Sequence off the Mission Statement
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Every nonprofit has a mission statement. It should be memorable, describing the organization’s purpose and framing leadership discussions.

It is not a standalone item. Build upon the mission with supportive documents and processes.

Sequencing

Sequencing is the process of combining things in a particular order, or discovering the order in which they are combined. Consider the application of sequencing to a launch process. From idea to implementation and evaluation of the mission, the steps work best in order.

Start with a good mission statement and other elements will follow suit. The mission is part of a brand platform or promise to stakeholders. The platform is often composed of the mission, vision and values statements.

A poorly drafted mission (too many words, confusion) or a lack of its use, adds little value to the most important wording in the organization.

Get the mission right and the association maintains relevance. Get it wrong and stakeholders wonder what you do.

In evaluating a mission statement I would offer that brief is better. It should distinguish the organization from others while answering the question, “Why join?”

Between the Mission and Dashboards

From the mission statement a number of communication techniques improve awareness of the association. They generally follow a sequence.

1. **Elevator Speech** – A thoughtfully crafted elevator speech allows leaders to communicate a consistent message between the first and third floor of an office building, for example City Hall. Because attention spans are short, be prepared when someone says, “Tell me about your organization.” It is usually a few sentences that include the mission, description of the membership, founding information, a note about the type of members, and major goals of the organization.
2. **Strategic Plan** – The plan serves as the roadmap or GPS (goals, priorities and strategies.) Members should be aware organization's and leaderships goals. It can be summarized in a brochure or on a business card. It should always be on the board table as well as at committee meetings. It should answer, “What does the association do for me?” Include it in member solicitations and renewals. AIA Orlando initially distributed it to members and prospects as a postcard.

3. **Impact Statement** – An infographic that depicts the impact of the association. Find data that impresses stakeholders. For example, size of the community represented, number of employees, taxes paid, investments, successes. Members want to know their association has influence. Design it as a page or two, avoiding a lengthy report of statistics.

4. **Member ROI** – Provide members and prospects with a formula for determining return on investment. Before joining or renewing prospects are asking, “Do I need to belong? What is the return on investment?” Consider an on-line value calculator such as those created by the Texas Medical Association and the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association.

5. **Dashboards** – Communicate progress of the strategic plan and mission with a visual report using graphics such as gauges and meters. An updated dashboard at every board meeting improves understanding of what’s important to measure and monitor. Dashboards allow the board to identify gaps and trends at a single glance.

Everything is built upon the mission. Sequence them in an order to improve impact and understanding.

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**Note:** Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and templates at [www.nonprofitcenter.com](http://www.nonprofitcenter.com).