

EDITORIAL

Managing Purpose in the healthcare eco-system. The need of a purpose



Gestionar el Propósito en el ecosistema sanitario. La necesidad de tener un propósito

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Within the framework of healthcare organizations, one of the issues that management teams generally address is the need to have a defined purpose. This element, which is essential to be able to establish the strategic vision of any organization, is not always considered as necessary and differential.

Let us start explaining what the concept of purpose really is. Hamel and Prahalad (2005) explain "The Strategic Purpose imagines a desired leadership position and establishes the criteria that the organization will use to chart its progress". This way of understanding the purpose as a competitive form clashes head-on with the way in which this element is usually interpreted by healthcare management teams, since in a market context that is not commercial and whose background is based on patient care, the assumption that any statement proposing elements of competitive intelligence often leads to uncomfortable situations both in management teams and in healthcare management.

Another of the doubts that often arise when establishing the strategic elements is the merger between mission and purpose. In this case, "The strategic purpose is stable over time"¹. This implies that while the mission can be achieved

and revised at defined intervals, the purpose and its essence never end, since it is an element that will always be there to remind us of the *raison d'être* of each organization.

Reinforcing this concept, Simon Sinek² explains: "People do not buy what you do, but why you do it". This is why the emotional concept of purpose when it comes to being the guide that defines the vision should be reinforced.

What should the purpose of a healthcare organization look like?

Once the concept of purpose is understood, another element that generates doubts in healthcare organizations is how it should be written. The recommendation is always to write sentences with the following characteristics

- **Clear:** The message to be conveyed to all internal and external stakeholders must be able to be understood. Any confusing message will divert the focus and efforts both in the present and in the future.
- **Personal:** One of the keys to the purpose lies in its ability to differentiate the organization from others with which it competes. It is necessary that the phrase that wants to inspire the entire ecosystem includes aspects such as the

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organization's own values and culture so that the origin of who proposes it is understood.

- **Inspirational:** As it is a statement of intent that must motivate, especially internal stakeholders, the way it is expressed must inspire success. Therefore, we must look for a motivational formula that allows us to awaken the spirit of feeling that we are different as an organization.
- **Integrative:** This is possibly the most difficult issue for healthcare organizations to resolve, since in most cases hospitals establish their priorities in patient management and in defining where the organization wants to position itself in the future, which not all stakeholders understand in the same way. Therefore, a purpose that integrates elements of patients, professionals and society is much more powerful than one that is linked to the objectives of a single line or strategic priority.

How can we formulate a purpose that integrates the needs of all stakeholders?

Once the healthcare organization has decided to use the purpose as a differentiating element, it is important to apply a well-founded methodology in order to define a phrase or motto on which to base the road to success. It is important to define a clear roadmap, as this strategic statement will be the lighthouse that guides the way to success.

Firstly, as an element of vision, is to make the decision to transform our organization by changing the concept of mission (what we do here) to that of purpose (why we are here). This question, which may seem identical, separates the usual from the transcendent and stands as the inspirational element of any company.

Secondly we need to establish in the roadmap is to integrate and involve all key stakeholders in our ecosystem. They need to know where our organization is headed, where the priorities are going to be set and, above all, whether they feel motivated to join us on this journey. One of the most complicated things in healthcare management is to be

able to demonstrate that our route and our destination is shared by all stakeholders and that they trust that we will achieve success on the basis of these premises.

Thirdly, identify three elements that are essential to our organization.

- A key word that should contain the message you expect from the organization or area you are leading and that is common to all stakeholders. These words should be related to competitive or transcendent elements. For example, win, lead, transform.
- A priority element that can be an element of decision at the strategic level of the organization.
- A differential value that defines the entity and that is difficult to find in the environment in which we operate and compete. This word is important because it structures the future value proposition of the organization and lays the foundations of how the services and support processes are generated.

In conclusion, it is worth remembering the fundamental aspects of strategic purpose: Purpose is not mission! Because the mission is fulfilled temporarily and the purpose remains. The purpose is the basis of the organization's inspiration and part of the competitive spirit. The purpose makes us different and this is what, together with the effort and the ability to meet the challenges, will make us a successful organization.

References

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