Personal Mission Workbook

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Creating a Personal Mission Statement
Engineering Career Center Workbook Series

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NOTE:

In the spirit of our mission to **inspire and empower Cornell Engineers to create lifelong career success** we have developed this workbook as a tool to capture information at this point in your life. Your career aspirations, skills, abilities, interests, and desires will change over time. We hope you will continue to grow right along with them. There are no “right” answers, and there is no need to feel 100% confident in your decisions. Decisions will adjust and change as you move forward, and being flexible and adaptable will allow you to embrace new information and opportunities that present themselves.

For now, the exercises and information in this workbook are in an effort to help you clarify what you want and gain confidence in your ability to be successful in its pursuit.

Check out our additional workbooks and resources online: [http://www.engineering.cornell.edu/resources/career_services/students/index.cfm](http://www.engineering.cornell.edu/resources/career_services/students/index.cfm)
Recently a college student posted the cover drawing on Facebook, describing how she had time to “breathe and doodle” during winter break from college.

It’s a whimsical, beautiful drawing that shares some of the same sensibility she brings to her photography. She is a gifted, creative artist who brings a kind heart and genuine care of the subjects to each picture taking session.

People light up when they see their photos. It’s magical. Through her photography this person weaves together beauty and meaning while capturing the perfect moment of which a memory is then made. This is “part of who she is” and these are areas in which she exhibits passion, deep interest and natural talent. And happiness.

Passion. Interest. Talent. Happiness. Important indicators that help guide her path and that she could use to craft a personal mission statement.

This workbook will help YOU craft an honest and authentic personal mission statement. A personal statement that represents you. For now.

A personal mission statement It is a declaration that can light your path and guide your way. It can be used as a gauge and be of help as you navigate college. And life.

Imagine it’s Saturday morning and you have nothing planned. You have no limitations and no constraints! A whole day to do whatever you’d like. What would you do? Who would be with you? What’s the point? How do you feel when you think about that? What does that day look like?

These are some of your “indicators” of what your life is about.

**MY PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

What's my life about? What do I stand for? How am I creating that?

My Saturday looks like...
POTENTIAL? PURPOSE? MISSION?

“What one can be, one must be.” - Abraham Maslow

You’ve probably seen Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs—a theory which has been adopted and used widely. It is most often depicted in a triangle as a hierarchical pursuit toward self-actualization. Self-actualized people are those who are fulfilled and doing all they are capable of. Maslow stated that it’s a fundamental need to discover and live your life’s potential; to “actualize” your potential.

Maslow might say that it’s your purpose to actualize your potential. But remember—life is not necessarily sequential. Or neat and tidy. Most importantly, none of these levels occur in isolation; none are possible without social connection and collaboration. A sense of belonging and community makes all the levels possible. And it is our ability to connect with others that may help meet most people’s needs without them ever attaining or striving to attain the self-actualization stage.

So, with thanks to Maslow, the assumption for this workbook is that every human being shares the same life purpose:

To realize your potential...in community.

No matter what needs you’re currently filling in your life. No matter what level you’re in on the chart.

Make sense?

Great!

Now, let’s take one step forward.

What you need to know:

Personal mission statements are not set in stone—they are best used for right now and will change as time passes. They grow with you.
CREATING YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

With that singular purpose in mind, let’s create a personal mission statement. For now.

There’s no one right way. Nope. But the idea is pretty simple; to end up with a sentence or two that’s “you.” A couple sentences that feel genuine and authentic when you say them out loud, and that ring true to those who know you well.

How will you know it’s right for you? You’ll know you’re on track when you look at it and say, “That’s me.” And when you examine your whole life you’ll see the ways you’ve made choices that make sense based on your mission statement.

THIS IS IMPORTANT. At different times in your life your mission statement may no longer fit. Just like your shoe size increased as you grow, a mission statement may need to change to represent you. That’s ok. It’s actually one of the great things about crafting a mission statement. You’re giving yourself an opportunity to LOOK and see what you’re creating in your life. And whether or not that is what you want to be creating.

Genius! Because that’s when you start again and reinvent yourself.

A personal mission statement at this point in your life—today—offers the opportunity to declare what’s important to you and use that as you make career decisions. In the future it can help you choose a different path when you’re at career crossroads or when a possibility you didn’t see coming shows up. Nice!

For now, it can help you identify companies that align with your values and beliefs and help you assess the costs and benefits of a career opportunity.

Sounds cool, right?

Here are some examples:

“My mission is to normalize energy efficiency.”

“To inspire and empower creativity in second graders.”

“My mission is to represent what’s possible for the homeless.”

“To create beautiful and functional products for the other abled.”

“To honor and empower wounded warriors.”

This workbook contains an easy way to create a personal mission statement, a longer 5 step process, and some exercises to get you started on your way if you need more!

Don’t forget your community. If you get stuck this endeavor can be much easier when you work it through with someone else.

What you need to know:

There is no right or wrong mission statement.
There is only the right one for you, for now.
YOUR MISSION IN LESS THAN A MINUTE

This can be pretty simple. Or not. Some of the shortest mission statements take the longest to craft.

Remember: your personal mission statement will resonate with you emotionally. It will “click” when you read it.

Give it a try! Here’s an easy guideline.

My mission is to (Strength) (What you value or stand for) to/for/with (Specific cause or group or calling that excites you).

If you’ve completed any of our other workbooks, you’ll have your strengths and values. If not, complete the exercises! Easy peasy.

More examples:

“I am on a mission to use technology to get people excited to engage with the outdoors.”

“I aim to engineer the evolution of law through disruptive technologies that enable lawyers and small business owners to more easily access and understand the legal process.”

“To make people’s lives safer and more convenient through medical technology”

Bottom Line: A mission aligns the things you love to do with helping a cause or group you care about while embodying something that’s important to you.
A 5-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Need a little more?

Writing a personal mission statement helps you see what’s important to you.

It can also help you identify your core values and beliefs. Michael Goodman (The Potato Chip Difference: How to Apply Leading Edge Marketing Strategies to Landing the Job You Want) describes a personal mission statement as “an articulation of what you’re all about and what success looks like to you.”

You may want a personal mission statement and still not be able to create one. Ergh.

Don’t give up! Try these 5 steps.

**STEP 1  PAST SUCCESSES**

You’ve had a lot of personal success. Write down 5 examples of successes you’ve had in the past few years. For example, you attained a particular goal, completed an important task, worked toward something over a period of time, left your mark on some project, did something really meaningful for someone else OR these successes can be a repeating pattern of something you continue to do in your “free” time (like journaling every day, cooking dinner every night, running, playing video games with friends, reading, building something, etc.).

5 past personal successes—name and describe them here
A 5-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

STEP 1  PAST SUCCESSES, continued
Reexamine your successes. Is there a theme(s)? LOOK CLOSELY for the magic.
Brainstorm here.

Themes:
A 5-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

STEP 2  CORE VALUES
Knowing your core values is important and beneficial. You may even be asked to cite them directly during an interview. At the least, labeling them for yourself will give you talking points about why you do what you do. Core values can be defined as attributes you believe identify who you are and what your priorities are. Your list may be lengthy. The idea is to start big, find the themes and whittle it down to a top 5-10.

You can find values clarification exercises in other ECC workbooks, online or through the library. You may wish to also work through an exercise with a trusted friend, mentor or career center staff member.

Once you narrow your list, write them here:

My values

The most important 3
A 5-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

STEP 3 WHAT YOU HAVE TO GIVE

How do you/could you make a difference in an ideal situation? Remember Maslow? We’re not working on the few bottom categories of the hierarchy. We’re in a position to where most of our needs are met (or pretend for this exercise) and we’re using our imagination.

In an ideal situation, what is the difference you would make to these groups if you could?

The difference I would make

- The world
- My family
- My friends
- My employer / through my future job
- My community
STEP 4  MY GOALS

What personal goals do you have for yourself? Think about it in terms of the near future being the next 3 years, and longer term, beyond 3 years. Think about your priorities and the life you are creating. What are the goals you have for YOU?

For example, a short term goal might be “to secure a full time position to grow my skills base while achieving success for the company” and a longer term goal might be “to develop my photography business as an outlet for my creativity and as a second income.”
STEP 5 PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

One thing a personal mission statement says to employers is that you may be able to make better time-management decisions. If you’re living by a personal mission statement, then you’re not wasting time on things that don’t matter to you. You know how to focus and you can decide what is important to you. And to the company.

Spread all your work from this workbook out on a table. Take a good look.

What do you see? What is trying to get your attention? What do the words, thoughts and feelings tell you?

Give it a try! You. Got. This.

MY PERSONAL MISSION. TODAY.

What you need to know:

If this is your first time developing a personal mission statement it may not be easy.
Stick with it—it will be worth the effort!
STILL STUCK?

Take a walk and contemplate these three questions:

What is my life about? What do I stand for? What action am I taking right now to live those things?

Be gentle with yourself. Some people create a mission statement to focus their lives. Give it a try!

A mission statement covers what you want to accomplish and contribute—who you want to be.

Here are some exercises that may help.

It’s your 30th birthday. You’re reading a press release citing your achievements. What does it say?

Describe your ideal day in 10 words or less.

You’re 90 years old. What have you found to be most important in life? What advice would you have for others?
MY PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT FOR NOW

Name:

Today's Date:

Where are you living?

What are the circumstances of your life?

What you need to know:

We would love to share in your success. Stop by the Engineering Career Center and show us your personal mission statement!