



Developing Your Professional Mission and Values

Your professional mission and values serve as your “compass” in life and work. This is true whether you are an external or internal consultant. They guide how you make decisions and solve problems, especially during complex and challenging activities. For many of us, our mission and values are implicit – we have not taken the time to clarify them explicitly or to write them down. Without explicitly proclaiming the mission and values from which we want to operate as professional consultants, we are prone to getting ourselves into situations – and operating in those situations – in a manner that does not match our nature and needs. Your professional mission and values can be communicated to clients to help them to understand and trust you, which is critical in collaborative consulting. Therefore, it is important for professional consultants to consider articulating their own mission and value, ideally in mission statements and values statements.

Developing Your Professional Mission Statement

Your professional mission statement describes overall purpose of your consulting activities. There are various perspectives on mission statements. Some people believe the statements should describe an overall purpose. Some people believe the mission should also include a description of a vision, or future state. Some people believe the mission should also include a description of overall values. Mission statements can be just a few sentences long.

There are also various perspectives on how to develop a mission statement. The suggestions below are associated with one of the ways to develop your own professional mission statement to describe the purpose of your consulting activities.

The process of producing your own professional mission statement is as important as the mission statement itself. Therefore, it is important for you to carefully think about your own mission before you reference any mission statements produced by others.

When you write your professional mission statement, it should:

1. Succinctly describe the purpose of your consulting activities.
2. Succinctly describe the overall type(s) of clients you serve in your work.
3. Mention the particular results (new knowledge, skills and/or conditions) that you work to help your clients achieve.
4. Convey a strong public image.
5. Mention any particular strengths and expertise that you have.
6. Be clearly understandable by you and your clients.

Developing Your Professional Values Statement

Your professional values statement describes the most important priorities in the nature of how you want to operate as a consultant. Some people might prefer to do a principles statement. Principles are descriptions of values in action and often begin with the phrase, “I will ...” or “I believe ...” Similar to the mission statement, the process of producing the values statement is as important as the values statement itself. The following guidelines will be helpful to you as you develop your own professional values statement.

- 1. When identifying values, think about behaviors produced by those values.**
Many of us struggle to directly identify desired values. We can get bogged down in words that seem too general, idealized – even romanticized – to be useful. Often, it helps first to identify desired behaviors and then the values that produce those behaviors.
- 2. Consider any relevant laws and regulations that pertain to your consulting.**
Identify behaviors or values that will help you operate in a manner so as to avoid breaking these laws and to follow the necessary regulations.
- 3. Consider suggested principles for effective consulting.**
Consider behaviors and values that are in accordance with the most important principles for consulting for you.
- 4. Consider your own lens, biases, style, response to feedback and conflict.**
You might identify behaviors and values that will help you to counter any potential misperceptions or obstacles that you might develop because of your own particular nature and needs.
- 5. Consider any current, major issues in your work.**
Identify the behaviors needed to resolve these issues. Identify which values would generate those preferred behaviors. There may be values included that some people would not deem as moral or ethical values, for example, team-building and promptness, but for many, these practical values may add more relevance and utility to a values statement.
- 6. Consider any ethical values that might be prized by your clients.**
For example, consider expectations of their customers, suppliers, investors and members of the local community. Before you identify these “public relations” values, be careful that you do not select values that you really cannot adhere to in your work.
- 7. From the above steps, select the top five to ten values.**
You cannot be all things to all people, including to yourself. Even if you do include all the values on your statement, it is still important for you to carefully think about which values are most important to you.
- 8. Associate with each value, two example behaviors which reflect each value.**
Examples of behaviors for each value make the values much more explicit and understood to you and to others.