



## How Does Defining Purpose Help You Develop a High Performance Operation?

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*What distinguishes a high performance operation from others? What are the reasons for its consistent excellence in performance? This is the first in a series of six articles which will outline actions that you can take to move your operation forward and increase your stature within your organization.*

**Purpose.** The first step in developing a high performing operation is to understand why the operation even exists in your organization. What purpose does it currently serve? What purpose should it serve? How does it influence and how is it influenced by other parts of the organization? What would be the consequences to the organization and its clients if your operation ceased to exist?

As the leader, you need to be able to thoughtfully and honestly answer these questions and to clearly articulate the responses to them to the leadership, the staff and the clients of your operation. You should think in the future tense, so as to define what you see as the purpose of your operation for the years that lie ahead instead of simply looking at the current state.

Example: The purpose of the office of financial aid is to assist students and prospective students in obtaining the financial resources necessary to enroll in the institution so that they can complete their educational program and enter the workforce.

Once you have articulated purpose, you then need to seek common understanding and agreement about your operation's purpose from the leadership of your institution. This provides the organization with the information necessary for making strategic decisions related to your operation and for the allocation of resources to your operation.

Your operation's mission statement should clearly articulate purpose. All operational goals must be based upon both the mission and purpose of the operation. The goals of the operation must be clear and well defined and they should be updated and refined frequently. The goal statements should each include a quantifiable definition of success.

Purpose should drive all of the daily activities of your operation. All the members of your operation need to have a clear understanding of the operation's purpose and you need to obtain their personal commitment to it. Each individual's goals and performance should be measured and rewarded based upon how they contributed towards the operation's satisfaction of its purpose statement.

When you submit requests for additional resources, you should insure that they are consistent with the leadership's understanding of the purpose of your organization and you should articulate how these resources will assist the organization in achieving its goals and objectives.

By taking this action, you are actively and consciously creating the roadmap for the future of your operation rather than allowing others to define it for you.