

THE NO NONSENSE GUIDE TO HELP YOU PREPARE A STATEMENT OF YOUR CASE



"This draft of the Case Statement has my basic thrust. Have it fleshed out, pretty'd-up, fussed over, given a shot of pizzaz, minimize the cost of the project, make the memorial opportunities sexier, shorten the headlines but add a lot more sizzle, get more exciting photos, cut the length, give me more details, find more inspiring quotations, get Board approval, and have it back tomorrow morning in final form."

YOUR VISION

Men and women will give sacrificially of their time, talents, and funds— if they believe in the value and integrity of your services and programs. A devotion to the mission of your institution leads to commitment and dedication. And that leads to dollars. You can count on it! There is no other factor as important. Nothing else even comes close.

Every organization and institution needs a basic document that sets forth its nature, purpose, and principal objectives. That document is often called a Case Statement. In business and corporate parlance, it is referred to as The Prospectus. Your major donors and leaders will understand that term. In our firm, we most often call it a Vision Statement— because we feel that there is nothing that has more dramatic and powerful impact than the proper interpretation of your dreams and your visions for the future. That is the magic!

The Case should state the type and scope of service you now provide and your objectives for the future. Here are some important components of a typical statement:

- Why are your activities and programs important
- Who benefits
- What is your philosophy of operation and your mission— your Grand Design
- What opportunities do you seek for greater service
- What is the nature and extent of your financial needs
- In what ways will you become a stronger and more effective organization
- How will the funds you seek help your institution serve more effectively and fulfill your mission
- What imperatives propel and move your organization forward
- Why are you worthy of voluntary effort and support

For a capital or endowment campaign, the Vision Statement is of critical significance. It is essential. It is everything.

But whether you are planning a major fundraising effort or not, you should have a Vision Statement that is current. And it should be reviewed, assessed, and revised on a regular basis. It is your basic document— that which gives spirit, vitality, and purpose to all you do. It is your Institutional Credo.

IF A SIXTH GRADER CAN UNDERSTAND IT, YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK

At the heart of your Case Statement, there must be a description of your objective and institutional purpose— your very special mission. It describes the philosophy and focus of your operation which makes you invincible! It is the platform which launches your program, and gives heart and character to the service you provide. The Mission Statement is not a sloganism— it is the life of your organization. Here are seven points which will be of help.

1 The statement of your mission is an enabling and empowering document. It is the engine which powers your institutional train. It uniquely combines your ethos, rationale, and philosophy— that memorializes and at the same time places into action your uncompromising purpose.

Putting into precise words this institutional covenant can be fiercely awesome— and requires deep introspection, careful scrutiny, and clear expression. It becomes your conscience and your guide. It is the overriding criterion by which you monitor and measure the health of your organization. It provides direction, determination, and dedication to all programs and services you offer.

2 A Mission Statement is more than just what you do. It describes why you do it.

Here's an example, for instance, of a statement that is bold, engaging, and reflective of the institution's values and focus. Most of all, it leaves no doubt what this organization is all about. "Next to the human face, hands are our most expressive feature. We work with them. We play with them. We comfort and love with them. An injury to the hand affects a person professionally and personally. At Vector Health Programs, we give people back the use of their hands.' Talk about a clear why, and clear values! This mission statement reminds us all of what it would be like to be without hands. It says why Vector exists.

3 The Mission Statement needs to describe how your organization chooses to bring about change. It is not described in terms of the programs and objectives necessary to achieve change. It is the change itself that becomes your mission.

4 The clutter and clang of an overly long Mission Statement makes it impossible to find the special core of the Statement itself. Keep it brief. Hone the words until there isn't any fat left.

5 The Statement should be understandable. If a sixth grade student can read, comprehend, and explain the Statement— you are probably on the right track.

6 The Statement should be reviewed, discussed, and approved by the Board of Directors. And then it should be assessed on a regular basis to make certain that both your institution and the Mission continue to be relevant and in concert, one with the other.

7 Once the Mission is approved, it must become the organization's credo, its anthem, the hymn it continually sings— with gusto, conviction, and zeal.

SEVEN WAYS A CASE STATEMENT IS USED

A carefully conceived, well-developed statement of your vision and need will assure that you:

- 1** Secure agreement, understanding, and commitment among your primary leaders and Board members— so that there is total dedication to the cause and a precise focus of the institution's objectives and long-range goals.
- 2** Have a direction and a defined strategy for how to most effectively present your vision and your case to your primary constituencies.
- 3** Inform leaders and workers of your program and your dreams— and demonstrate how the success of the endeavor will work to the immense benefit of those you serve.
- 4** Enlist new leaders to your cause— in sufficient numbers and at the proper level to win the effort.
- 5** Have an early working document and cultivation piece for prospective major donors.
- 6** Have a document that helps others endorse and share your vision— and accept greater and ever-expanding responsibility of identifying with your invincible mission and dreams.
- 7** Have a source book and guide for the writing of subsequent publications, articles, foundation proposals, and videotaped presentations.

SPEAK VERY SOFTLY. IT WILL SOUND LIKE THUNDER

The typical statement runs from 10 to 30 pages of double-spaced manuscript. But don't worry about how long or short it is. It needs to be as long as it needs to be! And no longer. A prospect will read a long document if it is well written. And a short statement not well written— will not be read at all. Don't worry about the pages. Worry about the writing.

The case is seldom a printed piece. It certainly should not look slick or expensive. More commonly, it is typed and photocopied and used for limited distribution.

The rationale for such a format is to avoid a piece that looks costly. That is often a turn-off. Desktop publishing, however, has increased the possibilities for cost-effective type-setting, design, and printing.

Here are some other tips:

- The Vision Statement is most often not a signed article, although it occasionally appears as a statement of the governing board of the institution.
- There are times when an introductory letter, signed by the chief volunteer officer, establishes the appropriate tone and setting.
- It need not be illustrated— but photographs, graphs, maps, or charts can be very effective and compelling in making the case.
- Emotion outpulls intellect every time. Go for the visceral. But it has to be believable.
- Statistics don't have sizzle! You've heard the story about the one fellow who says to the other: "A person is hit by a car every 18 seconds." The other fellow says: "That guy must be pretty bruised up at the end of the day." But if the statistics are dramatic and demonstrate sizable growth or need, they can often be displayed dramatically in a graph. Better still, instead of statistics, use actual cases, real stories, and write about victims or success stories. That will bring vital life (and dollars) to dull statistics.
- Often individual copies are numbered and registered. That helps give the feeling of "a limited edition to select friends."
- Methods of binding vary, but should seldom be elaborate. You may find that a three-ring binder is most effective. No one throws away a three-ring binder!
- Make it comprehensive— but not superfluous. And that's a fine line.
- And never forget . . . the thundering and dramatic impact of the understated.

THE NINE ESSENTIALS YOU HAVE TO COVER

There are nine areas you will need to describe and interpret. They almost always comprise the subject matter of the case. They need not necessarily follow in the order shown below.

The History of the Organization. This will be particularly important if your roots are deep and your heritage rich. Why and how did you come into existence? What issues caused your formation? Describe the social and demographic setting. Describe in dramatic terms your incomparable mission. But keep this all brief. Remember you are making the case for your future and your dreams-not your distinguished past!

The Problem and the Opportunity. A statement of the social problem which creates the need for the particular project or program. Describe the compelling opportunity and challenge for service that is presented to your institution at this time. Write about the urgency. Keep in mind that people are most persuasively motivated by what saves lives or changes lives. Do not describe how the proposed program will help the institution— about how it will help people. It is important that the case has a larger platform than the institution itself.

Proposed Solution. The institution's plan for solving the problem and why it seeks this particular opportunity for greater services.

The Institution's Unique Role. Why your particular institution is best qualified to respond to the problem, meet the challenge, render the proposed service.

The Goals. A description and the justification of fundraising projects.

The Fundraising Equation. In the financing of the proposed plan, who should be responsible? What are the sources of funding that will combine to make the goal? What part does private philanthropy play in that equation?

The Fundraising Plan. How you propose to raise the required funds and any evidence that this plan will be successful.

How to Give. Statements concerning the nature and kind of gifts you seek.

Leadership. The names and qualifications of those who will lead the fundraising program, as well as those who will be ultimately responsible for the program and policies for spending the money.

USE A TEAM APPROACH. IT ASSURES SUCCESS.

A statement of its case is probably the single most important document that an institution ever prepares. The best talents and most responsible authorities of the organization should be involved in its production.

It may be developed and written by the staff, although it is much more effective to have the staff and Board work in concert in the preparation. Finally, it should be approved by the Board. This assures all are in agreement and understand fully the thrust and forward focus of the organization.

Truly effective and memorable case statements are seldom produced exclusively by an outside writer without the intimate and whole-hearted cooperation of those who know the institution best. And for a variety of reasons, the best statements are not often produced internally by the institution's staff.

The most formidable Vision Statements are probably produced by a four-step process:

- Those who are best informed about the institution furnish the data and basic material.
- A skilled professional writer— who understands fundraising and the preparation of statements— develops the information, determines the concept, and puts the material in written form.
- The organization then edits the statement so that "it sounds like us."
- The professional writer then redrafts the statement to incorporate the organization's changes and suggestions.

What is too often overlooked in this process is its value in unifying the opinions of the leaders of the organization. The preparation of a case can be wonderfully effective in clarifying vague understandings, securing agreement on fundamental principles, and focusing everyone's thinking on the real issues confronting the institution.

Unless they are experienced in fundraising, few writers— no matter how talented— can prepare an effective statement. And almost never— an advertising or public relations firm.

Developing a Vision Statement is a milestone in the life of an organization. Because of the importance of the process and the experience, we recommend that responsibility for it be retained by the governing board itself, or by a high level committee, with proper staff support and technical assistance. Keep in mind, however, that it is said that a camel started off as a horse that was reviewed by a committee! Limit the number of people who are granted editing privileges.

"A man who knows not how to write may think this is no great feat. But only try to do it yourself and you will learn how arduous is the writer's task. It dims your eyes, makes your back ache, and knits your chest and belly together— it is a terrible ordeal for the human body.

So, gentle reader, turn these pages carefully and keep your fingers far from the text."

Prior Robert Alden
c 1300 AD

EVEN THE BEST WRITER CAN'T OVERCOME A WEAK INSTITUTION

A tiger chatted with a lion— as they drank by the side of a pool. "Tell me," said the tiger, "why you're always roaring like a fool."

"It's not so foolish," said the lion with a twinkle in his eye. "They call me King of Beasts, which proves it pays to advertise."

A little rabbit overheard this conversation and he raced home like a streak. He thought he'd try the lion's plan— but his roar was just a squeek.

And a hungry fox that morning had his breakfast in the woods. Which only goes to prove— It doesn't pay to advertise when you haven't got the goods.

No matter how skillful and creative the writer is, you cannot conceal an institutional lack of a well-defined and important purpose. No matter how compelling the copy, you cannot fabricate a dedication to significant and attainable goals. The organization must have the capacity and credibility to justify to the donor that his or her dollars will be used wisely and effectively— a happy mixture of institutional experience, capable staff and volunteer management, and proven efficiency and success. No mumbo jumbo. No flim-flam.

The writing of a case is not so much an experience in creativity, as an expression in self-revelation. A mediocre or unworthy institution cannot produce or substantiate a great case.

To prepare a carefully documented case— a statement that propels and motivates one to action— requires an appropriate amount of time. Don't push it! But if it takes too long, something is wrong. It probably means that some of the pieces are missing. Or you don't have a truly valid case. Or you have the wrong writer.

Too many case statements are merely self-adulation. But the case is not for the purpose of praising the institution. It is for heralding the institution's ethos— its purpose and objectives. It must motivate the reader to identify with that purpose and those objectives.

A really powerful case will be more concerned with the cause that the institution represents and the problem it seeks to resolve— than with the institution itself. Not easily achieved, this subtle approach!

If your institution has the will and the faith— you can break all barriers, overcome any obstacles, and achieve great things.

WATCH OUT FOR THE SIX PITFALLS. THEY'LL BURY YOU.

1 Undefined Purpose. The reasons your organization exists should be described in compelling terms. A clear statement of your mission and your vision is perhaps the central function of the case.

2 Overstated Emotionalism. It is perhaps natural and understandable to try to convey in writing how those who are closest to the organization feel about it. This sort of case may work with the most loyal alums of a college or the most grateful patients of a hospital — but is not always the most effective approach for those outside the inner circle. Keep in mind the powerful impact of the understated.

3 The Pleading of Needs. The fact that an institution has large and urgent financial needs is not a good reason for the dispassionate reader to make a gift. Every institution has needs. The reader is persuaded and moved by exhilarating opportunities — the promise of effective action and the solution to human and social problems. Dwelling on financial problems may, in fact, cause the potential donor to question the institution's financial management and stability. It may sound like a bad investment. Remember: Gifts come to institutions with answers and solutions not to those with financial problems and needs.



"Who the devil wrote this terrible Case Statement. It comes perilously close to the truth!"

4 Misunderstanding What Motivates a Prospect. Volunteer leaders and prospective donors are most often interested in the financial stability of the institution, the cost of the proposed project, and how the completed program will be funded in future years. Sure— they're interested in the cause and the project. But they also want to see the bottom line. They want to know about your past— in relation to your present and your future. They want to know how it will make their community a better place in which to live and do business. A too-lengthy history or a massive missile in which the facts are difficult to find can drown the reader. The quality of a statement is not to be measured in sheer weight!

5 Vague Plans. Planning should be fairly well completed before the case statement is issued. Vague and uncertain plans do not inspire.

6 Unsubstantiated Grand Claims. It is easy — and tempting to engage in chestbeating. Claims to eternal and infinite significance must be supported by commensurate documentation. Darn!

THE WRITE STUFF

Each writer has a style uniquely his own. (Okay, okay — you prefer . . . "a style uniquely his or her own!") But we'd like to suggest a few things to keep in mind to help you create a document with a sense of force and urgency.

Sell Your Reader. Don't lean over backwards to present your facts too objectively. Sure, tell the truth — but you must state your case in a manner that propels the reader to get out the checkbook. You must sell. And you must ask for the order.

Appeal First to the Emotions — Then to the Intellect. Personalize statistics with true stories and case studies. Resist the mundane. Talk about a specific heart patient or a girl that turned her life around with the scholarship she received. Describe a child with cerebral palsy who takes his first step. Tell the story of Johnny, a delinquent, whose life was changed by the Boys Club. Don't be subtle, be specific, use names — and if it makes the reader tingle and break out in goose bumps . . . well, you're on your way to a gift!

Hone Your Words Painstakingly. Some words are more positive, more powerful than others. When you are talking about the project, say what wonderful things it will (not "would") make possible. Never ask for help. Instead, talk in terms of the opportunity the campaign presents to the donor. Focus on the incredible work that is accomplished in a less than adequate facility, rather than describing a place so squalid and unsafe that the organization couldn't possibly be doing a decent job. Do you remember how much fun it was to get a gift at Christmas or on a birthday? A gift is fun, with very positive connotations. A pledge, a contribution, even a donation — these don't have the same warm-fuzzies as the magic word: Gift.

Break the Copy with Interesting Headings and Sub-Heads. Give readers a chance to pause and catch their breath.



"I'm willing to give to you if I'm properly motivated by a Case Statement that has high dramatic and emotional impact."

Tell Your Readers What You Want Them To Do. If your case is being used for a feasibility study, say that the institution welcomes the interviewee's ideas and involvement. If the case is used as the principal campaign publication, ask specifically, for a generous gift.

Be Certain to Use Visual Aids and Quotations. Maps, graphs, photographs, and charts add high impact to the case. Use quotations from the institution's "users," well-known citizens in the community who endorse the project and the institution, and others who can speak to the need for the project in the community. Or try a famous author, an artist, philosopher, or an expert in the institution's field of service. This will underline your message and add credibility.

Remember, the Vision Statement should move the reader to action. If it is sufficiently dramatic and appealing, the case transforms the institution into a cause. And causes are what motivate men and women to action.

THE FAIL-PROOF CHECKLIST

Here are some questions to ask, examine . . . and then answer, in preparing material for your Vision Statement. You can have total confidence in this list nothing has been forgotten. Use it as a guide to compliment the other areas indicated throughout this document. Check off each question as you complete the material.

✓	How Is The Institution Positioned In The Community And What Is Its Heritage?
	When was the institution founded?
	What were the circumstances surrounding the beginnings?
	What geographical area does the institution serve?
	Natural resources in the area?
	Industrial and business concentration?
	What distinguishes the area from the rest of the country, state, or nation— a capital, a distribution center, a rural area?
	Describe the population of the service area.
	Population trends. Increasing or decreasing? Aging?
	Level of affluence and occupational types.
	Educational level and cultural types.
	Ethnic origins.

✓	How Does The Institution Benefit The Community— How And Who Does It Serve?
	What are the services offered by the institution?
	How many people use these services? Have they been increased or decreased? Why?
	How much do each of these services cost? Are they furnished free or subsidized?
	What are the services offered by other organizations in the institution's service area?
	Is there any duplication of services or is the organization's niche unique?
	Does the institution cooperate with other organizations in joining programs or use of facilities?
	In the community, is there a need for services not currently being met that the institution could fill if it had increased funds?
	How many potential new users of the institution could you expect to attract if its programs_ were increased?

✓	Why Is A Fundraising Program Necessary?
	Why does the institution need funds?
	Is the program for capital or endowment or both?
	Specific components of the campaign and project?
	How will the campaign improve the organization's ability to fulfill its mission?
	How much money does the institution need?
	How will the money be raised?
	Have alternative sources of funding been investigated? (government grants, bonds, etc.)

✓	Is The Institution Fiscally Sound?
	What is the current operating budget?
	Is the institution operating in the black?
	Who makes the major contribution to the present operating budget?
	Does the institution have a membership drive, annual support campaign, admission fee, or subscriptions?
	Does it have an endowment?
	What are the financial assets and liabilities of the institution?
	Are the fees charged (if any) competitive?
	Does the institution have a Planned Giving program?

✓	Does The Institution Have Strong Leadership?
	What is the composition of the Board of Directors (or Trustees)?
	How many are on the Board?
	Are different ages and both sexes represented?
	Major business and commercial interests?
	Community minorities or institution's constituency?
	Is the staff well qualified?
	How many persons are on the staff?
	What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the Executive Director and other key staff?
	Does the institution use volunteers and are they effective?
	Do the administrative facilities meet the requirements of the staff and volunteers?

There's something mystifying that takes place when a group is asked to review or edit a Case Statement. It tends to kindle qualities in a person that are somewhere between sadism and belligerence. There's something uncontrollably satisfying in reworking material. Someone else's material! We understand that the feeling is very close to what pre-historic cavemen felt when they clubbed an enemy. What follows is a revision of the Gettysburg Address after a committee and board members were asked to look it over.

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address
(As Revised By Members Of The Board)

FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO	- <i>should be eighty-seven years and four months ago</i>
OUR FATHERS	- <i>confusing . . . do you mean the Pilgrims, or those who signed the Declaration of Independence, or what</i>
BROUGHT FORTH On	- <i>"founded" would be a better</i>
This Continent, A NEW NATION	- <i>be specific and name the country</i>
CONCEIVED In Liberty And Dedicated To The	- <i>sounds awkward . . . better say "based on the idea of freedom"</i>
Proposition That All MEN Are Created Equal.	- <i>tsch! tsch! what about women . . . we can 't afford to upset the women</i>
NOW WE ARE ENGAGED IN A GREAT CIVIL WAR Testing	- <i>make this the first paragraph— taking too long to get into the story</i>
WHETHER THAT NATION OR ANY NATION-	- <i>not necessary. . . just say "our nation"</i>
So Dedicated And So CONCEIVED	- <i>there you go using "conceived "again . . . say "established"</i>
Can LONG ENDURE.	- <i>endure what . . . a better term would be "continue to exist"</i>
We ARE MET	- <i>mixed tenses, very bad . . . say "have met" or "are gathered"</i>
On A GREAT BATTLEFIELD Of That War.	- <i>what battlefield . . . why not use the specific name</i>
We Have Come To Dedicate A Portion Of That Field As A FINAL RESTING PLACE For Those	- <i>why beat around the bush . . . just say "cemetery"</i>
Who Here Gave Their Lives THAT THAT Nation Might Live.	- <i>"that that" sounds like "ratatat-tat" . . . how about "that our country "</i>

"Sorry Mr. Lincoln, but you'd better try again. What we're after is something that's hard-hitting with more punch. Something with some snap, crackle, and pop. More authoritative and forceful. Something impressive— something that people will read and remember! By the way, would you mind using a little better scratch paper. It's hard reading your notes from those used envelopes."



"I think we should organize a campaign to raise money for air conditioning. But first we need to write a Case Statement."

TO OUR FRIENDS:

The cartoons and the material in this Monograph have been designed and written by the creative staff of Jerold Panas, Linzy & Partners. We would appreciate recognition if any portion is quoted or used directly in a document. But you are free to use any or all of the material without permission.

The great hope of all our staff is that you find at least some of it productive— perhaps a helpful springboard in developing your own Vision Statement.

We would be interested in your reaction to the material . . . and particularly pleased to have any suggestions you would like to add for future editions.

We are consultants to the world of philanthropy— a partnership of men and women engaged in all aspects of fundraising, resource attainment, leadership development, and design-communications. We provide a variety of services: Development Office Audits, consulting, pre-campaign feasibility studies, and resident campaign services.

The firm's major office is in Chicago. For more information or additional material, contact our Client Services Division:

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