

The Mission and Vision Framework

A mission is what you do and for whom, in the present tense. A vision is the changed situation you are working toward, years out. People blur these constantly, and the result is statements that sound impressive and steer nothing. This framework builds both from **six plain questions**, then pressure tests the result. It works at every scale because the questions do not change, only who answers them: you alone, your team, or your company.

FOR INDIVIDUALS

Write a career mission you can say out loud in an interview without cringing, plus a five year vision specific enough to plan against.

FOR TEAMS

Answer the question every team eventually faces: why does this team exist beyond the org chart? Then align quarterly work to it.

FOR COMPANIES

Separate mission, vision, and strategy so each does its job, and test whether a customer would recognise any of it.

01 The six questions

Answer in rough sentences, not polished ones. Polish hides gaps. You can tighten the language later, after the thinking is done. Give each question real time; the fast answers are usually the borrowed ones.

1. Who do you serve?

A person or group you could describe to a stranger. Everyone is not an answer, it is an evasion.

2. What problem do they actually have?

Their words, not yours. Nobody wakes up wanting solutions.

3. What do you do about it?

The method or craft. Verbs, not category labels.

4. What is your proof?

Results, track record, credentials that would convince a skeptic.

5. What changes because you exist?

The before and after for the people you serve.

6. Where is this going in five years?

A scene, not a metric. What would a visitor see and hear?

02 Assemble the mission sentence

Your mission is answers one, two, and three compressed into a single sentence, with answer four available as backup. Start from the frame below, then rewrite it until it sounds like something you would actually say to a person, not print on a mug.

Assembly frame: I help (who, from question 1) do (outcome, from question 2) through (method, from question 3).

Team version: this team exists so that (who) can (outcome), which we do through (method). Company version: swap I for the company name and delete anything a competitor could also claim.

03 Write the vision paragraph

Now expand question six into one paragraph, five sentences at most, in the present tense as if the five years have already passed. Present tense matters: it forces specifics. We are the leading platform collapses immediately when you have to describe a Tuesday.

04 Before and after: three real rewrites

These are composites of statements I have workshopped in Seoul classrooms and corporate sessions, moved from wallpaper to working.

BEFORE: SOUNDS IMPRESSIVE, STEERS NOTHING	AFTER: PASSES THE RECOGNITION TEST
I am a passionate marketing professional leveraging synergies to drive innovative growth.	I help Korean consumer brands turn flat social channels into measurable revenue, and I can show the numbers.
Our team delivers world class support experiences.	This team exists so that a customer with a broken order gets a fix, not a ticket number, within one business day.
We empower global citizens through transformative education.	We prepare Korean university students to compete for jobs in English, using real interviews and real writing, not textbook dialogues.

Notice what changed each time: a named audience, a verb you can picture, and a claim a competitor could not copy paste. Nothing else was added. Specificity did all the work.

05 The recognition tests

Run whichever test matches your scale. A statement that fails its test goes back to the six questions, because the problem is never the wording, it is a missing answer.

- **Individual:** read your mission to someone who knows your work. Ask them: is this me? If they hesitate, the gap between your mission and your evidence is showing.
- **Team:** read it to a member of a neighbouring team. Ask them what your team would say no to. If they cannot answer, the mission does not exclude anything, so it does not decide anything.
- **Company:** read it to a real customer. If they cannot connect it to their own experience of you, it is internal poetry. Publish it nowhere until that changes.

06 The five common failure modes

- **The thesaurus mission.** Empower, enable, elevate, unlock. If the verbs are interchangeable, the mission is too. Use the verb you would use across a coffee table.
- **The mirror vision.** The five year picture describes your success, not your audience's changed situation. A vision no customer appears in is a compensation plan.
- **The committee sentence.** Every stakeholder added a clause and now it reads like a legal disclaimer. Missions are subtraction exercises. One audience, one outcome, one method.
- **The strategy smuggle.** Channel choices and revenue targets do not belong in a mission. They change yearly; the mission should survive them.
- **The drawer statement.** Written at a retreat, filed forever. A mission that is not used to kill at least one opportunity per quarter is decoration.

07 The alignment cascade

In a company, the three levels have to nest. The test is simple: each level should be able to point one level up and say, this is the part of that we own. Fill the cascade for your own situation, whichever level you sit at.

LEVEL	THE STATEMENT IN FORCE TODAY	THE PART OF THE LEVEL ABOVE WE OWN
Company		
Team		
You		

Empty cells are findings. A team that cannot name the part of the company mission it owns is drifting, however busy it looks. A person who cannot connect their work to the team mission has a role description, not a mission, and that gap is where disengagement starts.

08 Put it to work on a schedule

CADENCE	INDIVIDUAL	TEAM OR COMPANY
Quarterly	Does my current role move the vision forward? Name one piece of evidence.	Does each active project trace back to the mission? Kill or reassign one that does not.
Yearly	Rewrite the vision paragraph from scratch, then compare. Drift is information.	Re run the customer recognition test with fresh people.
At every big decision	Which option moves the five year scene closer? That is the tiebreaker.	If a decision contradicts the mission and you make it anyway, update the mission. It is lying otherwise.

09 Worked example: one full pass

Here is the framework end to end for one person, a project manager with eleven years in logistics who felt invisible in a big company.

- **Who do you serve?** Operations directors at mid size Korean manufacturers.
- **What problem do they have?** Shipments slip and nobody can say why until the customer calls angry.
- **What do you do?** I build tracking and escalation systems that surface problems two days before they become apologies.
- **Proof?** Cut late deliveries forty percent across three product lines; my playbook is now the standard in two divisions.
- **What changes?** Directors stop firefighting and start forecasting.
- **Five years out?** I run a supply chain visibility practice; two consultants work for me; manufacturers call us before peak season, not after it.

His mission fell out in one draft: I help mid size manufacturers see shipment problems before their customers do, through tracking systems that escalate early. Compare that to the resume line it replaced, results driven logistics professional with a passion for excellence, and you can see what the six questions actually buy you.

10 The vocabulary, kept straight

WORD	WHAT IT IS	THE TEST
Mission	What you do, for whom, in the present tense.	Could a stranger repeat it after one hearing?
Vision	The changed situation years from now, described as a scene.	Does your audience appear in it, better off?
Strategy	The few big choices about how to win this year.	Does it exclude real options you could have chosen?
Values	The decision filters you accept costs to keep.	Has one cost you something in the last quarter?

Most broken statements are category errors: a vision hiding in a mission, a strategy dressed as values. When a statement feels bloated, it is usually two of these fused together. Split them and both get sharper.

11 Your ninety day operating plan

WHEN	INDIVIDUAL	TEAM	COMPANY
Today	Six questions answered in rough sentences.	Workshop booked, prework sent: everyone answers the six questions alone first.	Current statements pulled and sorted into the four vocabulary boxes.
Day 30	Mission sentence passing the friend test; vision paragraph drafted.	Team mission passing the neighbour test; posted where the work happens.	Recognition test run with five real customers; gaps documented.
Day 90	Vision paragraph rewritten from memory and compared. One decision made using it.	One project killed or reshaped for tracing nowhere; cascade table filled.	Statements republished only where they operate: hiring, planning, reviews.

A NOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

Every semester a student shows me a mission statement full of words like innovative, passionate, and global, and every semester I ask the same question: what would you refuse to do? The room goes quiet. That silence is the test. A mission that cannot generate a no is a caption, not a compass. Write yours so that saying it commits you to something, then let it commit you.

Matthew Clement • CareerComms, Seoul

TAKE IT FURTHER

The interactive builder walks the six questions with prompts and assembles your statement drafts. Free, no signup:
careercomms.com/tools/mission-vision