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Managing the mission

Business owners work to set their companies apart - and get employees on the same page - with detailed mantras

Birmingham Business Journal - by [Aneesa McMillan](#) Staff

It's a common obstacle that small business owners face: How do you get employees to buy into your vision without sounding like a crazed cult leader or a quirky self-help author?

Or how do you conquer the struggle to develop a business model that doesn't scream "company owner gone nuts"?

But most importantly, how do you get employees to adopt your plan for success that makes them feel like they are a part of the team?

Some local business owners have found a way to effectively relay company goals through a mission statement that does not alienate employees.

Rob Henger, CEO and owner of **Henger Rast Mortgage Corp.**, believes a mission statement should do two things: define the purpose of the company and provide a differentiating fact that points out a company's specialty.

"Our mission is to provide access to home ownership to all Americans," said Henger. "Our niche is personal service."

When Henger took over the company that later became Henger Rast in 2004, he challenged himself and his company to reach out to a different demographic of people in a new way, he said. His mission statement played an integral role in taking his company in a new direction, he said.

It reads, "Henger Rast Mortgage Corp. is committed to breaking down barriers and simplifying the lending process to help all Americans obtain the dream of homeownership. Henger Rast Mortgage Corp. fully employs its extensive financial and human assets to provide the highest level of customer service in the mortgage banking industry."

"Your mission statement has to say what you do and differentiate how your business is different from your competitors," Henger said. "As a business owner, you have to decide at the beginning if you are going to be a company that pays attention to details."

As for employees, Henger said the mission statement can provide a strong sense of direction.

"Our mission statement largely defines the culture of the organization," Henger said. "I would say it brings an expectation of the culture and performance within our staff."

Business owners must also allow their mission statements to grow with their company, he said.

"Over the years, it has evolved and changed as the purpose of the company changes," Henger said. "Our purpose has broadened and improved."

Brian Bateh of AL Employment agrees. Bateh implemented a mission statement when he began his company that said, "To provide the best service to both clients and candidates at a fair market price."

He made sure the mission statement was a key component in his company's development.

"I developed it from day one ... It was the foundation of what we wanted to accomplish for the future," said Bateh. "The employees responded very well ... We included them in the process and it was something that we all came up with collaboratively."

In order to be effective, it was something the entire staff had to believe in, he said.

"They didn't have to buy into it, so it eliminated the backlash," Bateh said.

He even makes sure new employees are aware of his vision for the company.

"They are introduced to the mission statement during the hiring process," Bateh said. "It really sets the tone and level of expectations for new hires."

As it relates to his business model, Bateh said the mission statement is an integral part of his business plan.

"It defines who you are as an organization and it also sets the guidelines of where you want to go," he said.

Paavo Hannien, director of the small business development center at the **University of Alabama**, said there is a strong correlation



Bob Farley | F8photo.org

Rob Henger, CEO of Henger Rast Mortgage Corp., crafted a mission statement that outlined the company's specialty, providing everyone access to homeownership.

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between the business plan and the mission statement.

“If they don’t have a mission statement, then they probably don’t have a business plan,” said Hannien. “What the plan says will speak to the goals of the company.”

A lack of clear and concise planning can create a variety of issues for the company and its employees, he said.

“It can’t just be a couple folks in a conference room,” he said. “It needs to be a reflection of the total ethos of the company and its customers.”

As for employees, Hannien said it gives a clear understanding of their roles in the company.

“It gives an understanding to an employee of the value of the company,” Hannien said.

However, like most issues surrounding the galvanization of companies and their employees, if it is done incorrectly, there are some common problems.

“If you haven’t at least sat down and talked about it, you’ll have some confusion about who you want to be.”

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