

PROCESS TO ARRIVE AT A MISSION STATEMENT

The following process has proven very effective for helping groups get clear about what they do and why. Many mission statements are no more than PR speak – and often not very good at that. This process helps the people themselves to explore their deepest motivations and arrive at a shared picture. Then they can articulate what they want to encapsulate as their mission.

A mission statement should give a succinct message about the core purpose of the organisation. It is best created collectively by the people in the organisation. Ideally there would be many conversations on the lines, “as an organisation what is our common purpose?” These can then culminate in a workshop for, shall we say, a dozen or more senior people representing all parts of the organisation.

This is the core process about which you might choose to add conversations, exercises or stimulations of one sort or another.

FOCUS – say 15 minutes

Before actually using LVT we would start by focusing the question afresh for the workshop. Is the question, “What is our common purpose?” or does it need to be re-worded? This is to get everyone to buy into the enquiry.

Then we can introduce the guidelines for LVT – say 10 minutes

GATHER – say 20 minutes – sub-groups of 3 or 4 people (approximately)

Everyone writes their responses to the question, drawing on the conversation they have had previously and their own insights. They do so with rigour – an active verb in each complete statement. After this point no new ideas should be added so people are challenged to get it all out there in this short session – all the raw material for everything that follows.

ORGANISE – say 30 minutes – still in small groups

First part is to apply the framework:

Our purpose is

To ..., **In a way that....**, **So that....**

Note; this is challenging because it is not easy to differentiate between the three areas or decide where to put ideas. (That it is difficult is valuable because people have to make the effort to make the distinctions)

Roughly speaking

To ... will say **what** the deliverable is for the customer

e.g. Provide state of the art communications

In a way that.... will be about the **values** that underpin what we provide

e.g. Responds to customer’s needs

So that... will be about outcomes for stakeholders or **why** we are in this

business e.g. our employees are proud of what we do

NB this is an exercise in sorting out between the three categories. It is a tough process as people need to choose where each item fits. Generally speaking most ideas will be the ‘In a way that ...’ category. They can be asked to cluster items in each category, according to mutual relevance.

There will be some errors of syntax that can be adjusted later (e.g. the word to may have been used on the original idea statements whereas the idea may have been assigned to a different part of the framework). It does not matter too much if people don't manage to get it all correct as their picture will be dismantled (maybe take photos of the boards before proceeding)

Now it gets tougher because we need to arrive at a single picture.

INTEGRATE – brief and transfer 10 minutes, cluster 20 minutes, title 20 minutes
The three groups come together to pool their material. One way is to assemble all the 'To...s' one to one new board, all the 'In a way that...s' onto another and the 'So that ...s' onto a third and assign a group to each. They can negotiate with one another as they will want to re-assign some ideas. Nothing should be rejected. If there are very obvious duplicates then put one aside onto a separate board.

On each board ideas should be clustered and each cluster should be titled, using the principle that the title is a summing up of what the cluster contents mean. It should have the same form as the ideas themselves, of a full statement with an active verb. NB Making titles is another challenge – this is a meaning-making process and should not be skimmed.

Now the titles (leaving the content to one side) can be used to make a **statement of common purpose**.

REALISE – 30 minutes

From the statement of common purpose a mission statement can be derived.

The simplest statement will focus only on the 'To...s'. This will make it very succinct. It should be as abstract as possible.

Consider the following alternatives;

We are good modern builders

We are builders of first class houses

We create homes for people to live wonderful lives

'The In a way that...s' can be written up as a values statement.

'So that ...s' will give guidance on how to engage different stakeholders – what's in it for them?

An important aspect of the stage REALISE is what happens to the people. Having worked through this process they should be feeling clear and confident about addressing the purpose, not just that they have arrived at a mission statement but also that they have come together as a group to address that mission. This clarity will radiate to employees and customers.

Splitting into small groups helps to keep everyone involved. Timings above amount to three hours or so. Allow a good half a day! Allow for plenty of conversations and break for refreshments (and to cool the brains).