



Mission Possible

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Mission Statements. A necessary evil or crucial strategic step for your medical practice? Read on and you can decide for yourself.

If you don't plan to use the mission statement – refer to it in meetings, emphasize its importance to staff, make it a part of strategic direction, then crafting a mission statement for your practice will be a complete waste of time. Don't bother doing it. In fact, there are consultants who now decline requests for this kind of work because they've seen how ridiculously ineffective they are in driving the organization in a new direction.

However, if you're prepared to creatively engage in important conversations to develop and follow through on a mission statement, you may be on the right track to building a strong practice team working for a mission-driven organization. Your team members should know the mission statement, understand it and use it.

Mission statements today are not comparable to those of yesterday. Mission statements of the past used to be full of flowery, cryptic language which really went nowhere toward helping the company move in a particular direction. Today's mission statement is more of an organizational mantra that can be used real-time in day-to-day operations. Some have referred to them as an internal identity.

Crafting a mission statement is really the first step in an organization's strategic planning process. You should begin the process by asking these questions:

- What is our organization's primary purpose? What is the problem-solving service/product we provide?

- Who are our customers and how do we provide this problem-solving service/product to them? (For a medical practice, this could be your patients, members of your Board, or the community in which you practice)
- What makes us unique?
- How do we provide a high-quality work environment for our employees?
- How do we meet the responsibility to provide a return on financial and human resources?

You should include many voices in the development of your mission statement. Some organizations prefer for executive staff to craft the statement and then include the rest of staff in the vetting process. Other organizations have create cross-functional teams that develop the statement for vetting by the staff at large. Either process works as long as there is an option for greater buy-in. Regardless of the process you choose to draft your mission statement, consider the following:

- Determine the Target Audience – to whom is the mission statement directed
- Length – some are only a few words, others are several sentences, but most agree the shorter the better, especially if you want to avoid boring your target audiences
- Intentional word selection – it is important to set the tone of the mission statement to reflect the organization. If the wording is too full of uninspiring jargon or buzzwords, the message might get lost. Say what you mean in as few words as possible and use words that are easily understood
- Durability - your mission statement should stand the test of time

Although your mission statement should not change over time, it should inspire change within the organization and that means it must be used. So, once your mission statement is developed, vetted and approved, it should be communicated throughout your practice in multiple venues. Introduce it to staff by memo (either electronically or paper), list it on your website, and make a point of having leadership use it in meetings. Some post it throughout the office in areas where staff congregate.

Finally, the mission statement should be translated into performance objectives and used as a basis for strategic planning from which the organization operates. Below are some examples of mission statements from other industries and from other medical practices. Take these into consideration when writing your practice's mission statement.

Mission Statement Examples:

Apple will be a leader in providing simple, powerful, high-quality information products and services for people who learn, communicate, and create.

The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit.

Health System or Medical Practice Mission Statements:

- Our mission is to serve the health care needs of our service area.
- Our mission is to be the premiere medical home for patients of all ages.
- It is our mission to improve the health of those we serve with a commitment to excellence in all that we do. Our goal is to offer quality care and programs that set community standards, exceed patients' expectations and are provided in a caring, convenient, cost-effective and accessible manner.
- Our mission is to be an active team to promote wellness and provide complete health care to people of all ages. Our patient centered care will be of superior quality, fully accessible, and cost effective. We will actively promote self care as well as coordination of care within our health care community.
- It is our mission to enhance community health through service with compassion, excellence, and efficiency.
- Dedicated to the practice of Family Medicine we strive to improve our patients' mental and physical health with care, compassion and commitment to excellence.

Mission Statement Resources

Abrahams, Jeffrey. (2007). 101 Mission Statements from Top Companies: Plus Guidelines for Writing Your Own Mission Statement (Paperback). Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press.

O'Hallaron, Richard D. (1999). The Mission Primer: Four Steps to an Effective Mission Statement (Paperback). Published by Mission Incorporated.

The Mission Primer: 4 Steps to an Effective Mission Statement. Published by Mission Impossible, Inc. 1999

Balanced Scorecard Step-by-step for Government and Nonprofit Agencies. By Paul R. Niven. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003.