

The Four Why's

Now that we have defined the purpose, audience, and desired impact of vision, mission, and values statements and shown how they relate to the seven levels of corporate consciousness, I want to describe a method for creating statements that address the specific needs of employees, customers, and society. The method is called the “Four Why’s.”

The process differs from other methods in that it (a) differentiates between an organization’s internal motivations and its external motivations, (b) addresses the needs of employees, customers, and society, and (c) builds a motivational link between employees’ personal motivations and the organization’s motivations.

This exercise describes the process by referring to the establishment of the vision, mission, and values for Richard Barrett & Associates LLC.

Internal Motivation

The Internal Mission

Step 1: Two important questions must be answered to discover the internal mission of an organization: (a) “What is our core business?” and (b) “What do we need to do to grow and develop as an organization?” The answer to the first question gives focus to our work. The answer to the second question provides us with an inspirational statement that motivates employees. After some discussion, we decided that Richard Barrett & Associates LLC was in the business of values-driven organizational transformation and that the company will grow and develop by building a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation. Therefore our internal mission is: To build a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation.

The Internal Vision

Step 2: The next step is to develop a statement that describes organizational fulfillment. We arrive at this statement by asking “Why?” in front of our internal mission. The answer represents a deeper level of motivation. We asked the question “Why do we want to build a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation?” The answer: “To be a global resource for organizational transformation.” This is our internal vision and the answer to the first “Why.” These two statements together—the internal mission and the internal vision—provide a direction for the development and growth of the organization and its employees. Figure 6-2 illustrates the process used in defining the internal motivations.

If we were to go to the internal vision and ask “How are we going to become a global resource for organizational transformation?” we would find the answer in our internal mission—“by building a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation.” This is an important concept. To get to a deeper level of motivation ask, “Why?” To move back ask, “How?” If, for example, an organization already has a good internal vision but does not have an internal mission, then ask the question “How?” in front of the internal vision. This will lead you to the internal mission.

The External Motivation

The External Mission

Step 3: After defining the internal mission and vision, the next step is to discover the external mission. This is an inspirational statement that describes the service we provide to our clients. Again we asked the question “Why?” in front of the internal mission. “Why do we want “to build a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation?” The desired answer is a statement that will inspire our customers. Our answer was “To support leaders in building visionary organizations.” This is our external mission and the answer to the second “Why.”

The External Vision

Step 4: The next step is to discover the external vision. This is an inspirational statement that describes the contribution we want to make to society. To get to this statement we need to ask the question “Why?” in front of our external mission. “Why do we want to support leaders in building visionary organizations?” The answer is, “To change the philosophy of business at a global level.” This is our external vision and the answer to the third “Why.” These two statements together—the external mission and the external vision—explain how we are going to assist our customers and the benefits that this will bring to society.

If an organization has an external vision but no external mission, the question “How?” can be used in front of the external vision to find its external mission.

We can now do a check on the internal consistency of the external vision by asking the question “Why?” in front of the internal vision. The external vision should represent a deeper level of motivation of the internal vision. When we asked “Why do we want to become a global resource for organizational transformation?” We found that answer in the external mission—“To change the philosophy of business at a global level.” This was the fourth “Why?” In this manner we have created a continuous motivational loop that links all four statements together.

The team working on the mission and vision will know when they have reached closure because there will be a strong resonance around the statements that have been developed. If the resonance is absent, the work is not finished.

In Richard Barrett & Associates LLC we believe that by building a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation, we can become a global resource for corporate transformation. We want to become a global resource so that we can help leaders all over the world build visionary organizations. This supports our external vision of changing the philosophy of business at a global level.

Values

Values That Support Internal Motivations

Step 5: The next step is to define the values that will support the internal motivations. This is done by reaching consensus on the values we believe will support us in achieving our internal mission and vision. The values we chose to support us in achieving our internal mission—to build a worldwide community of professionals committed to values-driven organizational transformation—were excellence, innovation, and profit. The values chosen to support us in achieving our internal vision—to be a global resource for organizational transformation—were trust and strategic alliances.

Excellence responds to the need to be professional. Innovation responds to need to continue to grow and develop our corporate transformation models and tools. Profit responds to our need to find right livelihood through our work, invest in the continuing development of the corporate transformation models and tools, build a global transformation network, and create a sufficient surplus to be able to carry out pro bono work for not-for-profit organizations. Trust is important in creating organizational cohesion, and strategic alliances are important in building a worldwide network of partnerships with consultants and human resource specialists who will be working with the corporate transformation models and tools.

The Values That Support External Motivations

Step 6: The next step is to define the values that will support the external motivations. This is done by reaching consensus on the values we believe will support us in achieving our external mission and vision. The values we chose to support us in achieving our external mission—to support leaders in building visionary organizations—were service and empowerment. The values we chose to support us in achieving our external vision—to change the philosophy of business at a global level—were ethics and the evolution of consciousness.

We want to be of service to leaders by empowering them and their organizations to become all they can become. In this way we hope to contribute to the evolution of consciousness. Ethics responds to our need always to be driven by the highest possible motivations in our work.

More Why's

Departmental Motivations and Values

Step 7: Steps 1 through 6 are usually carried out by the management team. The next step is to elicit feedback from the rest of the organization. This is done by sharing the statements with the next level of management (departmental heads) and asking them to build their departmental mission and vision statements. When they ask “Why?” in front of their departmental mission and vision statements they should find the answer in the organizational level statements. If they don't, then they may want to modify their own statements or suggest modifications to the organizational level statements. The departments should also reflect on their values. They should either endorse the organization's chosen values or suggest alternatives.

Personal Motivation

Step 8: The final step is to build a motivational connection between the mission and vision of every individual and the mission and vision of the organization. When an individual asks “Why?” in front of his or her personal mission and vision statement, the individual should find the answer in the department's or organization's statements. It is important to realize that it is not necessary to link one's personal mission to the mission of the unit where one works. A personal motivation could relate to the departmental or organizational mission or vision.

If when you ask “Why?” in front of your personal mission or vision you don't find the answer in the department's or organization's mission or visions, then the motivational link is broken. In this case, you will not find fulfillment in the organization. There must always be a motivational link between a personal vision and mission and some level of the organization's vision and mission for fulfillment to be found. It is in the organization's best interest to help every individual find work that makes this link. When an individual's motivation and an organization's motivation are aligned, then people tap into their deepest levels of productivity and creativity. Mission mentality then becomes a competitive advantage.

Going back to the example of Richard Barrett & Associates LLC, my personal mission is “to understand the dynamics of personal and organizational transformation.” Why do I want to understand the dynamics of personal and organizational transformation? To be an acknowledged leader in the field of personal and organizational transformation. This is my internal vision—how I find personal fulfillment. When I ask “Why do I want to be an acknowledged leader in the field of personal and organizational transformation? I find the answer in the organization's internal vision— to be a global resource for organizational transformation. Thus, there is alignment between my personal vision and the organization's internal vision. When I ask “Why do I want my company to become a global resource for organizational transformation.” The answer is “to change the philosophy of business at a global level.” This is the organization's external vision. When I ask, “Why do I want to change the philosophy of business at a global level.” The answer is, “to create a sustainable future for humanity and the planet.” This is my large vision and the force that drives my work.

By the time this exercise is completed, every individual and department should have a clear mission and vision statement and know how they relate to the organization's mission and vision in a logical motivational chain. At this point, the management team should do a consolidation check to make sure the department's and the organization's statements are in alignment. When this has been done, and any necessary adjustments made, a communications strategy can be developed to tell the staff about the organization's vision, mission, and values.

Teaching Notes:

Advantages of the “Four Why’s” Process:

The “Four Why’s” process of building mission, vision, and values statements offers several advantages:

The separation of the internal and external motivations gives greater clarity to the mission and vision statements by separating the needs of employees from the needs of customers and society.

The linking of statements in a motivational chain creates internal consistency.

The process allows everyone in the organization to related their personal mission to the organization’s mission or vision. All employees can see exactly how they and their department make a difference in serving the greater whole.

Presenting the Values in a Mission Statement:

There are several presentational formats:

Simply state your values in the way that Harley Davidson does:

Be fair

Tell the truth

Keep your promises

Respect the individual

Encourage intellectual curiosity

Put them in the form of general statements of intention, as does Merck:

“We are committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity. We are responsible to our customers, to our employees, to the environments we inhabit, and to the societies we serve around the world. In discharging our responsibilities we do not take professional or ethical shortcuts. Our interactions with all segments of society – our customers, our suppliers, governments, and general public – must reflect the highest standards we profess.”

Present your values in the form of a credo, similar to the way Tom’s of Maine does theirs:

WE BELIEVE that both human beings and nature have inherent worth and deserve our respect.

WE BELIEVE in products that are safe, effective, and made of natural ingredients.

WE BELIEVE that our company and our products are unique and worthwhile and that we can sustain these genuine qualities with an ongoing commitment to innovation and creativity.

WE BELIEVE that we have a responsibility to cultivate the best relationships possible with our co-workers, customers, owners, agents, suppliers, and our community.

WE BELIEVE in providing employees with a safe and fulfilling work environment, and an opportunity to grow and learn.

WE BELIEVE that our company can be financially successful while behaving in a socially responsible and environmentally sensitive manner.

¹This exercise is adapted from Richard Barrett, *Liberating the Corporate Soul: Building a Visionary Organization*. Boston, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998.