

(20) Five most important questions (for nonprofit organizations)

- o Five Questions
 - s What is our mission?
 - s Who is our customer?
 - s What does the customer value?
 - s What are our results?
 - s What is our plan?
- o The questions are straightforward—and deceptively simple.
- o Throughout the self-assessment process, you will examine the fundamental question of your mission: what the mission is and what it should be.
 - s The suggested criteria for an effective mission statement are that it:
 - ï Is short and sharply focused
 - ï Is clear and easily understood
 - ï Defines why we do what we do; why the organization exists
 - ï Does not prescribe means
 - ï Is sufficiently broad
 - ï Provides direction for doing the right things
 - ï Addresses our opportunities
 - ï Matches our competence
 - ï Inspires our commitment
 - ï Says what, in the end, we want to be remembered for
- o You will determine your primary customer: the person whose life is changed through your work.
- o You will determine your supporting customers: volunteers, partners, donors, and others you must satisfy.
- o You will engage in research to learn directly from customers what they value, decide what your results should be, and develop a plan with long-range goals and measurable objectives.
- o Your commitment to self-assessment is a commitment to developing yourself and your organization as a leader.
- o You will expand your vision by listening to your customers, by encouraging constructive dissent, by looking at the sweeping transformation taking place in society.
- o You have vital judgments ahead: whether to change the mission, whether to abandon programs that have outlived their usefulness and concentrate resources elsewhere, how to match opportunities with your competence and commitment, how you will build community and change lives.
- o Self-assessment is the first action requirement of leadership: the constant resharpening, constant refocusing, never being really satisfied.
- o And the time to do this is when you are successful.
- o If you wait until things start to go down, then it's very difficult.
- o We are creating tomorrow's society of citizens through the social sector, through your non-profit organization.
- o And in that society, everybody is a leader, everybody is responsible, everybody acts.
- o Therefore, mission and leadership are not just things to read about, to listen to; they are things to do something about.
- o Self-assessment can and should convert good intentions and knowledge into effective action—not next year but tomorrow morning.