come to you—presented themselves as causes demanding a response. Strong emotions are often attached to them.
- Knowing and understanding the issues—in the context of the community served—are essential to building an effective organization.
- The issues may grow and change. To remain relevant, your nonprofit will have to do the same.

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Primary Topics

Mission
Your nonprofit's purpose

➔

Vision
The impact you intend to make

Surely there's more to it than that....

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Master mission distinctions

<p>Mission Magnetic North</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abstract ▪ Static ▪ Enduring 	<p>Mission Statement: Lively Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are here because... ▪ Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will do these things... ▪ Result <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our goal is to achieve...
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Find the path to your vision

Issue
because

Mission
we will

Planning
*analyze
prioritize
strategize*

Action
*engage
evaluate*

Vision
achieve

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Master vision distinctions


<p>Vision The destination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear ▪ Ambitious ▪ Optimistic ▪ Rational 	<p>Vision Statement: Succinct Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We intend to... ▪ Challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can accomplish... ▪ Inspiration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will succeed...
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Expect some long discussions

I'm not sure how to put it into words, but I'll know it when I see it.

I have made this [letter] longer, because I have not had the time to make it shorter.
—Blaise Pascal, "Lettres Provinciales", 1657

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Anticipate the issues

Know the givens

- What do we **do**?
- What does everyone feel passionate about?
- What must be included to avoid misrepresenting the organization?

Know the hot buttons

- What uncertainties are likely to need the most attention?
- Where is there dissent?
- Are there topics or perspectives that are considered taboo?


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Identify the participants

Who will participate in the process?

- The board owns the mission; they make the final decision.
- The staff has everyday responsibility for achieving the mission. They have critical information, and you want the buy-in their participation will earn.
- Constituents (such as clients or funders) can bring a valuable perspective.

Create a task force of people who are interested in both process and outcome. Keep it small; keep it agile.


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Structure the discussion

- Identify the key questions to be considered
- Prepare participants with backup materials
- Create and distribute an agenda that includes the topics to be discussed


- Review the process
 - The goal
 - Topics to be covered
 - Ground rules for participation
 - How decisions will be made
- Vary your means of exploring information to accommodate different personal styles

If you have the means, invest in a professional facilitator.

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Define the process

- A task force of the most creative thinkers and writers available drafts an initial statement.
- Task force presents the draft to the board for *general* comment on message and tone.
 - Caution! Wordsmith detour ahead!
- Task force incorporates board comment into a second draft.
 - If you have access to a professional writer, use it now.
- Task force presents the second draft for preliminary approval.
- Task force makes any necessary adjustments.
- Task force presents the mission statement for the board to adopt.


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Agree on the ground rules

We are pursuing a shared goal

- All ideas are welcome
- I will listen carefully to what I resist most
- Equal participation from everyone is key
- There are no taboo topics
- I will uphold the confidentiality agreement (if there is one)

Encourage productive disagreement; you'll have a better outcome. To unify the group and advance the effort, focus on the goal.

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Tackle the questions

Open questions will encourage discussion.

- What needs to be done that only we can do, or that we can do better than anyone else?
- Who benefits from our products/services and how?
- How do we accomplish our work?
- What do we value most?
- How broad or narrow is our focus?

What are the most important questions for your nonprofit to address?

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Use what you've created

Congratulations!
You've got a mission and vision statements.

Use them to:

- Define your organization to the world
- Guide your decision making
- Inspire your constituents (clients, community, board, staff, funders)
- Promote your cause

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Consider others' mission statements

Organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.
—Google

...provide relief to victims of disasters and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.
—The American Red Cross

...to strengthen the nonprofit sector by advancing knowledge about U.S. philanthropy.
—The Foundation Center

To enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential.
—Microsoft

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Plan to achieve your vision

Strategic plan

- Agreed upon priorities and broad means of achieving them over the next -three years
- Tool for evaluation progress toward significant goals

Business plan

- Organization-wide activities to take place during the business year, as supported by the annual budget
- Tool for evaluating staff performance at individual and team levels

Personal plan

- Each staff member's plan for his/her own performance
- Tool for evaluating individual performance and growth

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Consider others' vision statements

A world without Alzheimer's disease.
—Alzheimer's Association

Current and future media and telecommunications technologies promote, and do not impede, democratic values.
—Media Access Project

Every child will be a wanted child.
—Planned Parenthood

A personal computer in every home running Microsoft software.
—Microsoft

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Take action

Implement your program activity

- Deliver products and services
- Monitor progress
- Adapt and improve based on what you learn
- Share learning with others


Connect to your community

- Seek collaborative opportunities

Advocate for your cause

- Educate your audience and the general public
- Educate lawmakers


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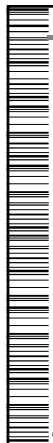


Are we there yet?

How will we know when we've achieved our vision?

- Keep asking yourself how close you are, over and over.
- Ask your clients, donors, members of the community— anyone with a genuine interest in your nonprofit.
- Learn from your successes and your failures; modify your activity for constant improvement.
- Don't be afraid to say, "We've done it! Our work is through."

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Email oliver@otessier.com

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