



Kingdom-Minded

Defining your mission, vision, and values

By Mark Griffin

WHEN WE MEET WITH PEOPLE to discuss strengthening their Human Resource (HR) practices, we often use the term “kingdom-minded organization.” More often than not, they are intrigued as to precisely how we define such a considerably broad scope or approach. Certainly, many Christian business people, pastors, and consultants have their own ideas as to what constitutes a kingdom-minded organization.

My own kingdom-minded human resources organization has worked hard to develop what we feel is a clear, actionable, and measurable articulation of just what a kingdom-minded organization means to us and how to achieve it. As a result, the organizational leaders we work with express enthusiasm to achieve these goals and are willing to invest their precious time, dollars, and energy into making their organization a prosperous one — one reflective of Christ and his teachings.

For the framework of a kingdom-minded organization, the model I developed contains principles that can apply to marketplace organizations, churches, and nonprofit organizations alike.

A kingdom-minded organization puts Christ first, with a focus on integrity, honesty, and straightforward business dealings with staff, clients, customers, contractors, suppliers, and others. Such an organization possesses clearly delineated mission, vision, and core value statements. It has agreed upon goals and objectives, especially in the realms of mission execution, customer service, production, and quality.

Being a kingdom-minded organization does not in any way preclude prosperity and financial success. On the contrary, it aims to be prosperous for the benefit of its key stakeholders, leadership, owners, employees, and the organization’s community. They should — they *must* — strive to do great things, marrying their godly goals with the fruits of success — those of a job well done. By no means should they consider themselves as unable to participate in the results-driven culture of winning U.S. organizations.

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES (MVV)

When mapping out the future of an organization that professes to strive to become high performing, management must create its mission, vision, and value statements (MVVs) or ignite existing ones by recreating them. Much has been written on what should comprise mission, vision, and value statements. I always suggest keeping them simple — concepts that all employees can remember and fully support. It’s difficult to fully commit to and “own” a company’s ideals if they are so complicated, convoluted, or vague that the employees can’t remember them clearly.

MISSION STATEMENTS:

Successful organizations begin by establishing their mission (which is the core reason for their existence), the product or service they provide, those to whom they provide it, and the benefits of that product or service. A lack of an established mission means that not only are staff and management unsure of their purpose, but customers and vendors are also left in the dark, uncertain of what to expect.

An organization’s mission ideally defines what it does best every day and why, and reflects the customer’s needs as well. Having a mission is the foundation upon which a high-performing organization’s dreams and potential become reality. Essentially, it affirms the reason(s) why an organization exists.

Under the guidance of a project facilitator, a team of senior management begins by developing a framework of what they believe the mission should be. The facilitator shares and explains this mission framework to each supervisory layer, soliciting input on each occasion, and ultimately shares it with the employees who then sit down with a good human resources representative in a roundtable session to discuss it and generate further input. The facilitator may need to go back and forth a few times before a final product is derived. Once the majority of employees and

management agree to the refined mission, all employees need to agree to respect and support it.

A primary benefit to creating or revisiting a mission is that it opens up communication within and throughout an organization. Every successful organization has a clearly established mission, one that has been developed with input from all employees collectively, not simply flowing down from the top. Employees become fully invested in an organization's mission when they are engaged in establishing that mission. The mission must be ingrained within the organization's culture. Not only are employees and customers made familiar with the company's mission; candidates for positions in high-performing organizations are also exposed to the mission during the interview process, before they're offered a position.

Some tips to remember when writing a mission statement: (1) Keep it short and easy to remember; (2) Specify your target customer and describe the advantages you offer; and (3) Define your product clearly and how it differs from the competition.

You may be wondering how you can say all that and still keep your mission statement short and memorable. Here are two strong examples from high-performing organizations with effective mission statements.

Google: *We organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.* Their marketplace? The world. Their product and its advantages? Organizing the world's information to make it easily accessible and useful. They do this and they do it exceedingly well.

Starbucks: *We inspire and nurture the human spirit — one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time.* Their marketplace? Also, essentially the world, yet they stress the individual: one person, one neighborhood at a time to maintain a personal feel. We are already very familiar with their product and social coffeehouse environment, aren't we?

VISION STATEMENTS:

In addition to a mission statement, all high-performing organizations possess a clearly defined vision. Organizations with an established vision have a workplace of direction, purpose, and achievement. These organizations envision where they want to be and do the appropriate things to get there. Every employee is given a copy of this road map.

Vision statements should consider how the market and your customer base may change within the next three, five, or seven years; how such changes can create opportunities for your organization; how to bridge the distance between how things are today and where you envision you want to be within your established timeframe; how you will surpass your competitors in order to gain greater market share; and also what you are doing collectively to capitalize on the changes in business conditions and your business's needs.

Like a mission, an organization's vision has, ideally, offered all employees an opportunity to help create and contribute to it. The more buy-in an organization has among its employees, the greater

the effectiveness of the vision. The vision should inspire. It demonstrates where the organization as a whole wants to be, and what will occur as it delivers on its mission. It is where an organization envisions itself in those three, five, or seven years. (We prefer five years, because that is a reasonable amount of time for most organizations to get to the next step.)

So, whereas the mission is what an organization does best every day, its vision is what the future looks like when it fulfills its mission exceedingly well. Some effective vision statements include:

Nike: *To be the number one athletic company in the world,* and

Amazon: *Our vision is to be earth's most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.*

When I worked for Gatorade, we developed an incredible advantage over the competition because we took the time to establish our vision — where we were going and when we wanted to get there — and ensured that every employee shared this vision. Gatorade's competitors at the time fell back because they lacked a commonly shared vision. They lacked a road map.

VALUES STATEMENTS:

The third ingredient of MVVs is values, specifically core values. A core value, from a human resources perspective, reflects the heart of an organization. It pumps the blood throughout; it makes an organization tick. It defines the organization and its culture and what it takes pride in doing. It is how vendors and customers view an organization's behavior toward them. It is what employees tell their neighbors and friends when asked what it is like to work where they do.

A company focused on quality might state its core value as: *We do not compromise on quality. Quality is job one.* An organization valuing individual responsibility would want to say: *We believe in holding ourselves accountable. We deliver on our promises and we always endeavor to use good judgment.* Efficiency, honesty, customer service, ownership — these and many more reflect the kinds of core values that high-performing organizations embody.

In order to enjoy growth and prosperity and achieve high performance, a kingdom-minded organization must first look inward and thoughtfully address these three critical aspects of running an organization. Those that invest in well-developed and bought-in mission, vision, and values will reap dividends far beyond those that do not. ●

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