

The Leader's Workbook

Jeffrey Davidson

Step #1:

Defining Your Team's Meaning
Statement

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

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"Elegant in simplicity. Very powerful."

Larry Wolff, President & COO
Ouellette & Associates Consulting, Inc.

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Introduction

You know your team wants meaning, a reason to get up in the morning and be excited about coming to work. But how do you develop this? How do you share *meaning* with your team?

This workbook is designed to help you develop a memorable, easy-to-share, and moving Meaning Statement.

The first section helps you define where you are going. You will do this by imagining success for you and your team. Once you start imagining this, there are 6 simple questions to answer.

Each question builds upon the previous questions and leads you to defining and refining the meaning of your team.

To be fair, these questions are easier to ask than they are to answer. Most leaders will find themselves revisiting, rethinking, and re-answering the questions a few times to define their team's Meaning Statement.

Now is the time to define your meaning. Now is the time to share your meaning. Now is the time to start leading. Pick your destination. Let's go.

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Imagining Success

Today is your 2-year anniversary. It's been that long since you were assigned these people that have become your team.

You are excited about the last year and cannot wait to see what happens next. It's been so much easier because your team is the *best team* you have ever worked with.

Your work with the team is the reason you will be promoted next quarter. It hasn't been announced yet. The organization is saving that for the next annual meeting.

Even the idea of making a big deal out of your promotion speaks to the incredible work your team has done.

Yesterday a colleague joked about envying your team.

"What do you put in their water?" she asked.

"Everyone loves your team. Even our most difficult clients think they walk on water! They all seem happy. They work hard. And they all love working for you. Whatever you are doing, don't stop."

Maybe the most amusing, or confusing part of the conversation was that your colleague didn't ask how you built a high-performing team.

It isn't a secret. It's a series of habits you and the team developed. Anyone, everyone could do it if they paid attention to the right details.

[Based on this scenario, answer the following 6 questions]

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Knowing the customer

One of the reasons this team is unlike other teams is because you talk about the real customer of your work. You have learned that being customer-focused gives greater clarity.

You have a deep sense of who your real customer is. You don't serve a vague consumer. You serve real people with real wants. The customer has a need and your work meets that need. You recognize how your output solves their problems.

Your team talks about this. They understand the difference between serving an idea and serving an explicit set of people who want and need what you produce.

Who is your true customer? Who consumes the work of your team?

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Defining success

Many people misunderstand your team. Other managers guess you are driving team members to work long hours in order to accomplish so much. And they wonder why your team doesn't complain about overtime. That's not it.

One key difference for your team is a focus on success. Every project starts with the question, "What does success look like?"

First they define the problem from your customer's viewpoint. Then they define the key activities that bring success for your customer.

They not only know who they serve, they know when they have succeeded.

What needs do you fill for customers?
What does success look like for your team?

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Overhearing a customer

You are in Starbucks, waiting for the barista to finish your order.

While you are standing in line you overhear two people talking at a table behind you.

You recognize one of the voices because he is a customer. Your team recently served him. The other voice asks what its like to work with your team.

What does your customer say about working with your team?

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Overhearing your team

That night you are sitting in your home, thinking about the conversation in Starbucks when your phone rings. It's an old friend, someone you haven't talked to in ages. They never call. This is either great news, or something terrible.

After saying your hellos they begin. "A bunch of us got together last weekend and one of the folks was someone from your team. Everyone got to talking about work and they had no idea you and I are old friends. You'll never believe what they said about working on your team!"

How did your team member describe working on your team?

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Meaning drives action

You know coordinated action requires a common understanding. It's not enough for the organization to have a mission statement, you have a Meaning Statement *for your team*.

It is broad. It captures why you exist, what your team is becoming, and who you strive to be.

Your team's meaning gives everyone a rallying cry that keeps them together when others are falling apart. By sharing this your team has become stronger.

What is your team's Meaning Statement? Why do you exist and who are you becoming?

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Short and simple

Your Meaning Statement is powerful because it's not complicated. It's not marketing speak. It's not some mumbo-jumbo phrase developed by a large, corporate committee.

It's clear. It's easy to understand. It's simple.

And all of that is true because: It. Is. Short.

Refine your Meaning into a tweet-size statement, 140-characters or less.

Defining Your Team's Meaning Statement

Credits

We build on the work of others and we are glad to list their names here.

The following slides are based on work by Bernie O'Donnell of [Performisys](#):

#7 – Overhearing your customer

#8 – Overhearing your team

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Do you want more?

If you are interested in learning more about building and leading your team, please reach out to learn about our keynote presentations and development programs.

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