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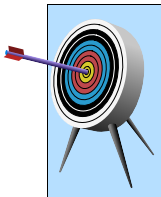
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Your Personal Mission Statement

What Are Your Guiding Principles and Values in Life?

Many companies formulate their corporate philosophy to guide their actions and decisions. Based on this idea, your "Personal Mission Statement" can serve as a kind of charter, stating your principles and values in life. The idea is to clarify these values and principles so that they can form a stable core for your personality. This allows you to make conscious decisions in accordance with what matters most to you.

Developing a Personal Mission Statement that really covers your main values and principles could take several weeks or months. The following guide shows a structured approach to arrive at a clear idea of your values and principles. First you will need to reflect on each area of your life and write down what you want to accomplish in that area and why it is important to you. You should consider every step in depth. It might be helpful to also get feedback from persons you trust. Based on the results of this compilation you should revise the underlying principles and values and work on it until you feel entirely comfortable with its content and its wording.



Today's exercise
The goal for today is to get you to start reflecting and to develop a first impression of what your Personal Mission Statement might look like. Go through the steps and write down everything that comes to your mind. Don't spend too much time on them, since you can't finish the task today, anyway. For today's exercise it should be enough to complete No. 1 – 4. No. 5 is provided for completeness in case you want to continue with this task after the workshop.

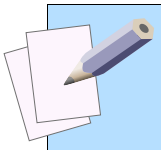
In order to fine-tune your results, it will probably be necessary to work through the worksheet again after a few days. A final, unchangeable result will probably not be achievable. Our personality is subject to on-going growth and development. Therefore, it is a task of lifelong learning to clarify one's personal values and principles and even more so to live up to them.

1. Explore your passions and your personal strengths

Knowing your passions and strengths is important to be able to focus on what really matters to you and how you can contribute something meaningful to your life or the lives of others. In this part of the exercise you should put aside modesty and try to write down as honestly as possible everything you are good at and what you enjoy.

The following questions might help to guide your thoughts:

- What are your good at?
- What do you enjoy?
- What topics are you especially interested in?
- What are your most positive character traits?
- What matters to you in general?



For today's exercise it is enough to briefly reflect on your strengths and passions. You might want to jot down the key points. It is definitely worth the effort to address this issue again during the following weeks. Reflect on it. Ask friends and family what they consider to be your strengths and passions. Getting external feedback from persons you trust might give you valuable insight and a more complete picture of yourself.

2. Identify your roles in different areas of your life

In our life we need to play a number of different roles: we are parents, spouses, friends and family. We have a role at our job, in the clubs we join, in the voluntary work we do, etc. We also have to take care of ourselves, our own needs, our physical and mental health.

- What are the areas in your life that are important to you?
- What areas will become important to you in the future?
- What roles do you play in these areas?
- What roles do you want play in them?

Make a list of all the different areas of your life and the roles you play, expect to play or would like to play in them. This breakdown will give you a structure that helps to identify what matters to you and what your goals are in these areas.

3. Clarify your vision for every area of your life

Look over the list of areas and your roles. The following questions might help to clarify your vision:

- What is important to you in this area of your life?
- What do you want to achieve in this area?
- Why is this achievement important to you?
- What other goals might be hidden behind this?
- What should this area of life ideally look like in five years? And in 10 years?
- Which of your objectives complement each other? Which ones contradict each other?

Try to be clear and specific about what you want to achieve.

Example

"I want to be a good father/mother". This may be true, but what does that mean? "I want my children to feel loved and accepted. I want to support them in achieving their goals. . . . " This is much more specific and hence much more helpful when it comes to making actual decisions about how to behave.

Another way to approach this is the miracle question from systemic coaching. You can consider the areas of your life one by one and perform the following thought experiment. Even if it seems a bit 'mystical' at first, if you are willing to give it a try, this approach has the potential to help you to come to a clear idea of your vision.

Imagine, tonight while you are sleeping a miracle happens and from tomorrow on your role and tasks, your goals and values for this area of life are absolutely clear to you. You will also manage to really live up to these values. However, you were asleep when the miracle happened, so you didn't notice.

- The next day and in the days after that, how exactly would you realize that your values and goals are clear and that you let them guide your actions?
- What will be different? What will you do differently?
- How would others recognize the change: your spouse, your friends and family, your co-workers?

4. Identify your values and principles

Based on the items collected in the previous exercises, now it is time to identify your underlying values and principles. How do you want to treat other people? What do you

believe in? Which principles should guide your actions? What values do you want to live up to?

To answer these questions, it might be helpful to follow these steps:

- **Make a list:** Which words describe your principles, and ideals? Make an unordered list and jot down everything that comes to your mind.
- **Clarify:** How could you express these values and principles? Develop the ideas from your keyword list into phrases stating your values/principles.
- **Prioritize:** What is really important to you? Reduce the list to the statements that really matter to you. You can also try to put them in order by priority.

5. Your Personal Mission Statement

Now, develop your Personal Mission Statement from the phrases describing your values and principles: Go through your list several times to "fine-tune" your statements. Can you put the statements into clearer terms? Have you left anything out? Is there anything that is not so essential and can be omitted? Does the order reflect your priorities?

Some hints:

- Remember to KISS – to keep it short and simple. Ideally your mission statement consists of three to five phrases. The more concretely and specifically you word them, the better you can allow them guide your actions.
- Put the statements in positive terms: "What do I want to achieve?" instead of "What do I want to avoid doing?"
- Rework your mission statement whenever you have the feeling that your values and principles have changed. We grow with the duties that we take on; the mission statement should be modified accordingly (e.g., if a new role appears in your life).
- If you need inspiration for formulating your values and principles, a simple web search for "Personal Mission Statement" will bring you a number of examples. There are very different ideas of what such a mission statement should look like. You have to find something that fits your personality and meets your requirements.

You should revise your Personal Mission Statement a few days later and then again a few weeks later. Do this as often as necessary until you feel that the statements really capture the essence of what matters most to you.

Sources and further readings

Stephen R. Corvey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, (Part II, Habit II)