

# Putting Idealism To Work

Putting Idealism to work is a collection of pieces of wisdom, pithy rules of thumb, notes to self, and management top tips that everyone at City Year dips into during their spare time, ready to produce and apply the perfect one at the right moment.



## **1. Challenge cynicism wherever you find it.**

The first step towards putting idealism to work is to reject cynicism and embrace idealism. All successful human endeavours—from breakthrough inventions like the telephone to great social leaps forward like the US civil rights movement—begin with the assumption that change is possible. Nothing is more destructive today than the growth of cynicism, a pervasive negativity—a habitual scoffing—that ridicules positive initiative, questions everyone's motives and assumes the worst in people and institutions. Cynicism is the enemy of positive change because it discourages creative thinking—and destroys both the belief that change is possible and the will to act. Like a corrosive cancer of the human spirit, cynicism has become so pervasive that recognising and standing up to cynicism—especially in everyday conversation and thinking—is now a major act of courage and belief. Learn to recognise cynicism, in all its forms. Challenge cynicism everywhere, especially within City Year itself.

## **2. "Every battle is won or lost before it is fought."**

This 2,500-year-old insight from the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu (pronounced "sun soo") is the most important rule of implementation for idealism. All of City Year needs to be built on it. It means that setting clear and correct goals, and preparing an effective plan to meet those goals, are the critical elements to success. Almost any glitch or failure can be traced directly to poor planning or preparation. Another way of saying this rule is, "For better or worse, you always get the result you planned (or failed to plan) for." There are three steps to winning battles before they are fought. First, visualise a final result—a great service project, an outstanding event, a successful fund-raising activity; second, think backwards step by step from that imagined great result, until you understand all the steps and every single detail it will take to succeed—including contingencies for what could go wrong—like, "What do we do if it rains?"; and third, only then begin to implement each step forward.

## **3. Always begin each new task with the same question, "What are our goals?"**

Someone once said, "If we are not careful, we will end up in the direction we are heading." That's an amusing way to remind ourselves that the first step of any successful project is to set clear and focused goals. Once you are certain of the goals, design everything around achieving those goals, and don't forget to constantly refer back to the goals as you implement. (Find simple ways to keep reminding yourself and your team of the goals along the way—as someone else once pointed out, the "most common human error is to forget what one is doing").

## **4. Develop a core theory for what you are doing, and narrate it through every aspect of your task.**

A core theory is a big idea—like a bright star to a sailor—that helps you navigate and make decisions to achieve a large goal. At City Year, the biggest core theory is that social progress can be achieved

through intensive civic engagement that unites people and institutions for a common purpose. A good core theory can help make decisions and solve problems. For example, when City Year needed to find a way to raise money from the general public, the solution developed was the serve-a-thon. The serve-a-thon not only raises funds, but promotes the broad core theory of City Year by systematically engaging thousands of people in service, idealistic activities, resource engagement, inspirational communication, leadership development and building a more beloved community. Similarly, whenever you are seeking to achieve something at City Year, ask yourself, "What is the core theory here?" and then build everything around the core theory.

### **5. Multiply the power of everything.**

Multiplying is a powerful tool for social change. Almost everything we do at City Year can and should be multiplied so that its effect produces more inspiration, more service, more idealism, more civic engagement and more resources for the common good. The key to multiplying everything is to always ensure that you are doing many things at once. For example, morning PT is a powerful multiplier: the corps energises and gains focus for the day ahead, while building a sense of community, while inspiring passersby, while sending a daily message that young people are a powerful, positive community resource. We must never seek to be the entire flame, just the biggest spark we can be. How can we do this? Never serve alone. If your task is to build a garden recruit local children, parents and business leaders to join you. Service is power and inspiration and commitment. Constantly give it away. Invite local businesses to contribute and participate in your carnival; give an article written on your service project to your sponsor; hand the daily briefing and the corps member application to visitors to increase their knowledge and understanding of City Year's work; ask one of the children you are working with to speak at your team's presentation—it will not only provide that child with a powerful leadership development opportunity but it will also make for a more creative and effective presentation. Most of all, when planning anything at City Year, always stop and say, "How can this be multiplied so that we are engaging more people and resources to make the largest possible positive impact?"

### **6. 'Advance' everything.**

To 'advance' something is to prepare every aspect of an event or activity in advance, including physically going to the site where the event or activity will take place. Excellent 'advance' work is the absolute hallmark of the best political campaigns, entertainment and corporate events. City Year's techniques for 'advance' are a set of critical leadership skills which everyone—corps and staff—should master. Since, "every battle is won or lost before it's fought," without excellent advance, there is a good chance we have already lost.

### **7. Delight people—exceed expectations.**

In the business world the old standard was customer satisfaction. But in today's demanding world who wants to be just satisfied? Today, people need to be delighted. It is important to realise that the delight standard not just be applied to the private sector and consumer goods anymore, but to every aspect of modern society, including government and charities, like City Year. In other words, if national service as a whole and City Year in particular do not delight people, neither will survive—nor should they. At the same time, we must also realise that when the service of young people delights communities, it changes the way people view young people—and that gives young people real power. How do you know when you have delighted someone? When you have exceeded their expectations. Who do we seek to delight? Everyone—children and teachers in schools, workers and clients in all the charities where we work, people on the street, policy makers and funders. In everything we do, plan and implement, make sure that it passes the 'delight' test—exceeding everyone's expectations.

### **8. City Year-ise everything.**

At its best, City Year should be like a crystal. As a crystal grows, each new part contains the same simple patterns, and the same elements of design and structure. Over time, the crystal becomes strong and complex by repeating its simple formula. If you snap off a part of the crystal you can always tell where it came from—and most importantly, that part contains the patterns and ideas so that it can continue growing on its own in a new environment. Similarly, each part of City Year should be built from the same values, techniques and structures. In other words, every aspect of our work should be City Year-ised—the learning, ideals and techniques of the organisation should be present in everything we do. Constantly step back and re-examine your part of the organisation, asking, "How would anyone know that this is a City Year activity, event, document, or meeting?"

### **9. Create your own environment for success.**

Don't let the unknown standards of others limit the possibility of your success. For example, if your whole presentation away from headquarters depends on having a slide projector and you are told they are, "ninety-nine per cent sure," they are going to have one for you, bring a slide projector anyway (and an extension lead).

### **10. Success means being deliberate, programmatic and accountable.**

This is the best recipe for success when implementing anything at City Year. Only by being deliberate, programmatic and accountable can City Year, or any organisation or person, achieve anything important. To be deliberate means to do things with a purpose and on purpose. To be programmatic means to have an effective and creative step-by-step plan for achieving a specific result. To be accountable means to establish a set of timely and effective consequences to ensure that those results are really achieved. Almost any success or failure at City Year can be traced directly to how deliberate, programmatic or accountable we were. In general, however, the most common failures are usually ones involving a lack of accountability.

### **11. Nail the details! Every single one.**

Excellence is all in the details. Everything counts, all the time. Our details are PT, the uniform, the CY Standard, our brochures—and a thousand other things. See the beauty in those details. Each Standard, each painted wall, each child taught, for better or worse, tells the world about our values, standards and beliefs. City Year is being built by almost painful attention to detail. Hold yourself, your peers and the people you are leading to the highest possible attention to detail.

### **12. Pay very close attention to City Year's look and feel.**

Look and feel includes many things, and it is essential to City Year's mission and our ability to succeed. For example, City Year events are always interactive, with guests asked to do PT or participate in a warm-up. This is because it's the best way to get across the importance we place on involvement. Another important example is the City Year logo, which is infused with many levels of meaning and lets people know that City Year is a very deliberate organisation. In general, the look and feel of service activities, the headquarters, the staff and corps, events, all make a major statement about—and constantly reinforce—our values, mission and commitments. Apple computer founder Steve Jobs said, "I have found that the best companies pay attention to aesthetics. Beyond the functional benefits, the aesthetics communicates something about how they think of themselves, their sense of discipline, how they run their company." Whenever you are planning a City Year activity conduct a "look and feel" audit of your plans. If it's not there, go back and put it in.

### **13. Every important task gets a team.**

While everyone has specific responsibilities, all major organisational tasks should be built around well-functioning teams. Teamwork makes for a better design process, a more enjoyable working environment and a better final result. If you find yourself (or see another) working on an important organisational task largely alone, putting in extremely long hours, trying to implement a million details and beginning to feel a bit like a martyr, then something isn't working right and you should speak up. Get a team around that big task.

### **14. Get group input—but put one person in charge.**

For anything to get done, there must be one person who is both accountable and responsible. However, everything can be improved when there is group input.

### **15. Resources go where they are needed.**

As priorities shift, it is important to remember that resources must also be shifted to meet important organisational goals. At any given time your role may be to ask for or receive resources. Always remember that the needs of the organisation as a whole come first.

### **16. Before a decision, maximum input. After a decision, maximum unity.**

This is the only way to get things done.

### **17. Don't tinker—seek powerful solutions.**

When something is not working, be careful not to censor your own thinking by assuming that certain solutions are not possible—or are too radical. Ask yourself, "If I could do exactly what I thought was

needed here, what would I do?" More than 90% of the time the powerful solution can in fact be implemented.

### **18. Think laterally.**

This is the very heart of idealism. As George Bernard Shaw said, "Some people see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not?" Develop an almost child-like habit of challenging the conventional wisdom of what's possible. When planning and implementing City Year programming, service or events, constantly force yourself and others to question your assumptions, dream the possibilities and think laterally. Sometimes an entirely new way of thinking about something can open up remarkable new opportunities. If someone says, "That can't be done," ask "Why?" If they say, "We tried it and it failed in the past," ask "Why?" Best of all, bring into the planning process people with fresh perspectives—people who have almost no experience with what you are doing. Never having run the race they won't be stuck in the same way of thinking as everyone else.

### **19. Pilot a new idea first.**

A pilot is an experiment—a test. Before attempting to implement a new idea or system on a large scale (such as across an entire corps—or across the country), pilot that idea first. Conduct a low-cost (in terms of money, time, people or other resources) experiment with the idea. (City Year, for example, began with a nine week pilot summer, rather than a full-year programme.) Try it with one team, one division, one event, etc. See if it really works, or learn how to make it work well. If it really is an improvement, teach the whole City Year organisation.

### **20. Found it right.**

"We had a fundamental belief," says Apple Computer founder Steve Jobs, "that doing it right the first time was going to be easier than having to go back and fix it. And I cannot say strongly enough that the repercussions of that attitude are staggering. They're just staggering." Whenever you are founding something new at City Year, think it through, take the time, and do it right the first time. Remember that the tiniest of seeds can grow into a great tree with many limbs, but those limbs have to be present in the initial seed. You cannot attach a limb onto a fully grown tree. For example, when City Year began it was vital that the first 50 corps members represented a true cross-section of young adults and that each of just five teams had a private sector sponsor. Today, the corps unites more than 2,000 young adults across all lines of geography, class, ethnicity and education.

### **21. Don't separate the process from the result.**

For example, if you are designing a workshop on how to empower corps members, corps members need to be involved in the design and implementation of it.

### **22. Implement fewer things better.**

With the best of intentions, we can have a tendency at City Year to try to do too many things at once. It is always better to do a few things excellently than to do many things merely satisfactorily—or even poorly. When making plans and decisions always take one last look at the result to see if we are trying to do too much (which is usually the case) and then have the courage to cut.

### **23. Think big—but implement extremely well day to day.**

City Year's mission is extremely large (change the world) and extremely small (today's service project). Only if we do the small mission well will the big mission follow.

### **24. Seek truly effective communication.**

Truly effective communication means (1) developing simple, clear messages and (2) using diverse, appropriate and often creative methods of communicating those messages so that real communication actually occurs. Sometimes it means holding a special briefing in advance, or developing a skit, or writing a document, or having a testimonial or pairing people up for a discussion—sometimes it means all of these and more. Also, be very aware of language used, including body language—the words we choose and our body language are powerful aspects of communication. Be extremely sensitive to both.

### **25. Take dramatic action; get skit-ish!**

The most effective form of communication at City Year is the skit. Skits are the best method of communicating in a diverse environment. The very process of having to create a skit forces a group to

think clearly about the information being presented and how to effectively present that information to a specific audience. The best skits are informative, creative and a little bit silly. Perform skits internally and externally.

**26. If it is not in the CY Circle, it doesn't exist.**

The Circle is our strongest communication tool. It literally can keep us all on the same page. It should inform, inspire and engage—both internally and externally. Read it, contribute to it, share it.

**27. Set ambitious but achievable and realistic goals—and meet or exceed every single one.**

It is absolutely vital to meet or exceed every major organisational goal we set. When the organisation meets its goals it builds the confidence of others to invest in the next set of more ambitious goals. In other words, each set of goals is a step. On the other hand, a person or an organisation is always harmed the most by not meeting self-defined, publicly stated goals. Because we must meet or exceed every goal, we must be very careful about the goals we set.

**28. Build every relationship with CIA—communication, involvement and appreciation.**

Connecting people and institutions for positive action through community service is City Year's primary method of social change. Think of the City Year organisation like a needle, and the corps and staff as the thread, weaving together people and entire sectors of society (charities, businesses, policy makers, government). We can only be effective by strengthening existing relationships and building new ones. Accordingly, we must all become experts building, maintaining and intensifying relationships. Communicate constantly—both the positive and challenging information. Involvement is at the very heart of what City Year is about. If you involve people, they become committed. Finally, appreciate people and institutions: a thank you letter, a phone call, a note from the whole team, a plaque, or a small gift like a City Year mug are all real ways of showing appreciation. For every City Year relationship you manage, do a CIA check periodically.

**29. One person manages each relationship.**

While many people will play a key role in building a City Year relationship, every important relationship at City Year should have one person managing that relationship and accountable for its health and growth.

**30. Everything takes longer than you think—plan for it.**

There is a significant gap between having an idea and implementing that idea: it takes longer to get the meeting set, to have that first draft, to put up the dry wall, to get the right input and to have people call you back. Make sure the schedule you set is workable.

**31. Use the Honda recipe for excellence.**

Each year, we are told, Honda Corporation buys one of every car made in the world, rides them, takes them apart and then designs the best elements of what it learned into its own cars. Use this same technique for building your part of City Year. Remember that someone may already be working on—or have already solved—the same problem you are working on. Seek her or him out.

**32. Inject creativity into everything.**

A little creativity goes a long, long . . . l o o o n g way. After you have planned something, step back and do a quick creativity check by asking, "Where are the real creative parts to this?" If you can't find the creativity, go back and inject some.

**33. Everything feels like a failure in the middle—keep going.**

This insight came to us from Harvard Business School professor and City Year board member, Rosabeth Moss Kanter. In every planning process there is first a burst of creativity and excitement—and then suddenly it seems as if everything is falling apart. Guess what? You've reached the middle. Keep working and it will all come together.

**34. Always look beyond the obvious next step.**

Learn to predict and anticipate potential negative consequences—and then take steps to avoid them.

**35. Manage by information.**

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard Business School professor, and City Year board member, shared the insight that a very empowering way to manage big tasks is by information. That is, publicly distribute

progress reports for specific goals, such as how many teams have 100% attendance, or how we are doing hitting our recruitment goals. A healthy competition is just one benefit of managing by information. The sharing of information also shows how the organisation is doing as a whole, and shows where either investments need to be made or where special expertise is being developed. Almost any activity that includes numbers or lists can be managed by information.

### **36. Learn how to get diverse input for designs and decisions.**

Sometimes this just means walking around asking people, "What do you think of such and such?" And sometimes it means putting together a focus group (or more permanent group) of people with diverse experiences, perspectives, ideas and backgrounds to get input more systematically. In planning anything, think about inclusivity in terms of input into design, implementation and communication. Perform an inclusivity audit in your head at each step of the way.

### **37. Deploy for inclusivity.**

As you put together groups and deploy, think about ensuring inclusivity at each step of the way. For example, if you are heading out to a presentation in two cars, make sure each car represents the diversity of your group—in case one car gets lost and misses the presentation.

### **38. Always debrief—look for the unexpected success or failure.**

After every major team task, assemble the team and debrief—analyse what went right, what could have been done better and why. Work out how City Year as an organisation can learn the lessons your team learned. Then you can put the lessons learned in writing. Organisational expert Peter Drucker points out that we can always learn the most when we get results which differ from what we expected. Be especially on the look out—and learn the most from—the unexpected success or the unexpected failure.

### **39. Establish a certainty of process for new projects.**

Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter instructs that it is important to establish a certainty of process for getting a major task done. In others words, at the very beginning, establish (and make sure all participants are aware of) a process that the project will go through to get completed: the project's time line, what everyone's role is, who needs to see what by when, when meetings will happen, what decisions will be made by whom and when, who will lead the process as a whole, etc. Once this is done it should decrease the anxiety over the 'how' of a project. If you are leading a new project it is best to come to the first meeting with a draft plan for establishing a certainty of process.

### **40. No one tends to appreciate anything they get for free.**

This is just a fact of life. When designing and implementing, seek to ensure that everyone earns whatever they are given, even if they can earn it in creative ways.

### **41. Give the innovative project its own space.**

Organisational expert Peter Drucker says that if you want someone to develop something fundamentally new, you must first remove him or her from what he or she is doing now. Otherwise, the day-to-day pressures of the existing job will always crowd out the new responsibility; the demands of the 'now' always eat 'what could be', and nothing fundamentally new gets developed.

### **42. Find a sponsor for everything.**

Everything at City Year should have its own sponsor—like the uniform. Finding a sponsor for each initiative at City Year not only maximises City Year's limited resources, but it also ensures long-term sustainability for national service and multiplies the power of our work. Seek a sponsor for what you are working on— Starfish, the CY Circle, the yearbook, etc—and engage that sponsor in our work. By building a direct link between a private sector sponsor and the service work, we share idealism, engage more people in service and build a stronger democracy. Before spending any funds, operate by the NIKADSA principle (Need it? In Kind? At a Discount? Shop Around).

### **43. Make the complex simple.**

Simplifying things is hard work—but it's essential. Apple Computer founder Steve Jobs reminds us that, "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." At first, the solutions to most problems seem very simple. But the more we understand the problem, the more complicated everything becomes and soon we are coming up with, "all these convoluted solutions. That's sort of the middle," Jobs observes, "and that's where most people stop. But the really great person will keep on going and find

the key, the underlying principle of the problem—and come up with an elegant, really beautiful solution that's simple and works." Whenever you are implementing or programming anything at City Year go back over the final result. If it's too convoluted keep working until you make a breakthrough to real simplicity.

#### **44. Remember, everyone always needs to be prepped.**

Whenever you are asking anyone—corps members, staff members, service partners, parents, corporate sponsors, anyone at all—to participate in a workshop, roundtable, fund-raising event or other City Year activity, always remember that everyone needs to be prepped. That is, everyone needs to be told the exact nature and goals of the event or activity, who will be attending and why, what role they are expected to play and what major points need to be covered. Prepping speakers is an important leadership skill. If it is a major event or activity, rehearse everything. Actual testimonies need to be heard, focused and improved. One final tip: if people are asked at the last minute to speak, it is always tempting for them to say, "Well, I was just asked at the last minute so. . ." when they stand up to speak so as to gain the support of the audience. Ask them in advance not to; the effect is always the opposite: the audience will immediately lose confidence in both the speaker and the organisation.

#### **45. Train your replacement seamlessly—and document everything.**

If you move into another job or role at City Year, or are preparing to leave the organisation, the work you have done should continue at the same level of excellence so that the transition of your responsibilities to another person is seamless to the organisation. Training and documentation are the keys to a successful transition. Make sure that your experience, methods and lessons learned are shared with the organisation in writing so the knowledge is accessible and not carried in your head. In other words, everything you created should not fall apart the moment you are not there to do it.

#### **46. Be a clock builder, not just a time-teller.**

John Smale, former CEO of Procter and Gamble, said of his company, "Our commitment must be to continue the vitality of this company—its growth in physical terms and also its growth as an institution—so that this company, this institution, will last through another 150 years. Indeed, so it will last through the ages." In everything we do, we need to think of the seven generations ahead of us and ensure that we are making it possible for them to participate in an even better City Year. Jim Collins and Jerry Porras of Stanford School of Business describe this strategic way of thinking and operating as 'clock-building' or building systems and structures around the work we do so that it will be built to last. If we always rely on one person to 'tell time' (that is, to perform a specific function) then without that person we are lost. However, if that time-teller builds a 'clock' around his or her specific function, many people can tell time from it. Time telling often gets great praise within any organisation—simply because of the terrific heroics of time-telling individuals. We must all learn to be clock-builders, not time-tellers, and to reserve our highest praise for the best clock-builders.

#### **47. Pass the ball.**

If everyone on a football team spends their entire time racing to the ball, wherever it is, and tries to keep it to themselves, no one will ever be in a position to score. If we pass the ball, someone else can score—and we all win. At City Year this means that there are many times when we have taken a project, idea or situation as far as we can and we need to pass it for the organisation. Sometimes that means taking it to a supervisor, or reaching out more broadly.

#### **48. Work calmly, but with a sense of urgency. You can change a mind, an organisation or a life—today, right now.**

It is amazing how much one can accomplish in a day with a calm sense of urgency— and how little one can accomplish in a month without it.

#### **49. Don't forget to have fun.**

A little bit of fun builds community and makes the group more productive over the long run. When your plans are almost done, go back over them and do a fun check—especially for retreats and long meetings. If there is no fun time there, go back and put some in.

#### **50. We must never lose the human aspect of what we are doing.**

It is always important to keep this in mind as we get busy with all the important things we have to do.

### **51. Operate with purpose and pride.**

We are all working towards a mission of building a stronger community and country through national service. We should always seek to operate with a powerful sense of purpose and pride. Purpose and pride are a major source of positive power—especially for young people—as they deeply inspire and lead others, even the casual observer. Operating with purpose and pride means that whenever we are in uniform, whether walking down the street, riding the bus, serving in a school or attending a meeting, we should be purposeful and take great pride in our work. Specifically, it means operating with a positive attitude and powerful appearance, body language and courtesy. The positive inspirational effects of operating with purpose and pride are often stunning. On the other hand, failure to operate with purpose and pride casts a shadow over the good works of the entire organisation and tends to reinforce cynicism.

### **52. Lead with ideas.**

The first role of a leader is to lead with ideas, rather than rules or expectations. Allow people to get as excited as you are about those ideas. When people understand the why they will tend to quickly make the how happen.

### **53. Set very high expectations for yourself and others—especially people you are leading.**

Perhaps the greatest mistake any leader or supervisor can make is to set low standards and expectations for others. People will often respond to exactly the expectation that is being set. Your main function as a supervisor is to develop others so that they can do your job. If you make excuses for others, if you expect less from others than you expect from yourself, if you do not hold people accountable, if your first goal is not to challenge the people you are leading, but to be liked by them, then people you are leading will invariably learn to resent you because they know that you do not fundamentally respect them enough to challenge them and hold them accountable.

### **54. Build the site. Build the organisation. Build national service.**

These are the three goals we constantly strive to reach in all that we do at City Year.

### **55. Put the needs of the organisation as a whole above the needs of your corner of the organisation.**

The needs of City Year as a whole always take precedence over the needs of a single team, department or individual (unless that individual is in crisis).

### **56. No one you are leading should be upset with anyone leading you, or with the organisation.**

When you are leading others it is your responsibility to be accountable to the organisation for the people you are leading. You are responsible for their understanding, attitude and behaviour. They should not be upset with or misinformed about anyone, especially someone who is leading you. If they are, you are probably blaming others (either overtly or subtly) and not accepting full responsibility and accountability for your role.

### **57. "It's not my fault—but it is."**

We must all try to feel real trusteeship for the organisation, accepting responsibility for fixing problems, rather than blaming others for these problems. This means there are often many times when we could truly go the extra mile, foresee negative consequences and take corrective action in advance, rather than thinking that it's, "just not my fault."

### **58. When leading, set the vision, delegate the tasks and then hold people accountable—really accountable.**

Nothing is more important than accountability. When we fail to hold people accountable we not only let down the organisation (and everyone who serves in it and supports it), but also the person who we fail to hold accountable.

### **59. Always keep your troops informed.**

This is a real gem from the military. Share information constantly—both the good news and the bad news. Share it as soon as you have it—especially with anyone you supervise. Sharing information decreases anxiety and increases the willingness of others to follow you. Holding on to information tends to infantilise the people you are leading. The best commercial airline pilots communicate constantly with the passengers.

**60. Seek clarity in thinking—and have the courage to go where that clarity leads.**

The work we do is often difficult. Solutions to problems are not always easily apparent. Over time, however, hard work and hard thinking usually lead to clarity—sometimes not until you are lying in bed late at night. When you get clarity, follow it, even if it challenges original assumptions or ideas.

**61. To solve a problem or get a major task done, release energy.**

Organisational expert Peter Drucker reminds us that just like in nature, energy within an organisation cannot be created—it can only be released. There are almost always enormous resources of untapped energy available at City Year, and the best way to solve a problem or get a major project accomplished is to release energy around that problem or project. Sometimes that means just letting people know about the problem or project—and letting those with the energy come forward. Other times it means creating a special team. For example, in the first year of City Year Rhode Island the organisation simply did not have all of the staff resources it needed to conduct graduation. Instead the call went out to the corps, and the energy released was extraordinary—corps members were pivotal to making the event outstanding. Because City Year seeks to be a catalyst or spark for broad civic engagement and idealistic action, City Year corps and staff must become experts at techniques for releasing idealistic energies.

**62. Admit mistakes freely.**

Doing so makes it easier to fix things, and encourages others to admit mistakes— and soon we all realise that it is all right to make mistakes, just so long as we learn from them.

**63. Refuse to fail.**

This may sound a bit arrogant, but it is just a way of describing an attitude at City Year towards extreme adversity or difficulty in achieving a desired goal. To achieve important organisational goals, City Year will re-imagine plans, re-arrange priorities, re-allocate resources, or just plain work harder and smarter. Remember: because we refuse to fail, we must be careful that the goals we set are important enough to do what it takes to achieve them.

**64. When leading, be comfortable being misunderstood.**

Abraham Lincoln said this. Of course, we must always try hard to be understood. But the very nature of leadership is to be out in front—often ahead of other people's thinking. And if you want to lead you have to be comfortable with the fact that sometimes being out in front means that you will be misunderstood. (Some leaders are misunderstood for years, even for their entire life.) This is especially true if you seek to lead with ideas, which take time to be worked with, thought about, experienced and take hold. As Schopenhauer said, "All truth passes through three stages: first, it is ridiculed; second, it is violently opposed; and third, it is accepted as self-evident."

**65. Sometimes we all need to allow ourselves to be led through the darkness.**

Part of being a strong leader is learning to be a strong follower.

**66. Do three squishy things a day.**

You know you are truly leading when you do at least three things a day that make you a little bit uncomfortable.

**67. Rotate leadership.**

Give leadership opportunities to people you are leading. It's the best way to train new leaders.

**68. Find everyone's strengths and work with them.**

Assume that everyone has a unique strength, something special to offer, and set about discovering it and releasing it. You will always find it. Everyone and everything is a resource, and we need to be artists of combining those resources to achieve new, magical and positive results.

**69. Systematically inspire.**

A major responsibility of leaders is to inspire, which means literally to breathe life into. We should seek ways to systematically inspire others, both individually and organisationally. If you inspire one other person to take a positive action, you have doubled your own impact. If that person inspires another person, you have tripled your impact—all while you are off inspiring a third person. Inspiration is at the heart of our work, for if we light the idealism of others we can achieve things we could never achieve alone. We must always assume that everyone carries a spark of idealism.

**70. Seek to be effective, not just right.**

Often this means truly walking in other people's moccasins. Of course, it is perfectly acceptable—even essential for those who seek to lead—to challenge the thinking of others. But as Robert Kennedy said, "The task of leadership, the first task of concerned people, is not to condemn or castigate or deplore; it is to search out the reason for disillusionment and alienation, the rationale of protest and dissent—perhaps, indeed, to learn from it."

**71. Share your thinking process with others.**

If people know how you got to a conclusion, they will have more confidence in following you there.

**72. The highest form of leadership at City Year is that of the servant leader.**

This means working with and supporting other people—doing and modelling, rather than pointing and ordering.

**73. Maintain a creative distance between yourself and the people you are leading.**

If you become too close to people you are leading you tend to lose your effectiveness.

**74. Train someone else—especially a corps member—to do it.**

Always ask, "Is what I'm doing a task that someone I am leading could perform with the proper training and guidance?" If so, stop doing it, and start training and guiding.

**75. Learn to recognise and resolve false choices.**

One of the hallmarks of good leaders is that they easily recognise and resolve false choices. A choice is a false one if, in fact, we do not have to choose at all, or if there is a totally different way of looking at the situation. For example, it is a false choice that City Year must choose between youth development of the corps and providing important service. The best possible youth development is for a corps member to experience the real empowerment of excellently providing a critically needed community service.

**76. Gut check major decisions.**

Never compromise the integrity of the organisation. When making major decisions, learn to trust your best instincts, and the best instincts of others. If something doesn't feel quite right, perhaps it's not. Always put the integrity of the organisation first—ahead of what might be easiest at the moment. If you are unsure, seek out more information and opinions.

**77. Implement decisions seamlessly.**

Always own the decisions you are implementing or the news you are communicating. For example, if during the input stage you strongly disagreed with the final decision, no one should be able to detect that from how you implemented or communicated the final decision to others. In particular, never lead people by appealing to personal loyalty—especially appeals against the organisation, such as, "City Year really screwed up, but just do this for me." Invariably, leading others through appeals to personal loyalty ends up harming not only the organisation but also oneself, because it isolates you from the support of the organisation the next time around.

**78. Your commitment brings about the commitment of others.**

When it's a good cause, and you have committed yourself entirely, people will come out of the woodwork to help you. The poet W.H. Murry wrote: "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy—the chance to draw back—always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans. The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision—raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no [one] could have dreamed would have come his [or her] way."

**79. It's never what we say, it's always what we do.**

This is how leaders are judged.

**80. Don't confuse empowerment with anarchy.**

Structure is the heart of real empowerment. Provide people you are leading with the structure and skills they need to meet their potential. As Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter puts it, "Structure is liberating."

**81. Seek to be a coach rather than a parent.**

It's often more effective.

**82. Develop the judgment to know when to set aside usual policies for a higher goal.**

Sometimes it's important to set aside business as usual.

**83. Give immediate feedback (whenever possible).**

Timely, balanced feedback (both positive and negative) is critical for growth.

**84. Find and use teachable moments.**

Constantly share what you're learning with those who you are leading.

**85. Celebrate achievement.**

No matter how small. Whenever possible, name the names of the people who have achieved.

**86. View every crisis, need or challenge as an opportunity to move forward or get someone involved.**

The Chinese word for crisis combines danger and opportunity. At points of crisis there is often a unique opportunity to make positive breakthroughs. Look for them and pursue them.

**87. Develop a bias for action.**

Indecisiveness can be the greatest problem of all. It is almost always better to make a decision, and then learn from it, than to hold everything up. The poet Goethe wrote, "Whatever you can do—or dream you can—begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

**88. 'Power tools' are City Year's interface for idealism—the basic building blocks of City Year.**

For idealism to thrive, it must be supported by an entirely new kind of organisational culture—one that is as accessible and as inclusive as possible. 'Power tools' are named structures that make idealistic activity and teamwork easier and more productive, for example, NO-STU-ESO (a facilitation technique, "no one speaks twice until everyone speaks once.") If you want to communicate an important idea, it is often best to create a structure that embodies that idea. Then name it, and train specifically on the structure or technique, including the reasons behind the structure. The City Year name for this technique is NIPITISI (nee-pee-tee-see, "name it, perfect it, train it, and spread it."). Create new power tools all the time. See Chapter 9.

**89. Take reasonable risks that seem to be in line with City Year ways of putting idealism to work.**

**90. Constantly put yourself in other people's shoes—'moccasin' everything.**

The essence of City Year is found in the Native American prayer, "Great spirit, grant that I will not criticise my brother or sister until I have walked a mile in his or her moccasins." What would the world be like if everyone truly walked in each other's moccasins? It would be a truly aware world of justice and peace. The practice of identifying with someone else is a powerful tool for social change—and it is a key element of good leadership. When planning anything, first conduct a moccasins exercise—challenge yourself to be in tune with the unique people and environment you are working in.

**91. City Year is dedicated to helping build the "beloved community" Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of.**

Building the beloved community is a journey that never really ends.

**92. Seek to be as inclusive as possible.**

Inclusivity is the real test—and ultimate goal—of building the beloved community. Inclusivity means taking diversity one step further by learning to tap everyone's strengths to achieve goals that are larger than ourselves. A purposeful and inclusive community is more than the sum of its parts. The strong circle—with no one in and no one out—and the City Year uniform, which everyone shares in common, are tools of inclusivity.

**93. Celebrate all holidays.**

By embracing and celebrating the holidays of all cultures, we share in the joy of each other's cultures and enrich our community.

**94. Everything at City Year begins with the question: what is citizenship?**

Citizenship is City Year's core value, and the proposition that voluntary national service reinvigorates citizenship is City Year's core theory.

**95. City Year is dedicated to developing the concept of public service entrepreneurship.**

We are all engaged in entrepreneurship—the art of putting existing resources to better, more productive uses. The main resource City Year puts to higher utility is youth.

**96. Civic engagement, not traditional politics, is City Year's vehicle for change.**

The distinction between traditional politics and civic engagement is a critical one to City Year. City Year is both non-partisan and pre-political. We neither march nor petition. City Year is an intensive civic experience, an immersion in service and leadership for corps, staff and others. Community service is a unique and special meeting place for diverse people and institutions to come together to find common ground and purpose. Community service is not presented as a replacement for politics. Rather, community service is a new meeting ground that can help improve politics by building a more engaged, knowledgeable, inter-connected, and idealistic citizenry and society. Mahatma Gandhi said that there were three keys to building a democracy—the ballot, the jail (by which he meant civil disobedience), and the spade, by which he meant the willingness of citizens to do the daily service work that it takes to create a democratic society. Without the spade the ballot becomes meaningless and the jail (being willing to give up your own personal liberty for something you believe in strongly) becomes impossible. City Year is about giving young adults the chance to experience and develop the spade work necessary for a democratic society. It is not about the ballot or the jail.

**97. There should be no City Year client.**

City Year seeks to be a catalyst—a mechanism to engage an ever widening circle of people and institutions in positive change through idealistic action. While we may never totally reach this ideal, City Year does not seek to make a client of anyone. As Jane Addams, founder of the Settlement House movement, writes, "You cannot go into a man's house with a stern resolution to be a friend to him. The delicate flower of friendship does not grow that way. But you can become identified with the interests of the neighbourhood of which he is part. You find yourself working shoulder to shoulder with the man who lives next door—friendship springs most naturally in comradeship and identity of interests." At the centre of all the idealistic change at City Year are the City Year corps members, who are the "rocket fuel" for the whole enterprise.

**98. All people—especially young people—need the same eight things.**

Meaning, adventure, community, power, respect, structure, challenge and opportunity.

**99. Young people are the resource, not the client.**

This is the whole reason the youth service experience is so powerful. City Year is not a youth programme. It is a social change organisation—seeking to shift attitudes, values and resources towards the common good—with youth as its greatest resource. In everything we do, we need to think about how we can release the power of young people.

**100. City Year is an act of will.**

City Year does not have a solitary institutional base. City Year is essentially a collective act of will of many people and institutions. As a full-time member of the City Year community, your actions of will make a huge difference.

**101. The ideal service metaphor is to act like water.**

What kind of institution does City Year seek to be? In building your part of City Year, remember that the Tao De Ching, a two thousand year old Chinese text credited to Lao-Tzu, tells us that the highest form of leadership is like water—it seeks the lowest level so that it touches and connects all things; it moves around great barriers that it cannot go through; it acts as a solvent on things that are stuck, and it makes good things grow.

**102. Try to put into practice the Iroquois principle that, "with each decision, consider its effect on the next seven generations."**

What would the world be like if this were practised universally? Perhaps a world without poverty, pollution, or war.

**103. Send out, "tiny ripples of hope."**

Robert Kennedy, speaking in South Africa in 1965, said, "Each time a person stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others, he or she sends out a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other through many centres of energy and daring those ripples create a mighty current that can strike down even the strongest walls of oppression and resistance." Almost every good thing that ever happened at City Year stemmed from an act of courage and belief by an individual or group of people. Small, heroic acts, like the daily dedication of corps and staff, help build City Year. In the process, these acts ripple out to inspire others to act on their beliefs, who in turn inspire others.

**104. City Year is built by witnesses and champions.**

A witness is someone who has seen or been affected by the work we do, such as a corps member's mother or father, a service partner, or even someone riding public transportation or strolling by PT. A champion is someone who acts on City Year's behalf and places his or her personal resources and credibility behind moving the organisation forward. Many City Year champions have taken major personal and professional risks that have significantly moved the organisation forward. Staff and corps must be both witnesses and champions, and help develop other witnesses and champions.

**105. Courtesy is a powerful skill for social change.**

In a time where violence is pervasive and civility sometimes uncommon, being courteous, kind and polite are powerful tools to affect and change the immediate environment around us. A simple, "hello," "please," and, "thank you," can have huge effects. Looking behind to hold the door for the person after you will surprise people in a positive way. Courtesy has the power to build a sense of community and interconnectedness, and in a world of low expectations a little bit of courtesy goes a long way. Powerful courtesy inspires and leads others, and serves as a platform for larger ideas of idealism. Let's make power courtesy a signature of City Year and national service.

**106. The corps and staff together make up a single City Year workforce for idealism.**

We are all in service—both corps and staff.

**107. We are all fund-raisers.**

Every single corps member and staff member must take responsibility for raising the funds to support our work. We are all able to serve full-time today because others have made it possible. We should see fund-raising as a major part of our mission, and as an opportunity to get others involved and shift resources positively.

**108. We are all communicators—and communication is a huge part of service.**

We communicate strong messages everyday whether we know it or not—through our pride in our uniform, our courtesy on the transportation system, the way we interact with people on the street and in our excellent service. Sometimes we may feel that the truly selfless thing to do is to quietly go about our work, rather than inspire visitors, community members and members of the general public. In fact, quietly going about our work can be the most selfish thing we could do. By not inspiring others we are holding onto a gift we have for others, and—most importantly—we are failing to ensure that next year more work can get done and more people can dedicate themselves to idealism full-time. Think about how many silly or violent or valueless messages are sent across the mass media everyday. As leaders—corps and staff—we should be competing strenuously to get our messages of idealism, service, and belief in the power of young people across in all that we do through TV, radio, print and word of mouth. Everyone you are leading should develop a sophisticated understanding of the positive role that mass communications can play in moving our society forward.

**109. Take what's best—and leave the rest.**

Draw on the virtues of every institution—businesses, governments, charities, schools, universities, religious bodies, families and even armies. Each of these institutions has real virtues for us to embrace (such as the esprit de corps of the military, the accountability of the private sector, and the rigorous thinking of academia), as well as pitfalls we may seek to avoid. The key is always to keep thinking critically—take what's best, leave the rest.

**110. Appeal to the best in people and institutions.**

Challenge everyone to put their best to good use. Never be hesitant to ask someone to contribute or get involved.

**111. City Year is a values-based organisation—and that's good.**

For many years, leaders and institutions in our society became increasingly shy about talking about values—often for a very good concern; "In such a diverse world, how," many have asked, "can society choose to elevate any particular values?" On its surface at least, the choosing of values might seem to be oppressive, or at least insensitive. Increasingly, however, our society is reaching a new consensus, based on two insights. First, committed people of all backgrounds are realising that it is impossible to live and work without values—in fact, without widely-held shared values, our society will come apart. In particular, if we do not deliberately provide our young people with powerful, positive values, they will often receive powerful negative values by default. Second, there really are many widely-held shared values at City Year. Many of the greatest values at work at City Year are stories and ideals of great wisdom that often express in powerful ways widely held, shared values that speak across cultures and communities. For example, the founding ideal of City Year is captured best by the Native American prayer, "Great spirit! Grant that I will not criticise my brother or sister until I have walked a mile in his or her moccasins." This ideal is expressed many ways in many cultures. For example, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Christianity) and, "Hurt not others in ways that yourself would find hurtful" (Buddhism). This is a very powerful human value that says all true moral action begins with a profound awareness of others. What would the world be like if no one judged anyone until they truly experienced the other's circumstance? It would be a world free of war, want and hate. The key to real social change is to operationalise such powerful values. At the same time, there is an increasing concern among committed people that cultures not be used for profit or fad. City Year seeks neither. It is with deep respect that City Year seeks to use great wisdom from many cultures that can speak to the very best of what it means to be human, a condition common to all cultures. The alternative course—to ignore great wisdom, and to fail to share it systematically—seems unacceptable. Now, perhaps more than ever before, our society needs positive, practical action guided by time-tested wisdom of the common good.

**112. City Year is not what you think it is.**

This is not meant to sound arrogant; it is just that on first contact City Year often isn't what people think it is. This is probably because it is trying to do many different things at once, and it is struggling to do things in new ways. The main thing to keep in mind is that we all can keep discovering what City Year is about, and we should never be too surprised to learn something fundamentally new about the work we are all doing.

**113. City Year takes an holistic approach to change.**

As the Nigerian proverb says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child."

**114. Seek to move out of your comfort zone and into your challenge zone.**

City Year is often a place where you get a chance to 'slay your dragon'—and grow. In other words, you get many opportunities to do difficult, personally challenging things. For those that are shy and tend to always follow, the dragon to slay might be to speak publicly and lead. For those who tend to lead, the dragon to slay may be to learn to follow others and work effectively in a group. Eleanor Roosevelt said that, "You must do what you are most afraid to do."

**115. Try to be both a student and a teacher in a school for idealism.**

Moment to moment we must easily slip from being a student to a teacher to a student again. As a student, study people who are good at something and learn from them. Learn the most from your own experience, from those with similar experiences, and from those learning the fastest. Remember, corps and staff always have a great deal they can learn from each other. As a teacher, constantly share your insights, ideas and experience, especially with people you are leading.

**116. Think differently with City Year.**

City Year is often a counter-intuitive institution. In other words, at times, City Year can feel like a clock that turns the wrong way. New staff and corps members may feel like Alice, having travelled through the looking glass, where white is black and black is white. On any given day, City Year tends to challenge many traditional assumptions about many things, such as the roles of young people and

the private sector in social change—even traditional assumptions about how to make diversity work. Push yourself to think differently with the organisation.

**117. Behind almost every success is good judgment.**

Good judgment is essential to our work. The good news is that judgment can be developed and improved. There are, it seems, three elements of good judgment: first, common sense. We must always try to evaluate what we are doing from a simple, common sense perspective. Sometimes the most thought out plans simply do not pass the common sense test. Second, experience. As we all learn—sometimes very painfully—experience is an extraordinary teacher. Finally, the third element of good judgment—and perhaps the most important—is one's own personal security. In other words, the more we can keep our own ego out of our decisions, the better our decisions tend to be.

**118. Learn when to ask for help, advice and resources.**

This is the hallmark of those who have succeeded most independently in the organisation.

**119. Seek opportunities to get a win.**

City Year can be a complicated working environment. It can take time to learn how to accomplish tasks and organisational change. Seek opportunities to get an organisational win—a successfully completed task that adds value organisationally.

Getting that first win will boost your own confidence, and the confidence others have in your work.

**120. Show a little "g" and "i."**

Gumption and initiative.

**121. Use every experience as a learning experience.**

Both positive and negative experiences.

**122. Seek to be both an outstanding leader and an outstanding follower.**

City Year needs both. Learn to move easily between leading and following.

**123. Struggle to maintain an open heart and an open mind.**

Perhaps nothing is more important for growth and success. Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

**124. Everyone needs to do things that are not in the job description.**

For example: moving things upstairs, answering phones, moving things back downstairs, helping out on a organisation-wide event, putting out a mailing, or inspiring a visitor.

**125. Seek to transcend both guilt and anger.**

The most effective agents of social change (both people and institutions) have first transcended (risen above) guilt or anger as a major influence on how they process information or make decisions.

Decisions based on guilt tend to be paternalistic— that is, they tend to be highly protective of people and make assumptions and decisions for people, rather than challenging people with information, goals and accountable systems; decisions based on anger tend to place a higher priority on making a point or getting a reaction than finding a truly effective outcome. The hallmark of the best leaders at City Year has been that they have consistently transcended both guilt and anger.

**126. First absorb, and then contribute to, the organisational wisdom.**

City Year seeks to be a continuous learning organisation. The many people who have served in City Year, both staff and corps, have developed a real organisational wisdom that needs to be respected and appreciated. First seek to understand and absorb the organisational wisdom, and then do what you can to contribute to it.

**127. Embrace change.**

City Year is always changing, like sand beneath our feet. That's good. Learn to love change. Change is what keeps the organisation moving forward. The ancient Greek idea of throsos is at work at City Year: a boat is at sea, and to survive the journey without docking the boat, the crew must fix and replace every board, one at a time, while at sea; by the time the boat returns to the harbour, it is a completely different boat; but of course, it is the same boat. Every year there is new change to be embraced—growth of the corps, new locations and new ideas.

**128. Take enormous pride in the City Year uniform.**

Is your uniform clean? Your name tag straight, in the right place and easy to read? How we wear the uniform speaks the loudest about how we feel about our work, our values, ourselves and commitments.

**129. Commit totally to building City Year while you are here.**

You can make a major difference that has long term results.

**130. Take responsibility for three things.**

The three things are: (1) doing your own job excellently; (2) helping others with similar jobs do theirs excellently; and (3) helping City Year meet its organisational goals.

**131. If you are struggling with an aspect of City Year, suspend judgment and seek out more information about it.**

As a corps member or staff member you may not always agree with the way the organisation thinks—especially in the beginning of your City Year experience. Over the years, however, many corps and staff members have said that many aspects of City Year cannot be truly understood—and therefore adequately judged—until they are experienced personally and then thought about over time. On the other hand, there are always aspects of organisational thinking that need changing. The difficult part is figuring out which is which. If you find yourself confused or angry about organisational thinking, it is vital to first suspend judgment, and then get more information, rather than immediately reacting negatively. To care deeply, and yet have the discipline to suspend judgment, is one of the strongest and most important qualities of leadership.

**132. Tack your sail into the City Year wind.**

City Year's rapid development is like a wind that provides all of us with tremendous opportunities for personal and professional growth. Fill your sail with that wind and grow. Fight the wind and tire. Be unaware of the wind and stagnate.

**133. Share ripples constantly—they increase the joy.**

If someone is having a bad day, a ripple can bring that person up and give perspective. You may be holding onto someone else's inspiration. If you have a ripple, share it.

**134. A positive attitude is the first qualification for being a part of City Year.**

This must be true for both corps and staff. Inspiring others and maintaining an environment in which idealism can flourish depends on all of us maintaining positive attitudes. This does not mean always being 'rah rah'. But it does mean that we must all remain positive, constructive and inspired, even when being critical.

**135. Few things are as important as being on time and in a good mood.**

Think of how much time, energy and resources gets wasted otherwise.

**136. When criticising individuals or the organisation, always speak personally and specifically.**

In other words, speak for yourself, not others or a group. Use "I" statements and give specifics, rather than general, vague criticism.

**137. Good ideas tend to be resilient and will eventually be implemented.**

Try not to become frustrated if your ideas are not implemented right away. The organisation simply cannot absorb or implement every good idea immediately. But definitely talk up your ideas and insights—at some key moment you or someone else may be in a position to implement it.

**138. City Year thrives on trust and joy.**

Trust and joy are like City Year's air and water: if we don't give our trust, we will exhaust ourselves second-guessing everyone and everything, to the detriment of our own work. If we don't take joy in our work, we will burn out and harm other people's joy. On the other hand, if we take joy in our own work, suspend judgment, assume we do not always have all the information, and trust in the positive motivation of others, we will be rewarded by the trust of others.

**139. Avoid the it-doesn't-apply-to-me mode.**

We all have times when we believe that a certain rule or expectation—attending a staff meeting or briefing, filling out a form, being on time, shaving in the morning (for men), wearing the uniform or a name tag—"just doesn't apply to me today." Often our intentions are well-meaning—we are trying to get something important done. But this attitude can tear at the City Year community and undermine the overall effectiveness of the organisation. Catch yourself when this starts to happen, and gently point out when others fall into this mode.

**140. Take personal responsibility for your own well-being.**

Often the first thing we lose at City Year is sleep, followed closely by our perspective. It's very important for all of us to get healthy doses of both, and ensure there is balance in our life and work. Prepare yourself mentally, physically and emotionally for the times of the year that are harder than others.

**141. Don't let anyone else's negativity bring you down.**

Rise above cynicism and negativity.

**142. Our work at City Year is made possible entirely through goodwill.**

It gives us all a huge responsibility.

**143. Never ridicule anyone else's idealism.**

There are really very few nevers at City Year, but this is one. The most destructive thing any corps member or staff member can ever do at City Year is to pour cold water on someone else's idealism, passion, and enthusiasm. As an organisation we cannot tolerate it and stay true to our ideals.

**144. Grow ideas.**

Learn to listen to others and grow each others' ideas. It is a powerful process.

**145. Learn to appreciate receiving feedback as a means for personal and professional growth.**

Receiving critical feedback can be a powerful gift.

**146. Whenever the organisation is implementing anything new, or something affects the entire organisation, City Year's leadership will lead forcefully.**

With almost everything else, decisions at City Year are extremely decentralised.

**147. Turn your insights into action, not anger.**

In general, try to practise the 'Noah principle' of criticism: don't just predict the flood, build an ark. Realising something is amiss is only the first step. Offer timely alternatives.

**148. There is always room for specific, professional criticism, but not constant in-house criticism.**

Regular complaining about the organisation, even over little things, can be like a constant drip of water that slowly cracks our foundation. Constant negativity is ineffective, unprofessional, and unfair to the rest of the committed people on the team and in the organisation. Most of all, it harms the joy of working here.

**149. Be careful to avoid becoming isolated within the organisation.**

Everyone needs to be part of a team. Speak up if you are feeling isolated.

**150. Loyalty is essential—both inside and out.**

Almost anything in City Year can be taken out of context. Be loyal to each other. This work is difficult and everyone is trying.

**151. Always give others the benefit of the doubt.**

That way, you will always get the benefit of the doubt too.

**152. Avoid using information as a weapon.**

City Year is a large organisation, and we all gain access to different pieces of information. Any sensitive information that is important for a specific person or the organisation as a whole to know should be shared professionally and sensitively. We need to be careful not to use the disclosure of

certain information as a means of making a point, or to gain an advantage or hurt someone in a moment of anger.

**153. Honesty will set us free.**

Without being destructive, we must always struggle to be very honest with ourselves and others.

**154. When City Year speaks, it should speak with one voice.**

That way we will be most able to be heard and understood.

**155. Back-channelling tears at the cohesion of the organisation.**

Back-channelling is when an individual tells someone that he or she is upset with someone else, rather than taking the issue directly to the person involved. Telling someone about a problem who cannot do anything about that problem only increases everyone's sense of frustration. Often, by the time a situation is resolved, the back-channelling has spread, and the actual information becomes distorted, deepening many more people's sense of frustration. If someone complains to you about someone else, suggest that they take their concern directly to the person involved. If a person does take a concern directly to another person, and is not satisfied with the response, the next step is to take that concern to that person's supervisor. It is never back-channelling to take a concern to someone's manager (or higher).

**156. Take care that personal agendas do not impede your ability to learn, grow and contribute.**

We all have special concerns, insights and sensitivities that we carry with us seven days a week, 24 hours a day. These concerns, insights and sensitivities are very important. However, we all must be very careful not to let them harden into an overriding personal agenda that prevents us from having the flexibility to learn and grow, receive new information, examine new ways of thinking—or most importantly—get our work done and meet our commitments.

**157. Resist gossip and rumours.**

Gossip kills community and tears at the trust we all need to have in each other. A good rule is simply not to initiate, listen to, or pass on gossip or rumours. The ability to resist gossip is a major test of personal and institutional character. Let's make City Year into a place of social integrity—where people never say anything behind some one's back that they would not say directly to their face.

**158. It's a privilege for all of us to serve at City Year.**

It is a remarkable thing that we get to do this work full-time. We have to remember that this is fundamentally a fragile organisation, and that other people's contributions make our work possible, and many other people who want to serve here in the corps and on staff are not able to.

**159. This is hard.**

Be strong.

**160. Seek to have a hard head and a soft heart.**

Having a hard head means being mentally tough, courageous, disciplined, and persevering in the face of obstacles. All great endeavours and all social change require people with hard heads. As Robert F. Kennedy said to a group of young South Africans, "The world demands the qualities of youth—not a time of life, but a state of mind, a temper of the will, quality of the imagination, the predominance of courage over timidity, and the appetite for adventure over the love of ease." At the same time, a hard head is best accompanied by a soft heart, by compassion, empathy, and understanding. A soft heart means being emotionally available and supportive to those in need. All social change also depends on people with soft hearts. Both qualities require the other. A hard head without a soft heart can lead to cruelty or a survival of the fittest mentality. A soft heart without a hard head can be overindulgent, condescending, and even patronising.

**161. Systematically provide perspective for yourself and others.**

Immersion in the daily roller coaster of the excitements and frustrations of idealistic activity leads all too easily to our losing our ability to see real and powerful progress day to day, month to month and year to year. We then tend to see only the faults and failures; and this habitual fault-finding can spiral into cynicism and paralysis. To sustain ourselves in idealism, it is important to systematically regain our perspective by any number of creative means including regularly brainstorming a list of

accomplishments of the past month, semester or year; or asking someone positively affected by our work to speak to us. Good leaders constantly provide perspective to their followers.

**162. Get your daily starfish.**

Like the little girl on the beach, seek to make a difference in a specific and measurable way each day—and circle up at day's end to share and document your daily starfish.

**163. Frame everything as you go.**

Today's photo, article or award is tomorrow's inspirational treasure. Systematically framing the organisation's history builds both pride and perspective—two important ingredients to continued achievement and success. Colourful and meaningful displays provide real inspiration to visitors and new recruits. A good habit to get into is to frame everything right away—the very next day. Even a short delay can mean a permanent delay.

**164. Capture the impact of transformation by showing the "b" and the "a".**

A major part of City Year's mission is to inspire others to civic action. And nothing inspires and motivates people more than seeing a before and after comparison! We all work much harder once we have become convinced that change is possible. The two keys to getting a good 'b' and 'a' are to plan in advance and be creative. If it is a physical project, take pictures before you start and as you go—especially from the exact same vantage point. If it is a human transformation you seek, find creative ways to document the 'before'. Share your 'b' and 'a' transformations with the widest possible audience. Remember: by constantly seeking to show a 'before' and 'after' we will develop the discipline and focus to ensure that our daily work is truly transformational.

**165. Join us!**

This should be our constant battle cry. Remember that a large part of our mission is to multiply the power of our work, and inspire others to civic action. Remember that Dr Martin Luther King said that, "Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve." Whatever you are doing at City Year, ask people outside the organisation to join you. Give them the opportunity to feel the greatness.

**166. Always thank people—right away.**

Always thank people for their contributions to your project, service activity or event. Remember, expressions of thanks are like scrambled eggs: they need to be served right away. The quicker the thanks, the stronger the delight of the receiver. It is surprising how powerful this simple rule is. Immediate expressions of thanks—a letter, card, phone call or gift—magnify good will. (You will also find that the sooner the thanks, the shorter and more sincere your letter tends to be—as you are still flush with the warmth and impact of another's generosity; if you feel the need to write a long letter of thanks, you have probably waited too long). Failure to thank right away can lead so easily to failure to thank at all—which destroys goodwill dramatically.

**167. If there is no goal, there can be no success.**

It is shocking how powerful this simple rule of thumb is. For every activity, set a clear, written, and measurable (or at least observable) goal, and constantly measure your progress against that goal. Without a clear, written goal, your project is adrift. As some one once said, "If we are not careful we will end up where we are heading."

**168. If you want to communicate powerfully, tell a story.**

A major part of our mission is to inspire others to civic action. All great leaders communicated their ideas best by telling a story. Just think of the difference between hearing a 30-minute speech on the subject of how we can all make a difference versus hearing a simple story of a little girl on a beach who said, "I made a difference to that one!" when she was challenged as to why she was attempting to save dying starfish on the beach when she could not possibly save them all. The best stories are personal, full of vivid details and answer the question, "This is how I know that I am making a difference."

**169. Always be prepared to answer one question: why do you think you are making a difference?**

You never know when you'll be asked how you know you're making a difference. If you can't readily provide an answer, then cynicism may get the best of the person asking and they may assume the worst. They may assume that you can't provide an answer because you actually aren't making a

difference. Instead, if you were prepared, you could totally delight and inspire the person and give them faith that change is possible and that committed people are out there making a difference.

**170. If at all possible, say, "yes" the first time.**

Saying, "yes" is a powerful way to empower someone. A very good rule of leadership is to try to say "yes" the very first time that someone you are leading makes a request to try something new or different. Even if the request goes against your own experience and judgment, you should still consider saying, "yes" (so long as you do not feel a great harm might occur). That very first request is so key—if you say, "no" the lesson your follower may well learn is not to offer any ideas at all. It is important to allow people to make mistakes and learn from them—and, of course, that terrible idea may well turn out to have been a stroke of genius after all.

**171. Encourage your leaders.**

We live in an age in which leadership is constantly knocked down, criticised, deconstructed, and mistrusted. It's no wonder that many people are reluctant to take on leadership, particularly in the political arena. If we want to have great leadership, we need to learn to embrace great leadership, an increasingly rare occurrence these days. This requires the willingness to trust, to follow, and to believe in our leaders, and when necessary, to support them even as their shortcomings and faults become apparent. This doesn't mean that we don't challenge and provide feedback to our leaders, but we do it from a place of respect and support.

**172. Read at least one newspaper a day.**

Newspapers are the daily diary of our civic life. In order to be an active and concerned citizen, you should keep yourself informed of events happening in your local community, your city, country, world, and sometimes even outer space. By staying on top of different developments, you'll be better equipped and informed to help contribute to solving social problems and addressing community needs.

**173. I'm ready, choose me.**

All social change depends on individuals who declare themselves to be ready, who step forward and take initiative, who volunteer to take on the tasks at hand. Don't let hesitation, inertia, or fear, hold you back from stepping forward boldly. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I shall pass through this life but once. Any good therefore than I can do or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I may not pass this way again."

**174. Seek balance in life.**

Living a life of commitment and service can be very hard. Quite literally, we take on the problems of the world. In order to be effective and to set a good example to others, we should seek to maintain balance in our lives. This doesn't mean we don't or can't often work long hours or weekends, especially during heavy seasons in the campaign of idealism. But it does mean that you should not neglect your friends, family, relationships, health, or other personal areas of life. We should all also take time to relax, rejuvenate, and recapture our perspective and energy.

**175. Don't make them guess.**

Always seek to communicate with clarity and completeness. Don't make people guess or assume what you want or what you're trying to say. They may guess wrong.

**176. Front most, centre most**

When people come into a room (set up theatre style or some variation of that) we should immediately look for the seat that is closest to the front and the middle of the room. It exemplifies a willingness to be engaged fully and shows a great deal of respect and appreciation for whomever and whatever is about to be presented.

**177. Laugh at least once a day. Everyday.**

Our work at City Year is nothing if not fun. National service, as a movement, looks to tap into the energy and idealism of our nation's young people. Laughter is full of energy and idealism. Employ laughter as you would a tool, and watch what it can do.

**178. Please and thank you – three words that can take you anywhere.**

Simple courtesy in our daily lives can help to build community and a more civil and respectful society. At City Year, we talk about power courtesy. At City Year, we deal with all types of people—of all levels of age, professional status, economic levels and ethnic backgrounds. And all of them respond favourably to courtesy. (In fact, it should be noted that you more often get what you want when you're polite. Please and thank you will pay off.) So please remember, your manners affect the manners of others. Thank you.

**179. Become your message.**

The Indian human rights leader Mahatma Gandhi once said, "My life is my message." Those are five powerful words. Think about that—to become what you believe in. To become what is sought. If you cherish peace, be a peaceful person. If you honour justice, treat others fairly. If you think 'putting idealism to work' is a great slogan, become idealism—become an idealistic person. Remember PITW # 79. "It's never what we say, it's always what we do." They say actions speak louder than words.

**180. Remember that anyone can discover ways of putting idealism to work.**

And if you do, write it up and send it in so it can show up in the next edition.

**181. Make it better**

"In the business world, 'good enough' rarely is," stated CEO and President Jeffrey Swartz in The Timberland Company's 2005 Corporate Social Responsibility Report.

Both a promise and a challenge, Timberland's slogan, "Make it better," reflects upon past progress and commits to even greater excellence in the important work ahead.

The same holds true for our work at City Year. Each year our workforce is renewed as a new class of corps members pledges to make it better in schools and communities. Organisational tools and institutional knowledge must therefore be passed on from year to year, so that our work can have a greater impact, reach more children, and transform more communities.

For example, documenting your team's service in a legacy binder or updating your folder on the network ensures that next year's team can keep up good practices or eliminate bad ones instead of reinventing the wheel. With each act, word, leadership opportunity and community engagement—pause and reflect, "what can I contribute to ensure greater excellence and impact?"

**182. You've read the 'I', don't forget the 'TW'**

The ideas in the section can really make you think. But City Year is an action tank. Always remember the TW in PITW—we're putting our ideas and ideals to work. We exist to take action and to make every effort we can to promote the concept of citizen service. Whether you're working in a school with a child on their reading, painting a community centre as part of a service day, or simply explaining your uniform to an interested fellow shopper in the supermarket, remember that you must always try, and try hard—there is always a positive outcome to be taken from making an effort to spread City Year's work and message.

**183. Do what you think is right at the time, even if it means changing your mind.**

We can all get fixated on carrying out our carefully nurtured plans, even when it has become apparent over time that they are very bad plans. We may be afraid of looking weak or foolish if we change track, or worried that we will be seen to be contradicting ourselves. None of these things is a good reason for pressing on with a method that isn't working. As the economist John Maynard Keynes said, when a colleague criticised him for holding different views on economic policy before and after the Great Depression, "When the facts change I change my mind. What do you do?"