

Bio

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Do The Top 15 Hotel Chains in the United States Have Persuasive Mission Statements? It Is Your Call!

ABSTRACT

Purpose

This study investigates the mission statements of the top 15 U.S. hotel companies compared to the top 15 Fortune 50 firms, examining their challenges, solutions, and impact on organizational performance through an extensive literature review.

Design/methodology/approach

This study employed an observational and comparative methodology, analyzing mission statements from the top 15 U.S. hotel and Fortune companies through an extensive literature review to assess their challenges, solutions, and impact on performance.

Findings

The study found that mission statements involve multiple stages: planning, communication, resource allocation, and evaluation. The top 15 Fortune 50 companies averaged a 20.55% profit margin, compared to 11.92% for the top 15 U.S. hotel firms, highlighting a structural profitability gap. Challenges include resistance to change, limited

employee involvement, and inadequate resources. Effective solutions involve fostering urgency, engaging employees, and ensuring proper resource allocation. Strong leadership, clear communication, and consistent evaluation are essential. Overall, the top hotel organizations' mission statements are less effective than those of the leading Fortune companies.

Limitations

While this descriptive, observational study does not include independent analysis or control groups due to its nature, it offers valuable insights and an informative assessment that deepens understanding of effective, well-written mission statements.

Originality

This study fills a gap in existing literature by uniquely comparing hotel and Fortune company mission statements, identifying challenges, solutions, and performance impacts, and offering practical insights to enhance organizational success.

Key Words: mission statements, senior-level leaders, strategic management, strategy

PURPOSE

This practitioner paper is just an observational review of other scholars' works. As such, we decided to pursue a descriptive report, an essay, which is also considered a helpful appraisal, so that the reader and/or businessperson can better understand the importance of a well-written mission statement.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, Schaap and Schaap published an article titled *"Do Fortune 50 Companies Have Compelling Mission Statements?" We will let you decide!* Based on that study, we wanted to see if the top 15 hotel chains also have persuasive/convincing mission statements.

Below, we randomly selected a few mission statements from three of the most prominent hotel chains, as of March 2025:

	COMPANY	MISSION STATEMENT	NO. OF WORDS
1	Best Western Hotels	To deliver trusted experiences, drive hotel success, and foster a caring and inclusive culture that respects the environment.	19

2	Choice Hotels International	To connect the world through the power of hospitality.	9
3	Hilton Hotels & Resorts	To be the most hospitable company in the world - by creating heartfelt experiences for guests, meaningful opportunities for team members, high value for owners, and a positive impact on our communities.	32

Source: Internet

According to Hellweg (2010), in his article, he asked the following question: *Do you think you could get the mission statement to under eight words?* It is a good exercise to consider running if only to start honest conversations at your company about what you are doing, to/from whom, and toward what outcome. As McKeown (2012) states, these mission statements may still be considered “best practice” in some quarters, but in many cases, they do not achieve what they were intended to achieve. Ironically, many “directional documents” are not fit for purpose: they do not provide direction.

As affirmed by Kenny (2020), a clear mission statement defines the business you are in and the business you are not in. Having one will serve as a guiding star to help businesses emerge stronger from the pandemic.

As shown in Appendix 1, we listed all Fortune 15 companies' mission statements (i.e., shown specifically in Net Profit order, highest to lowest order), as of the end of 2024. These 15 mission statements had an average word count of 14.2. Also shown in Appendix 2, we listed the top 15 hotel chains' mission statements (i.e., also shown specifically in Net Profit order, also shown highest to lowest order), as of the end of 2024. On the other hand, these 15 U.S. hotel companies had an average mission statement word count of 18.9. This observation, of course, creates an inquiry into why a difference exists.

FIVE TEXTBOOK DEFINITIONS OF MISSION STATEMENTS

We believe that well-written mission statements do matter. Knowing this, and to better understand the characterization and meaning of a mission statement, rather than reference just one scholarly source, we wanted to present what five well-known textbook authors and respected researchers have concluded about this term over the last 10 years.

As specified by Rothaermel (2015), “The mission statement is a description of what an organization actually does, the products and services it plans to provide, and the markets in which it will compete” (p. 31).

Wheelen et al. (2018) view “A well-conceived mission statement as one that defines the fundamental, unique purpose that sets a business apart from other organizations of its type” (p. 16). “It also must be short so that every employee can remember the statement, and the design must be simple so that everyone can understand what the senior leadership team desires. The statement should let employees know exactly what the organization does” (p. 175).

Thompson, Jr. (2020) states that a mission statement is “who we are, what we do, and why we are here. To be worded well, an organization’s mission statement must employ language specific enough to distinguish its business makeup and purpose from those of other enterprises and give the firm its identity. However, suppose a mission statement is largely a collection of high-sounding words and (long) phrases and fails to convey the essence of a company’s business activities and purpose. In that case, it has no clear utility” (pp. 18–19).

According to Dess et al. (2021), “A mission statement is a set of organizational goals that identifies the purpose of the organization, its basis of competition, and its competitive advantage. More importantly, effective mission statements incorporate the concept of stakeholder management, suggesting that organizations must respond to

multiple constituencies. Furthermore, a good mission statement must communicate why an organization is special and different" (pp. 27-28).

Finally, Gamble et al. (2024) said, "A mission statement describes the organization's present business scope and purpose. It is purely descriptive. It identifies the establishment's products and services, specifies the buyer's needs, and gives the enterprise its own identity" (p. 20).

OVERVIEW

The current thought on mission statements is mainly based on guidelines outlined in the mid-1970s by Peter Drucker, a preeminent management thinker often called "the father of modern management." Drucker said that asking the question "What is our business?" is synonymous with asking the question "What is our mission?" (David & David, 2018, p. 43).

Every mission statement should be as distinctive as possible. Several guidelines have been introduced over the years about which key components should be included. They vary in numbers or names; however, the content is still more or less the same (Pernica & Tyll, 2018).

Creating mission statements articulating espoused goals, aspirations, and values is one of many corporate practices that have become standard in corporate America. While scholarly discourse on mission statements in higher education has increased over the last few decades, limited research has examined the role these documents play in institutional action and decision-making in businesses, with many studies arguing that they are just symbolic gestures with little influence on day-to-day operations. Given their potential to influence institutional action and guide organizational change, a better understanding of institutional leaders' use of these statements is necessary (McNaughtan et al., 2019).

REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

The following literature review includes a condensed series of top-level scholarly efforts on mission statements, a key part of strategic management concepts. These works, certainly limited in nature, are presented chronologically, starting in the early 2000s, to highlight the development of the thinking of various critics about this stimulating and debatable topic over the past 25 years. We chose this method instead of a content-oriented tactic so that the reader can understand the thinking and evolution of the various scholars and researchers over this period.

Mission statements seem imperative for modern higher education. That said, and as specified by Sidhu (2003), Desmidt and Prinzie (2008), Bartkus et al. (2006), and cited by Giusepponi and Tavoletti (2018). However, mission statements are widely used management tools; there is little evidence in the literature about their effectiveness in producing higher performance. What is more, their content may be generic (Finley et al., 2001) or rhetorical, being "amazingly vague, vapid, evasive, or rhetorical, lacking specificity or clear purpose ... full of honorable verbiage signifying nothing" (Newson & Hayes, 1991, p. 29).

According to Morphew and Hartley (2006), the literature on mission statements is rife with articles that praise mission statements but is undoubtedly short on evidence of their efficacy, explorations of the mission statement as a cultural symbol, as discourse, or descriptions of how mission statements function in the day-to-day performance of tasks.

As Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2013) state, some believe mission statements provide little value. Poorly developed mission statements do not provide an organization's direction to take appropriate strategic actions.

As per Gamble et al. (2015), a mission statement needs to be sufficiently descriptive regarding the following:

- Organization's products or services;

- buyer needs it seeks to satisfy;
- customer groups or markets it is endeavoring to serve;
- approach to pleasing customers; and
- organization identity (p. 20).
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David and David (2016) stated, “Mission statements should be reconciliatory and enduring. They also need to appeal to an organization’s diverse stakeholders. Moreover, these statements must be inspiring and dynamic in orientation” (pp. 48–49).

As Carpenter (2016) also specified, “Mission statements are seen to clarify (and perhaps advertise) the role the organization sees itself fulfilling in society. It also may be a way to attract workers whose enthusiasm for the missions translates into higher job satisfaction and greater effort” (p. 211).

Mission statements are foundational and voice the organization’s reason for existence, its purpose, and what it wants to achieve (Trybou et al., 2017). The mission statement echoes the university’s beliefs and actions. While the mission statement is not the only document that guides the vision and reason for the company’s existence, it is the most visible, permanent, and esteemed (Meacham & Gaff, 2005, as cited by Carver, 2020, p. 20).

Jungblut and Jungblut (2017) noted that one perspective of mission statements in higher education follows the neo-institutional idea that universities are exposed to pressures from their organization’s field of higher education (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Therefore, mission statements tend to be generic and full of obvious (outdated) claims that do not represent attributes of a specific institution but highlight general characteristics commonly accepted as mainstream ideas about higher education. As such, mission statements are not unique.

Per McNaughtan et al. (2019), leaders and intellectuals argue that mission statements are important documents that outline broad strategies and goals. Sadly, some scholars also argue that these documents are “understood as an artifact (i.e., or just an object) of the broader discussion about its purpose,” with the description of mission statements as artifacts illustrating symbolic, as opposed to functional, importance (McNaughtan et al., p. 155). As indicated by Olsen but cited in Carver (2020), many experts believe that mission statements should be short, memorable, and contain arousing jargon to the customer. A well-crafted mission statement should inspire, motivate, and guide the institution. In other words, it should be about the institution and what is essential to it (Bart, 1997). Elwick (2020) argued that mission statements are often portrayed as an opportunity for organizations to meet their diversity goals and introduce them into their core strategy.

Fiset and Hajj (2022, pp. 189–191) said: “Mission statements represent the enduring purpose of the organization. The content of these missions provides important insights into institutional motivations by clarifying what goals they wish to address and the decision-making processes by which these goals are pursued” (pp. 189–191).

Last, as Peek (2024) stated, your mission statement must function as a brief introductory statement for your company. Keep your mission statement under 25 words (i.e., or fewer). The longer a mission statement is, the less likely people are to read it.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

From a practical standpoint, this observational study, designed as a practitioner paper, adds to the literature on the interplay of mission statements.

As mentioned earlier, the mission statement defines an organization’s core purpose. That said, a well-crafted mission statement can provide the focus and motivation an organization needs to advance to the next level. As a first criterion, it should be easy to remember. Second, it should unquestionably inspire and motivate its intended

audience. Third, it should be compelling. Fourth, it should anchor the business's brand promise and value. If it follows these four requirements, a mission statement can be an essential tool for any organization.

Additionally, it should play a significant role in the daily operation of the corporation. It should be used for strategic planning, problem-solving, decision-making, and promoting the organization's objectives. The mission statement should be well distributed and visible. Finally, everyone in the business should know and understand the mission statement (O'Hallaron & O'Hallaron, 1999).

Based upon a review of the literature and the five definitions of mission statements provided by well-known textbook authors, the word length of a mission statement should be short and to the point. On the other hand, it should not be, as mentioned in the early part of this article, 32 and 42 words long (i.e., as cited by Choice Hotels and Omni Hotels and Resorts).

While there is no specific rule regarding the proper length for a mission statement, as determined by our literature review, organizations must be careful not to make their mission statements too long or generalized. If they do, they lose focus, missing out on essential elements that guide their organization (Bart, 2006). The mission statement needs to be tightly focused with an easy-to-understand and memorable theme. Moreover, the mission statement must be just long enough to achieve its specific purpose without including superfluous information (Abrahams, 2013).

While this research is not explicitly about how long a mission statement sentence should be, it is worthwhile to call attention to sentence length. According to Wylie (2009), the longer the sentence is, the less the employee, customer/student, or reader will understand it.¹ Wylie's inquiry shows the following:

- When the average sentence length in a piece was fewer than eight words long, readers understood 100% of the story.
- Even at 14 words, the reader could comprehend over 90% of the information.
- However, in 43-word sentences, comprehension dropped below 10. The bottom line is to break sentences up into shorter sentences and condense them.

¹ Ann Wylie runs a company called Wylie Communications Incorporated, where she works with communicators who want to reach more readers and organizations that want to get the word out. Ann Wylie is the author of more than a dozen learning tools that help people improve their communication skills, including RevUpReadership.com, a toolbox for writers. Her manual, *Planning Powerful Publications*, published by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), has been called "the bible" of publication planning. Before starting her firm, Ann was editor of the Hallmark Cards' employee magazine, *CROWN*. Under her leadership, *CROWN* was named the best publication of its kind in the nation by Women in Communications (WIC) and the best in the world by IABC.

Cardon (2021) found that when "sentences had 10 words or fewer, readers had nearly 100% comprehension. Once sentence lengths reached around 20 words, comprehension dropped to about 80%. Sentence lengths of 28 words resulted in just 30% comprehension. Therefore, for routine messages, it is best to aim for an average sentence length of 15 or fewer words" (pp. 178-179).

According to Nirmaldasan (2012), a sentence is easy or difficult to read based on the following:

- 8 words or fewer, the sentence is very easy to read.
- At 11 words, the sentence is easy to read.
- At 14 words, the sentence is fairly easy to read.
- At 17 words, the sentence is a standard sentence and generally easy to read.
- At 21 words, the sentence is difficult to read.

- At 25 words, the sentence is fairly difficult to read.
- At 29 words or more, the sentence is very difficult to read.

Mission statements are often regarded as superfluous—gratuitous. However, the strategic management and business ethics literature regards mission statements as important, clearly defining the purpose of the institution and establishing an ethical compass (Lopez, 2018). Given this importance, mission statements are also a key element of modern universities with strategic actorhood (Krücken & Meier, 2006), and they devote considerable effort to crafting a proper statement (Palmer & Short, 2008). Accordingly, higher education professors have increasingly focused their attention on mission statements (Seeber et al., 2019). Based on our study of empirical and observed analysis, as well as the literature, mission statements are indeed important.

Since this is a study similar in design to what Schaap and Schaap published in 2020, we are pleased to provide the following updated details:

1. Average number of mission statement word counts for the top Fortune 15 companies, as shown by the net profit in percentage, in 2024 = 14.2.
2. Average net profit for the top Fortune 15 companies, shown by net profit in percentage, in 2024 = 20.6%.
3. Average number of mission statement word counts for the top 15 hotel chains, shown by net profit in percentage, in 2024 = 18.9
4. Average net profit for the top 15 hotel chains, shown by net profit in percentage. in 2024 = 11.9%.

The data presented, shows that the Fortune 15 companies, as of the end of 2024, have significantly shorter mission statement word counts by 33.1%. In addition, the same Fortune 15 companies had a higher net profit margin (i.e., as shown on a percentage basis) of 42.2%. Further to this point, the shorter the mission statement, the better chance a company has to be that much more profitable (i.e., as evidenced in Appendices 1 & 2). That said, it is hard to compare one industry (i.e., the hospitality industry) to a handful of different (Fortune 15) industries.

Several structural cost drivers documented in industry analyses explain the comparatively lower net profit margins of hotel chains. First, wages and benefits account for a disproportionately high share of hotel operating costs; recent STR/CoStar P&L data show labor expenses per available room increasing by more than 11% year-over-year, limiting profit growth (PKF Hospitality Group, 2024). Second, distribution expenses remain elevated due to dependence on online travel agencies, whose rate-parity practices constrain pricing and extract commissions from gross revenue (Haynes & Egan, 2015). Third, capital intensity erodes hotel profitability, as property taxes, insurance premiums, and recurring renovation requirements weigh heavily on net margins (Turner & Hesford, 2019). In addition, interest cost and depreciation make REIT-linked hotel companies structurally less profitable than Fortune 50 peers in asset-light sectors (Schneider, 2025). Finally, cyclical demand and competition from short-term rentals constrain pricing power and exacerbated volatility (AHLA, 2025). Together, these factors could explain why 7 U.S. hotel chains in our sample average 11.92% net profit margins compared with 20.55% among the Fortune 15 companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conceptually, mission statements, within the context of the strategic management process, represent a long-term articulation between organizations' internal and external stakeholders (Fitzgerald & Cunningham, 2016). In addition, the benefits of mission statements are intertwined with the impact of the institution (Teles & Lunkes, 2009). Nevertheless, the academic literature on this topic is still limited despite the importance of this all-important subject, according to Fitzgerald and Cunningham (2016).

It has been widely established that broad mission statements are relatively useless, whereas narrow statements provide direction and value to an organization (Wheelen et al., 2018). Good mission statements also reflect customers' anticipations—in this case, students (David & David, 2016) as such, and based on our findings, especially the definitions of mission statements provided in the literature, especially what Giesepponi and Tavoletti (2018) stated “amazingly vague, evasive, or rhetorical, lacking specificity or clear purpose ... full of honorable verbiage signifying nothing, and the shear length of the mission statement word counts (p. 328), we propose that all organizations embrace a simple, harder-hitting, easier-to-understand, longer lasting, and inspiring mission statement—one that is directly relevant to the most important stakeholders. In addition, mission statements should be contracted with a minimum word count length and easy-to-understand, actionable, and truly motivational (see examples below).

According to Nirmaldasan (2012), a reasonably easy sentence to read and understand is 15 - 16 words long. According to Wylie (2009), the reader should comprehend at least 90% of the information given a sentence of that length.

As stated by the Public Works and Government Services of Canada (2020), we tend to write lengthy and complicated sentences strung together with commas and other punctuation marks without realizing it. If organizations want to write for their reader, they need to write shorter and simpler sentences. A target to aim for is 15 - 20 words. That length is usually long enough to get the point across without losing the reader. Sentences of more than 25 words are often difficult to understand on first reading, and even the most seasoned reader will typically struggle to make sense of sentences longer than 30 words.

According to David and David (2016), an overly general mission statement that does not exclude any strategy alternatives could be dysfunctional. Also, mission statements should be clear, concise, and intense (Özdem, 2011).

In keeping with Carpenter (2016), this researcher suggests, based on his own research study, that organizations should write a clear mission statement and use it, and, if possible, to attract motivated workers.

As affirmed by Gamble et al. (2021), we too recommend that companies should not state their mission to simply earn a profit. This is misguided. Profit is more correctly an objective and a result of what a company does (p. 21). Moreover, finally, as specified by Dess et al. (2021), we too feel that a “mission statement must communicate why an organization is special and different and that the mission should help to build a common understanding of purpose and commitment to nurture” (p. 28).

Knowing this, we are deeply passionate about our mission statement avowal because it is enduring and should help businesses better understand the importance of a short-worded announcement. It should resonate with both internal and external audiences (Peek, 2024). We also believe, as clearly stated by Baek et al. (2023), that mission statements are imperative for organizational performance because they encapsulate the organizational values and ideals, justifying an organization’s existence and directing its operations. In addition, we have presented elements for an effective mission statement. Our objective here was not necessary to establish a perfect model, especially because there is no consensus in the literature regarding what should be included in a precise and provocative mission statement, but to present, as a recommendation, an easy-to-understand, informative, and captivating assertion.

LIMITATIONS

As with any research, our study has its limitations. No independent research analysis was performed. As mentioned, this is just a practitioner paper with an observational review of other scholars’ works. As such, we decided to pursue a descriptive study, which is also considered an informative assessment, so that the reader and/or businessperson could better understand why well-written mission statements are so important.

Because this piece uses no control groups to compare outcomes, the analysis mentioned earlier has no statistical validity.

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APPENDIX 1

Top 15 of the Fortune 50 Companies (Rank is Shown in Net Profit Percent Order – as of ending 2024)

Rank	Company	Current Mission Statement	No. of Words	Net Profit in %
1	Johnson & Johnson	To help people live better, connect better, and see better.	10	36.9
2	Microsoft	To empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.	13	34.1
3	Merta Platforms	Giving people the power to build community and bring the world closer together.	13	29.0
4	Berkshire Hathaway	To deliver long-term value to our shareholders through the ownership and management of a diverse portfolio of businesses.	18	26.4
5	Apple	Bringing the best user experience to customers through innovative hardware, software, and services, centers around delivering the best possible user experience for its customers.	24	25.3
6	Alphabet	To work toward sustainable development and to make a positive difference in the world.	14	24.0
7	JPMorgan Chase	To enable more people to contribute to and share in the rewards of a growing economy.	16	20.7
8	Procter & Gamble	To provide branded products and services of superior quality and value that improve the lives of the world's consumers, now and for generations to come.	25	17.9
9	Wells Fargo	To serve customers at the highest standards.	7	16.6
10	Tesla	To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy.	8	15.5
11	Bank of America	To help improve financial lives through connections with clients and communities.	11	15.4
12	Comcast	To connect people to experiences and moments that matter through technology and entertainment.	13	12.7
13	Fannie Mae	To make homeownership and affordable rental housing more accessible and sustainable.	11	12.3

14	AT&T	To connect people to their world through innovative technology and services.	11	11.8
15	Chevron Corp	The Chevron Way explains who we are, what we believe, how we achieve and where we aspire to go. It establishes a common understanding not only for us, but for all who interact with us.	19	10.6

Notes:

1. Average word count for these Fortune 15 companies = 14.2
2. Average net profit, in percentage, for these Fortune 15 companies = 20.6

Sources: Wikipedia; 50pros.com

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_companies_in_the_United_States_by_revenue
<https://www.50pros.com/fortune500>

APPENDIX 2

Top 15 USA Hotel Chains (Rank is Shown in Net Profit Percent Order – as of ending 2024)

Rank	Company	Current Mission Statement	No. of Words	Net Profit in %
1	Best Western Hotels	To deliver trusted guest experiences, drive hotel success, and foster a caring and inclusive culture that respects the environment.	19	23.4%
2	Choice Hotels International	To connect the world through the power of hospitality.	9	18.5%
3	IHG Hotels & Resorts	Our purpose is to create great hotels guests love by providing true hospitality for everyone.	15	12.7%
4	Vail Resorts	To create the experience of a lifetime for our employees, guest, and communities.	13	12.2%
5	Wyndham Hotels & Resorts	To make hotel travel possible for all, ensuring that wherever people go, Wyndham will be there to welcome them.	19	11.8%
6	Loews Hotels	To "Welcome You like Family," which means they strive to care for guests and team members with the same level of warmth and dedication they would for their own family.	30	11.7%
7	Hilton Grand Vacations	To share the power of vacations.	6	11.7%
8	Hilton Hotels & Resorts	To be the most hospitable company in the world - by creating heartfelt experiences for guests, meaningful opportunities for team members, high value for owners, and a positive impact in our communities.	32	11.3%
9	Marriott International	To enhance the lives of our customers by creating and enabling unsurpassed vacation and leisure experiences.	16	11.1%
10	Host Hotels & Resorts	To be the premier lodging real estate company, focused on maximizing the long-term value of our high-quality properties and delivering superior returns to our stockholders.	25	10.8%
11	Chatham Lodging Trust	To deliver superior returns on shareholders through disciplined investment in high-quality hotel properties.	13	9.8%

12	Ryman Hospitality Properties	To create authentic and memorable experiences for our guests through our iconic destinations and entertainment offerings.	16	9.1%
13	Xenia Hotel & Resorts	To invest in and asset manage a portfolio of primarily upscale and luxury hotels with a focus on maximizing long-term shareholder value.	22	8.3%
14	Pebblebrook Hotel Trust	To own and operate upper-scale and luxury hotels and resorts in major urban and resort markets with a focus on long-term value creation for our shareholders.	26	8.1%
15	Sunstone Hotel Investors	To be a leading owner of strategically located, high-quality hotels in the United States, focused on delivering long-term value to our shareholders.	<u>22</u>	<u>8.0%</u>

Notes:

1. Average word count for these top 15 hotel chain companies = 18.9
2. Average net profit, in percentage, for these top 15 hotel chains = 11.9%

Source: Internet