What are Values, Mission Statements, and Vision Statements?

Definitions

**Values** -- important and enduring beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or desirable and what is not. Values exert major influence on the behavior of an individual and serve as broad guidelines in all situations ([www.businessdictionary.com](http://www.businessdictionary.com)).

**Mission statement** -- tells you the fundamental **purpose** of the organization. It defines the customer and the critical processes. It informs you of the desired level of performance (Wikipedia).

**Vision statement** -- outlines what the organization wants to be, or how it wants the world in which it operates to be. It concentrates on the future. It is a source of inspiration. It provides clear decision-making criteria (Wikipedia).

Examples

**Values statement:**
“We value timely and high quality service and strive to provide it to the professionals we serve. We value diversity and inclusiveness and work to demonstrate this in our activities, services, and research.” (National Center for Developmental Education at Appalachian State University)

**Mission statement:**
“The mission of the National Autism Association is to educate and empower families affected by autism and other neurological disorders, while advocating on behalf of those who cannot fight for their own rights. We will educate society that autism is not a lifelong incurable genetic disorder but one that is biomedically definable and treatable. We will raise public and professional awareness of environmental toxins as causative factors in neurological damage that often results in an autism or related diagnosis. We will encourage those in the autism community to never give up in their search to help their loved ones reach their full potential, funding efforts toward this end through appropriate research for finding a cure for the neurological damage from which so many affected by autism suffer.”

**Vision statement:**
"A personal computer in every home running Microsoft software.” (Microsoft)
“To help people save money so they can live better.” (Walmart)
“Land a man on the moon and safely return him to earth by the end of this decade.” (John F. Kennedy)
Characteristics and Components

Value statements--
- Define the organization’s basic philosophy, principles and ideals
- Set the ethical tone for the institution
- Represent the core priorities in the organization’s culture, including what drives members’ priorities and how they truly act in the organization, etc.
- Can drive the intent and direction for planners.

Mission statements define:
- Core purpose of the organization
- Who the organization’s primary clients are
- Responsibilities of the organization toward these clients
- Products and services
- The main objectives that support the organization in accomplishing its mission

Mission statements are:
- Limited to exclude some ventures
- Broad enough to allow for creative growth
- Stated clearly so that it is understood by all
- Useful for prioritizing how products and services are delivered.
- Includes sufficient description that the statement clearly separates the mission of the organization from other organizations

Vision statements:
- Define what the organization aspires to be
- Reflect the ideal image of the organization in the future
- Include key values and beliefs
- Serves as a framework to evaluate current activities
- Are stated clearly so that it is understood by all
- Are a focal point for strategic planning and are time bound, with most vision statements projected for a period of 5 to 10 years
- Communicate both the purpose and values of the organization
- Shape clients’ understanding of why they should work with the organization.

Adapted from: