

Vision, Mission ... Purpose?

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Vision and mission statements have become about as commonplace as letters to Santa in December.

Like letters to Santa, most vision and mission statements I have encountered describe an organization far different from the one I see on a daily basis. To get past the, "I've been a good boy this year," I suggest that you explore instead the organization's purpose. This is often unstated, but key to what is actually going on. Can your managers and employees explain what the company's purpose is or what their purpose is? Can you?

Like the letter to Santa, vision statements are aspirational in nature. They describe a future state that the company or organization would like to achieve; the desired impact that the company would like to have in its customer base, the larger market, the industry or economy. A vision statement is not a business plan, which describes the steps to achieve those goals. The vision statement is there to tell the world what it is that the company would like to achieve or accomplish. The purpose of a vision statement is twofold; the first is to inform about the company's aspirations for the future, the second is to motivate and inspire employees and stakeholders to act on those aspirations.

Take a look at your company's vision statement. Do you see the aspirational part? Do you see the motivational part? Do both of these accurately reflect the direction for your company?

While many people confuse vision and mission statements, or use them interchangeably, the difference is that

a mission statement is present based, rather than future looking. The role of the mission statement is to explain, "Why does this organization exist? What is it that we do?"

PMPA's vision statement, for example is: "To be the provider that best understands and exceeds the needs of our members while advocating for the success of our industry." That "to be" phrase shows the aspirational (future state) direction of this vision statement.

Our mission statement (present based), describes what we do and why: "Provide information, resources, advocacy and networking opportunities that advance and sustain our members." This mission statement communicates what we do, "provide information, resources, advocacy and networking opportunities" and explains why we do this, "that advance and sustain our members." Our mission is present based, and explains what we do and why.

We can see that the vision statement is aspirational/inspirational, and that our mission statement answers "What do we do?" and "Why do we do it?" But are these enough?



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Vision, Mission ... Purpose?

I think that vision and mission are not, by themselves, enough. I think that the organization and its managers and employees need to have a purpose. What is the purpose of your company?

What is it that makes up a purpose statement? I have seen definitions of purpose statements that seem to be confused with mission statements.

I propose that a purpose statement exists to describe the impact that the company and the employee have on its customers, clients and stakeholders. It describes the company's activities *from the customer's point of view*.

In today's world, our companies are battered daily by VUCA, Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. These forces are created by customers, markets, suppliers, regulations, interruptions in infrastructure, global events and even weather. These VUCA forces create risk for our member companies

I feel that the purpose of PMPA, and our role as its staff, is: "To reduce the risk that our members face so that they can make the high-precision and human-safety components that are critical in today's technologies." This purpose statement describes the impact of PMPA and our work from our customers' point of view.

How does PMPA act on or enable this purpose? By helping PMPA members with specification interpretations, assisting them with material properties data, collecting and publishing wage information or business trends reports, we help to reduce their risk by eliminating uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. By being proactive on government regulations, we help to eliminate the risk of uncertainty and volatility of the consequences of those regulations on the operation of their shops and provision of their products.

Our members also face a great challenge in finding people with skills to add value in their shops. So an additional purpose statement for PMPA could be: "To help create awareness and promote career opportunities, career training and change the conversation about the advanced manufacturing jobs we have in our member company shops." PMPA offers National Technical Conferences, PMTS (a national-level Precision Machining Technology Show), regional mini-conferences and a host of employee development support tools including CEU credit for PMPA-provided or recognized training to help people succeed on the job in our industry.

A purpose statement describes the impact of the company's activities from the customer's point of view.

I know that your company has a vision statement. I know that you have a mission statement. But does your company have a purpose statement? Can you explain it? Do your managers and employees know it? Share it? Live it? What is your purpose? How are you doing with that?

At PMPA, our job is to protect our members from risk and serve our members the things that they need to sustain and advance their businesses in today's VUCA environment. We aren't Santa Claus, but if you are a precision machining, advanced-manufacturing company, we have stuff on our list that can help advance and sustain you as you concentrate on making high-precision and human-safety components that are critical in today's technologies.

Growing PMPA Member Kalkaska Screw Products Values Active Involvement

Just as KSP chooses to be active in the community, Mr. Schlueter ensures that it gives back to the association as well. In October, Mr. Schlueter began serving on the PMPA Finance Committee.

"It was a thrill to be nominated and I'm really looking forward to being more involved in an official capacity," Mr. Schlueter adds. "I also feel that it's a good thing to give back to other organizations the little

nuggets of information that you have learned along the way that help you be successful. I think PMPA is very valuable for organizations that are in this industry because of the connections that you can make."

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