



Your Mission Statement: How to Get Employee Buy-In

With Idea Champions' 360° Mission Statement Process™



"...a meaningful purpose we can all define."

IDEAChampions

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Long ago, in the olden days before Southwest Airlines, PeopleSoft, Fast Company and Starbucks' Triple Mocha Latte, it was accepted practice for a company's CEO to bring the sacred tablets down from the mountain and proclaim the company mission with great reverence and fanfare.

Festooned with passages on values and vision, this often-ponderous scripture would be engraved, displayed and signed-on to without question by generations of head-nodding workers. "Yes, Mr. Flamistan. We understand the mission – the vision...the values... mm-hmm...zzzzz."

Then something happened. Actually, a number of things. Let us count them. The millennium. Disruptive Innovation. The Blackberry. Web 2.0. The Wisdom of Crowds. And Dilbert. Always Dilbert.

The upshot is this:

In little more than a decade, workers have developed a genuine need to be motivated from within for a meaningful purpose they can define.

Thus the need for a 360° Mission Statement™, authored collaboratively by everyone in the company, took root in the depths of the corporate soul.



Oh-oh. Here comes the rabble.

Naturally, some reticent 20th century elders recoiled. Employees creating and owning their company's mission? "Never!" they vowed. Even enlightened CEO's found it a curious concept.

But a few forward-thinking innovators could sense the times were changing. Intuitively they felt that including their company's entire workforce in a re-missioning process would result in more than just a great new mission statement. The process itself would dissolve silos, signal a new beginning and re-energize everyone in the organization.

"But where will we find an outside agent immune enough to company politics to champion and lead such a process?" " they wondered. They scanned the horizon, but none appeared. So for sheer lack of resources, the seed lay dormant.

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Then, in 2006, A&E Television Networks came to Idea Champions asking us to guide their employees through the process of rethinking and rewriting their company's mission statement.

So we sat down and mined our 20 years experience in innovation, creative thinking and team building to design the truly revolutionary...

...360° Mission Statement Process™ .



The New Center is *Everywhere*

Over the course of four months, we helped the entire AETN workforce engage in a lively, uncompromising rendezvous with their destiny – extolling, polling, cajoling and eventually rolling their entire team gestalt into a one-sentence mission statement that resonated for everyone.

Here's what AETN's Melinda McLaughlin, SVP, Insights and Marketing Solutions, had to say about our impact:

"The Idea Champions process *not only worked, it exceeded our every expectation* - from the resulting, first-ever employee-generated AETN mission statement, to the power of letting our workforce be a part of defining their own future. Idea Champions was at the heart of our success and masterfully made it comfortable and fun to leave our comfort zone. Our CEO has already received over 100 emails from employees thanking her for the process. What could be better than that?"

One hundred emails? What *happened* to these people?

Well, put simply, what happened was...

...a transformative shift in company alignment.



Here, paraphrased, is what AETN's workforce experienced:

“We’re One of a Kind”

All groups instinctively want to *differentiate from their competition*. This component of pride is universal. A 360° mission statement says, “We’re unique” in a voice everyone hears – their own.

“We’re Energized”

The 360° Mission Statement Process™ is a *wake up call to the entire workforce*. When they see what they created, it can't be ignored. The words they choose are a *daily call to action* everyone has agreed on.

“We’re Inspired”

Everyone instantly recognizes the process as a *unique opportunity for self-definition*. People show up with their highest aspirations for themselves, each other and their company.

“We’re Grateful”

Trusting employee wisdom gives everyone a sense of *creative ownership*. Over one hundred AETN employees actually emailed their CEO afterward to say “Thank you!”

“We’re Having Fun”

A guiding principle of Idea Champion's approach is ensuring that sessions are lively, creative and productive. A mission that emerges from *having goal-driven fun together* gives every participant in the process a positive reason to spring out of bed in the morning.

“We’re Moving in the Same Direction”

A mission statement process that incorporates everyone's wisdom dissolves silos and establishes *why employees show up for each other*. This deeper trust, as well as the statement itself, gives everyone an ability to align easily with their company vision and goals.

In other words, as a result of the process, *they got Game*.



The 360° Process Revealed

By now you may be curious about our 360° Mission Statement Process™. If you want to know *what* we do, we can summarize it in seven simple steps. But that doesn't start to explain *how* we do it.

That has to do with the skillset we've been perfecting for 20 years.

Wherever we go, we bring a tool chest brimming with breakthrough techniques, processes, and group facilitation skills. And we use them with simple integrity and respect for everyone involved.

There's ample evidence that it works. Spend ten minutes reading our client page on our website and then imagine a hybrid of Jackie Chan, Tom Hanks and Frodo. Part Ninja master, part Forrest Gump, part trusted ring-keeper.

Supple reflexes, a sense of humor, and total dedication to your success. That's our secret sauce.

This being said, here's our seven-step process.

The *What*, not the *How*.



Seven Steps to a New Mission Statement

Step 1. We lead your *core team* through a three-hour mission statement launch session. Energized and focused, we all jump in together.

Step 2. We survey your workforce using our proprietary i-Bank polling software. From that, our *BrainTrust* – a savvy net-centric team of forward-thinking visionaries – surfaces the memes and themes of the contributors, generating 20 or more viable draft mission statements.

Step 3. We solicit comments on each mission statement from your entire workforce in a follow-up i-Bank poll.

Step 4. We work closely with your core team to analyze the results and explore the implications.

Step 5. We facilitate a series of face-to-face “Who Are We?” sessions with a broad cross-section of your workforce – dynamic small-group meetings that engage, energize, and cut to the chase.

Step 6. We synthesize the input and present you with the top ten mission statements, along with other insights and recommendations.

Step 7. You review the options, select and / or adapt the best mission statement and then prepare your presentation to senior leaders. *

* Idea Champions can co-facilitate the final presentation to senior leaders if you wish. We can also help you review and select ways to roll out your Mission Statement to your employees, and “translate” it for public relations, prospective recruits, investors and other constituencies.



There. We just gave away the farm.

Well, not really. None of this would work without our unique expertise in facilitating each stage of the process. Some skills our clients applaud that we apply directly to the *360° Mission Statement Process*[™] include...

- ...our ability to work with strongly opinionated diverse groups
- ...our ability to adapt, adjust, and improvise on the fly
- ...our savvy at freeing up tough bureaucratic log-jams
- ...our commitment to making the process both fun and productive
- ...our knack for extracting the best *memes* from employee input
- ...our writing and editing expertise
- ...our seasoned flexibility with company cultures of every kind



Why Idea Champions?

A challenge of this scope requires *authenticity*. It needs the steady objectivity of clear-minded facilitators who aren't enmeshed in your company's day-to-day politics.

The *360° Mission Statement Process*™ is a concentrated mix of every skill Idea Champions has been perfecting for 20 years. It digs down deep into our expertise supercharging creativity, coaching enlightened leaders, building nimble, responsive teams and pioneering what we call the "Culture of Innovation."

That's why we're worth talking to. And maybe now.

Why Now?

Read your current mission statement. Does it sound like it makes any of the *seven common mission mistakes* listed on the next page? If so, you might want to initiate a 360° mission statement *sooner* rather than later.

If you already want to bring the *360° Mission Statement Process*™ to your company but you're wondering how, take slow, easy breaths. We can help. The reasons presented here will probably be sufficient. But if not, we have more ammunition we can provide for your pitch.

Just call us at 800-755-IDEA (4332) and we'll work with you to build a custom presentation full of visionary but gentle persuasion.

Mountains and lightning bolts are optional.

Seven Common Mission Mistakes

When a Mission Statement is handed down from above, it tends to reinforce an old paradigm: the stereotypical **parent-child relationship** between senior leaders and the workforce.

A persistent reminder of command and control, the top-down mission statement programs employees to become passive or silently defiant, to wait – to be told what to do, what to think, and how to act. It elicits *compliance* instead of commitment. Why? Because what should be an authentic expression of company-wide aspiration is replaced by a *simulation of consensus*.

The most common mistakes organizations make in choosing the top-down approach:

1. Thinking of the mission statement as an ad campaign. The target audience isn't external; it's internal. And workers aren't passive spectators sitting on the couch watching at home. If your mission statement ends up sounding like an ad, employees will only feel that management is trying to sell them something.

2. Pooh-poohing the Wisdom of Crowds. Making mission drafting a summit of the 'smartest' people in the organization – a skill that only senior leaders are qualified to do, implying that everyone else in the organization is not quite as smart.

3. Ignoring the need for pride of ownership and dismissing the phrase “meaningful work for all” as new-age froth. People *can* care about their work and co-create a great workplace.

4. Leaders treating the process like a political campaign for the hearts and minds of the rank and file. “If it's high minded and memorable, everyone will like it, and if they like it, we'll have their vote. Then they'll work twice as hard.” Manipulations like these usually backfire.

5. Hiring expert wordsmiths and consultants to invent the optimum mission statement, and producing a document that sounds like expert wordsmiths and consultants wrote it: politically correct, but lifeless. “That's not how I'd say it,” is the usual response.

6. Making investors or the business press corps the real audience. Creating a statement that impresses company investors and business editors, but fails to include or motivate the people responsible for the innovation, quality and service that drives profit in the first place.

7. Treating the mission statement like an untouchable philosophical legacy bequeathed by the founder to history. Worshipping continuity and tradition until the company arteries finally harden. Values and vision? Bequeath away. But Mission? Make it *relevant* and *inclusive*.