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It has been said that if you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there. Having a plan works best when we embark on a journey. A maintenance and reliability journey is no different and a solid plan can align everyone's efforts toward a common mission. It is useful to compose a mission statement for your maintenance and reliability program that can be easily understood by company management, employees, and perhaps even your customers. If you already have a mission statement, you may want to revisit it, especially if it was created more than 5 years ago.

Many may think a mission statement requires a document the size of War and Peace (Tolstoy, Viking Press, ISBN 0140444173); however, before you begin writing the next chapter, check what some of the experts advise by visiting the following online resources.

A good starting point for mission statement tips is the Leader to Leader Institute web site (formerly the Drucker Foundation). This page offers a comprehensive set of instructions and advice to set a mission statement project in motion. Business guru Peter Drucker says the mission should "fit on a T-shirt," yet a mission statement is not a slogan. It is a precise statement of purpose.

One Page Business Plans stresses simplicity and clarity at its web site. According to the site, a mission statement should state what your business unit does, what you care about, and why someone should use your services.

According to Janel Radke, in an article posted at the Craftsmanship Center, a mission statement's message should be accomplished in a brief paragraph that is free of jargon and "terms of art." In other words, it should avoid the kind of shorthand you may be in the habit of swapping with others in your field, but is unfamiliar to anyone outside the organization or the field in which it works.

A mission statement is a marketing tool, a leadership tool, and a motivational tool so it should not be rushed nor should it be dictated or forced. It is useful to get contributions and participation from all of the stakeholders or people who will be affected by the mission statement.

Most experts agree that the mission statement should be kept short, should be easy to remember, without having to read it, and should sound good when spoken.

An offbeat guide for building a mission statement is available at the ABC News site that suggests you start with a short questionnaire for both internal and external contacts. It also suggests a strategy for involving a group and keeping focus to get the best mission statement.

About.com offers a great resources area for writing a mission statement at. This site offers a 12-step process and includes some handy tips.

If you are leading, facilitating, or participating in a project to create a mission statement, you may want to use the knowledge and experience you gain to write your own personal mission statement.

Some examples of a maintenance and reliability mission statement may be:

- To ensure machinery reliability
- To support manufacturing through coordinated maintenance
- To increase availability
- To drive profit from increased reliability **MT**