Mission Statements, Core Values & Wall Décor

Tools For Operators · https://jeffreysummers.com/docs/mission-statements-core-values-wall-decor/

Somebody facilitated a session. Sticky notes went on a wall. Three hours later the operation had a mission, a vision, and five values, and a designer turned them into something framed by the walk-in.

Read it and you could hang it in any operation in America and nobody would notice. That is not a criticism of the writing. That is the whole finding.

What These Statements Actually Are

A statement written to be true anywhere decides nothing.

Integrity. Teamwork. Excellence. Passion for hospitality. Respect. Nobody on earth is against any of them, which means none of them rules anything out, and a statement that rules nothing out cannot govern a single decision in your building.

The inference: **strong operations have stated values; therefore stating values produces a strong operation.**

Backwards, the same way it is backwards with every instrument in this category. The strong operation had rulings, and somebody later wrote a description of them. The description is what got extracted and sold. The rulings are what did the work.

A Ruling Costs Something

Here is the test, and it is one question. What does this statement cost you?

A real ruling has a price. It tells you what you will not do, who you will not hire, what Guest you are not for, what money you will turn down, and what you will spend on when it is inconvenient.

Excellence costs nothing. Nobody ever made a hard call because a word was on a wall.

Try it in its real form instead. We do not run a station short on a Friday, even when it costs us the labor number. A cast member can fix a Guest problem up to this dollar amount without finding a manager. We do not take reservations we cannot execute at our standard, even on a slow week. If you cannot tell the truth about a mistake here, this is not the operation for you.

Every one of those has a cost, names a behavior, decides something, and could not hang on your competitor's wall without being false.

Why The Words Fail On A Friday

The statement on the wall is not what your operation runs. Whatever is in a cast member's hand at seven-forty is what your operation runs.

So when the framed value says one thing and the schedule, the review criteria, the position description, or the system setting says another, the artifact wins. Every time. The value never had a mechanism.

That gap is what your cast is actually reading. Teamwork on the wall while the schedule sets stations against each other. Respect on the wall while a review form measures nothing about how people treat each other. Excellence on the wall while the labor target cuts the hour that held the standard.

Your people do not conclude that the values are aspirational. They conclude that the operation says things it does not mean, and that read spreads to everything else you tell them.

Six Ways The Exercise Backfires

It substitutes for the rulings. The session happened, something is framed, the box is checked. The actual work of deciding how this operation runs never gets done.

It teaches your cast that words here are decoration. The most expensive outcome on this page. Once your people learn that a stated commitment does not predict behavior, every future statement you make gets discounted, including the true ones.

It gives cover to bad behavior. A manager behaving badly under a wall that says respect is worse than the same behavior with no wall, because now the operation is on record and visibly not enforcing it.

It cannot be violated, so it cannot be enforced. You cannot fire somebody for insufficient passion. You can absolutely hold somebody to a standard that says what they must do and what

they may decide.

It aims at the middle. Consensus language is the average of what everyone in the room could agree to, which is the thinnest version of what the operation believes.

It is the same set your competitor has. Integrity, teamwork, excellence, community. He has them too, printed nicer. Nothing structural separates the two operations.

The Legitimate Thing Underneath

There is a real need in here and it deserves an honest answer.

A cast needs to know what this operation is, what it will not compromise, and what they can count on from it. That need is real, and an operation that never answers it runs on whatever each person assumes.

The answer is a set of rulings with costs attached and mechanisms behind them. Not a word list. The need is legitimate. The instrument sold against it is not.

What Replaces It

Write what you will not do. Five sentences, each naming something the operation refuses and what that refusal costs. This is harder than a values session and it produces something that actually governs.

Attach a mechanism to each one. What in the operation enforces it -- a schedule rule, a spend authority, a standard, a hiring line, a review criterion. A commitment with no mechanism is decoration.

Say what a Guest gets here that they cannot get down the street. In plain words. If you cannot finish that sentence, no wall art is going to cover the gap.

Say what a cast member gets here, and what they have to put back. Both directions, specifically. That is the actual contract and it is worth more than any value word.

Rebuild whatever contradicts it, before you announce it. Every form, position description, system setting, and target sitting on top of what you just ruled. This is the step everybody skips, and skipping it is why the announcement fails.

Then say it out loud, repeatedly, in the building. Not framed. Stated by you, at pre-shift, in the moment a decision actually goes the expensive way because of it. That is when your cast learns it is real.

What Changes Tomorrow

Go read whatever is currently on your wall. Then ask five cast members, separately, to tell you one decision the operation has made that cost money because of something on it.

If nobody can produce an example, you have your answer, and it is the same answer almost every operation gets.

Then write one sentence: a thing this operation will not do, and what that costs. Something real -- turning down a booking you cannot execute, holding a station on a slow night, a comp authority you are handing to your cast without approval.

Find every artifact in the building that contradicts it and change those first. Then say it at pre-shift and say what it cost you the first time it cost you something.

Your cast will remember that sentence longer than they will remember anything that has ever been framed in your building.

Digging Deeper

Every term in my framework lives in the Knowledge Base: kb.jeffreysummers.com

Terms used here: [Designed Architecture], [Default Architecture], [Default Gravity], [Cast Contract], [Guest Contract], [Authority To Execute], [Meaningfully Differentiated Value], [Ordinary By Design], [Reciprocity Test], [Sameness Machine], [Connection Floor], [People Constraint], [Perspective Constraint], [Constraint Architecture], [Likeability Trap]

More of my work on this, all of it in the Knowledge Base:

- 3290 Decisions Not Values -- my name for this entire argument
- 3505 The Values Conflict -- what happens when the wall and the schedule disagree
- What A Verifiable Claim Looks Like -- the test any stated commitment has to pass
- 4.SH.5 Every Shift Deserves Your Best -- the commitment with a mechanism behind it
- 3.1.5 The Relationship Is Irrelevant. The Standard Isn't. -- the harder version

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