

SEX, LIES & MISSION STATEMENTS

by

Christopher K. Bart, Ph.D., C.A.

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Christopher K. Bart, Ph.D., C.A.
Associate Professor of Business Policy
Michael G. DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, L8S-4M4
Tele: 905 - 525-9140 ext. 2-3967
Fax: 905 - 521-8995
e-mail: bartck@mcmaster.ca

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Sex, Lies & Mission Statements

ABSTRACT

Mission statements seem to be everywhere and yet we know so little about their value and effectiveness. To tackle this problem, we reviewed the relevant mission literature to discover what others had to say about mission statements. We then conducted a survey of 88 CEOs from leading North American corporations to gauge the current state of mission management practice. In so doing, we began to discover some of the reasons why mission statements were not getting the credit they deserved or the results that most managers and experts have expected. We also found what seems to distinguish mission statements that work from those that do not.

Sex, Lies & Mission Statements

Mission statements abound and one often sees them gracing the walls and halls of the world's leading organizations. Boston based Bain & Company, in fact, recently reported that of the 500 firms surveyed, nine out of 10 had used a mission statement sometime in the last five years - thus making it the most popular of all recent management tools ever deployed.

The reason for their popularity is that mission statements are usually considered to be *the* cornerstone of every organization's strategy formulation exercise. It is also certainly implied in most commentaries on mission statements that superior performance results will follow shortly thereafter from their use. Very little evidence exists, however, which "proves" their true value. Most previous studies, instead, have tended to focus almost exclusively - and even obsessively - on their content (Campbell, 1989, 1993; Coats et al, 1991; Collins and Porras, 1991; Pearce & David, 1987; David, 1989; Klemm et al., 1991; Ireland and Hitt, 1992). None has attempted to compare "prescription with practice" and only a few have tried to link their findings (with respect to mission statements) to any measures of performance or satisfaction (Medley, 1992; David, 1989; Bart & Baetz, 1995; Bart, 1996a &b). As a result, it is currently unknown:

- * how mission statements are actually being used - relative to what the experts are saying;
- * how satisfied firms are with them?; and,
- * how useful mission statements are to an organization's existence? In other words, do they "make a difference" in terms of performance?

These questions formed the basis for a major (and on-going) research project. The current article presents some of the answers that have recently emerged.

MISSION STATEMENTS: THE SEX DRIVE OF ORGANIZATIONS

The power of mission statements rests in their ability to achieve two key results: to inspire and motivate organizational members to exceptional performance i.e. to influence behavior (Campbell, 1989, 1991; Collins & Porras, 1991; Javidan 1991; Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Klemm et al., 1991;); and to guide the resource allocation process in a manner that produces consistency and focus (Ireland & Hitt, 1991; King & Cleland, 1979). Mission statements accomplish these ends in the following ways:

Provide a sense of purpose and direction. A major leading cause of failure in most organizations is the inability of top management to identify and agree upon what their organization is really trying to accomplish. When this occurs, employees throughout the organization - but, especially senior managers - become confused and easily distracted in both their day-to-day and longer-term orientations. Before long, confusion and chaos (the "natural state" of all organizations) dominate.

A well conceived and communicated mission statement, however, is intended to help begin the process of overcoming these limitations. It does this by giving organizational members some security of direction (as opposed to wandering aimlessly) and by channelling their energy into selected areas.

Essentially, a mission statement is a formal written document designed to capture - and make clear to all organization members - an organization's *unique and enduring purpose*. It should answer some fairly basic, yet critical questions, such as:

* what is our purpose?; and

* why does our organization exist?

At Johnson Controls, for example, the answer to these questions is "to continually exceed our customers' increasing expectations". At Disney, it's "to help people have fun".

Knowing the answers to these questions, however, is not always easy or obvious. Just ask Xerox, Ford, and IBM. At different times, they each became confused about the reason for their existence and the results were almost fatal. Each eventually recovered. But it was only after rediscovering what their real purpose was and what they were really trying to accomplish.

It is also not surprising that mission statements today are regarded as the pivotal starting point for effective management with respect to almost every new management programme and initiative (e.g., TQM, corporate re-engineering, self-directed work teams, management by objectives, SBU/Divisional planning, etc.) Mission statements form the only solid foundation upon which any corporate programme can rest if it hopes to endure for the long-term.

Ensure that the interests of key stakeholders are not ignored. It is not uncommon for most individuals, when pressed, to respond that the real purpose of their firm is "to make money" or "to maximize shareholder value". Adopting this attitude in the extreme, however, has been shown to create serious and sometimes fatal problems for organizations. For example, focussing on shareholder interests exclusively often causes a firm to shortchange its customers (e.g. as Ford did when it compromised customer safety in their Pinto automobile - a car which killed dozens of people); to shortchange its employees (e.g. as GM did in its bad faith bargaining with unions in the 70's and 80's); and to shortchange society (e.g. as Exxon did when it tried to avoid its responsibilities and cover-up its negligence during the Exxon Valdez oil spill). Ironically, when a corporation appears to focus on its shareholders exclusively, it is those very same shareholders

who really lose in the end.

There is, today, however, an emergent, enlightened and growing viewpoint that an organization exists to meet and serve the needs of many different groups - not just the shareholders. This viewpoint argues that if an organization does not satisfy the needs of its shareholders/owners (for fiscal responsibility, efficiency, growth, etc.) its short term future will be far from guaranteed. However, if an organization does not also meet the needs of its customers (for quality, service, delivery, etc.), it will not exist. Customers will eventually seek other suppliers and new competitors will feel encouraged to enter. Moreover, if an organization does not meet the needs of its employees (with respect to wages, recognition, respect, etc.), its long term survival may be in doubt. Good employees will leave and the firm will develop a reputation which discourages attracting qualified candidates. Finally, if an organization does not meet the needs of its community or society (for good corporate citizenship), its existence will ultimately be threatened through legislation or other means.

Mission statements, therefore, cause organizations to consider the needs of multiple constituencies. And success with them has been described in terms of an organization's ability to balance the many competing interests that various stakeholders place upon it. One of the most widely quoted (and oldest) mission statements which attempts to strike this balance is that of Johnson and Johnson (shown in Table 1).

Sharpen an organization's (business) focus. Numerous writers have suggested that the fundamental rationale behind mission statements is to articulate a "definition of the organization's business" (e.g. Thompson & Strickland). They take this position based on the philosophy that no organization can do everything well all the time or to be all things to all people. It is, therefore,

Table 1

The Mission ("Credo") of Johnson & Johnson

We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses and patients, to mothers and all others who use our products and services. In meeting their needs everything we do must be of high quality. We must constantly strive to reduce our costs in order to maintain reasonable prices. Customers' orders must be serviced promptly and accurately. Our suppliers and distributors must have an opportunity to make a fair profit.

We are responsible to our employees, the men and women who work with us throughout the world. Everyone must be considered as an individual. We must respect their dignity and recognise their merit. They must have a sense of security in their jobs. Remuneration must be fair and adequate, and working conditions clean, orderly and safe. Employees must feel free to make suggestions and complaints. There must be equal opportunity for employment, development and advancement for those qualified. We must provide competent management, and their actions must be just and ethical.

We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work and to the world community as well. We must be good citizens - support good works and charities and bear our fair share of taxes. We must encourage civic improvements and better health and education. We must maintain in good order the property we are privileged to use, protecting the environment and natural resources.

Our final responsibility is to our shareholders. Business must make a sound profit. We must experiment with new ideas. Research must be carried on, innovative programmes developed and mistakes paid for. New equipment must be purchased, new facilities provided and new products launched. Reserves must be created to provide for adverse times. When we operate according to these principles, the shareholders should realise a fair return.

important for every organization to be very specific about which stakeholder needs it intends to satisfy/pursue and - perhaps even more importantly - *those which it does not*. Those organizations that fail to set some appropriate boundaries on their operations often find themselves with no focus, no anchor and no direction. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in the recent spectacle of Donald Trump who, without an appropriate set of organizational boundaries, found himself wandering from real estate development to hotels to airlines and eventually casinos - all in pursuit of something called "a deal".

Enable greater self control over employees. One of the greatest challenges of managing the large corporation is "staying focussed" i.e., ensuring that the activities of all members are consistent with the organization's stated objectives and strategy. There are many formal and bureaucratic techniques and tools which have been developed over the years to assist in this function and to minimize the risk of "dysfunctional activities" (e.g., formal reporting and management information systems, formal and informal reward systems, senior management leadership styles and, of course, personal supervision). *For the most part, all of these tools exist as control mechanisms operating outside the individual.*

Mission statements, however, hold the potential for creating the best form of control - self-control - either through their ability to inspire and motivate employees or through the process by which they are created. To the extent that a firm's mission statement appeals more to the hearts' than the heads' of its employees, greater commitment to the mission follows. This, in turn, strengthens the organization's control over the actions of its members. Several notable examples of organizations which use their mission to control the day-to-day activities of their members are Worthington Industries, Johnson & Johnson, L.L. Bean, Levi Strauss and British Airways.

Promote shared values and behavior standards. Shared values and behavior standards are the hallmarks of an organization's culture. A strong set of values and behaviors which are widely shared help to sharpen the focus of organizational members and increase control over them. Those who do not "buy-into" the organization's values/standards either quit or are encouraged to leave. Those who remain have a strong sense of identity and affiliation with their organization and are dedicated to preserving and protecting those principles and practices that their organization promotes and publicizes. In this capacity, the mission statement acts as a statement of philosophy whose purpose is to influence both thought and deed.

Mission statements, as described above, are the "sex drive" or "libido" of organizational life. They inspire passion and personal pleasure toward the organization. And their success is often described in such terms as commitment, involvement, and satisfaction. As such, managers should feel compelled to work diligently on them.

The "joy of mission statements", however, rests on frequent communication and both the mutual understanding and acceptance of each party's (or "stakeholder's") needs. Mission statements, therefore, need to be clear, concise and to the point. (See Table 2 for some notable examples of this.)

Despite their apparent widespread use, though, the value of mission statements is inconclusive. There are still significantly large numbers of organizations which appear to operate - quite successfully - without them (David 1989; Klemm et al, 1991; Pearce & David, 1989). Many

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Table 2**Mission Statements from Other Companies****SONY MUSIC CANADA**

Our passion is music. Our commitment is to our artists. Our focus is customer service. Our edge is innovation. Our success is in our attitude!

NEWPORT SHIPPING COMPANY

We will build great ships. At a profit if we can. At a loss if we must. But, we will build great ships!

AT&T

We are dedicated to being the world's best at bringing people together - giving them easy access to each other and to the information and services they want - anytime, anywhere.

JOHNSON CONTROLS INC.

Continually exceed our customers' increasing expectations.

CHEVRON CORPORATION

Chevron is an international petroleum company. Our mission is to achieve superior financial results for our stockholders, the owners of our business.

BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD

Our goal is to design and consistently deliver transportation and information services that exceed our customers' expectations. A successful railroad will be at the heart of this effort. We will achieve this goal by developing an atmosphere that stimulates the productivity and innovativeness of our people and leads to profitability and growth for our owners and employees.

unanswered questions concerning their adoption and deployment persist. And there are numerous anecdotal accounts questioning the true worth and real purpose of mission statements. As a result, the successful formulation and implementation of mission statements is viewed as a highly uncertain process with unpredictable outcomes. Yet, in spite of these doubts and criticisms, senior managers continue to forge ahead with their procreation and use such that the population of corporate mission statements shows no signs of decreasing.

The Research Project

CEOs from 88 leading Canadian and U.S. corporations were contacted by mail and asked to relate their experiences with mission statements following a set of prescribed questions. Fifty percent of the companies responding classified themselves as "primarily manufacturing"; 34 percent as "primarily service"; and the remainder as being involved in both types of activities. Only 7 percent of the firms were described as "unrelated" while 93 percent were categorized as a collection of "related" business activities. Twenty-three percent of the respondents classified their firms as high-tech in nature; 40 percent as medium-tech; and 36 were offered-up as operating in low-tech industries.

In the survey, the CEOs were asked to comment upon the following characteristics and features of their firm's mission statement:

- * the extent to which their mission was being achieved;
- * the clarity of their firm's mission statement;
- * their satisfaction with their firm's current mission statement;

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- * the clarity of their firm's mission statement;
- * their satisfaction with their firm's current mission statement;

- * their satisfaction with their firm's mission development process;
- * the influence of their firm's mission over their own personal behavior and the behavior of others throughout their organization;
- * the degree to which employees throughout the organization were committed to the mission;
- * the degree to which their firm's organizational arrangements were aligned with their mission;
- * the specific persons involved in creating their firm's current mission statement;
- * the purpose/rationale behind the development of the mission statement; and, naturally,
- * the content of their firm's mission statement.

The respondents' answers were then analyzed in terms of selected performance measures (i.e. mission content satisfaction, mission process satisfaction, mission achievement and influence on behavior) to determine which aspects and characteristics of firm mission were associated with superior performance. In this way, our findings would begin to address some of the uncertainty surrounding mission statements and hopefully contribute to their more effective deployment.

The Lies

The responses received from our survey were both surprising and revealing. The most amazing result was the fact that so much mendacity and misrepresentation appears to exist in the

published and very public mission statements in our sample of firms. What is so discouraging is that there appears to be very little quality control or willingness on the part of senior managers to ensure that only properly formulated and worded mission statements are generated and released. The overall conclusion is that, in any sample of mission statements, the vast majority are not worth the paper that they are written on and should not be taken with any degree of seriousness.

This is indeed tragic since so much time and effort appears to be spent in generating mission statements. They appear to hold so much promise. But the mission statement itself is a promise which appears to be broken before the ink is dried. The following represents the evidence upon which these conclusions are based.

Mission Impossible. Our analysis showed that only a small percentage of firms believed that they were making any real progress in terms of achieving the goals imbedded in their firm's published mission statements. Only 23 percent of the managers claimed that they were making significant strides in terms of fully achieving their mission. Seventy-seven percent, on the other hand, stated that they were experiencing significant problems in realizing their mission goals. This was occurring despite the fact that the average age of the mission statements was 10 years since first developed.

Mission clarity. One possible reason for this lack of mission success may be the fact that so few of the mission statements in our sample were perceived to be clear. An amazing 92 percent of the managers responding stated that they felt their current mission statements were not fully clear or self-evident to the rest of the organization. One has to wonder on what basis these statements are being approved and released - not only to the rest of the organization but to the entire world!

Mission satisfaction. What was truly surprising, however, were the results relating to managers' satisfaction with their current mission statement. A paltry 36 percent of the managers responding reported that they were "completely satisfied" with their firm's mission statement. Over 63 percent, on the other hand, indicated that they were less-than-fully-satisfied. This is quite remarkable because it suggests that, in a Western society where the corporate mantra is "TQM" (or "total quality management"), North American managers are either permitting their firms to operate with out-of-date mission statements or they are allowing their firms to produce mission statements in which the leadership (or anyone else, for that matter) has little confidence.

Mission accuracy. It was also especially disheartening to discover that even fewer of our senior managers believed their firms to be pursuing the "right" mission. Only 18 percent of those managers responding claimed to be fully satisfied with the specific direction specified in their organization's mission statement while 82 percent were not. Given that mission statements are supposed to be the cornerstone of every firm's strategic plan, it is no wonder that executive committees often report frustration and dissatisfaction with their firm's overall strategy. It is also hard to imagine any substantial team building within a firm's top ranks when there is so little agreement on something so fundamental to organizational success as the firm's mission.

Mission development process satisfaction. Low satisfaction with the mission statement, its clarity and/or its content suggests that there are probably serious and significant problems with how a firm's mission was developed in the first place. Our analysis of the managers' responses confirmed this suspicion. Over 73 percent of the respondents indicated that they were less-than-fully-satisfied with the process used to develop their organization's mission statement. Only 27 percent indicated total satisfaction. This suggests that many mission statements are being given

their corporate blessing much too soon and the process of mission development is being curtailed much too early.

Mission influence over personal behavior. Given a development process that was cut short, it was not that surprising to find that the understanding, commitment and support necessary for mission acceptance was less-than-forthcoming and, in some instances, totally lacking among our respondents. In particular, less than half (i.e. 45.2 percent) of the senior managers in the sample felt that their firm's current mission statement had a significant influence on their own personal behavior. Fifty-five percent, on the other hand, reported that it did not.

The results were even more dismal, however, in terms of the managers' assessment of their mission's influence over the behaviors of others. The managers reported (in almost 84 percent of the cases) that their mission statement appeared to have no significant influence on the day-to-day lives of other employees. Moreover, in 81 percent of the cases, they claimed that employees throughout their organizations were less-than-fully committed to their firm's mission statement. These results fly in the face of those who argue that mission statements should result in large numbers of individuals who both understand and who are committed to them. Clearly, the evidence suggests that the reality of corporate life appears to be just the opposite.

Who's involved and who's not. There are many groups that can legitimately claim to have a "stake" in the future of most organizations (e.g., CEOs, customers, suppliers, middle managers etc.). Managers in the survey were, therefore, asked to indicate the involvement (or non-involvement) of nine stakeholder groups in the development of their firm's mission statement.

Our analysis of the results indicates that rather than widespread participation in the mission development process (as is so often recommended in the management literature e.g.

Freeman, 1984) only limited and highly selective participation was found - especially among the organization's elite. CEOs and members of senior management were, by far, the ones most involved with the mission development process. Respondents claimed, for instance, that CEOs were involved in their firm's mission development process in 84 percent of the cases and that the senior management team was involved in 92 percent of the firms. The participation rate for other stakeholders went as follows: middle managers (44 %); non-managers (23.5%); consultants (41.2%); shareholders (26.2%) customers (20%); suppliers (7.1%); and board of directors (73.2%).

Mission statements, therefore, appear to be more for the benefit of top management than members throughout the organization. Moreover, as the organizational level drops, so does the rate of participation - with non-managers (i.e., all "other" employees) having the lowest rate of all internal stakeholders. Yet, one of the supposed benefits of mission statements is the commitment and passion that they inspire at all organizational ranks. Obviously, creating this passion is difficult if only a select few participate and/or are aware of it. But, why then do we see so many senior managers wringing their hands over the fact that their organizational members "just don't seem to get it!"

It was also startling to find so little participation by two important external stakeholder groups: customers and shareholders. If customers - and the satisfaction of their needs - are one of the primary reasons for any organization's existence, it would seem fairly obvious to include their participation in the mission development process - if only for confirmation of the organization's choices. Such was not the case, though, in our particular sample. This goes to further reinforce the notion that mission statements appear to be much more internally and top management

oriented than heretofore believed.

Who's in and who's out. Given this pattern of participation in the mission development process, one would naturally expect to see mission statements in which the interests of top management were paramount. On the contrary, our review of the mission statements supplied by the respondents indicated that "customers" were the most frequently mentioned stakeholder group (appearing in 78 percent of the mission statements) followed by employees (52 percent), shareholders (41 percent) society (33 percent) and finally suppliers (21 percent).

Some would argue that this shows a particular sensitivity and astuteness on the part of those responsible for creating the mission statement. Others, however, would respond that the limited participation of customers and employees (of all ranks) makes a mockery of both the process and the resulting statement. How can senior managers claim to know what customers want and what needs they intend to meet when they clearly have so little regard for their customers' opinion on such a fundamental matter. As one lower level employee was heard to remark upon senior management's unveiling of their firm's new corporate mission: "That's their mission, not mine!" This is indeed unfortunate considering that the firm's top management was known to have spent millions in consulting fees in order to facilitate the mission development process. Considering this employee's reaction, they should ask for their money back!

Confused rationales. At the beginning of this article, it was argued that there were two major rationales supporting the use of mission statements: increased employee motivation and a better resource allocation process. Our analysis shows, however, that neither rationale could be considered a major force behind the creation of the firms' mission statements. Instead, managers responses indicated that the degree to which mission statements were being developed for either

rationale was very limited. Only 35 percent of the firms reported using mission statements to inspire their troops to any great extent. And only 14.5 percent claimed that improved resource allocation was a primary driver or consideration in their mission's development.

These findings would suggest, then, that managers in the sample are either using their mission statements for purposes other than motivation and resource allocation or that they are simply unaware of the significant benefits that can accrue to their organizations from using mission statements for the two purposes described above. There is also the possibility that with so little research on mission statements, senior managers are unconvinced as to the real impact that mission statements have on their organizations (i.e., they don't believe the "hype") and/or are confused about how to use them properly. In any case, the findings obtained herein suggest that mission statements are both misunderstood and misused in most modern corporations.

The results obtained from this sample of leading North American companies are quite discouraging. The findings argue that mission statements generally do not hold much currency or favour within the top ranks of major Western corporations. And who can blame them. They are not statements of fact - but more of fantasy and fiction. As a consequence, their usefulness appears highly questionable. In fact, one might be tempted to disband any attempts currently in progress with respect to formulating or revising the mission statement of one's own company.

The results of our analysis have shown, thus far, that when mission statements are used, they may not be used for any of the reasons suggested by prior theory. Indeed, there appears to be more than an average probability that the next time you read or hear a mission statement, you should not believe it and should discount its worth to that organization. At a minimum, you

should shout: "Show me!" or "Prove it!".

Our research has established that most mission statements appear to be more hype and hysteria than real beliefs, philosophies and attitudes on the part of corporations. It is no wonder, then, that mission statements are held in so much contempt. They just don't seem to work - at least for most organizations. But, maybe that's because most organizations don't know how to get the maximum benefit out of them. (Or, phrasing the problem in a slightly different manner, there really are no "sex manuals" with respect to mission statements that one can rely upon.) Most of the existing pronouncements concerning mission statements and their development are based upon unsubstantiated and frequently anecdotal evidence. Reliable data is sorely needed which clearly shows how various organizations are profiting from - or, at a minimum deriving some satisfaction from - their mission statements. Then, other organizations - by following these best practices - might as well. If mission statements are to fulfill their promise, we need some guideposts and "markers" regarding their use.

Making it with your Mission!

Our research was able to uncover a number of important management practices related to the successful development and adoption of company mission statements. The research uncovered certain practices, which if followed, appeared to be highly correlated with selected performance measures. The performance measures were: satisfaction with the mission statement; satisfaction with the mission development process; degree of mission achievement; and impact of the mission on a manager's own personal behavior and on the behavior of other members throughout the

organization. Selected mission characteristics and practices were then correlated with these measures to determine if there were any significant differences in performance. The results of this analysis follow.

Mission components that really satisfy. Managers in the survey were presented with a list of twenty items which might be considered as part of any company's mission statement and asked to indicate the degree to which these items were contained in their firm's mission statement (i.e., not at all; somewhat; clearly specified). This list was derived from a review of those previous studies which analyzed the content of various company mission statements. Nine of the 20 possible mission components were found to be "clearly specified" in 40 percent or more of the mission statements (See Table 3 - shaded areas). In contrast, only five of the mission components were observed to be "not part of the mission" to any great extent. What this means is that while 45 percent of the mission components identified were being used with some degree of regularity, there were also some aspects of mission which were clearly out of favour.

The managers' answers were then correlated with their responses regarding "degree of mission satisfaction". As Table 3 shows, certain aspects of mission were indeed more highly correlated with manager satisfaction than others. Sometimes, the correlations existed for those mission components that were considered "high use" (i.e., items 1,2,3,9,12,17,20,21). Managers with mission statements containing these items should interpret this finding as one of validating their current mission statement component choices.

There were, however, other instances where high correlations with satisfaction were found when the degree of mission component usage was quite low (i.e. less than 30 percent) in five cases (i.e., items 4,5,13,14,18). It is here, that managers should pay especially close attention

Table 3
"Mission Component" Frequency Analysis and Correlation with "Mission Satisfaction"

Mission Components	Not part of mission (1) % response	Stated somewhat in mission (2) % response	Clearly specified in mission (3) % response	"Mission Component" Correlation to "Mission Satisfaction"
1. Purpose/Raison d'etre	1.4	15.1	83.6	.4169***
2. Values/Philosophy	13.7	31.5	54.8	.1902*
3. Distinctive Competence	18.1	34.7	47.2	.2919**
4. Competitive Strategy	19.2	46.6	34.2	.2341*
5. Behavior Standards	27.8	37.5	34.7	.2324*
6. General Corporate Goals	6.9	30.6	62.5	ns
7. Specific Financial Objectives	50.7	30.1	19.2	ns
8. Non-financial Objectives	26.0	41.1	32.9	ns
9. Business Definition	23.3	31.5	45.2	.3270**
10. Specific Markets Served	34.2	30.1	35.6	ns
11. Specific Products Offered	28.8	41.1	30.1	ns
12. Desired Public Image	31.5	24.7	43.8	.2759**
13. Location of Business	67.1	12.3	20.5	.1966*
14. Technology Defined	52.1	35.6	12.3	.2482**
15. Concern for Survival	67.6	22.5	9.9	ns
16. Concern for Customers	6.8	15.3	78.1	ns
17. Concern for Employees	23.3	24.7	52.1	.2709*
18. Concern for Suppliers	45.3	30.1	20.5	.2186*
19. Concern for Society	38.4	28.8	32.9	ns
20. Concern for Shareholders	24.7	34.2	41.1	.2455*

Significance: (*) = .05; (**) = .01; (***) = .000

Shaded areas signify mission components which are used/not used to a high extent in the sample.

since the more that company mission statements contain these items, the greater the managers' satisfaction with the mission statement. And the more that these items are missing from the mission statement, the lower the satisfaction. Managers that are currently unsatisfied with their firm's current mission statement, therefore, would do well to re-consider it in light of these findings. They just might be able to discover some of the source of their dissatisfaction.

It was, however, particularly interesting to identify the eight mission components which appeared to have no relationship with or impact on mission satisfaction (i.e. items 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19). In some cases, such as the component "concern for customers", the reason appears to be that it is simply an "over-used" term which no longer discriminates between high and low satisfaction. Some expression of concern for customers appears in virtually every mission statement in our sample. As a consequence, it no longer has any meaning or value - other than that most managers think that it should be included "for 'PR' purposes". But, clearly, some firms are expressing that concern when they really don't mean it.

In other instances, there does not appear to be any consensus as to whether including the particular component in the mission statement makes any difference or not (e.g. specific financial objectives, non-financial objectives, specific products offered, specific markets served). Perhaps, these components should be included someplace else other than in the mission. Until we have some evidence which clearly points to benefits from their use, however, managers would do well to avoid cluttering their mission statements with any more components than is absolutely necessary or warranted.

Mission: The child with many parents. Earlier, it was stated that a high percentage of managers claimed to be less than fully satisfied with the way that their mission statements were

developed. One possible reason for this lack of satisfaction may be due to the low levels of involvement and participation which were experienced by various stakeholders in the mission development process. All of the stakeholder involvement scores were therefore correlated with the managers' reported scores for "satisfaction with the process used to develop the mission statement".

As Table 4 indicates, high levels of participation by the CEO, by all employee levels (i.e. senior, middle and non-managerial levels), and by the firm's customers were found to be significantly and positively correlated with the managers' ratings for mission process satisfaction. The more that members of these groups participate in the mission development process, the greater the ratings of process satisfaction. But, sadly, the propensity to equally involve these groups does not seem to apply. Lower level employees ("non-managers") and customers garnered only 23.5 percent and 20.0 percent participation rates respectively in the mission development process. Yet their participation ratings correlated with the managers' satisfaction scores as strongly as the CEOs'. Clearly, many company's in our sample are missing a major opportunity to secure support for their firm's mission statements when they fail to involve these two important stakeholder groups. And managers in other organizations would do well to heed the findings from this study and consider the participation of non-managers and customers when called upon to design their firm's mission development process.

At the same time, the study results uncovered a number of stakeholder groups whose participation in the mission development process now appears suspect. Consultants, shareholders, suppliers and board members were each found not to be significantly associated with the managers' reported measures of mission process satisfaction. The implication from this finding is

that those firms which seek to involve as many stakeholder groups as possible in their mission

Table 4
Stakeholder Involvement
and Correlation with Process Satisfaction

Stakeholder	% of Stakeholders "Not Involved" in Developing the Mission	% of Stakeholders "Involved" in Developing the Mission	Correlation Score between "Stakeholder Involvement" and Managers' Rating of "Satisfaction with the Mission Development Process"
CEO	12.6	87.4	.2292*
Senior Management	8.0	92.0	.3777***
Middle Management	56.0	44.0	.2216*
Non-managers	76.5	23.5	.2265*
Consultants	58.8	41.2	ns
Shareholders	73.8	26.2	ns
Customers	80.0	20.0	.2353*
Suppliers	92.9	7.1	ns
Board of Directors	26.8	73.2	ns

Legend:

(*) = .05 significance

(**) = .01 significance

(***) = .000 significance

Shaded areas signify "high levels" of stakeholder involvement/non-involvement.

development process may be practising "overkill" and achieving little gain for all their extra efforts. Of course, it might also mean that many of the firms in this sample have yet to figure out how precisely to employ the participation of these other groups wisely (i.e., to their advantage) and therefore are missing out on the benefits accruing from them. Until this latter issue is sorted-out, most firms, in their mission development exercises, should probably simply concentrate on securing the participation and support of their customers and those selected internal stakeholder groups identified above. These stakeholders are where the real opportunities for achieving satisfaction with the mission development process appear to reside.

Going "all-the-way" with mission. One of the hallmarks of effective strategic management is the relationship which a firm's strategy has with its overall organizational structure. (Drucker, 1973; Bart, 1986) Numerous studies in the past have established that the more a company aligns its organizational arrangements with its strategy, the greater the firm's success in achieving that strategy. This success occurs because organizational systems and procedures which are aligned help focus and concentrate both the attention and efforts of all employees around the firm's strategic choices. The same, therefore, should hold true with respect to mission.

To test this proposition, managers in the survey were asked to indicate the degree to which they believed their firm's organizational arrangements were taken into account and aligned with their firm's mission. Nine organizational components were measured for their "mission alignment" using a five point scale (1="not aligned at all" to 5="total alignment"). In addition, the nine measures were summed to produce an overall mission-organizational alignment score for each company. The scores for each of the organizational components (as well as the summative

scores) were then correlated with the managers' assessment regarding the degree to which they believed their mission was being achieved. (Recall that large numbers of managers felt that their firms were not!)

As Table 5 shows, all but one of the nine organizational dimensions (i.e. job design) were found to be both significantly and positively associated with the managers' responses regarding mission achievement. These findings, therefore, both confirm and re-enforce the vast body of management research which argues that organizational performance (and the managers' satisfaction with that performance) is enhanced when mission and structure (the "ying" and "yang" of corporate life) are in harmony. Mission by itself is simply an intellectual activity. It takes, however, the discipline of structure, systems and formal procedures to make the mission dance. When working together, they create an invincible force that only a few organizations truly manage to accomplish but which no competing organization can repel.

It was, therefore, quite interesting to observe that the rating of "somewhat aligned with the mission" was the most frequent managerial assessment made with respect to the firms' organizational arrangements. Only a relatively small percentage of managers perceived their organizational dimensions to be "totally aligned" with their firm's mission. Yet, the results from the correlational analysis described above establish that the more a firm aligns its organizational systems and procedures (both individually and collectively) with its mission, the greater the rating for mission achievement. Firms that do not understand this (or those that choose to ignore this advice) operate at a distinct disadvantage to those that do!

Influencing behavior: The acid test of mission. The ultimate test of a mission statement is in its ability to influence behavior. Organizational members will obey and follow the dictates of

Table 5
Organizational Alignment with the Mission

Organizational Component	% Not Aligned (Score=1)	% Aligned Somewhat (Scores = 2,3,4)	% Totally Aligned (Score = 5)	Correlation Score (a)
Structure/Design	9.6	69.9	20.5	.2598*
Job Descriptions	11.0	80.5	8.5	ns
Strategic Planning System	2.4	50.6	47.0	.3527**
Operating Planning System	4.9	68.3	26.8	.3702**
Budgeting System	12.2	73.2	14.6	.2949**
Performance Evaluation Criteria	9.6	67.5	22.9	.4798***
System of Rewards	15.9	69.5	14.6	.3142**
Recruitment/Selection Systems	12.5	73.7	13.8	.3087**
Training and Development Systems	6.1	75.6	18.3	.3706**
Leadership Styles	3.7	71.9	24.4	.3793**
Total of Organizational Ratings	na	na	na	.3583**

Legend: (a)=correlation between Organizational Alignment Rating and Rating for "Mission Achievement"

Significance: (*) = .05; (**) = .01; (***) = .000

na = not applicable; ns = not significant

their firm's mission only to the extent that they are committed to it. Such commitment (as we have observed, though) is not automatically forthcoming. But, it can be influenced by some of the factors of interest in this study i.e. the degree of mission satisfaction; the extent of stakeholder involvement in the mission development process; and the degree of mission-organizational alignment. These three factors can each affect the extent to which employees are committed to their firm's mission and, in turn, the degree of influence that a firm's mission has on individual behavior.

As Table 6 shows, most managers in our survey felt that their mission's influence over both themselves and others was fairly low. Our analysis also established, however, that there exists a significant and positive correlation between a mission's influence over individual behavior and each of the three performance measures (i.e. mission satisfaction, stakeholder involvement and mission-organizational alignment). Table 6, in particular, demonstrates that mission influence over both the manager responding and over other organizational members is significantly greater:

- * the more various stakeholders are involved in the mission development process;
- * the more organizational arrangements are aligned with the firm's mission; and
- * the greater the satisfaction with the current mission statement.

In other words, the impact and commitment that a mission statement can deliver in terms of day-to-day organizational life comes only from mission statements that are fairly high in quality and pervasive throughout the firm. This, of course, takes time and a lot of focused and dedicated effort. But, to the extent that there is a spectacular reward for that investment (i.e. committed and inspired organizational members) managers should not shy-away from the costs and challenges involved. Rather, they should embrace those challenges with enthusiasm and with spirited and resolved dedication.

Table 6
Mission Influence, Satisfaction, Involvement and Alignment

Mission Influence	% No Influence Score = 1	% Some Influence Score=2,3,4	% High Influence Score = 5	"Influence" Correlation with "Mission Satisfaction" Score	"Influence" Correlation with "Overall Mission Involvement" Score	"Influence" Correlation with "Overall Mission Alignment" Score
Influence over the manager responding	1.2	53.6	45.2	.7444***	.3189**	.5552***
Influence over other organizational members	2.7	81.1	16.2	.4271***	.3644**	.5228***

Legend:

Significance: (*) = .05; (**) = .01; (***) = .000

Some Final Thoughts

Mission statements are the elan of corporate life. To the extent that they are used wisely, any organization can derive significant benefits - both emotional and financial. The present study was designed to show that the trouble with mission statements today is that they are simply being misused - and, in some cases, downright abused. In either case, the fallout from all this is a tarnished reputation for mission statements in general and doubts that are expressed in the cacophony of naysayers.

The most remarkable discovery of this research, though, is the fact that managers, despite the doubts and the fears, continue to press on in their dedication and devotion to preparing and promoting their firm's mission statements. Sometimes, these actions are without merit ("I need a mission because everyone expects me to have one"). These are the instances that typically result in the mission statement becoming nothing more than a statement of fantasy, fiction and lies.

Fortunately, at other times, mission statements appear to be conceived and "carried to full-term" on the nascent belief that a "sense of mission" is a good thing for any organization to have and an essential starting point on the road to organizational success. The present research supports this latter view and offers some tangible evidence that the blood, sweat and tears that many organizations shed in their *mission quest* is something that need not be done in vain. The present study offers some guidelines on what a mission statement should contain if it is to generate substantial managerial support. The results also provide some advice on both the nature and degree of stakeholder involvement and organizational alignment necessary to inspire commitment and mission accomplishment. Indeed, the study has demonstrated that there are some

clear and tangible benefits and rewards waiting for those organizations that have both the fortitude and the foresight to invest - and to invest vigorously - in their firm's mission. To be sure, additional confirmatory research is required. But the results obtained to date offer some exciting possibilities for the revitalized role of mission as corporations move into the 21st century, and beyond!

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