

A WEEK IN *Learning*

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

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Earlier this year, I wrote my personal mission statement and it has had a profound and positive effect on how I think about myself. I got the idea from a member of my team, Darian McCollum, who has had one for years and has used it to guide him in making decisions to stay on course with who he is and where he wants to go. Initially, I thought it was just an interesting idea. As I learned more, I discovered a mission statement can help you avoid simply floating through life not fully reaching your potential or your purpose.

Writing a personal mission statement forces you to think deeply about who you are and what you want to achieve. More than just writing down goals, (although that is always a good exercise) a mission statement goes further. It defines what is truly important to you. Your mission statement is you in a nutshell - a few brief sentences that sum up your deepest values and aspirations. Using it as your roadmap will help you keep focused, feel fulfilled by doing the things that mean the most to you, and deter you from distractions. Creating a solid mission statement takes time and involves several steps. These are described below.



“Your mission statement is YOU in a nutshell.”

- Aimee McIntosh

Reflecting

To write a personal mission statement, you must look inward. Pick a quiet place to gather your thoughts. You’ll likely want to do this over several sittings, starting with broad ideas then honing in until you have a couple of succinct, meaningful sentences that sum up YOU.

Start with your core values. I used [this website](#), which has an exercise that helped me to pick from a selection of values and then narrow them down. Be sure to print your list after you complete the exercise!

Next, reflect on these questions:

- 1) What do you believe to be necessary to achieve success?
- 2) Think of a person you admire and examine them. What qualities do you find so admirable? List those qualities and think about how you could best bring them into your own life.

- 3) Imagine who you want to be. Try to picture exactly who it is you want to become.
- 4) What do you want from life? And what kind of legacy do you want to leave behind? How will you have touched lives at the end of your life, meaning what is your butterfly effect?
- 5) Where do you want to go? This can be spiritual, a physical destination, relationships, community impact, a level in your career. Envision the details of your accomplishments, your personality, and the overall picture of your future. Examine your relationships with friends, family, career, hobbies or other areas of your life to create a well-rounded picture of what you want to achieve in those areas.
- 6) Lastly, using the above, what does this look like for me? Describe your BEST possible result. This isn't the time to be realistic, this is the time to dream.

Go through the questions above slowly and thoughtfully. Think beyond traditional measures of success like more money, better job, etc. Think about what will make YOU feel fulfilled at the end of your life.

Writing

Create a first draft with an overall statement about yourself. Be sure to include data from the reflection process listed above, such as:

- Qualities of people who inspire you that you'd also like to exhibit.
- Specific goals you identified.
- Your core values.
- Specifics from the "dream outcome" you noted.

Your statement doesn't need to make sense yet and can just be a collection of the key components. On your second and third draft, create sentences that weave these components together into 2-4 succinct statements on what you stand for, where you are going, and who you want to be.

Growing

Your mission statement shouldn't change drastically through your lifetime. As Marcus Buckingham (founder of the [Strengths Revolution](#)) has noted, core personality traits remain stable over long periods of time. The principles in your mission statement will guide you for years. Just in the few months since I've done this exercise, I've had a clarity that I did not have before. At heart, I knew what I wanted. Defining it has given me a new focus and provides a lens for decisions.

You can share your mission statement with as many people as you'd like - or with no one at all. My statement is personal to me, but Darian made his very clear during his interview as a way to convey who he is and to help determine if he was a fit for Goodwill. Your own mission statement will keep you from attaching yourself to a certain person, place, company, or project. Instead you'll know your mission, your purpose, your calling. That is how you ultimately achieve success for YOUR life, yours and yours alone.