Vision, Mission, and Core Values

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Abstract

The vision, mission, and core values are the principal ideas that differentiate an organization from its competitors. A young, developing company, M3H Aviation Solutions, strives to develop core principles that define the customer, the product and service, and values in which the organization is firmly grounded. M3H’s vision describes its long-term objectives for serving its customer. However, vague language, confusing ideas, and inconsistent practices produce an unclear idea of where the company is headed. M3H’s mission statement reflects not only its current products and services but very definitively the way in which it will serve the customer. While clear and concise, the mission statement lacks real identity from the industry’s competition. Finally, M3H’s core values reflect actual practice in trustworthiness, honesty, and the building of quality relationships. While the company is methodically in fair and ethical dealings, its core values might omit vital positions and leave questions in stakeholders’ mind.

Vision, Mission, and Core Values

M3H Aviation Solutions is a small, disabled-veteran, and minority-owned, government contracting company. The organization opened its doors just three years ago, winning its first Department of Defense contract only three months later. M3H specializes in aviation-support services such as scheduling, intelligence analysis, training, and evaluation. The company has since expanded to computer programming, courseware development, and academic instruction – all of which is aviation centered. In addition to its contractors, M3H has only four employees: the company’s president, a security specialist, a proposal manager, and an accountant, which keeps costs low and interaction streamlined. With a vast array of operational options, communicating a consistent vision and mission presents challenges. But, M3H’s core values keep the company grounded to seek opportunities and build lasting relationships.

**Vision**

Developing a vision requires a long-term and specific understanding of the direction of which a company is headed. Without such objectives, it is difficult to communicate the way, or the direction, in which the company intends to accomplish its vision. Unrealistic or vague terms used in a vision statement offers employees little understanding of individual impact or departmental goals. A strategic vision should offer a clear map to the company’s future. Government contractors are overwhelmed with visionary options. Business that could begin in the medical sector could, less than a year later, develop into aircraft maintenance. M3H Aviation Solutions, LLC’s vision offers highly-skilled, professional aviation services to military, state, federal, and international companies. This vision reflects the company’s intention to excel in the aviation community and provide exceptional customer service to its customer. And, while this is description may be slightly inconsistent with M3H’s current vision statement, the long-term intent is equivalent.

While the bulk of work thus far has been supporting the aviation community, specifically remote piloted aircraft (RPA), this may not be the case in the coming year. Government contractors are able to partner with other contractors whose expertise is in varied sectors. This allows companies to “break-in” to other markets despite lack of experience. As of late, M3H’s partnerships have let the company bid for work in information technology, communications, transportation, and aircraft maintenance.

**Analyzing Strengths and Recommendations of M3H’s Vision**

Arthur Thompson describes the do’s and don’ts of vision-statement wording in his 2012 text, *Strategy: Core Concepts and Analytical Approaches*. M3H’s current vision statement captures many strengths of Thompson’s constructive suggestions. For example, M3H’s vision for long-term business is both guiding and focused. The company aims to offer expertise and reliability to its customers which is expressed in its “go-to” nature. Additionally, the use of “aviation services” is specific enough to offer a general direction of the company yet broad enough to encompass many sectors that would be attractive additions to the company’s existing contracts. While it may seem vague, the use of such a broad term may prevent the company from frequently changing its vision statement. These strengths reflect honorable intentions and the customer-service orientation that M3H’s President reiterates daily.

Despite the positive aspects of M3H’s vision statement, it still falls in to some of Thompson’s (2012) “don’t” traps. M3H’s vision is flexible enough to incorporate directional adjustments, yet it lacks both specifics and a directional path. The broad spectrum of actual services the company is targeting is inconsistent with the company’s vision. M3H’s vision statement uses clichés such as “high-performance” and “world-class” which lack specific, measurable data. Further the addition of, “concept to contract,” at the end lacks its true intent to reflect the flexible nature of the company as required by the unpredictable nature of military contracts (McDonald, 2012). Each of these weaknesses results in either a frequently-changing vision or a confused and overwhelmed audience (Scheier, 2013). As an employee, it is difficult to identify personal impact to future objectives.

M3H plans to actively target three primary markets: aviation services, information technology, and international flight safety training. Contract customers range from the Department of Defense, State, and Federal Governments and Administrations. The company emphasizes exceptional customer service, subject matter expertise (SME), relationship building, an altruistic culture, and the lowest price. Finally, M3H’s product is service through human resources. Thus, the strategic vision should be developed with these attributes in mind. If the company intends to provide their Government customer with highly-qualified, motivated, subject matter experts at a cost below industry standards, it should be reflected in the strategic vision. M3H needs to remove vague, cliché language and describe its vision for long-term business operations. Finally, the vision statement should be comprehensible by its audience. Guessing the intent or using a confusing slogan lacks motivation or inspiration to customers and employees (Thompson, 2012).

**Mission Statement**

Corporate mission statements differ from its strategic vision in that the vision is a futuristic (long-term) intention while the mission is the current purpose (Thompson, 2012). M3H Aviation Solutions, LLC’s mission statement is, to provide innovative aviation services through “training, intelligence, surveillance, simulation and, direct contract mission support” in the military, Federal, International, State and local aviation market space. M3H uses its exceptional history and subject matter expertise in the “aviation services market” to quickly develop realistic, attainable, and cost-effective solutions for our customers by providing highly-trained and skilled contractors to accomplish mission requirements. This statement accurately reflects the present scope of business M3H is performing. First, it specifically outlines M3H’s service in technical, training, surveillance, simulation, and mission support. Each of these facets plays a vital role in today’s military mission requirements and offers a multi-dimensional assessment of the company’s actual mission. Second, it clearly states the customers in which the company serves. Lastly, M3H’s mission statement offers affordable solutions and experienced and talented professionals. These distinct statements give the company its identity.

**Analyzing Strengths and Weakness of M3H’s Mission Statement**

Patrick Hull outlined four necessities for a great mission statement in *Forbes Magazine*. M3H has strengths in three of Hull’s requirements: 1) what we do; 2) how we do it; and 3) whom we do it for (Hull, 2013). Additionally, M3H’s mission statement is all-encompassing of current operations and even offers insights to strategic approach. The statement is well written and avoids using vague or confusing language. M3H’s business operations cover a wide range of customers and services. So, while the mission statement is not particularly concise, the basics of “who we are and what we do” (Thompson, 2012, pp 16) are clear. Thompson (2012) also suggests that the mission statement identify the organization’s product or service and should specify the customer requirements that the organization is seeking to meet. Both of these are done well through M3H’s mission statement as both the product/service and customer requirements are outlined. The statement’s final strength is reflected in its realistic nature. The statement is not an aspiration or a goal; it is a reflection of M3H’s actual business standings.

Few weaknesses in M3H’s mission statement can be identified. The most obvious is the constraints “aviation services” puts to remain solely in this market. While it does reflect the current mission, it may not in the near term. Frequently changing the mission may confuse stakeholders such as employees and customers. Another weakness is Patrick Hull’s (2013) fourth requirement: “the value we are bringing.” M3H’s mission statement negates one of M3H’s primary objectives and values: to develop relationships that last a lifetime. Currently, many assets (financial, time, energy) are put toward fostering quality partnerships. M3H seeks to be a trusted asset to its customers, partners, and employees. Thus, the mission statement could include this attribute.

Recommendations for changes to M3H’s mission statement are limited to addressing weaknesses listed above. In the next couple of months, M3H will be expanding into the information technology (IT) and aircraft maintenance markets. The change will allow the company to grow beyond aviation services listed in its mission statement. Thus, the mission statement will need adjustments to reflect updated services. During revision, it is suggested to include a description of M3H’s relationship-building initiatives. The final recommendation is based on Thompson’s (2012, pp 17) suggestion that a mission statement should “give the company its own identity.” To provide the audience with the characteristic, M3H could suggest being the “most affordable” or the “leanest” in the industry (which is accurate).

**Core Values**

Developing a set a core values should communicate both the company’s most important values and dictate how stakeholders should expect to interact with the company. Since choosing customers, employees, and partners is ever changing, Government Contractors should take precautions ensure common values are aligned to meet objectives. Otherwise, companies may face conflicting processes, ideas, and behaviors (Malphurs, 2014). M3H Aviation Solution’s core values are: responding to the changing needs of our customers and being dependable and mission focused. We are committed to developing “long-term relationships through honesty, trust, integrity, respect, and service excellence.” One very positive aspect about M3H is the consistency in the President’s personal core values and those of the company. Such is reflected in his dependable honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity. Further, he remains the bigger person when wronged to uphold his dedication to relationships and partnerships.

**Analyzing Strengths and Recommendations of M3H’s Core Values**

Leading by example is a vital aspect to expectation management of employees, customers, and partners. This is M3H’s greatest strength of its core values. When such values are reiterated and practiced on a daily basis, it reinforces the importance to the company. In an interview with Robert Ford, Darden CEO, Joe Lee, confesses that one of the company’s greatest strength is hiring people who share the same core values as Darden (Ford, 2002). This is also true for M3H Aviation Solutions. The President carefully and strategically selects employees who are honest, can be trusted, have integrity, and respect. These are not attributes that can be taught, thus, hiring employees who already possess them is vital to executing the customer service required in Government contracting.

M3H is a low-cost minded company. This characteristic is no surprise to the customer or the employees as it is evident in proposal bids and expectations. However, omitting such a large aspect in the core values may leave some to question the ethical nature or true core values of business operations. This can only be further exaggerated if other (even non-related) negative business dealings occur. In today’s business, omitting information may be just as harmful as lying about it. Additionally, it might be beneficial if in the core values a statement is made to communicate the expectations set with current and future partners.

Thompson (2012, pp 18) recommends that companies “practice what they preach” and “walk the talk.” It is clear M3H succeeds at accomplishing these suggestions with operations, partners, and employees. Other experts suggest that core values should be developed to attract customers with parallel standards (Deringer, 2012). This can be expanded to include suppliers and partners as well. M3H has several partners differing on each contract. It would be recommended to make an expectation for shared values within the core values statement. Further, the company may want to eliminate pre-conceived ideas that the company may cut corners engage in unethical dealings in order to save money. M3H should (without divulging its entire strategy) communicate how developing long-term relationships has enabled the organization to sustain economical and cost-effective business operations.

**Conclusion**

An organizational vision, mission, and core values communicates to customers, employees, partners, and suppliers the intent of business operations. As a business changes, new products are introduced and new services performed, so can the statements that define the company’s commitment to a path. With only three years under its belt, M3H is growing rapidly. Contracts have been awarded, new expertise is being developed, and new partnerships are being formed. M3H has much strength in its vision, mission, and core values that define the organizations dedication to customers and employees. However, these should be refined to indicate long-term and current goals as well as all-inclusive to offer a complete package.

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