



# What is the difference between mission, vision and values statements?

Each statement may be part of the strategic planning process but have a different objective. These statements may be written for organizations or for individual departments.

A **mission statement** is a concise explanation of the organization's reason for existence. It describes the organization's purpose and its overall intention. The mission statement supports the vision and serves to communicate purpose and direction to employees, customers, vendors and other stakeholders. See SHRM's [Company Mission Statement Examples \(www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/policies/pages/missionstatementgeneral.aspx\)](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/policies/pages/missionstatementgeneral.aspx) for a variety of samples. Questions to consider when drafting mission statements could include:

- What is our organization's purpose?
- Why does our organization exist?

A **vision statement** looks forward and creates a mental image of the ideal state that the organization wishes to achieve. It is inspirational and aspirational and should challenge employees. Questions to consider when drafting vision statements might include:

- What problem are we seeking to solve?
- Where are we headed?
- If we achieved all strategic goals, what would we look like 10 years from now?

A **values statement** lists the core principles that guide and direct the organization and its culture. In a values-led organization, the values create a moral compass for the organization and its employees. It guides decision-making and establishes a standard against which actions can be assessed. These core values are an internalized framework that is shared and acted on by leadership. When drafting values statements, questions to consider might include:

- What values are unique to our organization?
- What values should guide the operations of our company?
- What conduct should our employees uphold?

In conjunction with a values statement, a **code of ethics** puts those values into practice. It outlines the procedures in place to ensure the organization's values are upheld. Questions to consider when creating codes of ethics might include:

- What are common ethical issues in our industry?
- What should someone do if he or she sees a violation of our values?

Management cannot create a new values statement or ethics code and expect immediate change. For an organization to have an effective values statement, it must fully embrace its values and ethics at all levels of the company and use them daily to guide its attitudes, actions and decision-making. Refer to [What does it mean to be a values-based organization? \(www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/whatdoesitmeantobeavalues-basedorganization.aspx\)](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/whatdoesitmeantobeavalues-basedorganization.aspx) for more information.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

<b>What is a mission statement?</b>	+
<b>What is a vision statement?</b>	+
<b>What is a values statement?</b>	+
<b>What is the difference between a mission, vision and values statement?</b>	+
<b>What questions should be considered when drafting a mission statement?</b>	-
Questions to consider when drafting mission statements could include: What is our organization's purpose? Why does our organization exist?	
<b>What questions should be considered when drafting a vision statement?</b>	+
<b>What questions should be considered when drafting a values statement?</b>	+
<b>What is a code of ethics?</b>	+
<b>What questions should be considered when creating a code of ethics?</b>	+
<b>How can an organization have an effective values statement?</b>	+

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Monday - Friday 8:00 am–8:00 pm ET

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