

Pick a social mission that's true to your core business

by LuAnne Speeter

Most companies have a corporate mission statement. Sometimes they're rather predictable, like Dell's:

"Dell's mission is to be the most successful computer company in the world at delivering the best customer experience in markets we serve."



Other mission statements are more inspired and true-to-brand, like Coca-Cola's:

"To refresh the world...to inspire moments of optimism and happiness...to create value and make a difference."

But consumers today are often seeking more than a corporate mission from the companies they do business with. Studies show they're more likely to buy from companies who stand for something of social or environmental value.

At the same time, many businesses are proactively seeking to make a difference in their communities – or even globally – beyond the visions and values that comprise their corporate mission. In many cases, that may require adding a social mission into the mix.

A social mission ties your social initiatives to your corporate mission and gives them authenticity. While your corporate mission communicates how your company makes a difference through its profits, your social mission addresses your commitment to having an impact *beyond* profit.

Starbucks is an example of a company with two missions. We're familiar with the corporate:

"To inspire and nurture the human spirit— one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time."

The company's social mission is evident, not only through its environmental mission statement – "Starbucks is committed to a role of environmental leadership in all facets of our business" –

but also in other prominent features on its Web site: A home page video about The Food Project, [Starbucks Shared Planet](#) project and its customizable [Global Responsibility Report](#).

[Ben & Jerry's](#), an organization renowned for its social activism, has not one, not two, but three parts to its mission statement: [social, product and economic](#). Speaking at the [2009 CECF Corporate Philanthropy Summit](#), Ben & Jerry's CEO Walt Freese stated that "a company's overall marketing mission should be separate from its social mission even if they at times join forces. Consumers need to understand that your social mission is coming from a genuine place."

When determining your own social mission and initiatives, choose what works well with your corporate mission and your core products and services. For example, Western Union's core service and tagline, "Connecting families around the world," is in perfect unison with its [Our World, Our Family](#) program. Such authenticity will only enhance your brand reputation while contributing to the greater good.

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