



SkillSharpener Web Extra

Team mission statement keeps reps working toward the same goals

As the song goes, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there."

Make sure you and your reps all know where you're going.

Renée Evenson, author of *Award-Winning Customer Service*, argues that frontline customer service reps should each have their own personal mission statement. A personal mission statement, she says, can help provide greater focus and direction for the individual rep by taking his or her personal vision and relating it to the corporate and departmental mission.

The customer service manager, of course, can be a great help in this process by reviewing mission statements with reps, discussing how they align with corporate and departmental goals, and providing the necessary tools and resources — as well as encouragement — that reps might need. "That would be a great discussion between a manager and a rep," Evenson says.

Create a team mission

Beyond that, Evenson suggests that managers can help close the gap between a broad corporate mission statement and individual reps' personal mission statements by creating a team mission statement for their service department or group. "You want to write a team mission — which would basically be the manager's mission — about how the manager's and the department's role relates to the corpo-

rate mission, and this will be a little different from what individual reps might come up with," Evenson says.

Why is it important for managers to get involved in the process? "Let's face it," Evenson says, "we all look to our leaders to give us some cues, and if the leader feels that it's important to have a mission, and shares that vision with the team, then the team is more likely to feel it is important as well. Involving

Make your mission and plan customer-focused

It doesn't make any sense to create a mission statement or an action plan without taking customer needs and expectations into account. "You have to know what's important to customers," says Renée Evenson, author of *Award-Winning Customer Service*, "and you don't want to guess about that. So creating a customer-focused plan means getting to know your customers, figuring out who they are and what they want."

A lot of this information can be obtained through your customer service reps, Evenson says. "They are the ones who interface with the customers and who hear what customers are saying," she says. "Ask them to make a point of bringing that feedback to group meetings, talking about it, and figuring out as a group what it is that customers want. And if there is a recurring problem perhaps you need to write something into your team action plan to do something about it."

Essential advice to keep in mind:

- Don't anticipate or assume what customers need. Ask them what they need.
- Ask what you are doing right and what you can do to improve. Then listen carefully to the customer's replies.
- Look for general trends in what customers are doing, saying, and complaining about.





reps and making them part of the solution will always make them feel more valued.”

“What the manager probably wants to do,” says Evenson, “is to write his or her own mission statement first, describing their role and how it relates to the company. Then sit down with their reps and have a general meeting to say, ‘We are all going to be doing this, individually and as a group. It will help us to define our role with the company and to better serve our customers.’”

Without a mission statement, Evenson says, it’s easy to lose focus. “A mission statement is your destination,” she says. “It tells in exact words what your company stands for and what you wish to achieve” — whether as an individual or as a group. “Having a mission statement provides everyone in your group with a clear focus, and most importantly, the same focus.”

Keep these prompts in mind

Following are Evenson’s prompts or suggestions for putting individual and team mission statements together. Share them with your reps before writing your missions.

1. Begin by analyzing what you, your company, and your team stand for.
 - What service do you provide? Why is it important to your customers, and what is your role in providing that service or selling that product?
 - What level of performance do you expect from yourself or from your team?
 - How do you expect your customers to be treated?
2. Your mission statement should be very specific about what your company (or you) expects to achieve.

3. Your mission statement should be brief.
4. Post your personal mission statement for your team to see. Make sure each part of the statement is clear, so everyone understands it.
5. Focus on your mission — make it part of daily kick-off meetings, etc.
6. Everything you do should in some way move you closer to your mission and toward your destination.

Putting the mission into action

The final part of Evenson’s advice involves creating a plan to put your mission into effect, and this is probably where reps will need the most one-on-one help. The plan provides the detailed directions that will help reps to complete their mission.

Specifically, managers should meet with reps to discuss their personal mission statements and to determine how they align with the corporate and team missions. In addition, reps might need suggestions on the specific course of action they need to take, their strengths and weaknesses, obstacles that might stand in the way of their mission, and tools and resources the company can provide to help them along the way.

The manager can also ensure that personal and team missions and action plans are focused on customer needs, rather than created in a vacuum. As Evenson warns, “You don’t ever want to write a plan without knowing whether what you are doing is important to customers.”

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