

DOES COMPANY SIZE AFFECT MISSION STATEMENT CONTENT?

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ABSTRACT

Mission statements are probably the most important communication issued by a firm to all of its many stakeholders. Missions provide the reason why the firm is in existence. This paper is a continuation of the mission statement research that the authors have conducted over the last twelve years. Previous studies have reviewed mission statements from the largest corporations in countries including Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, Japan, China, Brazil, and India. This study considers United States' businesses only. The intent of the authors is to determine if the size of the company affects the content of the mission statement.

The authors have conducted research on mission statements in 2001, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012 that has been published in various Allied Academies' journals. The majority of the articles have appeared in the Academy of Strategic Management Journal (ASMJ). The mission statement comparisons have emphasized two distinct areas, namely, the stakeholders mentioned in the mission statements and the named goals and objectives of the company. The stakeholders and goals/objectives emphasis is continued in this paper.

The authors again used the Fortune 500 list to determine the largest firms in the United States. In this study, the largest 100 firms are compared with the last 100 companies in the Fortune 500 list (numbers 401-500). The authors hope to determine if size does affect the stakeholders and goals/objectives mentioned in the firm's mission statement. Stakeholders identified included communities, customers, employees, stockholders/stakeholders, and suppliers/partners. Identified goals and objectives included affordability of products or services, following core values, striving for diversity, maintaining efficient operations, concern for the environment, maintaining ethical operations, striving for global operations, maintaining innovation, maintaining a leadership position, an emphasis on profitability/profits, desire to produce a quality product or service that provided value to customers, producing a safe product, an emphasis on teamwork, and the desire to gain the trust of stakeholders. Significant differences were identified in the mission statement content of these two groups of firms and are discussed in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

For at least the last 40 years, the company's mission statement has served as the primary communication tool to explain to all stakeholders what the firm is all about. It states the reason for the firm's existence. Peter Drucker, who is often considered the "father of management," wrote extensively about mission statements. He felt that missions are the "foundation for priorities,

strategies, plans, and work assignments” (Drucker, 1974). Drucker felt that mission statements differentiated firms and gave them their own personality. Drucker felt that the mission statement should serve as the foundation for the creation of company strategies and policies. If the emphasis in the mission statement was on customers, it was only logical that the firm’s policies and strategies should emphasize that stakeholder’s importance.

Drucker established the Leader to Leader Institute that emphasized the importance of the mission statement. Drucker felt that mission statements should be short and to the point. He suggested that the mission statement should be only 3 or 4 sentences in length. He believed that these few sentences should address four aspects about the firm including who are we, what do we do, what do we stand for, and why do we do what we do. This is a lot to expect from a single paragraph of only 3 or 4 sentences. Drucker felt that a good mission statement should specifically name the firm’s most important stakeholders.

Fred David believes that mission statements should include the firm’s basic purpose, its unique qualities or strengths, its values, its core stakeholders, and its major goals or objectives (David, 2005). Although they are known by many names including creed statements, statements of belief, and statements of business purpose, these critical communications must inform all stakeholders about the nature and character of the company. David also believes that mission statements must explain the organization’s “reason for being” (David, 2009). In this process, he feels that mission statements should clearly state who the firm seeks to serve, so the naming of stakeholders is especially important.

Many authors feel that the goals and objectives of the firm must mirror the content of the mission statement (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Robbins & Coulter feel that the mission statements must disclose the organization’s purpose or reason for being. This serves as a guidebook to all employees of the company in the process of establishing corporate policies and strategies. Other authors including Annie McKee feel that the mission statement provides the focus for the firm (McKee, 2012). Without a well written mission statement, the organization, in effect, has lost its compass. McKee emphasizes that the mission statement should describe what the firm considers important, what it does, and what it stands for. She, along with many other authors, feels that mission statements should be used by managers in the process of establishing and following short and long term objectives.

Another author on mission statements, Jeffery Abrahams, has researched over 300 of the largest U.S. firms’ statements (Abrahams, 1999). Following this analysis, he felt that a good mission statement reflects the values of the firm and provides stakeholders with a statement of purpose. Others, including Samuel and S. Trevis Certo, believe that the mission statement is a critical part of the strategic management process (S. & S.T. Certo, 2012).

Many authors feel that the strategic management process requires a carefully constructed mission statement to provide direction to all employees and managers. Hitt, Black, and Porter support this belief and stress that an effective mission statement must describe the central purpose of the company (M.A. Hitt, J.S. Black & L.W. Porter, 2012). Rarick and Vitton feel that mission statements should include important aspects of the company including company core philosophy, customer markets served, major products or services produced, and concern for the environment and the communities in which the firm operates (Rarick and Vitton, 1995).

Other authors including Thompson, et.al. emphasize that mission statements should clearly describe the current business and purpose of the firm (Thompson, et.al. 2012). These authors feel that a well written mission statement gives the company its unique identity. Another group of authors, Schermerhorn, et. al., feel that well written mission statements describe who the firm seeks to serve and what is the overall organizational purpose (Schermerhorn, et.al.). Finally, Wheelen and Hunger argue that an efficient and effective mission statement describes the fundamental or unique purpose of the organization (Wheelen and Hunger, 2010). They feel that this provides the unique personality of the firm that sets the company apart from all others.

Following a brief summary of previous mission statement research, the authors summarize the similarities and differences among the top 100 Fortune firms and those that are listed on the Fortune 500 list in positions from 401 to 500. There are many significant differences from the largest companies and those that are significantly smaller in size. Finally, the appendix contains a listing of the 200 firms used in this study.

PREVIOUS MISSION STATEMENT RESEARCH

The authors began their mission statement research twelve years ago. Five of the authors' mission statement articles have been published in the *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal* (King, 2001) and the *Academy of Strategic Management Journal* (King, Case & Premo, 2010), (King, Case & Premo, 2011), (King, Case & Premo, 2012) and (King, Case & Premo, 2013). This mission statement research has increased in size over the years with the most current study involving a review of ten countries' mission statements. These five research projects are briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

The authors' first study in 2001 involved a review of the Fortune 100 firms in the United States for that year. The authors reviewed the stakeholders specifically named in the mission statement as well as identified goals and objectives of the firm. This will be compared with the 2012 mission statements from the Fortune 100 companies. Table 1 shows that the most commonly identified stakeholder in 2001 was the customer with 61% of the firms identifying the importance of the marketing concept. As far as goals and objectives mentioned, providing a quality product or service and following established core values were most common. Notice that the goal of conducting ethical operations only appeared in 3% of the missions. Possibly the reason for this is that the Sarbanes-Oxley Act was not enacted until 2002.

Table 1: 2001 Fortune 100 - Mission Statements That Included			
Stakeholders	Percent	Goal/Objective	Percent
Customers	61	Quality/Value/Service	25
Stockholders	34	Core Values	25
Employees	21	Leadership	17
Competitors	9	Global	15
Suppliers	6	Technology	14
Governments /Law	2	Environmental	9
Community/Communities	6	Profits	6
		Ethics	3

The authors' second mission statement study reviewed the top 50 Fortune listed companies in 2008. Table 2 is converted into percentages rather than the actual number of firms including each item. Again, the most commonly mentioned stakeholder is customers followed by employees and communities. Notice that the number of firms listing community or communities increased from 6% in 2001 to 30% in 2008. The most common goals and objectives in 2008 were providing a quality product or service (52%) and conducting global operations (34%). These goals were closely followed by the importance of ethics and ethical operations (30%). The increase emphasis on ethical behavior (3% in 2001 to 30% in 2008 is likely the result, at least in part, to the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2002.

Table 2: 2008 Fortune Top 50 - Mission Statements That Included			
Stakeholders	Percent	Goal/Objective	Percent
Customers	62	Quality/Value/Service	52
Employees	34	Global	34
Community/Communities	30	Ethics	30
Stockholders	28	Environmental	16
Core Values	14	Leadership and Core Values	14
Suppliers	10	Profits	12
Government/Laws	4	Technology	2

Table 3 directly compares the results from 2001 and 2008 in a format where it is easier to observe major differences. Firms continue to emphasize the “marketing concept” and realize that the premier stakeholder is definitely the customer. Any firm that fails to meet the needs and wants of the customer will soon find itself out of business. As mentioned above, communities and ethics were included significantly more in the 2008 mission statements.

Table 3: Percentages of U.S. Mission Statements Containing the Following Words		
Stakeholders	2001 Study	2008 Study
Communities	6%	30%
Competitors	9%	0%
Customers	61%	62%
Employees	21%	34%
Govt./Law	2%	4%
Stockholders	34%	28%
Suppliers	6%	10%
Goal/Objective		
Core Values	25%	14%
Environmental	9%	16%
Ethics	3%	30%
Global	15%	34%
Leadership	17%	14%
Profits	6%	12%
Quality/Value	25%	52%
Technology	14%	2%

The authors also reviewed the mission statements of the 25 largest firms in the U.S. in 2010 and 2011. The 2010 study included a comparison with the largest corporations in Australia,

Canada, and Great Britain (King, Case & Premo, 2010). The authors compared the mission statements of these four English speaking countries in an effort to discover similarities and differences. The 2011 study summarized the 2011 missions of the biggest 25 firms in the United States with those of the largest firms in France, Germany, Japan, and China (King, Case & Premo, 2011). The 2012 study included mission statements from the United States as well as nine other countries. Table 4 summarizes the mission statements of the largest U.S. firms in 2001, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Table 4: Percentages of U.S. Mission Statements Containing the Following Words					
Stakeholders	2001 Study	2008 Study	2010 Study	2011 Study	2012 Study
Communities	6%	30%	40%	28%	28%
Competitors	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Customers	61%	62%	68%	64%	68%
Employees	21%	34%	24%	16%	16%
Govt./Law	2%	4%	8%	0%	0%
Stockholders	34%	28%	28%	24%	20%
Suppliers	6%	10%	12%	8%	12%
Goal/Objective					
Core Values	25%	14%	8%	8%	8%
Environmental	9%	16%	8%	4%	8%
Ethics	3%	30%	28%	28%	28%
Global	15%	34%	32%	28%	24%
Leadership	17%	14%	20%	20%	32%
Profits	6%	12%	16%	16%	16%
Quality/Value	25%	52%	56%	44%	32%
Technology	14%	2%	0%	0%	0%

This table shows that the most commonly included stakeholders over this twelve year period are customers, communities, stockholders, and employees. Customers, not surprisingly, are mentioned in the mission statements far more than any other stakeholder (over 60% in each year). Community or communities is still a commonly included stakeholder; however, it has dropped from its 2010 level of 40% to 28% in 2011 and 2012. Employees are mentioned less often in recent years dropping from a high of 34% in 2008 to 16% in 2011 and 2012. Stockholders/shareholders are also included less frequently slipping from the high of 34% in 2001 to 20% in 2012.

A review of the goals and objectives mentioned in these mission statements reveals that the goal of providing a quality product or service that represents value to customers is the most commonly stated goal along with achieving or maintaining a leadership position (both 32% in the 2012 study). Being ethical and maintaining ethical practices has been consistent at 28% for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Interestingly, technology was mentioned in 14% of missions in 2001 and not included in any statements reviewed in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

The following section of this paper summarizes the mission statements that were available on the Fortune 500 companys' websites in February 2013. The authors will refer to these as 2013 mission statements, although in many cases, the webpage listed them as still of 2012 vintage. In any event, the following summarizes the mission statements of Fortune 1-100 and Fortune 401-500 firms as of February 2013.

2013 FORTUNE 500 FIRMS: COMPARING 1-100 AND 401-500 LISTED FIRMS

The authors' goal for this study was to compare and contrast the very largest U.S. firms who were listed on the 2012 Fortune 500 website in positions from 1 to 100. The result of this analysis is then compared to the smaller 100 firms on the Fortune 500 list ranking in positions from 401 to 500. The following table summarizes the number of firms that identified the stakeholders and goals/objectives discussed above with a few additional items. For the 2013 mission statement analysis, the stakeholder groups included communities, customers, employees, stockholders/shareholders, and suppliers/vendors/partners. The goal and objective classes included affordability, core values, diversity, efficiency/effectiveness, environmental or earth friendly, global operations, growth/expansion, innovation, leader/leadership, profits/profitability, quality/value/service, safety/safe products, teamwork, and trust. Table 5 includes a summary of these 200 mission statements.

Table 5: Percentages of 2013 Mission Statements Including the Following Terms		
Stakeholders Mentioned	Fortune 1-100	Fortune 401-500
Communities/Community	19%	21%
Customers	64%	75%
Employees	34%	42%
Stockholders/Stakeholders	22%	31%
Suppliers	16%	17%
Goal/Objective Mentioned		
Affordable/Affordability	10%	7%
Core Values	8%	10%
Diversity	7%	10%
Efficient/Effective Operations	5%	12%
Environment/Earth Friendly	9%	12%
Ethics/Ethical Operations	23%	25%
Global/Worldwide Operations	34%	40%
Growth/Expansion	12%	24%
Innovation	18%	18%
Leader/Leadership Position	26%	33%
Profits/Profitability	9%	7%
Quality/Value/Service	30%	49%
Safety/Safe Product	11%	10%
Teamwork	10%	17%
Trust	5%	12%

A few comments are in order concerning the stakeholders named in the missions of these two groups of firms. First, the largest firms, that include Fortune #1-100 companies, most commonly include customers and employees. This is also true for the smaller size firms, numbers 401-500, but the percentages for these smaller firms are significantly higher. For example, customers were identified in 75% of the smaller firms' missions but only in 64% of the largest

firms. This is a fairly significant difference with the smaller firms naming customers in 75% of their mission statements. This is certainly reasonable given the fact that large corporations must constantly realize that to stay successful, they must identify and meet the needs and wants of their target market customers.

Employees are included in 34% of the largest firms' mission statements while 42% of the smaller companies incorporated this stakeholder. This shows that a significant percentage of these corporations realize the importance of competent employees. A review of the stakeholder section of Table 5 shows that smaller firms (401-500) identified each class of stakeholder more often than the largest organizations. Except for suppliers and community, there is a material difference between these two groups of companies. It appears that the smaller firms chose to identify stakeholders more often than that of their "big brothers." In many cases, these smaller firms published a longer and more detailed mission statement.

A review of the goal and objective section of Table 5 shows a number of significant differences between the largest and smaller companies. For example, the goal of providing a quality product or service that provides value to customers is mentioned in 49% of the smaller firms' missions but in only 30% of the largest organizations. The desire to conduct global operations was included in 40% of the smaller firms' missions but was only included in 34% of the largest companies' statements. The largest percentage difference between the two groups of firms concerned the goal of growth or expansion of operations. This was an identified goal in 24% of the smaller firms' statements but was only mentioned in 12% of the largest companies' missions. This is probably logical that the smaller firms have the desire to grow in size and approach the scale of the top 100 firms.

Another significant difference pertains to the goal of maintaining teamwork within the organization and when working with suppliers and vendors. The largest firms mentioned teamwork in only 10% of their missions while the smaller firms included this goal in 17% of their statements. The goal of efficient or effective operations was included in only 5% of the largest firms' missions while it appeared in 12% of the smaller firms. Trust was included in many more of the smaller firms compared to the largest organizations (12% smaller to 5% for largest).

Innovation was included in 18% of the firms' missions in both groups of companies. This is the only goal that was equally represented in both groups of firms. The majority of other goals including core values, diversity, environment or earth friendly, and ethical operations were very comparable in percentage. The authors were a bit surprised by the fact that only 9% of the largest firms and 12% of the smaller companies identified a concern for the environment and the desire to conduct earth friendly operations as an identified goal. One goal identified in this study that has recently begun to appear in mission statements concerns diversity. Firms realize that hiring a diverse workforce often provides a wealth of benefits. Finally, two other goals that have only been identified in the last few years are teamwork and trust.

Table 6 below shows the order of stakeholder ranking for both the largest of firms and the smaller companies. Notice that the ranking of these stakeholders is exactly the same for both groups of companies. Both the largest and smaller firms realize the importance of considering their customers and employees.

Table 6: Stakeholder Rankings by Frequency		
Stakeholder	Fortune 1-100	Fortune 401-500
First	Customers	Customers
Second	Employees	Employees
Third	Stockholders/Stakeholders	Stockholders/Stakeholders
Fourth	Community/ Communities	Community/Communities
Fifth	Suppliers	Suppliers

Table 7 lists the most commonly identified goal or objective for both classes of firms. There are some differences between the two groups of firms as far as the frequency of listing the companies' goals and objectives. For example, the most included goal or objective for the largest firms was the desire to conduct business operations on a global scale. The smaller firms most often included the goal of providing a quality product or service that provides value to their customers. The third and fourth most frequently listed goal or objective was to have a leadership position (#3) and conduct ethical business operations (#4) for both groups of firms. The fifth and sixth positions were reversed for the two size groups with the largest companies listing innovation ahead of growth/expansion plans. The smaller firms reversed these two goals. This is logical as the smaller firms had a stronger desire to grow and expand their business.

Table 7: Goal/Objective Rankings by Frequency		
Goal/ Objective	Fortune 1-100	Fortune 401-500
First	Global/Global Operations	Quality/Value/Service
Second	Quality/Value/Service	Global/Global Operations
Third	Leader/Leadership Position	Leader/Leadership Position
Fourth	Ethics/Ethical Operations	Ethics/Ethical Operations
Fifth	Innovation	Growth/Expansion
Sixth	Growth/Expansion	Innovation

In summary, there are many similarities and a few significant differences between the mission statements of the largest Fortune 500 firms and those on the bottom of that list. The smaller firms (#401-500) tend to write longer more detailed mission statements than those of the largest companies (#1-100). This is evident in the fact that every stakeholder class is mentioned in more of the smaller firms' mission statements than those of the largest companies. Customers, for example, were included in 11% more mission statements by the smaller firms (75% to 64%). Further, employees were included in 8% more missions by the smaller companies (42% to 34%). In addition, the largest firms only mentioned a specific goal or objective more often than the smaller companies in three cases. It was only affordability, profits or profitability, and safety or safe products goals that were more often included in the largest firms' mission statements. All of the other identified goals or objectives were more frequently included by the smaller firms and often significantly more so. For example, providing a quality product was included in 49% of the smaller company missions while the largest firms included this goal in only 30% of their statements. The goal of growth and expansion was included in twice as many of the mission statements of the smaller companies verses the largest ones (24% to 12%). In addition, goals such

as trust, teamwork, and efficient operations percentage wise were much more common in the statements of the smaller organizations.

MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

As a conclusion to this paper, the authors felt that it was appropriate to provide a few examples of mission statements from both the largest firms (1-100) and the smaller companies (401-500). Notice the identification of stakeholders and goals and objectives in the following mission statements. It is interesting to note that a number of firms in both size classes published a very short mission that listed very few stakeholders and goals. The following examples are from firms who issued a more comprehensive statement.

From the largest corporations, the authors selected PepsiCo (#41), FedEx (#70), and Deere (#97) as good examples of comprehensive mission statements. Pepsi mentions a number of stakeholders including investors, employees, business partners, investors, and communities. In addition, the goals of global leadership and ethical behavior are apparent. The FedEx mission includes customers, shareholders, employees, and suppliers/partners. The goals of providing high quality services, producing superior profits, maintaining safe operations, and conducting operations based on the highest ethical and professional standards are described in its mission. Finally, the Deere mission describes core values that include innovation, integrity, and quality. It also identifies stakeholders including employees, customers, communities, suppliers, and the environment. Maintaining safe operations and the production of a quality product are additional goals listed in the Deere mission statement.

PepsiCo - Our mission is to be the world's premier consumer products company focused on convenient foods and beverages. We seek to produce financial rewards to investors as we provide opportunities for growth and enrichment to our employees, our business partners and the communities in which we operate. And in everything we do, we strive for honesty, fairness and integrity.

FedEx – Mission - FedEx Corporation will produce superior financial returns for its shareowners by providing high value-added logistics, transportation and related information services through focused operating companies. Customer requirements will be met in the highest quality manner appropriate to each market segment served. FedEx Corporation will strive to develop mutually rewarding relationships with its employees, partners and suppliers. Safety will be the first consideration in all operations. Corporate activities will be conducted to the highest ethical and professional standards.

Deere - Mission Statement - “Guided by our company’s four core values – commitment, innovation, integrity and quality – we conduct our business in a manner that protects our employees, customers, communities, suppliers and the environment. This requires that, wherever we do business, we will comply with the spirit and intent of all applicable environmental, health and safety laws and regulations. A company-wide focus on quality extends to our EHS programs, which emphasize continuous improvement. We believe that this commitment to the

responsible management of human and natural resources contributes to the sustainable growth of our company.”

From the smaller firms (401-500), the authors selected Eastman Kodak (#408), NCR (#447), and Meritor (#481). Notice that the Eastman Kodak mission lists the following stakeholders: shareholders, customers, employees, and community. Its goals include increasing shareholder wealth, supporting the community, and respect for the environment. NCR’s mission lists such stakeholders as customers, employees, and communities. Identified goals for NCR are maintaining global operations, conducting operations on an environmentally sound manner, and concern for the safety and health of all employees. Finally, Meritor’s mission statement identifies shareholders, customers, and employees as stakeholders and the goals of developing innovative and efficient products.

Eastman Kodak - At Kodak, we believe that by doing well by shareholders also means doing right by customers, employees, neighbors, and suppliers. With that in mind, Kodak operates its facilities, and designs and markets its products and services, not only to increase shareholder value, but also to promote development of the individual, the well being of the community, and respect for the environment.

NCR – Mission -NCR has a proud tradition of responsible corporate citizenship dating back to the company's founding in 1884. As a member of the global business community, we are committed to conducting all aspects of business in an environmentally sound manner, with care for the safety and health of our employees, as well as for the needs of our customers and the general public in the communities we serve around the world.

Meritor - We anticipate our customers’ needs by developing innovative products that provide superior performance, energy efficiency and reliability. We provide a leading portfolio of differentiated services supporting our customers’ products throughout their lifecycle. We distinguish ourselves through our ability to consistently deliver on our commitments while maximizing value for our shareholders, customers, and employees.

These are a few of the examples of comprehensive mission statements found on the websites of the firms on the Fortune 500 list. Much is expected from these short three or four sentence statements. The firm must thoughtfully develop a description of it is and its reason for existence. A well constructed mission statement should provide the reader with some insight into the unique character of the company. These mission statements should then be the basis for strategic management practices and policies. The firm’s actions should be guided by these critically important statements of existence or purpose typically called missions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

The authors believe that a number of significant results can be identified through the review of the information contained in Table 5. Those individuals interested in mission statements can appreciate significant differences between the statements of the Fortune 500 largest firms (#1-100) and those of the smaller sized companies (#401-500). A review of this information can enhance the understanding of similarities and differences in mission statement content between these two groups of major corporations. This applies to both the stakeholders mentioned as well as any identified goals and objectives.

The first significant finding is that the smaller firms (#401-500) create and publish a mission statement that is more detailed and comprehensive compared to their larger counterparts. Table 5 shows that every identified stakeholder is mentioned more frequently by the smaller firms compared to the largest of companies. For example, customers were included in 75% of the smaller firms' missions while being included in only 64% of the largest companies' missions. Customers were the most identified stakeholder by both groups, reinforcing the importance of the marketing concept. These firms realized that their long-run success depends on meeting the needs and wants of their target market customers.

This important difference continues when the second portion of Table 5 is reviewed. Again, the smaller firms' missions identify the listed goals and objectives more often than those of the largest companies. The only exception is the goal of producing an affordable product which was included in 10% of the largest firms' missions compared to 7% of the smaller companies. A goal shared equally by both groups was innovation being reported in 18% of all firms. Other identified goals including efficient operations, concern for the environment, growth and expansion, and maintaining a leadership position were included in a larger percentage of the smaller firms' missions compared to the largest organizations. The largest firms' most mentioned goal was that of conducting global operations (34% of firms). The smaller companies' most frequently identified goal was that of producing a quality product that provides value to customers (49% of smaller companies).

Another major difference between these two groups pertains to the desire to grow and expand operations. This goal was included in twice as many smaller firms' missions compared to those in the larger businesses (24% to 12%). Likewise, providing a quality product that provides value to customers was included in 49% of the smaller firms' statements compared to only 30% of the missions of the largest companies. The above mentioned differences help any interested party in understanding how the size of the firm affects mission statement content. It is evident that the smaller firms strive to produce a mission statement that is more comprehensive and inclusive than those in the larger group. Anyone reviewing mission statements is likely to better understand who is important to the company (stakeholders) as well as the identified goals and objectives of the firm.

A final interesting point is the fact that the goals of conducting earth-friendly operations (or being concerned for the environment) and the desire to maintain ethical operations are included in a surprisingly few number of mission statements in both groups. For example, only 9% of the largest firms included a concern for the environment in their missions while that number was only a bit higher (12%) in the smaller companies' statements. This is another important point for anyone interested in mission statements. Without a study such as this, most interested parties would have no idea that the number of firms identifying the goals of concern for the environment and desire to operate in an ethical manner would be reported in so few mission statements of these largest corporations.

As stated earlier, the mission statement describes what the company is really about. It reports the character of the firm and identifies who and what is important to the firm. Table 5 summarizes a detailed study of 200 of the largest U.S. firms. The findings from this project should provide insight for any interested party to better understand the character of these firms and which stakeholders and goals are most important to the firms.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

The authors compared the mission statements of the 100 largest firms on the Fortune 500 (#1-100) list with those of the bottom 100 firms on this ranking (#401-500). Table 5 provides a summary of the findings from the analysis of these 200 firms' mission statements. It summarizes the most commonly mentioned stakeholders and goals/objectives in those missions. Since mission statements are a dynamic publication, the firms must constantly update these important communications. This process of mission statement revision insures that the company will constantly project its up-to-date "reason for existence" and "unique personality." The authors' objective is to better educate interested parties on similarities and differences in the mission statements of the largest Fortune 500 corporations and those of smaller firms.

The list of the 200 companies used in this study is available upon request from the lead author who can be contacted at dking@sbu.edu.

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