



Finding Your Core Purpose

"You can't know who you are until you know why you're here."

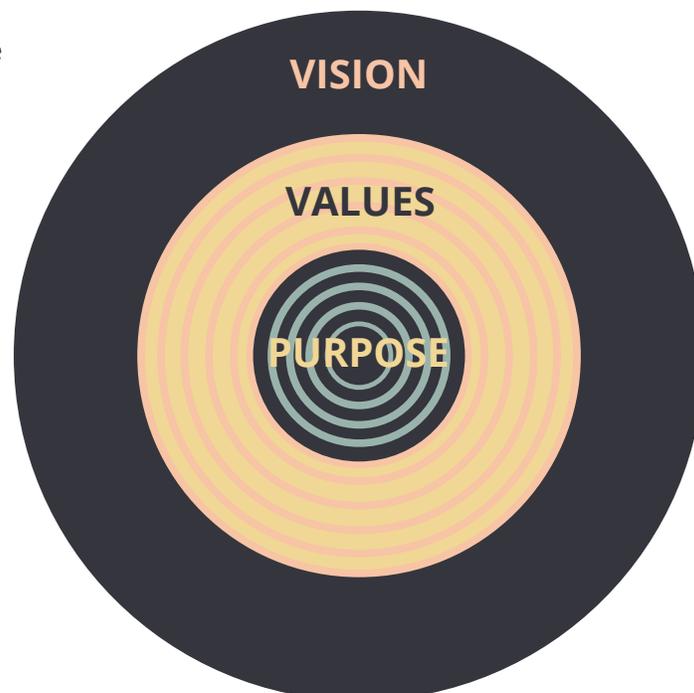
Why does your organization exist?

It might seem like an easy question — you point to the mission statement in the about section of your website or trot out the statistics that define your track record of successes — but when you really get to the root of the question, finding your Core Purpose can feel like more than an identity. And it should, because knowing your Core Purpose is the first step in knowing where the future of your organization lies.

A Core Purpose is a navigational device, the North Star against which every choice is measured. It tells everyone why they should care about the work they're doing, why they should understand they're part of a bigger endeavor than just making the next membership phone call or writing the next newsletter. Notably, a Core Purpose is not a Mission Statement, which implies that a project or goal is achievable, that once attained the need for the organization is over. A Core Purpose may never be achieved, but instead offers a guiding path forward for every single decision.

If you'd like to see your organization grow, then the first thing you need to contend with is finding and defining your Core Purpose. As the chart below shows, without this, you will not have the foundation on which to build your Values or Vision for the future.

- Envisioned Future
- Core Ideology



Your Core Purpose Discovery Workshop

Note: While we provide some space for jotting down notes and thoughts here, we also highly recommend giving each participant a block of Post-It notes so you can more easily organize like-minded thoughts on a blank wall or dry erase board.

Step 1 :

Get together a small group (5-10) of people. Be thoughtful about the diversity of the people on this team, and know that it'll work best with a team of people who are familiar with each other and therefore more likely to speak frankly. While you may not have the need to debate, everyone should feel empowered to say what's on their minds and to do so in a respectful way. This group will discuss what's important to them on an individual and even personal level.

A Core Purpose should be deeply and emotionally meaningful, something that will stand the test of time.

Step 2 :

Start asking questions. What problem does your organization seek to solve? If that problem does get solved, to whom would it matter most? What does your organization actually do? Remember: This is not about what you sell; it's about what you do.

Are there words or phrases that keep reappearing as you discuss? What are they?

Step 3 :

Now, ask why. Why does your organization exist?

Step 4:

Ask why that matters. Again. And again and again. What is the central idea you've drilled down to?

Step 5:

Sleep on it — literally, if necessary. Walk away from the group and let the idea you've settled on marinate. Then, it's time to refine.

Look at the words that appeared most in Step 1. Do any of them appear in your answer to Step 4? Your Core Purpose should be quick, snappy and likely not more than 5-8 words. Does it inspire? Does it contain an action verb? Does it get your team excited? Does it feel like it's something that actually matters? If you can truthfully answer yes to all of these questions, then you've found your Core Purpose.

Let's look at some examples

Your Core Purpose should be unique to your organization. But that doesn't mean there isn't inspiration to be had in some of those defined by other organizations, both for- and non-profit. Take a look at these and think about how they're short, meaningful and driven by action.

- Merck: Discover, develop and provide innovative products and services that save and improve lives around the world
- Mary Kay Cosmetics: Enrich women's lives
- Walt Disney: Make people happy
- TED: Spread ideas.
- Tesla: Accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy.
- JetBlue: Inspire humanity, both in the air and on the ground.
- IKEA: Create a better everyday life for many people.
- Life is Good: Spread the power of optimism.



Contact us to learn more!

www.SidecarGlobal.com