



Where Do You Work Again?

One of my favorite things to do before a strategic planning or team retreat is to take some time talking with each of the participants for the upcoming meeting. Talk about eye-opening!

You'd be amazed how often it seems as if people are describing completely different companies. The way they relay the mission, their grasp of current priorities, and their sense of what the group values sometimes bears little resemblance across the organization or even among executives and board members. On the other hand, from my perspective, the identification of such internal disconnects yields invaluable information as I plan out our work together.

What's my point? A misunderstanding, or inconsistent understanding, of an organization's mission can impact its ability to achieve results. Similarly, a misunderstanding, or inconsistent understanding, of mission can impact the company's ability to attract, retain, and draw the best from team members. In other words, mission matters!

So, join me for this month's edition of **EA Insights** as we explore mission's connection to outcomes and engagement. My hope is that you'll find reason to recommit to revving up your mission and/or your connection to it.

All the best,

June

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REV Up Your Mission for Outcomes and Engagement

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Ask most leaders what keeps them up at night, and among the top responses typically are outcomes and employee engagement. In other words, their struggle is: How do I get the results I'm after, AND how do I get people invested in coming, staying, and dedicating themselves to the work we do here?

Sound familiar?

Want my recommendation? Before you give into that knee-jerk reaction around new product development or you scramble to adopt the hottest employee perks -- both of which actually may be on the table, but not as first steps -- go back to the basics. *RE*Visit, *RE*VisE (if necessary), and *RE*View your mission.

REVisit Your Mission.

Many of us live with mission statements that were written when the company was launched...5, 10, 50, or 100 years ago. And, they haven't been glanced at since!

Why's mission important? It's the reason your organization exists. It's the statement that sets out what you're in place to do. Every entity -- nonprofit, government, religious, commercial -- needs to have a declaration that outlines the central understanding of

In This Issue

[REV Up Your Mission for Outcomes and Engagement](#)

[Quotes](#)

Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Solutions for Businesses](#)

[Solutions for Professionals](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)



"Quotes"

"[W]hether it's government or nonprofit or profit. Ask yourself ...: Is my mission improving the world? Are you sure about it? Seek to disconfirm that all the time. And if you can, change your mission."
~Jeff Bezos

"People...aren't hanging on your every word or the company mission statement. You have to become a broken record of your expectations of the organization and ...why it is relevant and how it works in specific ways."
~Douglas Conant

"[F]undamentally, your mission statement becomes your constitution.... It becomes the criterion by which you measure everything else[.]"
~Stephen Covey

"When it comes to communicating change at any time, the mission must be clear, and it must inspire."
~Frances Hesselbein

"The largest challenge that we face...is the ability to continue moving forward so the agency will have a single mission[.]"
~Alphonso Jackson



why it was formed. Outcomes very well may be hampered when there's uncertainty, at a fundamental level, about what the business is supposed to accomplish. It's hard to hit a mark, or hit it consistently, when few people are sure about what the mark is.

So, consider revisiting your mission. Read it, and reconnect with it in order to confirm or get fresh perspective on why your organization is here and what the work at hand is supposed to be.

REVise Your Mission (if necessary).

Test the relevance of your mission. Whether it was written 100 years or 100 weeks ago, does that mission statement express a relevant charge? Does it clearly explain why your organization exists, and does that reason make sense for the world we live in today?

Tweaking, or making significant adjustments to, the mission may be in order. When an organization continues functioning, despite an out-of-date or vague mission, it leaves its people without a clear galvanizing focus. As a result, disjointed and often conflicting efforts begin to emerge because people are left to themselves to interpret the path to be pursued. And, when that's the case, there may be isolated wins, but coordinated progress is unlikely.

So, if your current mission is lacking in some way, don't just look the other way. Revise it. Take the time to develop a new, or slightly updated, understanding of what your team is seeking to accomplish together.

REView Your Mission.

Both outcomes and engagement within an organization are likely to suffer if the people doing the work don't see how they fit into the puzzle. However, reviewing the mission regularly with the team helps to combat that tendency.

Clarify what the mission means to the company as a whole.

Don't assume that people will read the mission statement, especially when it's just added mindlessly to marketing materials or plastered on posters in the halls or break rooms. It's critical for leaders to have periodic discussions with staff at company meetings, at team meetings, and in one-on-ones about the purpose and direction of the organization's work. Help people remember it, understand it, take pride in it, and be able to share it. When there's clarity about the path that the company's taking, people gain a common focus and are better able to make decisions, set priorities, and act in ways that are consistent with advancing that focus.

Clarify what the mission means at the business unit, department, or location level.

Far too often in my work with organizations, I hear comments about what "corporate" is doing and, far too often, that central direction differs from the target that a particular unit or location has in its sights. When this is the mode of operating, it's no wonder that outcomes are skewed and engagement is lacking. Now, by nature of the work, sometimes it's easier for some parts of the organization to see themselves in the mission; even so, it's important to clarify the contribution to mission made by each unit. Each part of the organization -- whether it plays a customer-facing role or an internal one -- has to see itself as a vital participant in carrying out the mission. Every segment of the company has to understand how to use the oar it has been given and must be held accountable to paddle earnestly in the direction chosen for the boat as a whole.

Clarify what the mission means to the person. Especially as younger generations enter the workforce, they bring a desire to understand how they fit as individuals. In fact, "purpose" almost is a more significant hiring and retention game-changer than compensation. People want to know that what they do matters. And, what better way to meet that need for purpose than by helping the person to see how his or her job -- even those seemingly insignificant tasks -- connects not only to the work of the department but also to the overarching mission? When people see that they are active contributors to something greater than themselves, it tends to have a positive impact on their efforts, attitudes, and collaboration with others. They become more engaged. And, that engagement tends to have a corresponding positive effect on outcomes because now the work is being performed by people who are invested.

Slumping outcomes and lackluster engagement just may get a jolt of life when you tap into an unexpected source. And, that source is right there in your office. Isn't it time to dust your mission off and put it back to work for you?


Don't know where to start? Call on us at **Executive Advantage**. We're here to help you to *REV* up your mission and learn to use it more effectively to improve outcomes and engagement. There's no need to go it alone. [Contact us today.](#)

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About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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*"Stay focused on the mission."
~Naveen Jain*

*"People invest in businesses that they believe have the leadership, mission and team to grow and operate profitably."
~Robert Kiyosaki*

*"Employees are a company's greatest asset -- they're your competitive advantage. You want to attract and retain the best; provide them with encouragement, stimulus, and make them feel that they are an integral part of the company's mission."
~Anne M. Mulcahy*

*"Collaboration is a key part of the success of any organization, executed through a clearly defined vision and mission and based on transparency and constant communication."
~Dinesh Paliwal*

*"If you want to have the best employees, there really needs to be a vision and a mission. Talent looks for a mission. And if you have the best talent, that's the single biggest competitive advantage any company can have."
~Dan Schulman*

*"Building a mission and building a business go hand in hand. *** [W]e have always had a healthy understanding that we need to do both."
~Mark Zuckerberg*