

## DEVELOPING A PURPOSE STATEMENT

### Definition

A purpose statement captures succinctly why the organization exists and what it does. It should be memorable enough so that everyone connected to the organization can remember it and use it.

We encourage churches to develop a purpose statement rather than a mission statement.

A mission statement tends to be a hodgepodge of purpose, values and vision, resulting in a lack of clarity and focus.

A solid purpose statement, on the other hand, can be easily used as a benchmark for decision-making and planning.

It can also be used to build morale—and gain support and understanding inside and outside the organization.

### Qualities of a Purpose Statement

S—Specific—Unique to your organization.

M—Measureable—How will you know it has been accomplished?

A—Attainable—Achievable within the realm of faith.

R—Relevant—Worthy of accomplishment.

T—Timebound—Incorporates a time frame for accomplishment.

S—Strategic—It will capture the resources of our entire organization.

### Examples of Purpose Statements

Here are some purpose statements. Which ones are SMART?

3M: Our purpose is to solve unsolved problems innovatively.

Merck: Our purpose is to preserve and improve human life.

Walt Disney: Our purpose is to make people happy.

SETI Institute: Our purpose is to explore, understand, and explain the origin, nature, prevalence and distribution of life in the universe.

Fannie Mae: Our purpose is to strengthen the social fabric by continually democratizing home ownership.

Hewlett-Packard: Our purpose is to make technical contributions for the

advancement and welfare of humanity.

Sony: Our purpose is to experience the joy of advancing and applying technology for the benefit of the public.

Wal-Mart: Our purpose is to give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same things as rich people.

Valley Bible Church: We are committed to utilizing relationships for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship.

Here is a traditional mission statement, it is even harder to identify the core purpose:

"Apex Systems supplies technically innovative software and hardware solutions to the OEM computer market that provide long-term benefits to our customers and our investors."

### An Example Church Purpose Statement

This church uses five key words to summarize Christ's five purposes for His church

1. Magnify: Through worship we *celebrate* God's presence
2. Mission: Through evangelism we *communicate* God's word
3. Membership: Through fellowship we *incorporate* God's family
4. Maturity: Through discipleship we *educate* God's people
5. Ministry: Through service we *demonstrate* God's love

These key words, representing five purposes, have been incorporated into their purpose statement, which reads as follows:

"To bring people to Jesus and membership in his family, develop them to Christ-like maturity, and equip them for their ministry in the church and life mission in the world, in order to magnify God's name."

There are three important distinctive things:

It is stated in terms of results rather than in terms of activity. It is SPECIFIC and MEASUREABLE.

Five candidate results are listed.

Most churches, if they have a purpose statement, usually state it in terms of activities ( "*we edify, evangelize, worship, etc.*" ).

This makes it harder to evaluate and quantify.

A good purpose statement identifies the results we expect to see coming from

fulfilling the purpose.

For each result we should be able to ask questions like:

How many?

How many more than last year?

How many were brought to Christ?

How many new members are there?

How spiritual maturity demonstrated? What are the signs of maturity we look for?

How many have been equipped and mobilized for ministry? How many are fulfilling their life mission in the world?

These questions measure our success and enable us to establish Strategic Goals.

Second, the purpose statement is stated in a way that encourages participation. It must be ATTAINABLE and RELEVANT.

People must be able to see how they can make a contribution toward the goals of the organization. The purpose must be stated in a way that everyone can believe it is attainable and relevant. If it is attainable and relevant, then they will want participate in it. If your statement doesn't allow individual participation, very little will get done.

Third, and most importantly, notice the five purposes are arranged into a sequential process. It must be TIME-BOUND and include the elements of timely accomplishment. This is absolutely crucial. That way they can be acted on everyday. Every purpose statement needs a process to fulfill it; if not, you simply have a theological statement that sounds good but produces nothing.

Benjamin Disraeli once observed that "constancy to purpose is the secret of success."

Every great organization has defined its purposes and then somehow figured out a process or system for fulfilling those purposes.

The Central Church of Seoul, Korea, was built on a cellgroup system.

First Baptist Church, Dallas was built on a fully graded Sunday school system.

Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, grew due to a personal evangelism system.

In the early 1970's, many churches were built around a system of bringing attenders to church on buses. In each of these cases, church leaders clearly defined their purposes and then developed a process to fulfill those purposes.

It is not merely a target that you aim for; it becomes the motivating focus. A

clear purpose statement will provide the direction, the vitality, the boundaries, and the driving force for everything you do. Purpose-driven organizations will be the best equipped to minister during all the changes we will face in this twenty-first century.

## Purpose Statement Planning Worksheet

Why does our organization exist?

Why was the organization founded? What was its original purpose?

In the future, will our purpose change? (if yes, then how)

What, specifically, will we spend our time doing? Not, what will our people do, but what will we do?

How will we know if we have accomplished it? How will we measure ourselves?

What constraints of time will we place on accomplishing our purpose?

How will our entire organization be compelled to participate?

Draft Purpose Statement

Instructions: Taking into consideration your thoughts, what is the essential purpose of the organization? Boil it down to a single sentence that is simple and memorable. (Fifteen words or less)

What is the purpose of our organization?