

Small Business: A good mission statement conveys company philosophy

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define your business and brand, explains Denise O'Berry, a small-business expert and author of "65 Winning Strategies for Small Business Success" (Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99). "It helps you keep on the path you've decided to follow for your business."

Identify value added. At the very least, it should reflect your firm's core business activity, provide a focus and identify your firm's unique "value added" (the key advantage you provide over the competition), says O'Berry.

Think about the image you wish to convey and the values and philosophies your company has, says Thomas W. Shinick, an adjunct professor of entrepreneurship and small business at Adelphi University in Garden City and president of Corporate Development Partners, a Merrick-based business advisory firm.

"You don't need anything more than two or three sentences," says Shinick. "It doesn't have to be three pages."

The shorter, the better. It has to be memorable, notes Charles L. Sodikoff, an industrial/organizational psychologist and senior consultant at Corporate Performance Consultants Inc. in Hauppauge.

"The purpose of the mission statement is to help you remember the mission," he says. Think about Google's mission statement: "To organize the world's information and make it universally

For many companies, writing a mission statement is standard practice.

In only a few short sentences, it's meant to encapsulate what a company does, who it serves and why it matters.

The most powerful mission statements not only answer these questions, but also establish the core philosophies and beliefs that will guide your company moving forward.

A good statement helps focus your efforts and

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accessible and useful."

Make it enduring, accessible. A good mission statement should be inspiring, easily understood and long-term, says Sodikoff. It has to be communicated to everyone.

He once worked with a large client that had its mission statement visible on the wall of every floor when you stepped off the elevator. Yet, when he asked a group of senior people on the spot what the company mission statement was, they couldn't tell him.

Live your mission, keep it current. Creating a mission statement isn't enough. It needs to be lived, says Sodikoff.

"It's not about the words," adds O'Berry. "It's about what the words represent."

Revisit your mission statement periodically to see if you're still living by those words, says Shinick. Sometimes, the company grows or changes, and a new mission statement is necessary.

About two years ago, Gettry Marcus CPA began a rebranding effort that included a name change and a new logo, and eventually led to the firm crafting a new mission statement.

"Our old statement was more of an 'about' statement versus a 'why' statement," explains managing partner Steven Marcus.

The firm started revamping its mission statement in November 2013 and unveiled it to staff this past January when it moved into new offices in Woodbury. It identifies the firm's key service areas -- accounting, tax and consulting -- and also its underlying mission to "live the brand by always looking deeper."

"It defines our culture and our company," notes Marcus, who says the new statement is much more goals-oriented. It's included in the firm's internal materials and visible in a few locations in the office, including an electronic bulletin board, he says.

"A good management team will filter it down and continuously communicate the mission statement to employees," says Shinick.