

Chapter Four v5.2



Your Mission Statement

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Ah, life.

In this life, we all tend to get caught up in the details of whatever we happen to be doing (no matter what it is) to the point where we can't see the forest for the trees. This is true about everything, not just marketing.

Here's an example. A friend of yours — and we all know someone like this — wants to tell you about a great movie he just saw. He wants to convince you to see it, too. In a sense, then, he wants to “sell” you on seeing that movie.

But he goes about it like this:

“Oh, boy. I saw this great movie a few weeks ago. You gotta see it. It takes place in Boston ... no, wait. It takes place in New York. Wait. No, that's right. Boston. Yeah. And it stars that guy ... who's that actor? The one with the hair. Oh, jeez, I can't think of his name. You know who I mean. He's in all those horror movies. Who am I thinking of? Oh, YOU know. He used to be married to what's-her-name. The blonde. C'mon! What's his name? You know the guy I'm talking about, right? He's so funny!”

What happened to your friend? Think about it.

He's gotten completely lost in small details about what he wants to communicate to you, instead of getting to the essence of it.

Well, the same thing happens in business. You may *think* you're selling Volvos, but you're *really* in the business of selling "safety and reliability." So if you start blabbing on (like your friend) about the engine and the tires and whatnot, you'll never get a chance to discuss what your customer really wants to hear about — namely safety and reliability.

[:BEGIN QUOTE]

Of the many literary traps into which a writer may fall, the insertion of an irrelevant, indecipherable, and ungrammatical quotation that ends abruptly, foolishly.

— Uta Ellisatt

[END QUOTE:]

Your mission statement is what will keep you on track when you start getting lost in details, go trundling off the deep end, and lose track of what business you're really in. It will prevent your from getting MAD — Marketing Alzheimer's Disease.

There are differences, however, between a mission statement in conventional marketing, and a mission statement in mischief marketing. The table below summarizes some of these differences:

	Conventional Marketing	Mischief Marketing
Term:	<i>Mission Statement</i>	<i>Mischievous Mission Statement</i>
Definition:	A short text that makes explicit what business you're really in.	A short text that makes explicit what you are trying to accomplish in life, not just in business.
Scenario:	You're a graphics artist. You may think you're in the business of drawing and painting. But you're really in the business of communicating. Your mission statement would therefore reflect this.	You're producing a TV show about gardening. You may think you're in the business of talking about gardening. But you're really in the business of helping people enjoy and appreciate life without spending a lot of money.
Example:	" <i>Our mission: To communicate.</i> "	" <i>To help people experience life's simpler pleasures.</i> "

Here are some important points to keep in mind when you create your mission statement:

1. A mission statement should express who you are, what you do, what you believe in, and why.
2. Don't confuse a mission statement with a slogan, business plan, goal, advertising piece, public relations piece, or world peace.
3. Some of the most powerful mission statements are only a few sentences long.
4. Look at other mission statements to get ideas about how to approach your own. Keep it simple.
5. To develop a truly vigorous mission statement, take your time.
6. In your statement, avoid bragging about how swell you are, or about what matchless quality and great service you provide. Everybody says these things.
7. Honest, simplicity, frankness: these are good components of a mission statement.
8. Eloquent, grandiose statements don't have much impact. The best statements, by contrast, are direct and powerful.

Example: “Mission statement: To let my kids know that they don't need to be afraid to pursue their dreams.”

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Sleepless Man on a Mission Inspires His Kids

For many years, Jeff Arch struggled to be a successful writer. But things were so difficult for so long that he eventually gave up and did something else. Then, after his son was born in 1989, Arch decided to give it another shot. He decided to start writing again.

Quoted below on the subject of what motivated him to try again (that is, on the subject of his mission, as he saw it) is the author of the screenplay for the enormous hit *Sleepless in Seattle*:

"I got serious," Arch said. "I was proud of what I was doing, but I found I was starting to spin my wheels. I realized every single time I put my mind to something, no matter what it was, I got it. I got it fairly and pretty much on my terms."

So he made his mind up he wanted to write a hit film. "I thought, 'What can I tell my children about their dreams if I don't go after mine?' The idea of being a fraud by my own children just drove me crazy. I couldn't handle it. They deserved this."

— Susan King. "Sweet Dreams for 'Sleepless' Writer Movies."
Los Angeles Times. 6/29/1993

[END INDENTED, RUN-IN STORY:]

9. Make sure your statement reflects you, and not some other company or person. Even if your statement is a bit awkward — in fact, *especially* if it's a bit awkward — it will ring truer than it would if you tried to look like something you're not.

Example: "We Be Copyeditors"

10. Believe in your statement. If you don't believe in it, everyone you meet will know you're just full of it.

* I know what you're thinking. Stop it.

11. Don't use your mission statement all by itself. Instead, use it as an integral part of your entire campaign.

12. Review and edit your statement at least once every two months. It will help you stay on track.

13. A good mission statement should tell your story in less than 30 seconds. Why?

Because most people have a short attention span.

It was for a good reason that the marketing community borrowed the word "mission" from the field of evangelism. In evangelism and theology, the word "mission" is very powerful. The word itself carries what psychologist Carl Jung called numinosity.

In other words, 'mission' is something — more than a word; almost a symbol, really — that 'glows' (becomes numinous) in your imagination. It's a kind of placeholder for your vision.

So if you can craft a mission statement that deeply reflects who you are and what you and your company are up to — then it will carry you over the rough spots of your daily grind, and reunite you with your vision.

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Your Constitution, Should You Decide to Accept It

Your mission statement describes what you're really about. And if you're a publisher or a reporter, what you're often really about is not just manufacturing sound bites — but defending the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Random House founder Bennett Cerf often took a mischievous tack when it came to (a) marketing his then-new publishing company, and (b) fulfilling his First Amendment mission at the same time.

For instance, after he met James Joyce, whose *Ulysses* had been banned for obscenity in the United States, Cerf sued the U.S. government on Joyce's behalf.

In order to spark publicity for the lawsuit (and therefore the book) Cerf persuaded an envoy to bring a copy of *Ulysses* from Europe through U.S. Customs — and to forcefully insist that the Customs agent search the bags and confiscate the book. This the agent obligingly did. And so, amid a flurry of bureaucratic fuss, Cerf's legal show, right on schedule, had hit the road.

What few knew, however, was that beforehand, craftily, inside the book, Cerf had pasted reviews that proved *Ulysses* was regarded as a great work of literature.

Now, in those days, such reviews would not normally have been admissible as evidence.

But because they were literally pasted into the contraband volume, they went along with it for the ride to court, and so instantly slipped into evidence.

The company won the highly-publicized lawsuit, *Ulysses* became a bestseller, and Random House found itself well on its way from quirky upstart to major player (and champion of free speech).

— Adapted from John Tebbel's "History of Book Publishing in the United States."
As cited by Anna Bray Duff in Investors Business Daily of 3/17/1999.

~ **Idea Joggers** ~

- What can you do to enlarge your mission so that it concerns something greater than simply whether or not you'll make a ton of money?
- Are you passionate about the emergence of a new form of capitalism, for example? Then how can you incorporate that larger vision into your mission?
- Before you even think about mischief marketing, ask yourself, "What genuinely inspires me? What makes me feel as though my life has meaning?"

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That having been said, and all kidding aside (really) here is ...

The Real Mission Statement of Mischief Marketing

Okay, here's the actual, no-kidding-around Mission Statement for this book:

"Mischief Marketing is designed (**A**) to find its way, some lonely night, into the hands of *one particular reader* who has a significant business-related mission to fulfill in life, but who's currently too young; too old; too poor; too marginalized; too burdened with depression, illness, addiction, pain; too contemptuous of our greed-based culture; or just plain too tired to get started on the path to the fulfillment of that mission. And (**B**) to

provide that person with the marketing tools he or she needs to stop making excuses, and please get started already.”

For more on mission statements, check out MischiefMarketing.com.

Setting Goals and Alternative (Knight-Fork) Goals

Setting Goals

Once you have your mission statement, you can start setting goals.

But again, there’s a difference between setting goals in conventional marketing, and setting goals in mischief marketing.

In conventional marketing, most of your goals will be obvious, and they will usually be financial in nature. In other words, they’ll tend to look like this:

- To increase revenue 75% by this time next year.
- To reach the Generation Y (or whatever) market without necessarily appearing to be selling anything at all.
- To change the perception of your business.

In mischief marketing, however, your goals will tend to look more like this:

- To have a blast.
- To make disadvantaged people aware of the fact that, if they don’t get more involved in politics and marketing very soon, their situation will only get worse.
- To meet some rich celebrity at a rehab and marry them, thereby instantly narrowing your own gap.

- To make and market a film, as the directors of *The Blair Witch Project* did.
- To have a blast. (Did I mention that?)
- To convey important social or moral concepts, as Martin Luther King or Mother Teresa did.
- To reach a market considered impossible to penetrate, as Estee Lauder did.
- To market some truly important ideas by appearing to market trivial nonsense.
 - (Animators and cartoonists do this all the time, by the way.)
- To encourage your kids to do their homework.

Please sit down with me here for a moment while I elaborate a little on that last one, because I know it looks out of place, and yet it isn't.

How can mischief marketing — of all things on earth — help you encourage your kids to do their homework? Isn't mischief marketing primarily about business, about selling things?

Yes and no. Again, remember: mischief marketing is as much about “selling” ideas and values as it is about business. In fact, discussing business is just the vehicle — the Trojan Horse, if you will — that makes it possible for you to be reading this book in the first place.

[:BEGIN QUOTE]

The moral flabbiness born of the exclusive worship of the bitch-goddess SUCCESS. That—with the squalid cash interpretation put on the word success—is our national disease.

— William James.
The Letters of William James, vol. 2, 1920.

[END QUOTE:]

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The language of the marketplace has eclipsed all other forms of rhetoric. Don't worry, they're saying, we're not going to ask you to even think of community and civic responsibility or anything that is not in your direct, economic self-interest — and, somehow, a nation that we can be proud of will materialize.

— Conservative columnist Arianna Huffington.
Salon.com. 9/16/1999

[END QUOTE:]

But anyhow, forget all that for now. Here are some ideas for marketing the value of homework to your kids:

- Do your kids admire a particular celebrity? Then launch a mischievous letter-writing campaign to persuade that celebrity to call your kids up and encourage them to do their homework.

No, I'm *not* kidding. Not a bit. Do you realize that one phone call or one short letter from someone like Michael Jordan can turn a kid's life around — in a matter of literally minutes? Of course you do.

Aren't your kids worth the effort of a concerted mischief marketing campaign that points them in the right direction in life? Or would you rather just waste time hollering at them, and putting up a big, phony *front* about how concerned you are?

If you really love your kids, you'll do *whatever it takes* to help them get off to a good start. So, hey: try some mischief marketing, okay?

In particular, read about psychiatrist Milton H. Erickson, who was a genius at the *personal* application of mischief marketing principles and methods.

- Do your kids admire a particular kind of music? Then encourage them to learn something about how that music is made.

Target a campaign to the chief engineer at a major recording studio, and make it your goal to persuade him or her to let your kids sit in on a recording or editing session.

Let your kids see for themselves that far more transpires behind the scenes than they might have imagined. Maybe, if you're lucky, that revelation will interest them in some other aspect of the music business.

If your campaign works, your kids will also realize that you can't (say) operate sound editing or video equipment very well, or easily, if you can't even read.

- In short, take *advantage* of the worship of fame that dominates our culture.

Craft mischief marketing campaigns that will help put our society's grossly overpaid celebrities to work — at least on helping your kids.

- That is, with your kids — or just in general, with any of your prospects — *turn the machinery of the mass media culture to your own advantage. Judo it.*

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Culture Jamming

Writer Mark Dery and artist Joey Skaggs are among the proponents of a mischievous and potentially very useful and educational activity called “culture jamming.”

Culture jammers point out that our behavior — and even the way we think — is controlled by the mass media (especially advertisers and marketers). Of course, we can't detect the hype/nosis they foist on us any more easily than a fish can detect the presence of water. But it's there, and we swim in it.

Culture jamming, therefore, is about using mischievous techniques to expose how giant corporations puppeteer us. It's about ripping open the curtain to expose the frail, little old man behind the smoke and mirrors, as Toto did in that famous movie.

Is there a way out of ... the society of the spectacle? Yes. You can take charge of your mental environment, and become a culture jammer. Culture jamming means semiotic jujitsu — using media power against itself. The Adbusters' Media Foundation does this all the time with famous spoofs of the Absolut Vodka ads ("Absolut death," etc.) Other culture jammers often take commercials or TV programs and replace the dialogue and soundtrack with something subversive. Yet others take to billboards or road signs and cleverly rearrange the letters to say something different. As one activist suggests, "where critique is no longer a possibility, parody is always an alternative response."

— Steve Mizrach

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In the quote above, Mizrach is talking about parodying and spoofing our media-crazed culture. But those aren't the only ways to do culture jamming. Which brings us to the following.

When you're designing your mischief marketing goals, ask yourself:

- How can my product or service help educate people about how they're being manipulated, especially by my competitors — competitors like, oh, I don't know ... Microsoft, say. Or Sun Microsystems.
- How can I get the United States Attorney General to make my kids do their homework?

[:BEGIN FLOATING SIDEBAR]

Simple Goals

Sometimes, your mischief marketing goals may be very simple.

In fact, you could say that, back in 1964, musician Reg Dwight's goal was simply to put himself in the same room as his VLPs — nothing more.

Of course, that room happened to be a recording studio. And Dwight's job as a messenger for Mills Music eventually led to the publication of his first song.

About two years later, Reg once again got after-hours access to a different studio. This time, however, he met studio-owner Dick James, who discovered Reg and promptly took on the job of nurturing his solo career.

By the way, Reg Dwight at one point changed his name — to **Elton John**.

So you see, your goals don't need to be terribly ambitious or complicated.

— Philip Norman. *Elton John*
Claude Bernardin and Tom Stanton. *Rocket Man*.

[END FLOATING SIDEBAR:]

Setting alternate goals using the Knight Fork

But what really distinguishes a set of mischief marketing goals from a set of conventional marketing goals is the Knight Fork Principle.

† By the way, this has virtually nothing in common with sexual activity involving medieval men-at-arms.

In the game of chess, certain pieces (like the Knight; but there are others) can threaten two or more of your opponent's pieces at the same time. Such a configuration is called a fork, and the most well-known type of fork is the Knight Fork.

When you set up a situation like this, your opponent is virtually *bound* to give you one of those threatened pieces. In other words, you're bound to win *something* on your next move, no matter what your opponent does, no matter what happens.

Similarly, in mischief marketing, if you Knight Fork your goals properly, you are bound to achieve at least one of them **NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS**.

[:BEGIN QUOTE]

A book about mischief marketing could not be complete without at least a cursory mention of political activist Abbie Hoffman. — Shirley Yaerjo-King, 1999.

[END QUOTE:]

Here are some examples of Knight-Forking:

- A company invents a new kind of glue. Unfortunately, it doesn't stick very well. Goal A was not achieved.

~ **BUT** ~

The company then takes that very same glue, turns the whole situation around, and invents Post-It note pads — which suddenly have the *virtue* of not sticking very well (because now the notes are removable).

In other words, a new objective, Goal B, is identified and achieved. Et voila! Instant Knight Fork. And also an instance of the Judo principle, by the way. One way or another, the company wins.

If you were to plan this out in advance (which the inventors of Post-It did not, incidentally; they just got lucky), then you would ask yourself:

- What can I do with my product or service if it works the way I want it to work?
- What can I do with it if it *doesn't* work the way I wanted it to work?
- What is the *very least* objective this campaign can achieve? For instance, can my family members and I get a few laughs out of this thing? Can we make some politician look ridiculous? Can we expose an injustice, or an instance of consumer fraud in banking? Can we get media attention for something worthwhile? Can we at least write a good article, or maybe just a cheap TV movie about our project — ***no matter what happens?***

These are the kinds of questions you need to ask yourself before you sit down in earnest to design your mischief marketing goals.

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Monitoring the Side Effects of Your Goals

You often need to carefully consider, not only your goals, but their possible side effects as well. This is especially true in mischief marketing, which can actually be dangerous, as the following tale shows.

In the 1930s, before television, families gathered around the radio for entertainment every night after dinner. On the eve of Halloween in 1938, however, this harmless activity caused mass panic. That was the night Orson Welles ran *War of the Worlds* — a program consisting of a series of “news bulletins” apparently interrupting a normal musical show.

Now Orson’s goal was to provide some mischievous amusement on Halloween. And his highly realistic “news coverage” of Martians invading the earth did in fact include several disclaimers that made it clear the whole event was nothing more than a radio drama.

But the side effect of his talent for realism was awful. Many Americans missed the disclaimers, or didn’t understand them, and honestly believed we were being invaded by Martians. The streets jammed with the cars of terrified people fleeing their homes.

The next time Orson did something mischievous, you can bet he paid attention to the potential side effects of his primary goal(s).

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Here’s a table that summarizes some of the important differences between setting goals in conventional versus mischief marketing:

Setting Goals	
In Conventional Marketing	In Mischief Marketing
Narrow your focus. Set only a few goals.	Broaden your focus. Set <i>many</i> goals.
Keep your goals centered on bottom-line business factors (money).	Extend your goals to incorporate personal, family-related, and spiritual factors.
Think like a military commander who pinpoints one or two specific targets.	Think like a military commander who carpet bombs as many targets as possible, knowing she's bound to hit something eventually.
Set reasonable, achievable goals. Aim for the wood, not the chopping block.	Set unreasonable, impossible goals. Aim for the chopping block, not the wood.
Design sensible goals that have a useful purpose.	Design absurd goals that have no purpose other than to amuse you and your friends.
Stop kidding around.	Right.

No matter how many different goals you may have, however, there will usually (but not always) be one overriding goal common to every mischief marketing campaign: to appear larger or more *already*-well-known than you are at the moment.

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Who Was that Masked Man?

Jeremy Barbera started Metro Services Group with only \$900 in personal seed money.

Working from his living-room table, here are some of the mischievous things Jeremy did to meet his goal of landing big, important clients like American Express:

- Through a business incubator, he rented an address on prestigious Madison Avenue.
- On an average day, after phoning a client to discuss a proposal, he'd promise that his "secretary" would type it up immediately, and that he'd send the proposal to the client "via messenger."
- But Barbera was both the secretary and the messenger.
- So after he hung up the phone, he'd type up the proposal, change into his sweat pants, jump on his bike, and deliver the proposal.

As Jeremy puts it:

"I was CEO at 2 p.m., secretary at 3:30 p.m., and messenger at 4:30 p.m."

Barbera says he lived in fear -- well merited, as it turned out -- of discovery. As bike messenger he had befriended a client's security guard. When Barbera subsequently appeared downtown to meet with that client (this time in CEO mode), he encountered the guard. She buzzed upstairs and announced, "Metro's messenger is down here, and he claims he has a meeting with you." Thinking quickly, Barbera responded to his customer's confusion, "Oh, my brother used to work for me delivering packages when he was down on his luck." Barbera sustained this multirole juggling for two years.

— C. Caggiano. "Bootstrapping: Great Companies Started with \$1,000 or Less." *Inc. Magazine*. August, 1995, Page 26

By 1994, Jeremy's company had made \$6.4 million dollars in revenue. Would you say he at least achieved some of his financial goals using mischief marketing tactics?

[END INDENTED, RUN-IN STORY:]

Defining Your Unique Selling Proposition

Even though your mischief marketing campaign may (and should) have many goals, your core offering should be very simple and focused. In fact, ideally, it should be just one, unique thing.

Examples of unique, core offerings:

- A book called *The Interpretation of Dreams*
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Slot machines whose proceeds go to good causes

Why should your offering be simple and focused? Because you don't want to confuse people.

- **Case In Point:** When Xerox first tried to make personal computers, it didn't sell too many of them. Why? Because the brand name confused people. To most customers, who have one-track minds, "Xerox" simply meant "copy machine" and therefore couldn't mean anything else.

So now we come to your Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

As we mentioned briefly a little earlier, your USP is what makes your offering unique.

It's what distinguishes you from the competition and makes you stand out.

For example, if you're writing a business book, you might want to distinguish your book from other, similar books, by introducing new acronyms or terms that nobody else has.

Case in Point: Authors Al Ries and Jack Trout introduced the marketing term “positioning” in their excellent book, *Positioning*. The concept not only provided the USP for the book, but also introduced a genuinely useful thinking tool.

Your Unique Selling Proposition is what you're going to bring to the table when your mischief marketing finally succeeds in reaching your prospect.

In other words, when you finally meet with your VLP, your mischief marketing campaign becomes like the first stage of a rocket — it's just something that drops away, no longer needed.

Example: Suppose you plan to launch a charity organization that's based on a game where you play the stock market by buying and selling “playshares” whose prices are strictly tied to their real-world counterparts, but are fractionally lower. Commission or membership fees go to the charity. The whole game is supervised by authorities in securities, gaming, and philanthropy (which is why you'd need a lot of money — to pay the lawyers who'll design the legal infrastructure).

Now, stock trading games already exist, of course. But most of them don't benefit charity.

So your Unique Selling Proposition to Bill and Melinda would involve pointing out that yours is the *only* game devoted to charity (or the only one devoted to a particular charity). This would be the USP of your offering.

Case In Point: The USP for *Mischief Marketing* is “Marketing for people who hate marketing.” Since no other marketing book specifically addresses the needs of people who loathe and despise marketing with a passion bordering on that of Joan of Arc, *Mischief Marketing* is unique among such books.

Mischievous Pop Review Quiz:

1. You should write a mission statement because:

- a) I said so.
- b) it will help you define what business you’re *really* in.
- c) it will give you something to do while you’re downloading a big file.

2. Knight-Forking means:

- a) engaging in sexual activity with medieval men-at-arms.
- b) devising alternative goals so that, no matter what happens, you always achieve at least one of them.
- c) getting your daughter, Shira, to clean up her room.

3. A good mission statement should be short because:

- a) people these days have a short attention span.