

Stephen Lajoie

Introduction to Sustainability

October 18, 2009

This is my third attempt at this reflection paper; the first version dealt with my former job at Bond Brothers but I ran into a roadblock when trying to retroactively apply my mission statement. Basically, my thesis became that in order to provide for my family I should have pretended to agree with my boss that panicking was a useful response to the economic situation; I was having a hard time arguing that one to myself. The second version was about my new job at Nobis Engineering but I quickly realized that the job is still too new, the biggest challenge right now is a steep learning curve and time, not necessarily application of my mission statement will resolve that particular challenge. So now, on attempt three, I have finally recognize that the largest challenge facing me is all the work that I have for grad school, and learning a new job, and maintaining connection with my family, and the complex system involved is my life.

Each of our lives is a complex system, sometimes the complexity varies, but it is always there to some degree. I operate within many nested complex systems; I am a husband, a step-father, a son, a brother, a friend. I am a student, a co-worker, a cast member, a neighbor, a community member, a church member; the list goes on and on and each relationship has its own complexities, nuances and demands. Each part of my life requires time and effort and there is only so much time and effort available in any given day. I don't want to do anything in half measures, but at the same time, the second law of thermodynamics tells us that something has got to give. My challenge then is largely one of balance, or perhaps juggling; how do I keep all the balls in the air without dropping any?

My personal mission statement is "My mission is to provide economic security for my family and myself today while working to insure a sustainable planet for all future generations." Applied to this particular challenge, this statement seems to have real value and provide

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guidance. Providing economic security for my family means working, but it also means getting the maximum value from my MBA experience. Security can be short term - immediate and long term a solid career with good opportunities. I actually need to provide both which means that I need to perform at a high level both at work and at school. My mission statement can help me to remain cognizant of both sides of this coin and remind me that both are important. Learning my new job and quickly becoming a contributing and valuable member of my department will bring the immediate short term security that will allow us to live decently. Doing my best to learn as much as possible in school and grow as a person, a manager and a leader will insure long term security. Providing for my family is not limited to economics however, providing a safe, secure and loving emotional environment is at least as important as the money, probably more important. The Bible famously says in the Gospels "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36) (<http://bible.cc/mark/8-36.htm>). By the same token, what good would it do to provide economic security and have no-one in your life to make secure? I think I need to amend my mission statement and remove the word economic. I believe that my mission statement, thus revised, is both truer and provides better guidance as I face continued challenges.

I am going to print out my mission statement and post it above my desk at home to serve as a reminder and a guide as I do my school work. I believe that graduating from this MBA program will provide me with the opportunities to find a career that I can believe in and therefore flourish in. It will provide me with the confidence that I belong and deserve to be in whatever management level positions I find myself. That will help to provide the security I seek for myself and my family. I sincerely believe that this degree will also guide my future work into an area

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that will allow me to contribute to the future of the planet. The difficulty is always in the moment. The challenge is to find the balance between family, job and school without neglecting any of them but recognizing that each could be a full time occupation. The hard truth however is that I cannot afford to drop the ball on any account; I need my job, I need to do well in school to create the future that I seek, and neither job or school have much purpose without my family who sustain me. This is how a mission statement can be helpful, as a prism through which you can view decisions, opportunities and challenges and decide what the right course is to move you to your ultimate goal. I have never had a mission statement, I've never really had a mission. I've been more comfortable just bumping along. If my mission statement can do anything, I hope it can serve as a guide, a beacon, and when necessary, a crutch, to help me on my way to a future that will sustain me, and in which I will sustain others.