

Slide: Title Slide

Slide: Introduction (Photo and Info)

Hello everyone, my name is Tim Smith. I am the Operations Manager for Schuler Books with 4 stores throughout Michigan. I also am an instructor in the PBS Operations Module. I'm excited to be here today to speak about communication related to Mission, Values and Vision so that you are able to involve your team in seeing these aspects of your business come to life.

Slide: What We Will Accomplish Today

Today I am committing to sharing with you what I've learned about Mission, Values, and Vision. I will also provide for you some of what I find are good ways to communicate these elements of our businesses in a way that gets everyone united in a shared purpose regarding how to live these things out on a day-to-day basis. What you will be responsible for is participating in the act of taking this information and turning it into a plan for your store. To accomplish this, I will share information with you, and lead us in a few exercises that will allow you to craft pieces of this while we are together today. I hope we will also have a chance to talk with each other about some things that will be helpful to you as well. Today's session will jumpstart your process or refine the work that you've already done in this area. If that sounds good to everyone, we'll go ahead and get started.

Slide: Mission-Values-Vision

So first we will get into what each of these are, and what role they play in your business. Each is different from the other, but they all complement each other. Your mission, values, and vision inform the various ways your organization will decide its direction and purpose. How this looks is that you have your mission, often communicated as a mission statement. Values, which typically are a set of core beliefs that are informed by what you decide is important. Then, your vision which serves as a roadmap for how you will practically realize both your mission and core values.

Slide: Mission

In my mind your mission, as stated through a mission statement is the key to getting all the rest of this correct. Your mission is something that can be communicated concisely to articulate your core purpose, what your organization does, and who it serves. It is your guiding principle that will keep you focused and align everyone working with you to fulfill your stated mission. It informs business choices and strategies. It also will inform your customers on what your purpose is as well. Your mission is essentially the reason you believe your organization exists. When you craft your mission statement you want it to be something that you can communicate clearly and concisely to anyone that you interact with. We will get into the communication part as we progress today. For now. Think about why you wanted to do the work you are doing. See if you can state that in one or two sentences. This is your mission. You can craft your mission statement from that thought.

Slide: Values

Your values are the guiding ideals and behavioral standards that dictate how the team operates internally and externally. Some organizations have an extensive list of core values, and others have a pretty basic set of these. They should be specific enough to provide guardrails that keep you headed in the right direction, but also leave enough flexibility to allow for adaptation in situations where things evolve. After 30 years in the industry I've seen enough changes that I've had to lead our teams in re-assessing our values many times.

Slide: Vision

Vision is bigger, and much more complex. This is often developed over a period of concentrated effort to decide your path forward in relation to how you would like to implement your mission in practical ways. This is different than goal setting, or strategic thinking. I find it helpful to spend time thinking about the vision in disciplined times throughout the year. Your vision will adapt to changes in how you see your organization living out your mission throughout the life of your organization and should have periodic reviews over time. Essentially your vision is what you see as the concrete ways you want to implement your mission in your store. I'll share with you how our store does this practically in one department specifically later, but first I want to offer a couple of tips.

First, if you've never been part of a visioning process I encourage you to seek out some help. There are a bunch of really good resources for this. If you go to the Zingtrain website you can find many resources on visioning in their library. These resources will take you far in developing your plan for visioning. If you really want to go deep into this, they offer intensive vision process workshops as well. Also, there are people trained in this that will walk your team through a visioning process. Both of these last couple of things will involve big time, and monetary considerations, but it can really pay off in the long run.

Our marketing department has a tradition of gathering in January or February each year to vision for the upcoming year. We go offsite, and we spend an entire day on this process. Everyone comes prepared with homework that has been given out ahead of time, we look back at the previous years successes and learning opportunities, and then we spend the rest of the time intentionally looking forward at the next year in a way that we set our sights on how to take forward the things that are important while also dreaming up new ways to fulfill our mission while staying true to the store's values. This has been a meaningful process that has informed other parts of the business as well.

<https://launch.zingermanscommunity.com/2021/04/zingermans-2032-vision/>

Slide: Craft Your Mission Statement 5 minutes

One thing I want you to take away from this time is your mission statement. In a minute I will give you a few minutes to think about and begin to craft your mission statement if you don't have one or look at your current mission to be sure you are satisfied with it.

Before we do that let's briefly recap what a mission statement is. A mission statement is something that should be able to be communicated and repeated by anyone working in your organization. Your mission statement should be specific enough to communicate what you do, but general enough to allow for things to fit within it no matter what changes over the life of your organization. Your mission is why you think your organization exists as well as what you hope to contribute to those you serve. The construction should be simple. The concept will not necessarily be.

Take 5 minutes to write out your mission. To help you do this think of these questions. Why does my store exist? Why did I decide to do this work? What do I want to do for those my store serves? I find these questions to be helpful in crafting a mission statement. So answer these questions, but write your answers 3 times. Each time you write out your answers try to make them deeper, and clearer. If you already have a mission statement. Write it out and ask yourself the above questions. Does it answer these questions. If not, see if you can change it just a bit to do that. Okay. Go ahead and start. I want to give you about 5 minutes to work on this, and then we'll come back together.

Slide: Sharing 5-10 minutes

Are there any questions after this exercise? Any questions about what we've covered so far? Is there anyone willing to share what they wrote?

Slide: Communicating These Elements

How you communicate these three pieces of information will be crucial to how you are able to get buy-in and shared purpose with your team. It will also be crucial to communicate to your community so that you have the relationship with the larger community that you desire.

Slide: Communicating With Staff

Communicating your mission, values, and vision to the staff of your store is likely the most important communication you will deliver to this group. I'm sure any of you that manage people know that any staff who work with you naturally are not going to be as invested in the business as you are. This is natural and expected. While that is true, it doesn't mean that you can't develop a staff of people who are absolutely connected to you as well as your mission. When this happens, you will have a group of highly motivated people working in concert with one another for the greater good. If you accomplish this, there is no limit to what you can do.

Just a quick note about motivation. When developing these strategies, it is extremely important for you to consider why you want to get everyone on the same page. It is important to ensure that your method of communication, and your message is not transactional. If you do this for the person working for you to benefit, that is leadership. If you do this for your benefit only people know that, and it is seen as manipulation.

Slide: Strategies for Staff Communication

Think of the places and ways that you would like to see the mission, values, and vision communicated if you worked for your organization. For the mission, I would put this in as many places as possible. It should show up on your application, in your training, in your handbook, and somewhere in all your written internal communication. You will want to also reference it in all of your staff meetings, in conversations where explanations of why you do something, etc. Remember no one ever leaves a company because leaders overcommunicate.

What do some of these things look like? Your mission statement in writing can simply show up just below your store logo on whatever documents you offer to staff. In person conversation happens in a variety of ways, but one of my favorites is when someone brings me a suggestion or a problem. Often it starts off with something like, “Hey Tim, don’t you think it would be cool to do...xyz thing.” My response typically starts off with something like, “Yes, that sounds exciting. Tell me how you think it fits with our mission.” If it is a good idea that fits, we usually spend a few minutes talking about why it would be great, and then I send that person off with the assignment to come back to me with a proposal. If it doesn’t fit, often before we are done talking the staff person has concluded on their own that it doesn’t fit. Then we agree to move on without it, or if there is an element that is worth exploring, we leave with an open invitation to continue the conversation after some more thought.

The last thing I will say here is that your communication with staff on these topics will likely be more aspirational than practical. What do I mean by that? So, think of this story. If you teach someone how to practically build a boat, for example, it will be a boat. It will float and have all of the elements necessary. If you take a bunch of boat builders that have a deep desire to be out in the open sea, they will on their own think of ways to innovate the basic boat to be the best boat for going out to sea. They think of what it would be like to be out there, and what they need for the experience to be great. It’s the same for us. We can have a beautiful functional bookstore by teaching how to shelve, and merchandise, and run a register, etc. That said, we can have a truly magical, community treasure when everyone is united in what it looks like to have a space focused on the love and enjoyment of a great book. You have people working together to create a space and experiences that inspire and captivate everyone.

Slide: Why Is It Important to Communicate This To Your Staff

So why is this important? From the organization’s perspective it is one of the best ways to get better participation from staff. It is also the best way to consistently attract great staff. How does that work you might ask. Well, if you think of your staff like customers for a minute. If they are feeling like they are contributing to something important, work in a place that cultivates trust and safety, and they see themselves bettering themselves do you think they will be quiet about that? No. They will tell their friends and family about it. They will bring you people that will make positive impact in the store. This is just one way that it benefits the business.

For the employee they will feel the things we just talked about. They will have a sense of purpose working with you. They will feel safe and have trust in you. They will be a

better version of themselves working for you. No matter if they hate the work, they are going to take skills learned from the job at your store with them to their next work. Hopefully they will stay with you a long time and contribute positively to your mission. If not, though, they will certainly be better versions of themselves.

If you have ever heard me speak before on a topic related to leadership, you already know that I take a lot of inspiration from Simon Sinek. One of the things he does with each employee that joins his group is he personally calls them and welcomes them. Part of the welcome is that he says to them some version of, “congratulations you have joined our team. Our team has an outsized impact on the world around us, and you are now part of that. He shares the vision of what they are joining, and then he clearly states what he expects from them. The basic expectation is that they commit to taking themselves on. He promises to provide some resources and education to do that, but that they will also have to do some work on their own. Whether the person stays for a long or short time his expectation is that the person will leave a better version of themselves for having worked there.

Slide: Communicating With the Community

Communicating your mission, values, and vision with your community will happen in different ways depending on what your mission, values, and vision are. Some stores are completely mission driven and speak out about it openly and often. If you are a general bookstore and your mission, values, and vision are more general the communication to the public will be a bit more subdued. Don't mistake this for it being unimportant. It is important to communicate with your community regardless of where you fall on this spectrum.

Slide: Strategies for Community Communication

You will communicate with the community in writing sometimes. You may have statements on a bookmark or a sign that make it clear why you appreciate their support, and why this support matters. You will communicate in social media posts and newsletters at various times throughout the year as well. One common practice in our industry is to send an end of the year thank you newsletter, for example. This is a great place to put down your thoughts on why you exist, and what impact community support of your mission has.

You will also communicate verbally with customers that ask you questions or make suggestions. Think about something common. We've all had the question in some form about why we charge more for books, or do we price match Amazon. If you are like me this question makes me feel all sorts of things. It has taken our store a very long time to get to a place where we have a standard response to this that isn't defensive, or overly explains things. Our basic response to this now, is some version of, “I understand your question for sure, and I'm sorry there's confusion around this issue. We charge the price that the publisher has come up with so that the authors are able to be properly compensated, and bookstores are able to be the community resource that

you deserve access to.” Some people still don’t accept this, but it is much more understandable than trying to explain Amazon’s business practices for example.

Lastly you will communicate your values specifically by what you stock, who you invite for signings, what community groups you work with, etc. This is important to consider when deciding how these things impact your mission, values, and vision.

So now that we’ve talked about the communication piece. Why don’t we pause for a few minutes here and give you each a chance to write down ways that you currently communicate with staff, and the community plus additional ways you can think of to expand that. Perhaps we can take 3-5 minutes for that.

Slide: Live it

Now you understand what mission, values, and vision looks like. You also have tools, and ideas about how to communicate them as well. The last thing I will talk about here is that you have to live this stuff. No matter what the mission is, no matter how you communicate it. It takes an incredible amount of discipline. You will fall short sometimes, but if you are consistent that will be alright. An important truth to keep in mind is that your culture will be more impacted by what you tolerate vs what you promote. So, if you say your mission is to connect people through books, and you don’t take it seriously when hiring to hire readers it will communicate to everyone in your organization and community that you aren’t serious about this. It won’t matter how often you state your mission or how eloquently you communicate your values. It won’t resonate with people if it isn’t part of who you are as an organization.

Slide: Q & A 15 minutes

Slide: Thank You

I want to take a moment to thank MPIBA for inviting me to be here today. Thank you all for being here. I hope you will now have some tips, and tools to go back to your stores to put what we talked about here today into practice.

Slide: Want More?

Keep in mind that you can do more work on this topic if you wish. Earlier I spoke about Zingtrain. That’s a great resource. The ABA has lots of educational opportunities, don’t forget about PBS. There are many modules for anything you want to learn.