Mission Reflection

**Compose a Reflected Best Self Portrait** ½ page   
 3-6 characteristics  
 share ~2 when we gather in August

*Being extraordinary does not necessarily mean obtaining a position of   
 honor or glory or even of becoming successful in other people’s eyes.  
 It means being true to self. It means pursuing our full potential.*  
Being extraordinary. All of us can recall our own extraordinary moments—those moments when we felt that our best-self was brought to light, affirmed by others, and put into practice in the world. These memories are seared into our minds as moments or situations in which we felt alive, true to our deepest selves, and pursuing our full potential as human beings. Over time, we collect these experiences into a portrait of who we are when we are at our personal best. Sometimes this portrait is composed gradually and without much conscious attention or self-awareness. Other times, work organizations play an active role in providing us feedback, furnishing goals, and enabling relationships with others in ways that make this portrait explicit and consciously changing over time. Whether implicit or explicit, stable or changing, this portrait serves as both an anchor and a beacon, a personal touchstone of who we are and a guide for who we can become. We call this portrait the “**reflected best-self**.”   
 *LM Roberts (Harvard B-School) et al (Univ of MI B-School), Academy of Management Review, 2005*

Tips  
Think about **positive feedback** you’ve received over your lifetime (formal and informal)  
**Jot down** your thoughts and good memories  
 do this over time

**Identify themes**   
**Write**   
 - use the opening, “I am at my best when….” or “When I am at my best….” or   
 cluster by characteristics (#3)  
 - describe yourself in specific, concrete, situational ways or poetic, affective, abstract ways (#2)   
 - remember that there is no ‘right way’ to do this

**EXAMPLES**

**#1**

When I am at my best my focus is on other people and how I can best serve them.  I have my relationships with people in the forefront of importance and all other decisions or actions are weighed against those relationships first.  I am open to other people and draw out the best in them by being authentic, light hearted and humorous when appropriate; dead serious and laser focused when that’s required; or loving, caring and powerful when that’s required.  People know that they can count on me for compassionate, yet straight talk that creates a space, or clearing, for integrity and love.

I listen.  I don’t just listen to what people say, but I listen for who people are, even when they can’t see that they are or could ever be that.  People get to be who they authentically are within the space of my listening.

I am confident and present to who I am and my purpose in this world.  In other words I am being true to my Self.  This gives me a courageous and adventurous dimension as well as the ability to stand for something in the face of no agreement or to be “the first follower” when another is already leading.

In technical situations I am calm and confident in my ability to look at all the available data and apply it against a number of different models to find out which will best fit the situation to resolve an issue, open up a new set of possibilities, or release tension.  In technical situations this allows for solutions to arise and in human situations this allows people freedom to be.  I am able to explain technical matters in easily understood language and express appreciation to other human beings so they can experience their own value.

**#2**  
  
At my best-self: I share, I strip away all that life is not. I live large. I breathe deeply and inhale every whisper of life. At my best-self, I challenge myself mentally, physically, emotionally. At my best-self, I am neither at work nor at play, I am living in the moment. I am a lover of life. I am a seeker of truth and beauty. I am responsible for my own actions, my own beliefs, and my own connections with other people and all living creatures. At my best-self, I am small, invisible and insignificant. People don't see me, they don't feel me, however, they see truth and beauty in themselves and in the world around them that they would not have noticed had I not been there, and they feel physically, emotionally, and mentally better because of me.

**#3 (written with specific feedback from a group in mind)** Optimism  
In nearly every story I received, the writer highlighted my ability to always see the positives in any situation. At the very least, I was never one to lose hope when a situation seemed insurmountable or difficult. There were several stories about my ability to lead others (coworkers and family members) through challenges simply because I kept reminding them that everything would be okay.  
 I am particularly proud of this trait, as it is something that I strive for every day. To me, life is not worth living if you are going to hate everything about it!

Visionary  
When I say "visionary", it calls to mind an image of a single man, standing in front of a large crowd, leading them on into a brighter and happier future. Please know that this is not what I mean when I use the quality of "visionary" to apply to myself. What I mean is that I have the ability to see where my organization should be in the future. In short, I can establish a goal that actually means something, and can set in place achievable, actionable steps to reach that goal. What's more, I can do this for myself, for my department, or even (to some extent) for my organization. The story that my boss wrote about me focused almost exclusively on this talent, and I am so proud that she sees this quality in me.

Humor  
Almost every story (including the ones I wrote about myself) included at least a reference to the fact that I do not take life too seriously. I think that I have a great sense of humor, and definitely enjoy having fun and joking around with my colleagues and family alike.  
 This goes back to what I said about my optimism. I believe that life is not worth living if you are angry and pessimistic all the time. Life is good, and life is fun. All you need to do is find the good, find the fun.

Generosity & Compassion  
I combined generosity and compassion into one "characteristic" because I think they are related. I do feel compassion for others and their problems, to the extent that making other people happy actually makes me happy. This is where generosity comes in. I think generosity encompasses everything from volunteering to donating to helping out one of my friends just because they need me to.   
 Although the theme of generosity and service runs through several of the stories written about me, I think it is important to note that I do not help others because of some kind of self-sacrifice or sense of justice. I really try to make others happy because it truly makes me happy to do so.

Moral Compass  
This is another one that I am particularly proud of, and was very happy to see repeated in the stories written about me. In every decision I make, whether it is work-related or personal, I do try to justify my response in terms of my own morals.   
 Some writers commented, I think correctly, that this is the "counterweight" to my desire to see people happy. I want to make people happy, and I want to help people in any way I can, but I will not do anything that makes me morally uncomfortable. I have a good sense of what is permissible within the confines of my own morality, and I am comfortable with the boundaries that I have set for myself.

Intelligent  
My intelligence is one that I hesitated to put on my list of themes at all, because I truly believe that everyone is intelligent in their own way. Maybe someone is very creative, or knows a lot about cars. To me, this qualifies as intelligence. However, despite my hesitations, I am pretty sure that nearly every story touched on my ability to learn new things, comprehend quickly, and grasp the intricacies of complex ideas. So, I guess that is the way in which I am intelligent. I could certainly never lay claim to being creative!