

Guide your Life and Career: 8 Key Ingredients of an Effective Personal Mission Statement

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Less than half of workers in America are satisfied with their jobs and **only 1 out of 5** workers feel very passionate about their jobs (Harris Interactive Survey, 2004).

If you are one of those unhappy, dispassionate workers, were you ever passionate about your work? If you were, why did it fade?

One reason you may be dissatisfied with your job or career is because it is not in alignment with your personal purpose or mission in life. The external rewards and day-to-day situations of your job may not fit with your true purpose in life.

You may ask "But how do I know what my true purpose is?"

Great question!

One way to start to uncover your true purpose is to develop a personal mission or purpose statement.

Why develop a personal mission statement?

Just as businesses have mission statements that succinctly describe their driving force, developing a personal mission statement is very helpful in guiding your life and career direction. Additionally, your mission statement can:

- ✓ **provide a foundation for your career path and other avenues of your life**
- ✓ **support you through difficult times in your life**
- ✓ **help you avoid burnout or see your career in a different light**
- ✓ **guide your decision making in your work and life**
- ✓ **offer renewed meaning and inspiration for your life's work**
- ✓ **define or redefine a new career or life direction**
- ✓ **develop into your legacy**

What is a personal mission statement?

A personal mission statement (PMS) or purpose statement is simply a statement, phrase, or a few sentences that describes something in which you are most passionate. The enjoyment of pursuing your mission may not be a direct result of what you do, but the ultimate benefits you and others derive from your work.

What is the “purpose” of a personal mission statement?

The more you know the real “you”, the easier it will be to know how to express yourself through your work. Your personal mission statement is the foundation for all other facets of your life.

Once you have your personal mission statement, it will be easier to develop a career mission statement, a family mission statement, a relationship mission statement, a financial mission statement, business mission statement, etc. Each of these mission statements will speak directly to a particular facet of your life, but they all stem from and are aligned with your personal mission statement.

Here are some examples of personal mission statements:

“My life's mission is to be the most effective person I can be by continually improving myself in my interactions with others.”

“I am a courageous and honest source of inspiration.”

“My purpose is to create and express the beauty in myself and others through my work.”

“I am a spirited and insightful individual empowering myself and others to discover and live their truth”

What are the elements of an effective personal mission statement?

Personally, I have researched many ways to create a personal mission statement and have worked and reworked my statement many times. From my research and working with my clients, I have distilled down the **8 key ingredients of an effective personal mission statement (PMS)**.

1. **Succinct - No more than one or two sentences**

Some literature advises people to write a paragraph or more to explain their life's purpose. Although this can be helpful when creating a statement from scratch, I have found that if it is kept to no more than two sentences, it can be remembered more easily. Also, it's more difficult to carry around a couple of paragraphs rather than a little strip of paper with your PMS written on it.

2. **Written in the present tense**

You want to start living your mission or purpose right away. In fact, you probably are already living it without even being aware of it. I advise my clients to start out their PMS's with the phrase "I am..."

3. **Captures the essence of "You"**

The focus of the mission statement is on the real you, not necessarily the roles that you play in life. You may be a wife, parent, child, sibling, corporate manager, business owner, skier, painter, etc., but that is not who you are inside. Understanding the roles you play in life is an effective way to help you uncover your mission that underlies these roles.

4. **Visionary - Not a specific goal**

A vision is intangible, a goal is tangible. When your PMS is visionary, it is something akin to the North Star. It guides you but it is not a destination. A goal is the tangible target that you set to express your mission. At this point you can set many different goals for yourself that all have their foundation in your PMS.

5. **Universal**

Your PMS should be general enough that it can translate into any goal or facet of your life, career, relationships, family, finances, etc. It is your guiding principle from which everything else stems. It is pervasive and can apply to all the roles that you play. After all, you do bring yourself to work with you everyday.

6. **Describes your general influence on the world/in your life**

The process of developing your PMS is meant to help you define or redefine your life's path. Your PMS should allude to the impact you want to make but not necessarily describe exactly how you will make this impact.

7. **Constant, but may evolve**

The core theme of your PMS remains constant over time but the language or specific words that you use may develop over time. If you find your PMS to be flat or uninspiring, you may want to broaden or narrow its scope.

8. **Inspirational**

When reading your PMS, what feelings arise? Most people know they have their most effective PMS when they read it and get a sense of peace, joy, and inspiration. If it tugs at your heart, you know you've got it. Remember, it only has to be meaningful for *you*, not for anyone else.

A good personal mission statement takes some time to develop. Please visit www.waytogoal.com/tools.html to find information to help you develop your mission and more tools to assist you with your professional development.

Stay tuned for more information on the step-by-step approach to developing your own personal mission statement.

I hope this article is useful to you. If you would like to share your comments or your own PMS, please email me at doreen@waytogoal.com