

LEADERSHIP QUESTION #6: WHICH IS MOST IMPORTANT— MISSION, CORE VALUES OR VISION?

Continuing in my series of “[20 Leadership Questions](http://michaelhyatt.com/tag/20-leadership-questions) (<http://michaelhyatt.com/tag/20-leadership-questions>),” we come to the sixth question that [Michael Smith](http://www.michaelhsmith.com/) (<http://www.michaelhsmith.com/>) asked when he interviewed me. This one is related to something very near and dear to me.



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Michael asked,

“ Which is most important to your organization—mission, core values or vision?”

This is a little bit like trying to answer which sense is more important—sight, smell, hearing, taste, or touch? The truth is that they are all important.

At Thomas Nelson, our *core ideology* is comprised of four key elements. These are distinguishable but inseparable. It's a little bit like talking about an orange. You can distinguish its shape, its color, its size, and its smell and taste. However, you can't do away with any of these attributes and still have an orange. So it is with your organization's core ideology.

Here's how I define each element and roughly the priority I assign to each.

1. **Purpose.** Every organization has a purpose. That purpose may be clear or vague. It may be conscious or unconscious, written or unwritten. Some purpose statements are specific and inspiring, while others are vague and uninspiring. Regardless, no organization is ever formed—or continues to exist—without some sort of purpose. It is worth taking time to answer the question, “Why do we exist?”
2. **Values.** Values are the ideals that we esteem as a company. They are the philosophical foundation of our corporate ideology. They are the things that we hold dear and use to make decisions and keep us on-track. They are what we believe—no matter what. However, if they are to be more than mere platitudes, we must translate our values into specific behaviors that we expect from one another.
3. **Vision.** Having a clear vision of where you are going is crucial in any human endeavor. This is especially true when it comes to organizations. Unless we know where we are going, it is difficult to select the best

route, assign the necessary resources, or create any semblance of organizational alignment.

4. **Strategy.** Once you have a clear vision about where you are going, you can formulate a strategy for getting there. The best strategy is generally the one that gets you to your destination the fastest with the most efficient use of resources. However, some strategies work well in the short-term, but at the expense of the organization's values or purpose. That's why we can't really select the right strategy until we know why we exist (purpose), what we believe (values), and where we are going (vision).

To be effective, all four of these should be written down. At Thomas Nelson, this process literally took us two years. (But even now, we are continuing to fine-tune and polish.) Periodically, we review these components and assess our activities against them.

Questions: Does your organization have a written ideology? Do you include similar elements? more? less? How have they helped your organization?

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