BuildUp BOOKINGS

03

BONUS 03 OF 11 · MASTERING VACATION RENTAL MARKETING

Crafting Your Vision and Mission

A companion resource to the 2nd edition

WHAT YOU'LL HAVE WHEN YOU FINISH

A vision and a mission statement short enough to remember, specific enough to be wrong, and actually usable in the four places these statements earn their keep.

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PART 1

Do this now

Start here. Each one works on its own.

1 **Understand the difference before you write either one.**
Vision is where you are going. Mission is what you do every day to get there. Most companies write two versions of the same vague sentence and wonder why neither is useful.

2 **Write badly and fast.**
Three attempts at each, ten minutes total. You are looking for the true thing underneath, not the polished sentence.

3 **Apply the reversal test.**
Would any competitor claim the opposite? If nobody would ever say “we deliver mediocre experiences to guests we do not understand,” then your statement has no content. It is the most useful five-second test in this document.

4 **Cut every word that could apply to a dentist.**
Exceptional service. Exceeding expectations. Attention to detail. Trusted partner. Delete them and see what is left. If nothing is left, start over.

5 **Get both under 25 words.**
If your team cannot repeat it from memory, it will never influence a decision, which means it does not exist.

6 **Name one thing you will not do.**
The fastest route to a real statement. A mission that excludes nothing commits to nothing.

7 **Decide where it will actually appear.**
Owner pitch, hiring, website, or a decision you are facing right now. If you cannot name the place, do not write the statement — you are producing decoration.

PART 2

The depth

The full method.

Vision and mission are not the same thing

	VISION	MISSION
Timeframe	Where you are going. Years out.	What you do now, repeatedly.
Changes	Rarely — you either arrive or you re-aim	When your strategy changes
Tone	Aspirational	Operational
Test	Would you know if you got there?	Could someone act on this Monday?

The failure I see most is writing two aspirational sentences and calling one a mission. A mission you cannot act on is a second vision statement.

Why most of these are worthless

Because they are written to be inoffensive. A statement that survives review by committee has usually had every specific, arguable, disprovable thing removed from it — and specificity was the entire point.

Three tests that catch this:

The reversal test. Would anyone claim the opposite? "We provide exceptional guest experiences" — nobody claims the reverse, so the sentence carries no information.

The substitution test. Swap in a competitor's name. Still true? Then it is not about you.

The decision test. The real one. Name a decision this statement would settle. If it cannot help you choose between two properties, two hires, or two markets, it is not a strategic document. It is wall art.

What makes one good

Specific enough to be wrong. A statement that cannot be falsified cannot guide anything. "The easiest company in this valley for a homeowner to leave" is a real commitment — it means month-to-month terms, and it will cost you when someone leaves.

Short enough to remember. Under 25 words. Under 15 is better. Your team should be able to say it without looking.

True today, or a clearly labeled ambition. Do not describe a company you are not. Owners and staff notice, and it makes every other claim you make suspect. The book's own warning applies directly here: do not say it if you do not mean it.

Names a tradeoff. The strongest statements in any industry imply something the company will not do. If yours excludes nothing, it commits to nothing.

Where these actually get used

This is the half most guides leave out. A statement written and filed is worthless. Here are the four places it does work:

1. The owner pitch. Owners are choosing who to trust with one of the largest assets they own. “We are the easiest company in this valley to leave — month to month, no penalty” does more work than any list of services, because it is a claim a competitor is unwilling to match.

2. Hiring and onboarding. Your mission is a filter. If it says you answer the phone, then someone who will not answer the phone at 9pm is not a fit, and you know that at interview rather than in month four.

3. Decisions you are facing now. The real test. Should you take the property in the market two hours away? Should you accept the owner with unrealistic expectations? A good mission answers those.

4. The website — specifically, your About page. The book calls the About page the second most important page on your site for building trust, and this is the content that belongs there. Not a history of your founding. What you are for.

Write it in this order

1. **What do you do, plainly?** No adjectives. “We manage 40 cabins in one valley.”
2. **For whom, specifically?** Not “travelers.” Families with young children. Owners who live out of state.
3. **What is different, that a competitor would not claim?** The hard question. If you cannot answer it, the gap is in your positioning, not your writing.
4. **What will you not do?** Property types you decline. Owners you turn away. Markets you will not enter.
5. **Where are you going?** The vision. Should be recognizable as an arrival — you either got there or you did not.

Then cut. Ruthlessly. The final statement is usually one sentence from step 3, sharpened.

PART 3

Worked example

One example, all the way through.

Ridgeline Cabin Co. — fictional company, 40 mountain cabins, the running example across these bonuses.

First attempt, and why it failed

Vision: To be the premier provider of unforgettable mountain cabin experiences, offering exceptional properties that immerse guests in the beauty of the outdoors.

Mission: We strive to deliver outstanding service and memorable stays, ensuring every guest exceeds their expectations through our attention to detail and commitment to excellence.

This is what a first draft always looks like, and it fails every test:

- **Reversal:** nobody claims to be the non-premier provider of forgettable experiences.
- **Substitution:** swap in any competitor in the valley. Both sentences remain true.
- **Decision:** name one choice these settle. You cannot.
- **Length:** 22 and 24 words — under the 25-word limit, and still nobody on the team could repeat either. Short is necessary, not sufficient.
- Also note the mission has no operational content at all. It is a second vision statement.

The work underneath

QUESTION	HONEST ANSWER
What do you do, plainly?	Manage 40 cabins in one valley, expanding to a second market within three years
For whom?	Families with kids, and out-of-state owners who cannot drop by to check on things
What is different that a competitor would not claim?	Every cabin personally inspected before listing, and photographed honestly rather than flatteringly. Two competitors list properties from owner-supplied photos they have never verified.
What will you not do?	Take a cabin they have not inspected. Take an owner who wants revenue projections they will not hit. Take party rentals.
Where are you going?	The company out-of-state owners in this region recommend to each other

Second attempt

Vision: To be the company out-of-state cabin owners in this region recommend to each other.

Mission: We inspect and photograph every cabin ourselves, tell owners the truth about what their property will earn, and answer the phone.

Vision — 14 words. It passes the decision test: it makes owner referrals the metric that matters, which prioritizes owner communication over guest-acquisition volume. It is also falsifiable — you can literally count referrals.

Mission — 21 words. Every clause is operational and checkable. “Inspect and photograph every cabin ourselves” is a policy with a cost. “Tell owners the truth about what their property will earn” means declining owners who want an inflated number. “Answer the phone” means someone is on call.

The reversal test: a competitor could genuinely claim the opposite of all three — plenty list unverified properties, quote optimistic projections to win the contract, and route everything to email. That is how you know the sentence has content.

How they actually use it

WHERE	HOW
Owner pitch	The inspection policy leads the conversation. It is the thing two local competitors will not match.
Hiring	“Answer the phone” is stated at interview. Candidates who want strict hours self-select out, which is better for everyone.
A live decision	Offered a 12-cabin portfolio sight-unseen at a good rate. Mission says no. They declined, and the mission earned its keep that day.
About page	The mission is the first thing on it, above the founding story.

What they cut, and why it hurt

Their first mission draft included “and provide unforgettable mountain experiences for every guest.” True, and they wanted it. But it is unfalsifiable, no competitor would claim the reverse, and it diluted three specific commitments by sitting next to them. Cutting a sentence you like is usually the last step in getting one of these right.

PART 4

Your turn

Your worksheet. Print it and fill it in.

The groundwork

What we do, plainly (no adjectives):

For whom, specifically:

What is different, that a competitor would not claim:

What we will not do:

1.
2.

Where we are going:

Draft, three times each

Write fast. Do not polish.

#	VISION DRAFT	WORDS
1		
2		
3		

#	MISSION DRAFT	WORDS
1		
2		
3		

Test your best draft

TEST	VISION	MISSION
Under 25 words?	☐	☐
Would a competitor claim the opposite?	☐	☐
Still true with a competitor's name in it?	☐	☐
Names a decision it would settle	☐	☐
Excludes something	☐	☐
Team can repeat it from memory	☐	☐
True today, not aspirational fiction	☐	☐

Any unchecked box in the middle five means go back. Those are the ones that carry the content.

Final

Vision: _____

Mission: _____

Put it to work this week

WHERE	SPECIFIC ACTION	OWNER	DATE
Owner pitch			
Hiring / onboarding			
About page			
A decision I am facing right now			

The decision I will test it against: _____

What the statement says I should do: _____

PART 5

How you'll know it worked

What to check, and when.

Within a week — the memory test. Ask three people on your team to say the mission without looking. If they cannot, it is too long or too abstract, and length is the easier of the two to fix.

Within a month — has it settled an argument? A real statement gets invoked in a decision. If a month has gone by with nobody referencing it, it is not operational yet, and the likely cause is that it excludes nothing.

Within a quarter — the test that matters: has it cost you something? Turned down a property, declined an owner, lost a candidate who was not a fit. A mission that has never cost you anything is not guiding behavior. That is not a comfortable measure of success, and it is the honest one.

Watch for the drift. These statements decay quietly. If yours says you inspect every property and you took twelve sight-unseen last quarter, you now have a credibility problem that is worse than having no statement at all. Either change the behavior or change the statement — but do not leave the gap open where owners and staff can see it.

Not a signal: guests noticing. Guests do not read mission statements. This is an internal instrument and an owner-facing one, and judging it by guest response is judging it in the wrong arena.

PART 6

Where this lives in the book

Where to read more in the book.

Section: *A Clear Vision = Clarity* (Lightweight) — where the book asks you to write your vision and make it public, and the page that sends you here.

Then *Don't say it if you don't mean it* (Middleweight) on keeping your brand promises, alongside *Mastering Momentum: Planning the Next Three Years* and the 90-day ROCKS system, which is where your vision turns into quarterly objectives instead of staying a sentence.

Also read *The second most important page on your site for building trust* in the Lightweight chapter. That page is your About page, and your mission is what belongs at the top of it.

For turning these statements into a full identity — voice, tone, visual standards — use the **Brand & Style Guide** bonus, which opens with exactly these two statements as its foundation.

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