



HOW TO WRITE A VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Mission and Vision

Every club should have a vision of the future and a mission statement that outlines its purpose and reason for being. A mission statement is a formal written statement. A vision can be a bit less defined, but is equally important for long term development of the club.

What is a vision statement?

The vision is a statement of what a club hopes to accomplish, a "vision" of what success will look like. The vision should look far into the future: five, ten or even twenty years. A good exercise for developing a club's vision is to write a newspaper headline about the club's accomplishments at some date in the future. It might be unrealistic, but it is the vision to strive for.

What is a mission statement?

Every organization has a mission, a purpose, a reason for being. As such, every swim club needs to define its fundamental purpose, philosophy, and values. The mission statement clarifies the essence of club existence. It describes the needs the club was created to fill, explains why the organization exists, and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the organization's essential nature, its values, and its work.

Why have one?

Without guidance, it is difficult to establish boundaries for appropriate course of action. The mission statement provides the basis for evaluating the success of the club and its programs. It helps to verify if the club is on the right track and making the right decisions. It provides direction when the club faces new challenges or opportunities. Attention to mission helps leadership adhere to its primary purpose and helps during conflicts by serving as a touchstone for every decision. A powerful mission statement can also be helpful in attracting volunteers, donors, and community involvement.

When should it be reviewed?

It is important to reassess the organization's mission on a regular basis. If it has been more than five years, now is probably a good time to review and, if necessary, fine-tune or even rewrite the mission statement. All too often an organization's mission statement, which has been handed down over the years, loses relevance and ceases to speak to members, staff, board members, or supporters. Frequently, the landscape within which a club operates changes so markedly over a period of time, that the original mission must be updated, altered, or changed dramatically in order to address new realities.

Who should create or revise it?

Creating a mission statement is a group effort. Board members, staff, members, alumni and donors can provide valuable input during the creative process. The final wording should be approved by the board or, in the case of another organizational model, the key leaders/owners.

What do we do with our mission statement?

The mission statement should be referred to continuously. It should be present everywhere: on the letterhead, all communications, all brochures, and all official documents.

How do we write a mission statement?

An effective mission statement is concise, to the point, realistic, operational, inspirational, informative, and even emotional. It is forward- thinking, positive, and describes success.

An effective mission statement must resonate with the people working in and for the organization, as well as with the different constituencies that the organization hopes to affect. It must express the organization's purpose in a way that inspires commitment, innovation, and courage - not an easy task!

At the very least, your organization's mission statement should answer three key questions:

1. What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address? (the purpose of the organization)
2. What are we doing to address these needs? (the business of the organization)
3. What principles or beliefs guide our work? (the values of the organization)

You can begin the process of drafting a mission statement by asking staff, volunteers, and constituents to list words, phrases, or ideas that come to mind with respect to the organization and its purpose, business, and values. Give everyone a chance to be heard. Look for language and concepts that enjoy broad consensus.

Your Mission Statement Should:

- Express your organization's purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment.
- Motivate those who are connected to the organization.
- Be articulated in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp.
- Use proactive verbs to describe what you do.
- Be free of jargon.
- Be short enough so that anyone connected to the organization can readily repeat it.

Sample Swim Club Mission Statements

- The mission of XYZ Aquatic Club is to develop student-athletes who are a credit to society. The XYZ experience tends to shape and strengthen character throughout one's lifetime. Although XYZ strives to develop champion swimmers, the club measures success not only by national championships and college scholarships, but also by personal improvement.
- To have a nationally recognized aquatics program that teaches and trains all levels of swimmers, emphasizing individual progress, team unity and family participation.
- We, the XYZ Swim Club are committed to excellence and dedicated to developing world class citizens and world class athletes.
- The mission of XYZ Aquatic Club is: To protect and promote the mutual interests of its individual members and to encourage development of the athlete's fullest potential.
- To empower young people to be champions in and out of the water for a lifetime.

Material developed from:

- Radtke, Janel M.,(1998) "How to Write a Mission Statement" , Strategic Communications for Nonprofit Organizations: Seven Steps to Creating a Successful Plan, Hoboken NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Grace, Kay Sprinkel. (2003) The Nonprofit Board's Role in Setting and Advancing Mission. Boardsource, 2003.

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