

# EVOLVING MISSION STATEMENTS: A FIFTEEN YEAR COMPARISON

**Darwin L. King, St. Bonaventure University**  
**Carl J. Case, St. Bonaventure University**  
**Julianna R. Carney, St. Bonaventure University**

## ABSTRACT

*Mission statements are among the most important communications provided by the organization to its many stakeholders both inside and outside of the business. These statements inform all readers of the stakeholders and goals and objectives that are most critical to the firm. In particular, customers, stockholders, and employees are commonly identified in the mission statement. Likewise, goals and objectives such as the importance of producing a high quality product or service and using technology effectively are frequently included in the mission statement.*

*The authors have studied the changing mission statement content in the largest U.S. firms since 2001. This paper compares the mission statement content of the top 100 firms in the United States in 2001 with the content of the missions of the largest companies in 2016. The stakeholder names, goals, and objectives identified are compared over this 15- year study period. The findings from 2001 are presented first followed by a summary of 2016 mission statement content. Significant similarities and differences in mission statement content are discussed in the final portion of this paper.*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970's, mission statements have been developed by organizations to communicate to stakeholders who they are and what they intend to accomplish. In the 21st century effective communication by business organizations is critical. Mission statements serve to inform interested parties about the nature and character of the firm. The statements are typically short with few exceeding two paragraphs. An effective mission statement should clearly communicate the company's purpose, values, unique characteristics, and desired goals and objectives. In essence, the mission statement should provide reasons for the firm's existence.

Peter Drucker, often referred to as the "father of management," wrote extensively about the importance of a well-written mission statement. Drucker believed that the mission statement was the "foundation for priorities, strategies, plans, and work assignments" (Drucker, 1974). He believed the mission statement should aid interested parties in distinguishing one organization from another. Drucker stressed the mission statement should communicate the firm's "reason for being." He argued that the formation of the company's strategies and objectives should be based on the content of the mission. This is true today as the actions of colleges and universities should be based upon and consistent with the mission of the institution.

Drucker believed that the mission statement should answer the questions "What is our business?" and "What do we want to become?" in order to effectively manage current and future

operations (Drucker, 1974). He believed that effective long range strategic planning required a logical and achievable answer to these questions. Drucker believed that basic concepts upon which the firm had been built had to be visible, clearly understood, and explicitly expressed to all stakeholders both internal and external. He believed that the largest business organizations, in particular, must publish accurate mission and vision statements since they likely would be read by millions of stakeholders.

Drucker believed that the business purpose and mission were normally not given sufficient consideration or thought prior to their issuance by most firms. He believed that this error was perhaps the most significant cause of business frustration and failure (Drucker, 1974). This appears to have changed over the last forty years as organizations appear to be constantly updating and revising mission statements that appear on webpages and annual reports.

Drucker, who established the Leader to Leader Institute, frequently emphasized the significance of the mission statement. He felt that the mission should be quite short and very much to the point. Drucker believed the mission should be only three or four sentences in length. These few sentences should address four important aspects of the organization including who are we, what do we do, what do we stand for, and why do we do what we do. This is a large amount of information that must be thoughtfully condensed into a few sentences. Finally, Drucker also felt that the mission statement should specifically identify the most significant stakeholder(s).

Drucker also believes that many firms have a common misconception concerning the life of a mission statement. He believes that many organizations feel that a thoughtfully prepared mission statement, once completed, serves the firm's needs for the entire life of the business. Drucker argues that since the business environment is dynamic and constantly changing, a mission statement should regularly be revised and updated to reflect environmental changes. Drucker estimated that mission statements require revision at least every ten years (Drucker, 1974). Many other writers agree that regular revisions of mission statements are mandatory to reflect the constantly changing business environment. Once a firm has a revised time sensitive mission statement, the process of long-term strategic management can be more easily accomplished.

Drucker wrote in an article titled "The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization" that the effective mission statement is short and sharply focused. It should fit on a T-shirt (Drucker, 1993). He emphasized that the mission statement must be clear, and inspire stakeholders. He noted that every board member, volunteer, and staff person should be able to see the mission and say, "Yes. This is something that I want to be remembered for." Drucker believed that mission statements should not emphasize net income and profits but must "Express the contribution the enterprise plans to make to society, to economy, and to the customer." Drucker's works provided a solid foundation for better understanding the character, purpose, and importance of an organization's mission statement.

Fred David has also written extensively on the importance of a thoughtfully developed mission statement. Like Drucker, he also believes that a firm's mission statement should clearly communicate its "reason for being" (David, 2009). David argues that the mission statement should serve a number of vital purposes in the attempt to communicate information to stakeholders. He believes that a comprehensive mission statement should define an organization's target market(s), describe its products and services produced, markets served, technology utilized, and the organization's concern for survival, growth, employees, profitability, and the environment. In other words, stakeholder groups, goals, and objectives should be included in a complete mission statement.

Many authors, including David, feel that organizations often utilize a reactive, rather than a proactive, approach to the creation of a mission statement. The reactive approach describes firms that create mission and vision statements after the firm has experienced financial problems (David, 2009). He argued that the creation of mission and vision statements during a period of crisis is a symptom of irresponsible management. David believes that failure to create a comprehensive, inspiring, and attainable mission statement results in the loss of the opportunity to positively influence stakeholders including customers, shareholders, employees, and vendors.

Typically, mission statements are only one or two paragraphs in length. Therefore, this requires significant planning and thought in order to include all crucial elements such as the firm's purpose, values, significant stakeholders, distinctive characteristics, and desired goals and objectives. This is a lot of information that must be condensed into a fairly short statement that is both informative and easily understood. David also states that mission statements have received a number of various titles over the years including terms such as creed statements, statements of philosophy, statements of belief, and statements of business purposes (David, 2005). David also believed that the firm's "reason for being" should be clearly stated in the organization's mission statement (David, 2009).

David believes that a well-constructed mission statement should contain nine essential components. These include a mention of customers, products or services, markets, technology, concern for survival, growth, and profitability, philosophy, self-concept, concern for public image, and concern for employees (David, 2005). He argues that a well-written mission statement should provide important information such as the products and services offered by the firm and the primary target markets served. David believes that a mission statement "identifies the scope of the firm's operations in product and market terms" (Pierce & David, 1989). Based upon the authors' research since 2001, there are and have been very few mission statements that include all of these items listed above. In the most recent study by the authors, many 2016 mission statements include only two or three of the items detailed above.

Many authors, including Samuel and S. Trevis Certo, believe that the creation of an effective mission statement is a critical part of the strategic management process (S. & S.T. Certo, 2012). They feel that the strategic management process requires organizational direction which typically first requires a well-constructed, informative mission statement. This argument is shared by Hitt, Black, and Porter (M.A. Hitt, J.S. Black & L.W. Porter, 2012). These authors also support the argument that the strategic management process requires a mission statement that clearly articulates the essential purpose(s) of the business. Rarick and Vitton argue that an effective mission statement should contain a number of items including the company identity or self-concept, company philosophy, principal products or services produced, customers and related target markets, commitment to employees, obligation to stockholders, and geographic focus (C. Rarick and J. Vitton, 1995). The majority of authors listed above believe that an accurate mission statement requires a thorough analysis of the organization's internal resources and strengths as well as its existing external environment.

Harsh Verma studied mission statements and found that stakeholders are becoming more aware of and better understand their mission statement (Verma, 2010). He believes that top management must use careful judgement and seriously reflect on the company in order to identify its primary stakeholders, goals, and objectives. Verma emphasized that mission statements are useful for creating a structural mechanism where firm decisions and actions that deviate from the mission statement are quickly identified and corrected.

Annie McKee believes that mission statements must describe what the organization is about, what it does, and what it stands for (McKee, 2012). She feels, similar to many other authors, that without a thoughtfully created and well defined mission statement, the firm may lose its direction and overall focus. McKee states that a thoughtfully created mission statement assists management in decision making, motivating employees, and creating and integrating short-term and long-term goals and objectives. Other authors including Robbins and Coulter emphasize that firm goals must reflect the mission statement. (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). They further state that the mission is a broad statement of the organization's purpose providing a guide to all members of the organization. In other words, every employee including management, staff, and production workers must consider whether decisions they are making are consistent with the firm's current mission statement.

Schermerhorn, et. al., believe that effective mission statements identify whom the firm will serve and what purpose(s) they are serving in society (Schermerhorn, et.al.). Wheelen and Hunger stress that a well-designed mission statement defines the firm's "fundamental, unique purpose" that sets the firm apart from other similar companies (T. Wheelen and J. Hunger, 2010). Many authors argue that a mission statement should highlight the distinctive aspects of the organization. Finally, Thompson, et.al., state that a mission statement must describe the firm's "current business and purpose" (Thompson, et.al., 2012). These authors emphasize that an effective mission statement should accomplish a number of goals including identifying the firm's products or services, specify customer groups or markets served, and giving the company its own identity. To accomplish all of these goals in a concise statement, the firm's management must carefully construct the mission statement and update it when appropriate.

### **PREVIOUS MISSION STATEMENT RESEARCH BY THE AUTHORS**

The authors conducted their first mission statement analysis project in 2001. The mission statements of the Fortune 100 firms in 2001 were studied. The lead author reviewed the mission statements from 2001 and developed a list of two major areas of mission statement content. The first mission statement content area was the firm's stakeholders that it chose to identify in the published mission statement. This included the firm's customers and employees. The second identified area of mission statement content was the goals or objectives of the organization that were significant and identified in the mission. Examples include the production of a quality product or service and the adherence to an established set of core values. The results of this study was published in the *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal* (King, 2001). Table 1 (Appendix) is a summary of the results of that analysis.

The commonly named stakeholder in the 2001 mission statements was no surprise. Businesses realize that, in order to survive, they must satisfy the needs and wants of its customers. The importance of the customer is obvious in the following 2001 mission statement quotes. Merck's mission was to "improve the quality of life and satisfy customer needs." Proctor & Gamble desired to "improve the lives of the world's consumers." ConAgra took pride in "our success in serving our customers and meeting consumer needs." Lockheed Martin's mission was to "attain total customer satisfaction." UPS proudly stated in its mission that they were "not just in the delivery business, but in the customer satisfaction business." The importance of the customer was obvious in a majority of the 2001 mission statements.

The second most named stakeholder in 2001 was the firm's stockholders. This is also no surprise since, historically, the major mission of the firm was to maximize shareholder wealth.

Exxon Mobil stated that it emphasized “building shareholder value.” Ford stated that it attempted to “deliver superior shareholder returns.” AT&T, J.P. Morgan Chase, Boeing, Chevron, Home Depot, Lucent, and Ingram Micro each included the mission of “maintaining or maximizing shareholder value.” AT&T clearly identified the importance of both customers and stockholder’s stating in its mission that “Our goal is to enrich our customers’ personal lives which will build shareholder value in the process.” Alcoa went even further when it stated in its mission that it works to create “value for customers, employees, and shareholders.”

Employees were the third most frequently identified stakeholder in the 2001 mission statements. Merck stated that it attempted to “provide employees with meaningful work and advancement opportunities.” AMR stated that it attempted to “reward innovation and provide growth, security, and opportunity for all employees.” Including employees with other stakeholders, Kroger stated that their mission was to “satisfy our responsibilities to shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, and the communities we serve.” Merck’s mission included “providing employees with meaningful work and advancement opportunities. Finally, Southern Company’s mission included “providing a workplace that our employees value – we provide opportunities to grow professionally, we communicate openly, and we treat each other with respect.” The other four stakeholders including competitors, suppliers, communities, and government were mentioned far more infrequently. The 2001 mission statements showed that large corporations believed their primary stakeholders were their customers, stockholders, and employees.

There were eight identified goals and objectives in the 2001 Fortune 100 mission statements. Similar to named stakeholders, there are two goals that are included most often in the firm’s mission statement. The goals of providing a quality product or service and the adherence to a set of core values were most often mentioned with each appearing in 25 mission statements.

It is interesting to note that ethics was only mentioned in three of the 2001 mission statements. This may be related to the fact that the Sarbanes-Oxley Act was not enacted until 2002. Another surprise in this data is that concern for the environment was only found in nine of the missions. The authors’ felt that emphasizing ethical business operations and concern for the environment would have been more frequently included in the 2001 mission statements.

Returning to the top two goals of producing a quality product or service and adherence to a set of established core values, the following phrases were included in the missions of the largest 100 firms in 2001. Concerning the production of a quality product or service, Ford states that its mission is to “transform Ford from a good auto company into a stable, high quality consumer product company.” GE’s mission was to “live quality.” McKesson HBOC is “committed to continuous quality improvement so that every product and service HBOC offers is known as the best in the world.” Costco’s mission was “to continually provide our members with quality goods and services at the lowest possible prices.” A final example is from Johnson & Johnson who state in order to meet customer needs “everything we do must be of high quality.” Many other firms included similar phrases concerning quality in their mission statements in 2001.

The next goal or objective that was also included in 25 mission statements in 2001 was the existence of core values for the firm. Two examples include, first, Home Depot who listed eight core values in its mission. These included “excellent customer service, taking care of our people, giving back, doing the right thing, creating shareholder value, respect for all people, entrepreneurial spirit, and building strong relationships.” Another example comes from Goldman Sachs who state that its core business principles “emphasize placing our client’s interests first, integrity, commitment to excellence and innovation, and teamwork.” In describing core values of

the company, many firms included the idea that a primary core value involved the providing of value to both customers and stockholders.

The concept of leadership and being a leader was found in 17 of the top 100 mission statements in 2001. For example, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, and Kroger all stated in their mission statements that they were the leader in their particular industry. In particular, Kroger indicated that “our mission is to be a leader in the distribution and merchandising of food.” USX stated that they were an “innovative steel company that clearly distinguishes itself as the industry leader.” Finally, AMR’s mission indicated leadership in the industry as a result of “setting the industry standard for safety and security and providing world-class customer service.” The final five goals or objectives in descending order were global operations, importance of technology, concern for the environment, profits, and ethical operations. Again, it is interesting to note that concern for ethics and ethical practices only appeared in 3% of the 2001 Fortune 100 mission statements. The next portion of this paper reviews the 2016 mission statements of the Fortune 100 firms.

### **2016 MISSION STATEMENTS – FORTUNE 100 FIRMS**

Table 2 (Appendix) summarizes the most commonly included stakeholders and goals in the 2016 Fortune 100 mission statements. For the 2016 mission statements, the three most mentioned stakeholders were customers, communities, and employees. The three most commonly included goals or objectives for 2016 were production of a high quality product or service, the emphasis on global operations, and the use of innovation and current technology in the improvement of business operations. A few examples from the 2016 missions are presented in the follow paragraphs. Following that, similarities and differences between 2001 and 2016 mission statements will be examined.

Not surprisingly, the stakeholder most mentioned in 2016 missions was the customer. If a firm is not able to satisfy the needs and wants of its customers, it is doomed to fail. Two excellent examples of mission statements emphasizing customers include General Motors who state “Our unyielding mission to earn customers for life has led to a healthy balance sheet and world-class products that are winning in the marketplace.” Hewlett-Packard’s states “Our mission is to provide products, services, and solutions of the highest quality and deliver more value to our customers that earns their respect and loyalty.” Many other mission statements from 2016 echo this idea that the firm’s customers are its primary business focus.

Communities, as an identified stakeholder, were found more frequently in the 2016 mission statements than those of 2001. In 2016, 22 of the Fortune 100 firms considered communities to be an important stakeholder of the firm. JP Morgan Chase’s mission is “to serve our clients and our communities – there is nothing more important than to protect our company so that we are strong and can continue to be here for all those who count on us.” Proctor & Gamble include the following in its mission “consumers will reward us with leadership sales, profits, and value creation, allowing our people, our shareholders, and the communities in which we live and work to prosper.” That portion of one sentence in P&G’s mission includes not only communities but also employees and shareholders. A number of the 2016 mission statements identify multiple stakeholders and goals.

The third most frequently identified stakeholder in the 2016 mission statements is the firm’s employees. Two examples include Pepsi and FedEx. Pepsi states that “We are committed to investing in our people (employees), our company, and the communities where we operate to help position the company for long-term sustainable growth.” FedEx’s mission included the

following, “FedEx will strive to develop mutually rewarding relationships with its employees, partners, and suppliers. Safety will be the first consideration in all operations.” Safety will be discussed later in this paper as this goal was included in a several of the 2016 missions but was not mentioned in the 2001 statements.

The three most often included goals or objectives in the 2016 mission statements were the production of a high quality good or service, the importance of global operations, and an emphasis on the use of modern technology. There are a number of additional goals and objectives mentioned in the 2016 missions compared to those of 2001. These new items will be reviewed in the final portion of this paper. A few examples of the top three goals included in the 2016 missions follows.

The most frequently mentioned goal in the 2016 missions, consistent with the results from 2001, is the production of a quality product or service. For example, CVS had a comprehensive mission statement that included quality along with a number of other goals. CVS stated that “Above all else...our mission is to improve the lives of those we serve by making innovative and high-quality health and pharmacy services safe, affordable, and easy to access.” This is a good example of goals not mentioned in 2001 including safety and affordability. A second example of the quality goal is found in UPS’s mission. It states “We serve the evolving distribution, logistics, and commerce needs of our customers worldwide, offering excellence and value in all we do.”

The second most commonly mentioned goal in the 2016 missions is the desire to conduct global operations. For example, Exxon Mobil states “Exxon Mobil Corporation is committed to being the world’s premier petroleum and petrochemical company.” A second example comes from the 2016 General Electric mission. It states “GE’s mission is to invent the next industrial era, to build, move, power and cure the world.” Twenty-six of the 2016 mission statements indicated the importance of conducting business operations on a global scale.

The third most frequently stated goal in the 2016 missions was the desire to be innovative and use modern technology to improve business operations. It is interesting to note that the term technology was used more often in the 2001 statements but has evolved to being more commonly termed innovation in recent years. Innovation is a major goal for the many firms who continually strive to improve the quality of its products and services. The words “new and improved” are often found on the packaging. Two examples of the importance of innovation are found in the mission statements of AmerisourceBergen and Pfizer.

AmerisourceBergen stated “Our mission is to improve patients’ lives by delivering innovative products and services that drive quality and efficiency in pharmaceutical care.” The company identified innovation, quality, and efficiency as its primary goals. A second example comes from Pfizer who mentions a number of stakeholders and goals in a fairly short mission. This mission also stresses innovation. Its mission is “Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world’s premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world.”

Ten additional goals were listed in at least four of the 2016 Fortune 100 mission statements. Many of these goals were not found in those of 2001. Over this 15 year period, goals such as producing an affordable product or service and the desire to market a safe product or service and provide safe working conditions for employees are now part of the content of mission statements for many organizations. The differences and similarity between the mission statement of the Fortune 100 firms in 2001 and 2016 are presented in the final portion of this paper.

## **SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES – 2001 AND 2016 MISSIONS**

Table 3 (Appendix) compares the 2001 and 2016 mission statements and their identification of primary stakeholders. The left column of Table 3 shows the order of stakeholder frequency of inclusion, from most to least often, in the 2001 missions. The most common were customers, stockholders, employees, competitors, suppliers, communities, and governments. This changed dramatically, except for the most commonly included customer group, in 2016 with the frequency order changing to customers, communities, employees, stockholders, suppliers, government, and competitors.

It is not surprising that the most commonly identified stakeholder in the 2001 and 2016 mission statements is the company's customers (61% and 73% respectively). Over the 15-year study period, the number of large corporations that have specifically identified its customers in its published mission statement has continued to increase. All of the other stakeholders appear much less frequently than the company's customers. For example, in 2016, the second most mentioned stakeholder was communities (22%). Customers appeared in more than three times that number.

Communities appeared in 22% of the 2016 missions (2nd most common) compared to being found in only 6% of the 2001 statements (6th most common). It is obvious that the firms consider the communities in which they live and serve to be a primary stakeholder. It is interesting to note that the second most often identified stakeholder in 2001, stockholders (34%) dropped to fourth place in 2016 being found in only 17 of the missions. It appears that the historical mission of the corporation to "maximize shareholder wealth" is becoming less important to many firms. Peter Drucker in his articles from many years ago emphasized that the primary mission of the firm should not be to maximize profits. In recent years, concern for customers, employees, and the environment has become much more important.

Employees continue to be of primary importance to the firm being named in 21% of the 2001 statements and 20% of the 2016 missions (3rd most mentioned each year). It is interesting to note that competitors were the 4th most commonly mentioned stakeholder in 2001 but were not identified in the 2016 missions. Suppliers were named in 6 of the 2001 missions and that number increased to 9 in 2016. The inclusion of federal, state, and local governments as an identified stakeholder increased from 2% to 7% of the Fortune 100 firms.

Table 4 (Appendix) compares the frequency of specifically identified goals and objectives in the firm's mission statements from 2001 and 2016. It is readily apparent that Fortune 100 firms in 2016 are typically including many more identified goals and objectives in their missions as compared to their counterparts in 2001. The six identified goals in the 2001 mission statements were quality, core values, leadership, global emphasis, use of technology or innovation, and the environment. The six most often included goals in the 2016 missions were quality products/services, promoting global operations, use of technology or innovation, affordability of products/services, emphasis on ethical behavior, and the emphasis on profits and safety (tie at 12% each). It is interesting to note that the emphasis on ethical behavior increased significantly since 2001 when only 3% of the missions included this very important goal. Perhaps the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2002 provided an incentive to firms to increase awareness of the importance of ethical behavior in all business operations. The 2016 figures show that an emphasis on ethics is a very important goal as it now appears in 16% of the statements.

There are many differences in the goals and objectives of the largest corporations over this 15-year period. However, there is one similarity between 2001 and 2016 and that is the desire to produce a quality product or service. This goal ranks as number one on the frequency lists for both



years. In 2011, 25% of the firms mentioned the quality concept. This figure increased significantly in 2016 to 37% of the companies. The second most indicated goal in 2001 was the adherence to a set of core values. The importance of including core values in the firm's mission has decreased significantly as they are mentioned by only four firms in 2016. The second most frequently mentioned goal in 2016 was the desire to conduct operations on a global basis. Given today's level of technology, even small firms can market their products around the world.

The third most included goal in 2001 was the desire to be in a leadership position and was cited in the missions of 17 companies. The goal of maintaining a leadership position decreased significantly in 2016 being included in only six mission statements. For 2016, the third most identified goal was innovation in order to stimulate business operations and satisfy changing customer needs and wants. Innovation and modern technology was mentioned by 22% of the Fortune 100 group in 2016.

An emphasis on global operations was the fourth most mentioned goal in 2011 (15%). The frequency of emphasizing global operations increased significantly in 2016 with 26% of the companies including this as an identified goal (second only to quality). As mentioned above, the goal of continuous innovation and use of modern technology in firm operations increased significantly over this 15-year period. It jumped from the fifth most mentioned goal in 2001 (14%) to third place in 2016 (22%). Finally, concern for the environment was the sixth most common goal (9%) in the 2011 statements. Unfortunately, this vitally important goal dropped to the bottom of the 2016 list as it was included in only 4 of the missions of that year. Possibly the firms are taking for granted that they must be concerned for the environment and it is simply understood that they must work on that goal.

It is interesting to note that there are several goals that were included in 2016 missions but did not appear 15 years earlier. Mission statement content has evolved with the constantly changing business environment. There are five goals or objectives that were included in the 2016 missions but were absent from those of 2001. In particular, affordability or affordable products or services, safe products or services and/or safe working conditions, growth or expansion, efficiency and/or effectiveness, and loyalty and/or trust were included in several of the 2016 missions.

Affordability or affordable products was the most frequently mentioned of the five newly added goals with 17 of the 100 missions containing this objective. An example comes from Freddie Mac who states "Our statutory mission is to provide liquidity, stability and affordability to the U.S. housing market." The goal of producing a safe product or service and maintaining a safe working environment for employees was mentioned in 12% of the 2016 missions (equal to profits goal) in 2016. A portion of FedEx's mission states "Safety will be the first consideration in all operations."

The final three goals that were new to the list included growth or expansion, efficiency or effectiveness, and loyalty or trust. These items were mentioned less frequently than affordability and safety with only 8%, 6%, and 5% frequency respectively. Citigroup's mission states "Citi's mission is to serve as a trusted partner to our clients by responsibly providing financial services that enable growth and economic progress." Another example involving loyalty or trust comes from New York Life Insurance. A portion of their mission states "By acting with integrity and humanity, we earn their (customers) loyalty and trust."

Table 4 provides some interesting changes in mission statement content over the past 15 years. In addition to the 2001 and 2016 studies, the authors also conducted mission statement analysis of the largest 100 firms in 2008, 2010, and 2011. The results of these studies were not included in this paper. However, a quick overview of the five studies show that customers have always been the most frequently mentioned stakeholder increasing consistently over the period.

Production of a quality product or service has consistently been the most frequently included goal over the years peaking at 56% in 2010 (down to 37% in 2016). The mention of stockholders in mission statements have been consistently decreasing over the period dropping from 34% to 17%. Concern over ethics and ethical behavior peaked in 2008 with 30% frequency and decreasing to only 16% in 2016. Finally, the production of a quality product or service has consistently been a primary goal or objective over the 15 year period. However, the current inclusion rate of 37% has decreased significantly from prior years (52% in 2008, 56% in 2010, and 44% in 2011).

## CONCLUSION

Mission statements are a primary communications device for the business to inform all stakeholders of, as Peter Drucker stated, “what is the firm all about and what do they want to become.” The authors have reviewed Fortune 100 mission statements on five separate occasions since 2001. The first and last study completed in 2001 and 2016 were discussed in this paper. Mission statement content has been studied from two aspects. First, what stakeholders are important enough to include in the published statement? These are typically groups such as customers, employees, and stockholders. Second, what are the goals and objectives that are most significant to the organization? These often have included production of a quality good or service and a desire to conduct business on a global scale or be a world leader in the industry. A number of interesting points can be gleaned from a review of Tables 3 and 4 presented above. Some stakeholders and goals are frequently included in mission statements over the years while others gain and lose importance over time. Mission statements, no doubt, will continue to be an important communication device for the organization in order to provide vital information to all stakeholder groups.

## REFERENCES

- Certo, S.C. and S.T. (2012). *Modern Management: Concepts and Skills (Twelfth Edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- David, F.R. (2005). *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases (Tenth Edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- David, F.R. (2009). *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases (Twelfth Edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Drucker, P. (1974). *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, and Practices*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Drucker, P. (1993). *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Publishing.
- Hitt, M.A., Black, J.S. & Porter, L.W. (2012). *Management (Third Edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- King, D.L. (2001). Mission Statement Content Analysis. *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal*, 5(1,2), 75-100.
- McKee, A. (2012). *Management: A Focus on Leaders*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Pearce, J. and David, F. (1989). “The Bottom Line on Corporate Mission Statements”, *Academy of Management Executive* 1, 2 (May 1987): 109.
- Rarick, C. and Vitton, J. (1995). Mission Statements Make Sense. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 1, 11-12.
- Schermerhorn, J., Osborn, R., Uhl-Bien, M., Hunt, J. (2012). *Organizational Behavior*. Danvers, MA; John Wiley & Sons.
- Thompson, A., Peteraf, M., Gamble, J., and Strickland, A. (2012). *Crafting & Executing Strategy (Eighteenth Edition)*. New York, NY; McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Verma, H. (2010). Mission Statements- A study of Intent and Influence. *Journal of Services Research*, 9(2), 169-171.

Wheelen, T. and Hunger, J. (2010). *Strategic Management and Business Policy* (Twelfth Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

## APPENDIX

**Table 1**

**2001 Fortune 100 Mission Statements**

Stakeholders	Percent	Goal/Objective	Percent
Customers	61	Quality	25
Stockholders	34	Core Values	25
Employees	21	Leadership	17
Competitors	9	Global	15
Suppliers	6	Technology (Innovation)	14
Communities	6	Environmental	9
Government	2	Profits	6
		Ethics	3

**Table 2**

**2016 Fortune 100 Mission Statements**

Stakeholders	Percent	Goal/Objective	Percent
Customers	73	Quality	37
Communities	22	Global	26
Employees	20	Technology (Innovation)	22
Stockholders	17	Affordable	17
Suppliers	9	Ethics	16
Governments	7	Profits	12
Competitors	0	Safety/Safe Products	12
		Growth/Expansion	8
		Efficiency/Effectiveness	6
		Leadership	6
		Loyalty/Trust	5
		Environments	4
		Core Values	4

**Table 3**

**2001 and 2016 Fortune 100 Mission Statements: Stakeholders**

Stakeholders	2001 Percent	2016 Percent
Customers	61	73
Stockholders	34	17
Employees	21	20
Competitors	9	0
Suppliers	6	9
Communities	6	22
Government	2	7

**Table 4**  
**2001 and 2016 Fortune 100 Mission Statements: Goals/Objectives**

<b>Goal/Objective</b>	<b>2001 Percent</b>	<b>Goal/Objective</b>	<b>2016 Percent</b>
Quality	25	Quality	37
Core Values	25	Global	26
Leadership	17	Technology (Innovation)	22
Global	15	Affordable	17
Technology (Innovation)	14	Ethics	16
Environmental	9	Profits	12
Profits	6	Safety/Safe Products	12
Ethics	3	Growth/Expansion	8
		Efficiency/Effectiveness	6
		Leadership	6
		Loyalty/Trust	5
		Environments	4
		Core Values	4