WHAT ARE ‘MISSION’ AND ‘VISION’ STATEMENTS?

A. Mission Statement
(Compiled from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia – with links and references removed, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_statement)

A mission statement is a statement of the purpose of a company or organization. The mission statement should guide the actions of the organization, spell out its overall goal, provide a path, and guide decision-making. It provides "the framework or context within which the company's strategies are formulated." Historically it is associated with Christian religious groups; indeed, for many years, a missionary was assumed to be a person on a specifically religious mission. The word "mission" dates from 1598, originally of Jesuits sending ("missio", Latin for "act of sending") members abroad.

..vision and the mission statements are often confused with one another, and some organizations even use them interchangeably. In simplest terms, the mission is the organization's reason for existence, and vision is what it wants to be.

Effective mission statements commonly clarify the organization's purpose. Commercial mission statements often include the following information:

- Purpose and aim(s) of the organization
- The organization's primary stakeholders: clients/customers, shareholders, congregation, etc.
- How the organization provides value to these stakeholders, for example by offering specific types of products and/or services

According to Bart (1997), [a] … commercial mission statement consists of 3 essential components:

1. Key market – who is your target client/customer? (generalize if needed)
2. Contribution – what product or service do you provide to that client?
3. Distinction – what makes your product or service unique, so that the client would choose you?

Examples of mission statements that clearly include the 3 essential components [are]:

- McDonalds - "To provide the fast food customer food prepared in the same high-quality manner world-wide that is tasty, reasonably-priced & delivered consistently in a low-key décor and friendly atmosphere."
  - Key Market: The fast food customer world-wide
• Contribution: tasty and reasonably-priced food prepared in a high-quality manner
• Distinction: delivered consistently (world-wide) in a low-key décor and friendly atmosphere.

• Courtyard by Marriott - "To provide economy and quality minded travelers with a premier, moderate priced lodging facility which is consistently perceived as clean, comfortable, well-maintained, and attractive, staffed by friendly, attentive and efficient people"
  o Key Market: economy and quality minded travelers
  o Contribution: moderate priced lodging
  o Distinction: consistently perceived as clean, comfortable, well-maintained, and attractive, staffed by friendly, attentive and efficient people

B.1 Vision Statement: Internal in Orientation
(By Susan Ward, About.com Guide - with links and references removed, http://sbinfocanada.about.com/od/businessplanning/g/visionstatement.htm)

A vision statement is sometimes called a picture of your company in the future but it’s so much more than that. Your vision statement is your inspiration, the framework for all your strategic planning.

A vision statement may apply to an entire company or to a single division of that company. Whether for all or part of an organization, the vision statement answers the question, “Where do we want to go?”

What you are doing when creating a vision statement is articulating your dreams and hopes for your business. It reminds you of what you are trying to build.

While a vision statement doesn’t tell you how you’re going to get there, it does set the direction for your business planning. That’s why it’s important when crafting a vision statement to let your imagination go and dare to dream – and why it’s important that a vision statement captures your passion.

Unlike the mission statement, a vision statement is for you and the other members of your company, not for your customers or clients.

When writing a vision statement, your mission statement and your core competencies can be a valuable starting point for articulating your values. Be sure when you’re creating one not to fall into the trap of only thinking ahead a year or two. Once you have one, your vision statement will have a huge influence on decision making and the way you allocate resources.
Sample Vision Statements

Five years from now, Paula's will be rated as a "five star" restaurant in the Greater Toronto area by consistently providing the combination of perfectly prepared food and outstanding service that creates an extraordinary dining experience.

Five years from now, Computer Services Ltd. will have annual revenues of over one million by consistently providing timely, reasonably priced repair and instructional services.

Within the next five years, ZZZ Tours will become the premier eco-tour company in ________, increasing revenues to 1 million dollars in 2010 by becoming internationally known for the comfort and excitement of the whale-watching tours it offers. …

… Within the next five years, Metromanage.com will become a leading provider of management software to North American small businesses by providing customizable, user-friendly software scaled to small business needs.

Five years from now, Tiny Tots Diaper Service will be the top grossing diaper service in the Lower Mainland by consistently providing a reliable, affordable service for Moms and Dads with small children.

B.2 Vision Statement: External in Orientation (The Ideal World)
(By Estela Kennen, http://estela-kennen.suite101.com/the-vision-statement-a9380, with links and references removed)

This type of vision statement answers the question “What would a perfect world look like?” Another way to think of it is “What would a world that no longer needed our organization look like?” Below are actual examples from non-profits:

- The vision of the ASPCA is that the United States is a humane community in which all animals are treated with respect and kindness.
- SHELTER, Inc. is working to realize a vision: A Home For Everyone.
- We will work until we achieve a society free of violence.

Your organization may never achieve this type of vision, but it can nonetheless be very motivating, uniting people as powerful reminder that there is still a lot of work to be done.

Neither type of vision statement [internal or external in orientation] is inherently better than the other. The staff and board members at your non-profit should collectively decide which makes most sense for your organization.