



Why Mission Statements Matter ***by Virginia Swain***

Writing a Personal Mission Statement, a customized, individualized process and framework, is a foundational step clarify one's life and career mission. A toolbox, perspectives and personal, interpersonal, systemic competencies are offered to build on the participant's mission. Its purpose is to:

- Recognize your core gifts and talents
- Confirm your special calling and integrity
- Learn to access your deepest hopes and visions
- Being proactive rather than reactive to challenges
- Take responsibility for your life by trusting your Mission.

People with mission statements step off the treadmill by building first personal time in their daily lives. They learn to listen within more effectively, reflect on their roles and the latest practices to learn new competencies. They are practical idealists who can withstand the daily pressures of a challenging work world by being proactive rather than reactive.

A well-thought-out mission statement is protection, in a sense, against obstacles because of the confidence and strength that comes from owning and trusting a keen sense of purpose. The process helps students focus on “what they want to be (character) and to do (contribution and achievements) and on the values and principles upon which being and doing are based” or a personal constitution as Stephen Covey states in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Covey writes, “Mission is ‘a personal constitution, the basis for making major, life-directing decisions, the basis for making daily decisions amid the circumstances and emotions that affect our lives. It empowers individuals with the same timeless strength amid change. People cannot live with change is there is not a changeless core inside them... With a mission statement, we can flow with changes.”

In my consulting experience, people are hungry for authentic leadership, to have meaning and purpose in their lives. Besides having the confidence and trust in oneself and one's abilities, a mission statement process gives a seasoned or emerging leader a foundation upon which to be successful in work and life, to find one's passion and personal power. Power is being re-defined.

Personal power is exemplified by a sense of inner integrity, clarity, intention, and confidence. Power is not defined as “power over” someone else. In mission driven leadership, the power that comes from knowing and trusting innate gifts and strengths is enormously powerful helping them “hold true to themselves” in a world of social and economic instability and change, a mission statement will help people withstand personal obstacles because they have a sense of what is solid, enduring, and changeless about them.

Going within, as educator Parker Palmer says “we who lead find the courage to take an inner journey toward both our shadows and our light – a journey that, faithfully pursued, will take us



beyond ourselves to become healers of a wounded world. A new leadership is needed for current times, but it will not come from finding new and wiler ways to manipulate the external world.”

Webster’s Dictionary’s definition is “a mission is a continuing task or responsibility that one is destined or fitted to do or specially called upon to undertake.” The major synonyms listed in Webster are “calling” and “vocation.”

Richard Bolles, in his bestseller, *What Color is Your Parachute?* writes that mission is not “a problem to be solved in a day and a night. It is a learning process which has steps to it. Each step must be mastered in turn before the next can be approached. A key step, he writes, is to ‘exercise the talent which you particularly have, your greatest gift, in which you most delight,’ in the place that appeals to you the most and for those purposes which most needs to have done in the world.”

Writing a Mission Statement is the first course of all the Leadership Certificate Programs. Tuition us \$695 for 8-10 hours.