

Article from:

THE COMPASS

The Online, How-to Newsletter for Manufacturing and Distribution Professionals
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Achieving Excellence in Manufacturing

MISSION: POSSIBLE

How often do you go into the hardware store or the gym without a purpose? Not very often, right? Chances are you have a reason for being there, a mission, if you will. Missions that consist of buying a new tool or lifting a few weights may be small in the scheme of things or part of a larger goal like improving your health. Either way they motivate and give purpose to our daily lives.

As difficult as it is to imagine wandering aimlessly through life when we're not at work, it is equally difficult to imagine living without a mission when we are at work. Perhaps that mission is a small-scale mission, such as filling today's orders or earning a paycheck, but imagine the sense of purpose we all would have if our missions encompassed a grander goal.

Have you ever heard the story about the man who walks past a construction site where three workers are busy at their jobs? The man stops by the first worker and asks him what he is doing. The worker replies, "I am laying bricks." The second worker, when asked, says, "I am building a wall." And the third worker's response? He pauses reflectively with a happy look on his face and proudly says, "I am building a cathedral."

When we feel we are an integral and valued part of an inspiring company mission, we go to work motivated by more than simply earning a paycheck or filling today's orders. We become part of something larger than ourselves. We are able to minimize the frustrations we may feel today when we consider them in light of tomorrow's promise. And that promise of tomorrow is the vision it takes to write a company mission statement. Vision is the shared perception of the organization's purpose and future. It is a clear picture of what the organization will achieve and a supporting philosophy.

Writing a company mission or vision statement is not an easy task. It requires thought, attention, and courage. Companies tell us how they wrestle with the

process. They know the statement needs to have the sincerity show through, but they fear it could be taken out of context and sound sappy or corny.

Is writing a mission statement worth all that trouble? Absolutely. Here are the benefits.

BENEFITS OF WRITING A MISSION STATEMENT:

1. Employees and management alike feel they are an integral and valuable part of something larger than themselves, which gives new meaning to their work and fosters creativity.
2. Employees and management see and support the company's big-picture vision as well as its details.
3. A mission statement's big-picture focus motivates everyone to care about, maintain, and even surpass the company's standards of quality.
4. When jobs and projects shift focus, require new skills, or change priorities in keeping with the mission statement, everyone is motivated to do their part.
5. A mission statement provides the foundation for communicating to your customers what your company stands for and convincing them that you can provide what they need.
6. If you're aiming for ISO 9000 certification, you'll need to write a company quality policy, which is essentially the same thing as a mission statement.

What is a company quality policy for ISO registration? It is a definitive statement of what should be done in the business, while a mission is a statement of purpose. Sound like the same thing? We think so, and we believe an organization can only handle one such statement. They should be one and the same. Besides, if you think about it, a company should be completely unified in its mission with respect to all its beliefs, including its quality standards.

Whether or not you are considering ISO registration, a clear and sincere company mission statement will help get everyone on board with any growth process. On a day-to-day basis, it is a guide to and constant reminder of your company's values, purpose, and objectives.

We will also discuss how to go about putting your mission statement down on paper.

Are you considering ISO registration but find the prospect daunting?
Are you already registered but need help upgrading to the new ISO 9001:2000 standard?

AEM Consulting Group has the right answer for your unique situation. For a free no-obligation, initial consultation with Doug Anton of AEM Consulting, contact us at (800) 950-7123; e-mail: <mailto:anton@aemconsulting.com>

PUTTING YOUR MISSION DOWN ON PAPER

When you sit down to write your company's mission statement, avoid apple-pie clichés and empty rhetoric. If it's maudlin and manipulative rather than heartfelt plain truth, employees and management will sniff it out. Keep your mission statement short, concise, hard-hitting, and authentically emotional. Above all make it honest and sincere. Remember that your mission should supply a rallying point for employees and management alike. If they don't buy into it, it will be nothing more than a plaque that hangs ignored on the wall.

Questions to ask in the process of writing a mission statement/company quality policy:

- Why is our company in business?
- What do we do that is distinctive?
- What are our basic beliefs?
Do those beliefs provide a foundation for setting specific company goals and objectives? (Note: Specific goals and objectives, such as 100% on-time delivery or 10% increase in sales, do not belong in a mission statement. However, your goals and objectives will naturally derive from and support the basic beliefs set forth in the mission statement.)
- What will help our business continually improve quality and profitability?

Many companies already have a business plan that addresses these questions. If your company's business plan fits that description, you're ahead of the game. Your mission statement (or company quality policy) will simply be a highly distilled

version of the business plan, one that is more philosophically focused than strategically focused.

Here is what our mission statement looks like.

AEM Consulting Group's Mission Statement

AEM is committed to:

- * customizing solutions that enable our clients to deliver profitable, high-quality products and services to the marketplace,
- * utilizing successful processes that engage the people involved, and
- * continued learning and growth.

A very good one from one of our clients is:

Luran, Inc. is dedicated to providing our customers with the highest quality machined metal products, manufactured in a safe and clean environment. We take pride in consistently producing quality parts and assemblies on a timely basis, including difficult and small quantity orders.

You've Written the Mission Statement. Now What?

After writing the mission / vision statement or quality policy, your next step is to make sure you share it with everyone in the company. For a mission statement to have real value, everyone in your company must understand and buy into it. In addition, you must support this shared vision with measurable objectives, strategies, and action plans that move your company in the desired direction. One of management's key roles is to set and communicate specific objectives of success. All employees need to know what the goal is and what the current status, or measurement toward that goal is.

How do you communicate your company's mission? Hanging a plaque on the wall is a start, but it's not enough. Make sure you print out and distribute the mission statement to everyone, from the assembly line to top management. Better yet, the president of the company should pitch the company's mission to the entire staff at a meeting, and department heads should reinforce it at departmental meetings. After all, it is always the leaders who set the vision and tone for any business.

Communicating your company's mission, goals, and objectives is an ongoing process that keeps your company's vision clearly focused for management and

employees alike. This ongoing effort includes reviewing that vision and remaining open to modifying it in the future to reflect changing goals and conditions.

When done right, your company's mission statement is an effective means of defining a set of unifying principles and communicating those principles to employees and customers alike. It is a powerful way to motivate everyone in your company to see his or her job as the building of a cathedral rather than just the task at hand. It is worth the time and the challenge.

Are you burning to write your own mission statement but need some one-on-one guidance?

Are you unsure how to create goals and objectives that support your mission as well as your bottom line?

Contact Doug Anton of AEM Consulting Group and learn about the customized solutions we can offer to meet your business's unique needs. Call us at (800) 950-7123, or e-mail us at <mailto:anton@aemconsulting.com>

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