

Tie HR to business strategy with the right mission statement

HR mission statements can inspire the workplace and increase support from senior management and executive leadership.

Too bad so many of them don't. More often than not, HR mission statements are poorly written and don't reflect the organization's overall business strategy. The worst are so full of HR jargon and "consultant-speak" that they beg to be ignored. "Most people don't understand what an HR mission statement is. It's usually so watered down, and so unbusinesslike that HR shouldn't distribute it," says Margaret Morford, president of The HR Edge consulting firm.

Proper mission statements are more than a series of bumper-sticker proclamations. They provide genuine guidance, helping to align HR activities with broader business goals.

Take the following steps to create a business-focused mission statement:

- **Brainstorm** (with HR staff if you have them) about HR's goals, values and priorities. Consider the following questions: How do you spend most of your time? How would you like to spend most of your time? What have been HR's top accomplishments? Why? What are HR's most important contributions and how will the mission statement support them?
- **Talk with top executives**, including those in sales, operations and marketing. Ask them what drives the organization's goals and strategies
- **Distill the core values** and organizational drivers down to two-to-five precise, compelling sentences.
- **Determine which HR activities** don't support the statement and consider curtailing or dropping them. Morford says, "As you define what you will do, define what you will no longer do."
- **Distribute the mission statement** to executives and managers with a memo outlining its goals and return-on-investment potential.
- **Ask for executive feedback.** Revise the mission statement accordingly.

Sample HR mission statements

Ideally, an HR mission statement expresses how an organization's human resources help that organization meet its business goals and cites ways to measure its success.

Bad example: Often, HR mission statements are little more than a laundry list of basic HR functions. Here's an example: "HR provides training, benefits, compensation, hiring and other services and support that meet the needs of all employees and helps them become top performers."

Good example: Detail and context matter. "HR's responsibility is to ensure that our human resources are more talented and motivated than those of our competitors. HR's performance will, therefore, be measured by comparing the company's sales, profits and productivity with those of our top two competitors."