

The Importance of Mission for NGO's

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Mission Statement

- The scholarship related to mission statements is varied.
- Some research suggest that mission statements are not helpful, perhaps detrimental to the activities of NGO's.
- In the USA, the law requires NGO's to have a mission statement.
- I would like to look at mission from that perspective.



Mission Statement

- In the USA, scholarly findings indicate that a clear, motivating organizational mission helps an organization to focus its attention on those innovations that will most likely support the accomplishment of that mission.
- Such a mission also creates a climate in which innovations are given a fair chance to succeed. As a result, non-profits with clear, motivating missions tend to be more innovative.
- But this is not without risk. (Mission Drift)



What is a Mission Statement and What Does It Do

- The mission statement is the “raison d’être” of any organization.
- At its best, a nonprofit's **mission statement** is a succinct expression of an organization's essential reason for existence or core purpose.
- Some mission statements may include other elements, such as references to how an organization achieves its impact or what it most values.



What Does a Mission Statement Do?

- The mission statement should succinctly define the organization's purpose and programs.
- The statement needs to be carefully thought out because it is an important tool in planning, recruiting board members, raising funds, and communicating with the public.



A mission statement should answer the following questions:

- **What** are the organization's services and programs?
- **For whom** are the services and programs intended?
- **(Where)** Which geographic areas(s) is (are) served?



Mission Statement

- The mission statement should remain relatively unchanged from year to year.
- It should be broad enough to allow for organizational growth, but not so broad as to allow for complete changes of direction or focus.



Mission Statement

- It is essential that the organization's leadership understands the purpose of the arts agency and is able to articulate its programs.



Mission Statement

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The Good and the Bad

A Good Statement...

Uses language your constituents use.

Is emotionally stirring.

Communicates the "why."

Is concise.

Is a single, powerful sentence.

Sounds good spoken out loud.

Is memorable.

Surprises.

Is actionable.

Is specific.

A Bad Statement...

Uses jargon, doesn't understand your audience.

Is logical and cold.

Communicates only the "what" or "how."

Is really long.

Is a rambling paragraph.

Is full of clauses and hard to say.

Is forgettable.

Is dull.

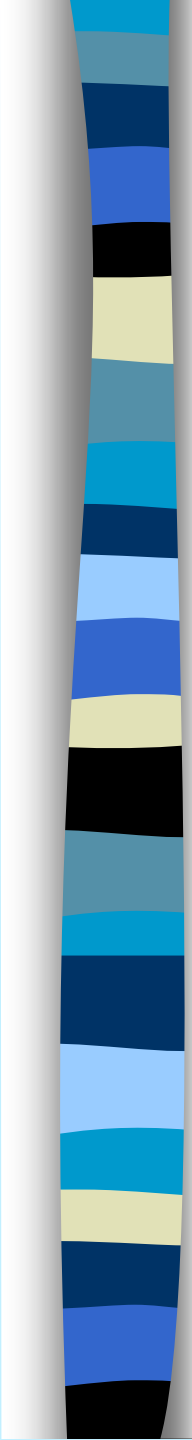
Can't be quantified.

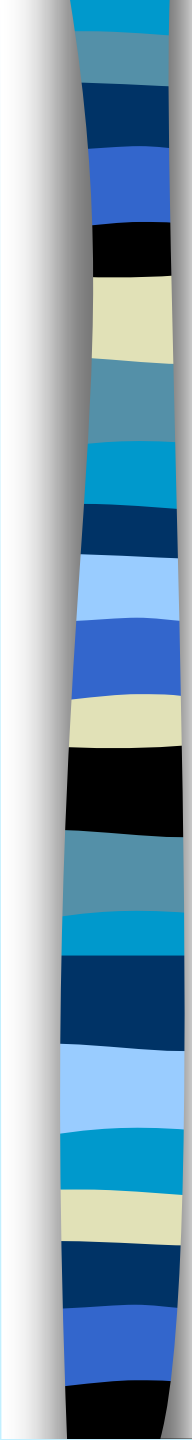
Is vague.

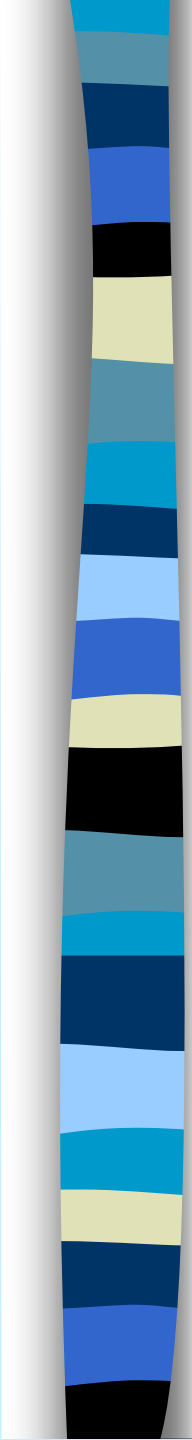


What does research say about mission?

- Many years, most nonprofits were evaluated for their mission and the good that they set out to do, rather than by their measurable impact.
- In the 1990s, there was a shift related to the funding source for nonprofits.

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- The technology boom made some people wealthy, and a new donor emerged that was younger, outcome focused, and wanted to view their donation as an investment.
 - They expected a return on that investment and required nonprofits to demonstrate their success and impact.

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- At the same time, there were some scandals in the nonprofit sector that led to a call for accountability.
 - The nonprofit sector was pushed, and often mandated, to adopt business operating procedures to provide evidence of results and accountability to deep pocket donors and the general public

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Has this been successful?

- The risk of the pressure to operate an NGO like a business ought to be obvious.
- NGO's are mission not profit driven.
- A significant risk is *mission drift*. That is, modifying the NGO's mission or simply moving away from it to accommodate the pressure to be more business-like.



Mission Drift

- Financial pressure is often the cause of mission drift.
- An NGO needs more money and sees an opportunity to generate additional income that involves an activity or activities outside the mission.
- This is justified because of financial need.



Avoiding Mission Drift

- All organizations benefit from developing a strategy. The most well-developed strategy models come from the private sector and focus on markets, customers, and competition.
- BUT, these models fail to take account of two crucially important features of nonprofit organizations



Avoiding Mission Drift

- the value produced by nonprofit organizations lies in (a) the achievement of social purposes rather than in generating revenues;
- and (b) nonprofit organizations receive revenues from sources other than customer purchases.



Avoiding Mission Drift

An alternative strategy model for NGO's focuses the attention on three key issues:

1. public value to be created,
2. sources of legitimacy and support,
3. operational capacity to deliver value.



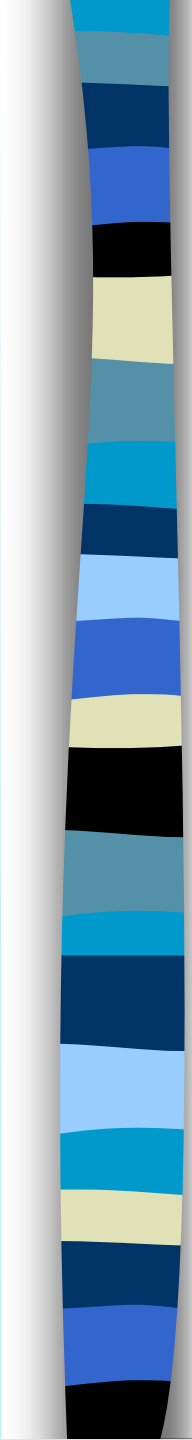
Avoiding Mission Drift

- This alternative strategy model resonates powerfully with the experience of nonprofit managers precisely because it focuses attention on social purposes and on the ways in which society as a whole might be mobilized to achieve them.



Conclusion

- The **mission statement** defines purpose, this is **important** to drawing volunteers, donors and other sources of assistance to help the nonprofit.
- Nonprofits often exist on donations and volunteers. Without either, the organization may not be able to operate.
- So, I would argue that an effective mission, carefully and responsibly adhered to, is critical to the survival of NGO's

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- Thank you
 - Questions