

Personal Mission Statement MBA 514 Professional Skills

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there."

Lewis Carroll - Alice in Wonderland

Overview

The objective of having you draft a personal mission statement is to help frame your direction for personal change throughout your MBA program. Many of us respond to the requests of colleagues, teachers, bosses, spouses, or children without much thought about how complying with these requests helps us to move along our path (i.e. meet our own needs) in addition to helping others. Having and being in touch with a personal mission statement makes it easier for us to make choices that will move us along our own desired path in life. It can help us answer the question, "Where do I want to go, and who do I want to be when I get there?"

Covey describes the personal mission statement as our "constitution." It is the standard by which day by day actions can be judged. His notion is basically one of "where do you want to go in life?" That frame is difficult for many of us to envision. Other authors have an alternative way to frame the personal mission. They would ask you to write your obituary. When your life is over, for what would you like to be known? Remembered? Appreciated?

The benefit of drafting (or re-drafting) a personal mission statement is that it helps you think through your priorities deeply and carefully. The outcome should help in aligning your behavior with your beliefs. The process has strong roots in the "cognitive" approach to managing behavior that suggests "values" drive "attitudes," and "attitudes" drive "behavior."

Balance in life: Multiple domains

Much of the value of a personal mission statement comes from balancing important parts of our lives. Covey describes domains or "centers" (besides oneself) which include partners, family, money, work, possession, pleasure, relationships, and spirituality plus issues of security, wisdom and power. Whetten and Cameron discuss centers or domains in the context of life balance. Their domains are a bit more concrete. Their short list includes: Work activities, intellectual activities, social activities, family activities, spiritual activities, physical activities, and cultural activities. It might help you to start from the fundamental values you rank in your Rokeach Value Survey. You might also look at your Time Management Log for ideas of how you express your values in action. Your first challenge is to identify (list) the domains or centers that are fundamentally important to you as a unique individual.

Moving from Domains to a Mission Statement

Once you have a sorted list of important values, the next step is to write it in a short form which reflects your particular sentiments around those values. This may take several iterations with time for reflection between drafts. See if you can draft one sentence "position statements." If your experience is like others, your first attempts will be too long and too wordy, so keep throwing out words until you can boil your statement down to a short page.

The Franklin-Covey website (www.franklincovey.com) has a mission builder (go to the "effectiveness zone" and click on "mission formulator") that you can use to help you build your mission statement. This website also has more examples if you would like to see them. Another resource to try is *The Mission Statement Book* by J. Abrahams (1995, Ten Speed Press).

If you have trouble narrowing your description, select the enduring themes... the ones which reoccur to you across a variety of situations. Remember your objective is to create an enduring statement of purpose that reflects values and priorities.

The Assignment

Draft your personal mission statement. Make supportive notes regarding how the mission statement relates to the assessment material you have been given. Be prepared to bring it to the last session and share it with others. Be ready to present and explain your mission statement and to engage others around their mission statements.

Your mission statement should be one that is value-based and ideal, yet useful and based on your reality. Think in terms of how this mission statement can be useful to you in making choices during your MBA program and beyond. This is the beginning of your MBA journey, and your personal mission statement will be one of your guides on this journey.

Criteria for evaluation: Content (Do you address the assignment correctly and completely?) 40%; Integration and Insight (Does your write-up reflect a thoughtful and insightful assessment of your mission statement?) 40%; Writing and Organization 20%.

Your mission statement is due during the last session on Friday, October 2nd, 2009.