THE

SoapBox
Employee

HANDBOOK

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This publication was produced at SoapBox HQ.

Content by: Warren Tanner
Design by: Olivia Truong
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The **SOAPBOX EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

For
SIMON

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Prologue:
the HitSend Story.

The original idea for SoapBox started with Brennan, when he was an undergrad at Ryerson University. Previously, Brennan was a big fish at a small town high school, and when he came to Ryerson he had high hopes. However, he was surprised, and often frustrated with a lot of things in his University experience that were very sub-optimal. For example: registering for classes was a broken process. Buying textbooks was a horrific, inefficient process that wasted a lot of people's time. Etc, etc.

What was even more frustrating was that often, Brennan and his friends were able to think of solutions to these issues that, from their perspective, could be easily implemented.

So one night, Brennan couldn't stop thinking about all of these issues and all of the potential solutions that were not being implemented, and he got out of bed and starting writing an email. The email was addressed to pres@ryerson.ca, the University President's public email address. Brennan laid out several ideas he had about how to make the school a better place.

Once the email was fully typed out, Brennan felt a sense of relief - almost a weight off his chest. Then, as he was about to send the email, he had second thoughts - "this is a pretty bold email to send the President - do I really want to do this?". After thinking about it some more, he thought, "what's the worst that can happen?" and with that he hit send. This would become the first HitSend moment.

With that, Brennan was able to fall asleep, and the next day, started to forget all about his email.

2 weeks later, to his surprise, Brennan got a response from Sheldon Levy, the President himself, saying "Brennan, I loved your email - please book some time to come in. I would love to hear more." The meeting was set for the following week.

*gulp. Be careful what you wish for.

Brennan felt a sudden sense of pressure. Pressure to come prepared with great ideas. Pressure to not waste the President's time. He sprung into action, starting by trying to gather more, even better ideas to bring to the meeting. He went back to his friends and said, "what were those ideas you had about fixing the school?" he listened, and wrote some down. He did the same thing with different friends. He tried to set up a Facebook group, but that didn't work. He was about to send out a survey - but realized he didn't know what to ask, exactly.

In the process of trying to collect ideas from his peers, Brennan realized there must be a better way - but there wasn't. So he started building one.

Brennan showed up to his meeting with the President, to find that the Provost, Vice-Provost, as well as various other members of the Presidents staff had been invited. Quite an audience.

Brennan started by talking about some of his ideas. The President leaned in. Brennan mentioned more of his ideas. The President leaned in further. To his Brennan's slight surprise, the meeting was going really well- the President took a real interest in the list of ideas that Brennan had assembled and seemed intent on solving them. The President explained that he and his staff, "didn't sign up for classes or buy textbooks themselves" and rarely got such first-hand, unfiltered information from the frontlines. They seemed hungry for more.

Brennan, sensing his opportunity, then said:

"This is great that I am here in your office and have the chance to share my ideas with you - but imagine if we could get the entire student body in here - and we could prioritize which ideas were most important."

Brennan could see by the look in the President's eyes that he was on to something, and with that, Brennan pulled out a piece of paper with a sketch on it. The sketch was of a software system he wanted to build to connect student ideas to the President's office.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Fortuitously, Ryerson University was about to open the Digital Media Zone, Canada's first University incubator for startup ventures. Brennan met Graham - who was working as faculty at the time - and they started building early prototypes of what would become SoapBox. Shortly after that, Brennan met Warren in the DMZ - who after a few months of courting each other, joined the company full time.

The company was named HitSend. The product was named SoapBox.

In 2013, the company would be renamed SoapBox Innovations Inc. But you can call it SoapBox for short.

Where does the name SoapBox come from?

"The SoapBox story begins about 200 years ago in Hyde Park, in London England. People used to get up on a SoapBox, which was a wooden box, and make an impromptu speech about anything that was important to them. If the crowd liked the speakers ideas, they would stop and cheer. If they didn't, they would boo, or or just keep on walking. And this is what would happen most of the time...

But every once in a while, the speaker would tap into something that really resonated with people, and would that would happen, more and more people would gather, until the point where the group didn't just want to talk about the idea - they wanted to do something about it.

Then something special would happen - they would march over to Parliament - and rally for change.

Now times have changed, but people still want a place to speak their mind, and share their ideas - so we've taken that exact same concept - fast forward 200 years, and put it online."
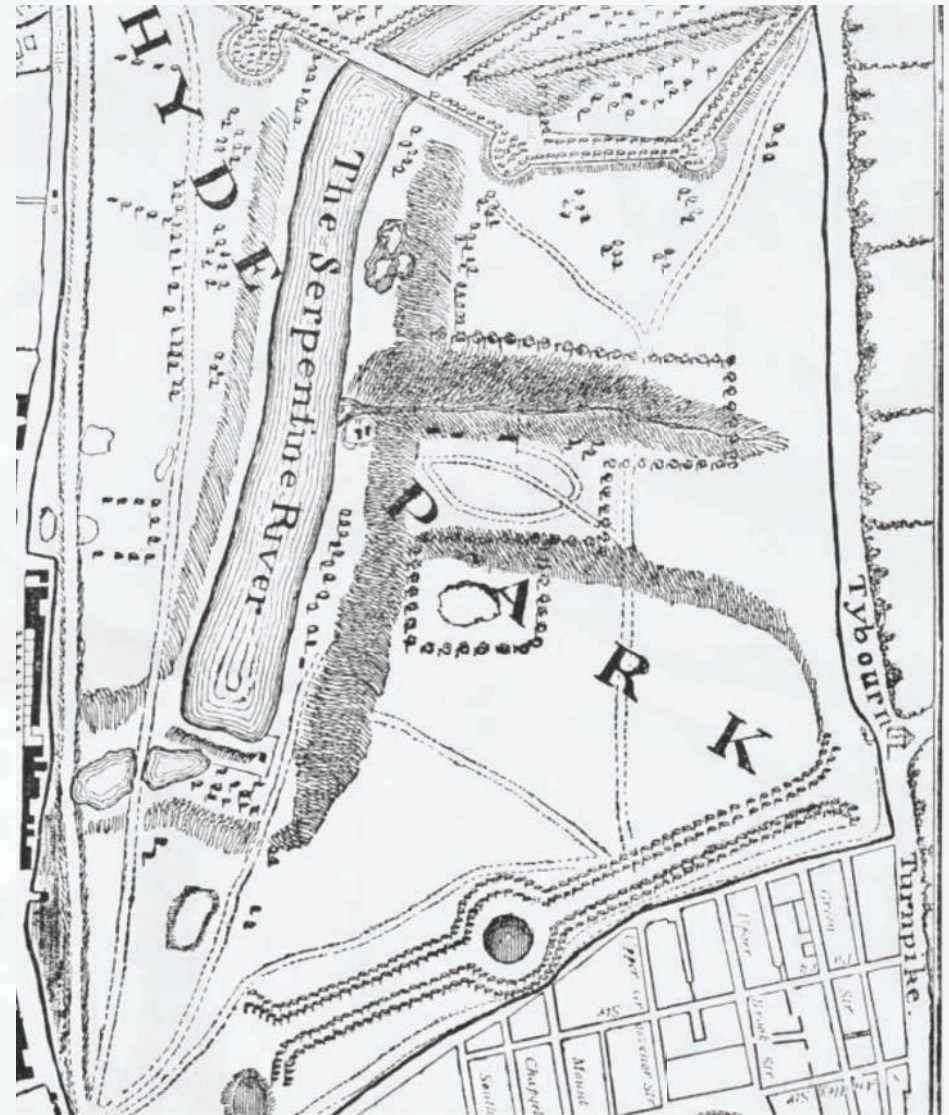

FIG. 0-1. — *Hyde Park map and illustrator interpretation*

Our Mission

To increase collective happiness by empowering
communities to set and achieve goals.

What We Believe

1. We believe that involvement leads to commitment.
2. We believe that communication enables progress.
3. We believe that progress is contagious.
4. We believe that working towards a shared goal
    provides purpose and a sense of happiness for
    everyone involved.
5. We believe the best way to improve communication
    is to put all parts of the process in the same place.

Our Values

1. Be a great human.
2. Build trust.
3. Let the best idea win.
4. Always compete (Win.Win.Don't Lose.)

"This is the true joy in life,
the being used for a purpose
recognized by yourself as
a mighty one; the being
thoroughly worn out before
you are thrown on the scrap
heap; the being a force of
Nature instead of a feverish
selfish little clod of ailments
and grievances complaining
that the world will not devote
itself to making you happy."

— *George Bernard Shaw*

SHOULDER

HIP

KNEE

FRONT   SIDE   IN ACTION

SoapBox Universe Characters
- what style/dimension do
we want them as?

looking
up angle   looking down
                            angle

FIG. 1-1. — *Preliminary sketches of a SoapBoxer*

CHAPTER I

How to

Be a Great Human

—

*Dealing with other human
beings at SoapBox.*

How to

BE A GREAT

HUMAN

Be Confident.

You trust yourself.

*Others can only trust you
when you trust yourself first.*

FIG. 1-2. — *This map covers 5 areas of confidence*
1) *A healthy body is a healthy mind*
2) *Listen before you speak*
3) *Plan ahead and be spontaneous*
4) *Smiles spread confidence*
5) *Dress to look your best*

Be Competent.

You are capable of
doing great work.

Be Accountable.

You own your decisions,
good or bad.

Be Humble.

You are modest despite being awesome.

This is a direct quote from the HubSpot Culture Code. We like the wording so much, we adopted it here. We also think they are pretty awesome.

FIG. 1-3. — *Just awesome*

T-Shaped.

You have breadth and depth. You are a generalists in many topics, but still specialize in one strength.

VALVE *We first came across this in the [Valve Employee Handbook](#), which is a document that has had a huge influence on how we think about culture.*

We don't know you Valve, but we like your style. I guess we're kind of like a secret admirer — but in the classic, 1950's sense of the word... NOT the modern day creepy variety.

FIG. 1-4. — *An employee demonstrates the T-Shaped knowledge*
A) *Broad range generalist*
B) *Specialized expertise*

sway bracing

End posts

Bottom lateral

flooring

Hip vertical

lower cord

Main ARCH

143 FT

PIER

CROSS GIRDER TIE-ROD

PIER

84 FT

531 FT

column

parabola: $y = -0.00116(x-251.5)^2 + 73$

FIG. 2-1. — *Diagrams of two types of bridges*

CHAPTER II

How to Build Trust

—

Build trust like how you build bridges.

Be Trustworthy.

Your actions
match your words.

Think Long-Term

You treat all relationships like
long-term relationships.

At the start — you never know
which relationships will end up being
long-term — assume they all will.

Act Like an Owner.

Your decisions are rooted in the
following order:
purpose, company, team
and then self. *(see* **FIG. 2-2***)*

Selflessness.

You focus on the work,
not on your ego.

| Purpose | → | Company | → | Team | → | Self |

FIG. 2-2. — *Inspired by* HubSpot Culture Code,
see "Use Good Judgement"

Be a Giver.

You make the first move, take the first step, come your halfway first, and pro-actively bring goodwill to all your relationships. You keep track of how much you are giving, not how much you are getting.

FIG. 2-3. — *In the Japanese culture, it is not seldom to pour your table neighbour's tea first. All teacups at the table would primarily be filled, before pouring yourself a cup of tea.*

Diagrams (labels within figure)

↳SCREEN WIDTH 11½"

screen height

A

A

SCREEN MASK

METAL FLANGE

45°

SUPPORT AREA

EXTERNAL INSULATING COATING

EXTERNAL CONDUCTIVE COATING

BASE DETAIL

TUBE DIAGRAM OF LIGHTBULB
- Diagram by General Electric.

* cross section

plug parts

LED lens

±3%

control current

wire roting

94V-0

* ANATOMY of LIGHTBULB

socket shell combined.

glass

aluminum

copper

screw thread contact

electrical foot contact

INTERIOR.

BASE CONNECTOR

patent diagram
-lightbulb application

LIGHT DIFFUSING COVER

BALLAST STRIPE ELECTRONICS

BASE CONNECTOR CAP

FIG. 3-1. — *Diagrams of lightbulbs, often used to express ideas*

How to
Let the Best Idea Win

—

*May the best idea be the last
idea standing.*

Be Positive.

You believe in making tomorrow better than today and are always looking for the next great idea.

"Even apart from the instability due to speculation, there is the instability due to the characteristic of human nature th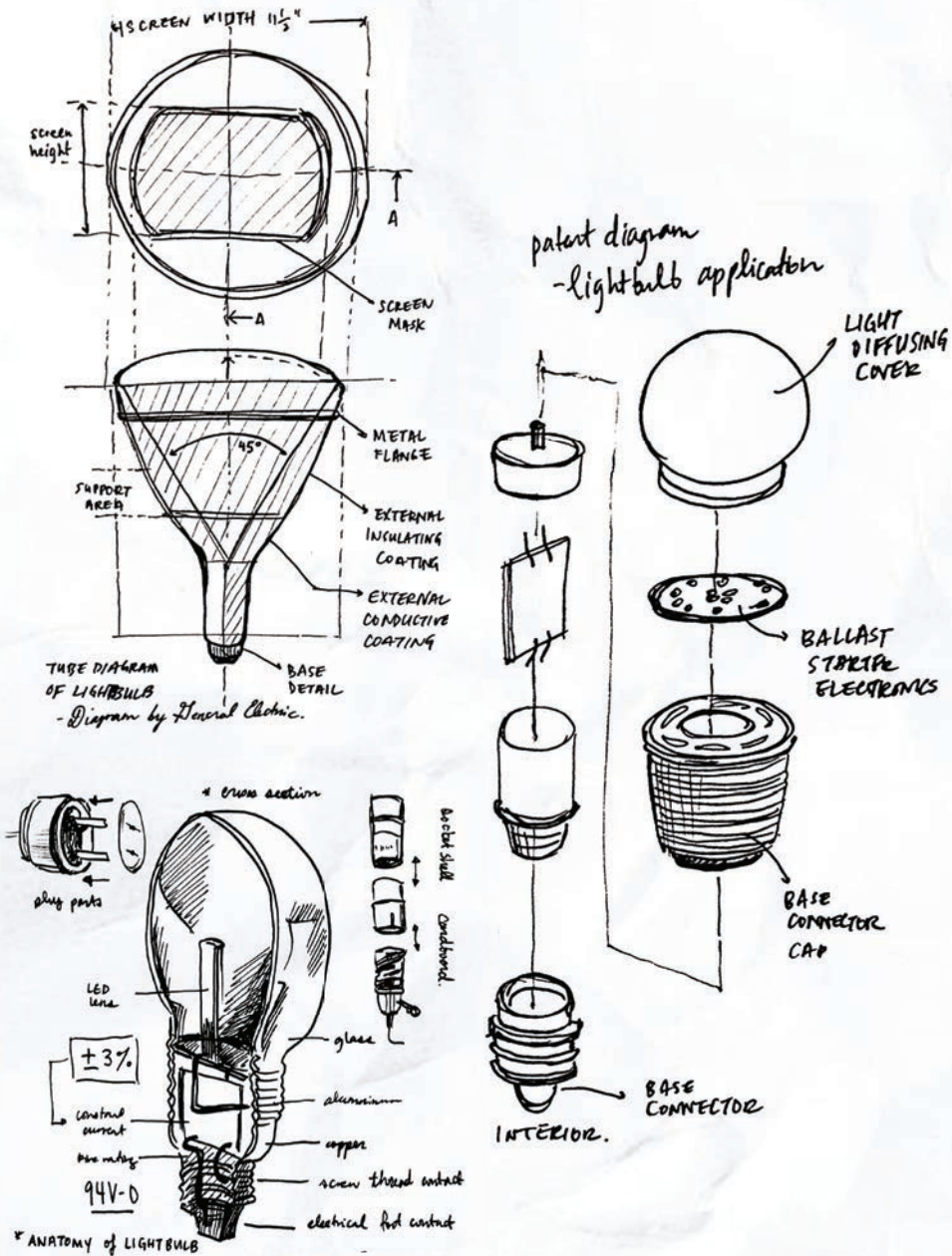at a large proportion of our positive activities depend on spontaneous optimism rather than mathematical expectations, whether moral or hedonistic or economic. Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many days to come, can only be taken as the result of animal spirits—a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities."

— *John Maynard Keynes*

Active Listening.

You give people your full attention: you don't just wait for your turn to speak.

Communication.

You communicate in a way that is crisp, clear, and relevant.

* Whether it's in person, an email, through Skype or on the phone

Have Empathy.

You pro-actively seek to understand the other person's point of view.

* Don't dismiss someone's point of view just because you don't get it.

Customer is King.
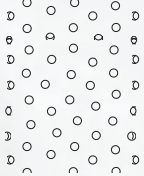
Your conclusions are market-driven.

2013: The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

2012: The European Union (EU)

2011: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee (Liberia), Tawakkul Karman (Yemen)

2010: Liu Xiaobo (China)

2009: Barack Obama (US)

2008: Martti Ahtisaari (Finland)

2007: Al Gore (US) and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

2006: Muhammad Yunus (Bangladesh) and the Grameen Bank

2005: International Atomic Energy Agency and Mohamed ElBaradei (Egypt)

2004: Wangari Maathai (Kenya)

2003: Shirin Ebadi (Iran)

2002: Jimmy Carter (US)

2001: Kofi Annan (Ghana) and the United Nations

2000: Kim Dae Jung (South Korea)

1999: Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders)

1998: John Hume and David Trimble (Northern Ireland)

1997: Jody Williams (US) and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines

1996: Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta (East Timor)

1995: Joseph Rotblat (Britain) and the Pugwash movement

1994: Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres (Israel) and Yasser Arafat (PLO)

1993: Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk (South Africa)

1992: Rigoberta Menchu (Guatemala)

1991: Aung San Suu Kyi (Burma)

1990: Mikhail Gorbachev (Soviet Union)

1989: Dalai Lama (Tibet)

1988: United Nations Peacekeeping Forces

1987: Oscar Arias Sanchez (Costa Rica)

1986: Elie Wiesel (US)

1985: International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

1984: Desmond Tutu (South Africa)

1983: Lech Walesa (Poland)

1982: Alva Myrdal (Sweden) and Alfonso Garcia Robles (Mexico)

1981: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1980: Adolfo Perez Esquivel (Argentina)

1979: Mother Teresa (Albania)

1978: Anwar Sadat (Egypt) and Menachem Begin (Israel)

1977: Amnesty International

1976: Betty Williams (Britain) and Mairead Corrigan (Northern Ireland)

1975: Andrei Sakharov (Soviet Union)

1974: Sean MacBride (Ireland) and Eisaku Sato (Japan)

1973: Henry Kissinger (US) and Le Duc Tho (Vietnam, declined)

1972: prize not handed out

1971: Willy Brandt (Germany)

1970: Norman Borlaug (US)

1969: International Labour Organisation

1968: Rene Cassin (France)

1967: prize not handed out

1966: prize not handed out

1965: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

1964: Martin Luther King Jr (US)

1963: International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies

1962: Linus Carl Pauling (US)

1961: Dag Hammarskjoeld (Sweden)

1960: Albert Lutuli (South Africa)

1959: Philip Noel-Baker (Britain)

1958: Georges Pire (Belgium)

1957: Lester Pearson (Canada)

1956: prize not handed out

1955: prize not handed out

1954: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1953: George Marshall (US)

1952: Albert Schweitzer (France)

1951: Leon Jouhaux (France)

1950: Ralph Bunche (US)

1949: Lord (John) Boyd Orr of Brechin (Britain)

1948: prize not handed out

1947: Friends Service Council (The Quakers), American Friends Service Committee (The Quakers)

1946: Emily Greene Balch (US), John Raleigh Mott (US)

1945: Cordell Hull (US)

1944: International Committee of the Red Cross

1943: prize not handed out

1942: prize not handed out

1941: prize not handed out

1940: prize not handed out

1939: prize not handed out

1938: Nansen International Office for Refugees

1937: Viscount Cecil of Chelwood (Britain)

1936: Carlos Saavedra Lamas (Argentina)

1935: Carl von Ossietzky (Germany)

1934: Arthur Henderson (Britain)

1933: Sir Norman Angell (Ralph Lane) (Britain)

1932: prize not handed out

1931: Jane Addams (US) and Nicholas Murray Butler (US)

1930: Nathan Soederblom (Sweden)

1929: Frank Billings Kellogg (US)

1928: prize not handed out

1927: Ferdinand Buisson (France) and Ludwig Quidde (Germany)

1926: Aristide Briand (France) and Gustav Stresemann (Germany)

1925: Sir Austen Chamberlain (Britain) and Charles Gates Dawes (US)

1924: prize not handed out

1923: prize not handed out

1922: Fridtjof Nansen (Norway)

1921: Karl Hjalmar Branting (Sweden) and Christian Lous Lange (Norway)

1920: Leon Victor Auguste Bourgeois (France)

1919: Thomas Woodrow Wilson (US)

1918: prize not handed out

1917: International Committee of the Red Cross

1916: prize not handed out

1915: prize not handed out

1914: prize not handed out

1913: Henri La Fontaine (Belgium)

1912: Elihu Root (US)

1911: Tobias Michael Carel Asser (The Netherlands) and Alfred Hermann Fried (Austria)

1910: Permanent International Peace Bureau

1909: Auguste Marie Fran?ois Beernaert (Belgium) and Paul Henri Benjamin Balluet, Baron d'Estournelles de Constant de Rebecque (France)

1908: Klas Pontus Arnoldson (Sweden) and Fredrik Bajer (Denmark)

1907: Ernesto Teodoro Moneta (Italy) and Louis Renault (France)

1906: Theodore Roosevelt (US)

1905: Baroness Bertha Sophie Felicita von Suttner (Austria)

1904: Institute of International Law

1903: William Randal Cremer (Britain)

1902: Elie Ducommun (Switzerland) and Charles Albert Gobat (Switzerland)

1901: Jean Henri Dunant (Switzerland) and Frederic Passy (France)

FIG. 4-1. — *A list of Nobel Peace Prize winners.*

CHAPTER IV

How to
Win. Win.
Don't Lose

—

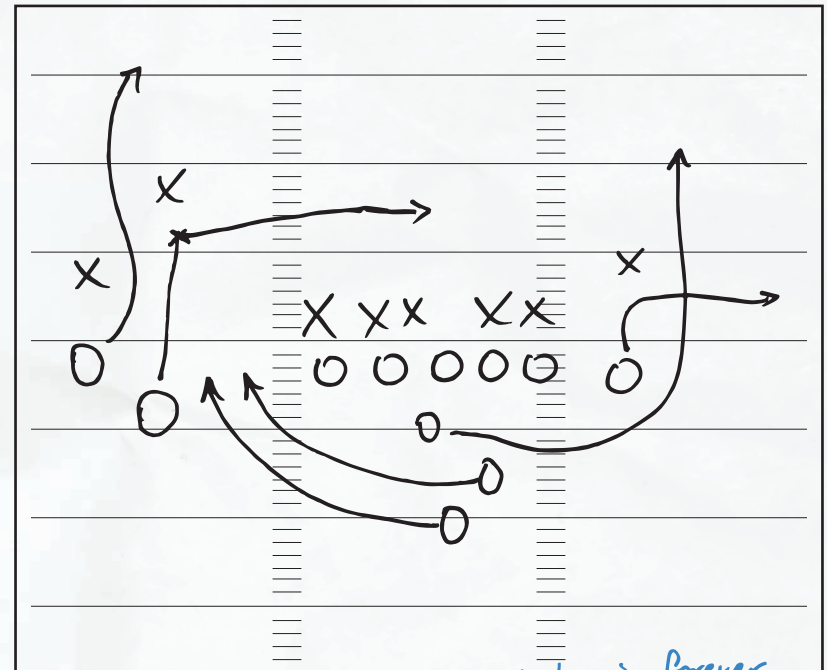*May the best idea be the last idea standing.*

Always Compete.

You approach every day like a championship game. You know life is a game of inches and that there are no little things.

"If you want to win forever, you've got to always compete."
— Pete Carroll

FIG. 4-2. — *The popular football team, Seattle Seahawks, reaches their championship success with the help of game plans.*

Hard Work.

You know that accomplishing big things is usually the result of a high level of sustained effort.

> "THE GREATS WEREN'T GREAT CAUSE AT BIRTH THEY COULD PAINT, THE GREATS WERE GREAT BECAUSE THEY PAINT A LOT..."
>
> — MACKLEMORE

I hope that God decides to talk through him
that the people decide to walk with him
Regardless of pitchfork cosigns I've jumped
Make sure the soundman doesn't cockblock

air right out of your lungs. And those
words be just oxygen. Just breathe

I hope that God decides to talk through him
that the people decide to walk with him
Regardless of pitchfork cosigns I've jumped
Make sure the soundman doesn't cockblock
the drums. Let ~~there~~ the snare knock the
air right out of your lungs. And those
words be just oxygen. Just breathe

Be Clutch.

You are cool under pressure
and you have the fortitude* to
act in a way that your team will
be proud of.

* Fortitude
— [fawr-ti-tood] noun.
Mental and emotional strength in
facing difficulty, adversity, danger, or
temptation courageously.

Perserverance.

You can do hard things. You
can impose your will on the
universe to change things
people said were not possible.

Results Oriented.

You know that being effective is more important than being busy.

Don't just do a lot of work for the sake of (working.)

Glossary of Terms

BLAP BLAP: what we call our company handshake. Inspired by Troy and Abed (Community). SoapBoxers only do this handshake with other SoapBoxers. This is important to note, because once people see a secret handshake, they want to learn it and do it too. Just say sorry, SoapBox only...and let them down easy.

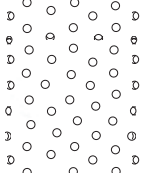**BINGO BANGO:** loosely translated from Jess's native speak as "therefore" or "before you know it". Usually accompanied by an exclamation mark.

✳ **CHIPOTLE:** the SoapBox burrito of choice. The founders used to eat Chipotle 3x week for 3 years - when we had a Chipotle in the building.

DEMO DAY: the biweekly ceremony of presenting to your peers what you have accomplished in the previous 2 weeks. Demo day begins with the Wikipedia challenge. The winner either goes first, or chooses the first presenter. Beer and chips are encouraged.

THE DMZ: the name of the incubator where SoapBox was founded. Part of Ryerson University. They are the metaphorical couch we crashed on before we could get our own place. Nothing but love for the DMZ.

THE GONG: the physical gong in the office. It is used to mark accomplishments like closed sales, firsts, and for signifying the end of a sprint.

✳ always amazing

JUNE 28TH: SoapBox's birthday (incorporated June 28th, 2010).

LIGHTS OUT: this is sales speak for "really good" or "awesome".

MUGGLES: what SoapBox developers call ordinary persons with no magical coding abilities. Be nice to muggles and speak slowly to them - as they most often won't understand what you are talking about.

NEW CASTLE BROWN: the unofficial beer of demo days.

SCRUM: our morning stand up meetings - should be no more than 6 people taking (max) 1 min each.

General format is:
a) what you did yesterday (or biggest win)
b) what you are working on today and
c) if you have anything blocking you.
d) Always done standing up.

SOAPBABE: A moniker proudly created by the early ladies of SoapBox. A SoapBabe is one who is strong, resourceful, confident, and who represents the power of all women in tech.

SPIRIT ANIMALS: Each team at SoapBox has a spirit animal. We're not exactly sure why we have them - we just do.

SPRINTS: 2 week periods of focused work, culminating in demo day.

SPIRIT ANIMALS
of SOAPBOX

HONEY BADGERS
Sales Development

Our SDRs do care. But honey badgers get the honey.

TIMBERWOLVES
Sales

Large wolves that hunt alone and in packs.

HONEYBEES
Marketing

Bees pollinate. Bees communicate. Bees make honey, which Honey Badgers love.

RAVENS
Engineering

Highly intelligent, Ravens are one of the only animals that can use tools. Also known as the wolf-bird, Ravens help Wolves locate prey in the wild.

OWLS
Design

These nocturnal birds are recognized for their intuition, wisdom, and the ability to see what others do not. Owls are also known to act as messengers.

BEARS
Client Success

Strong, confident, protective of their young, and faster than a race horse.

STRATEGY SESSIONS: usually refers to playing Towerfall. Occasionally, it means actually discussing business strategy.

TOWERFALL: a 4 player video game often enjoyed at the end of a long day at work. It is a well designed game that can be played by developers and muggles alike.

THE WIKI CHALLENGE: the game where each person starts on the same wikipedia page (usually where we left off last game) and races to navigate to the same destination page (usually a random word chosen by a guest or previous winner) using only by clicking on links within the page. First one there wins.

TRIPOD: the name the founders gave to themselves. Early on in the company history, Brennan, Graham, and Warren realized that they came up with better solutions collectively than they could have individually. This was only possible because each of them believed that the most important thing was getting to the best possible answer - and not trying to steer the others towards their answer. This thinking has been crystalized as "Let the Best Idea Win."

Also, like a tripod, if one of the legs breaks, the whole thing falls over. That is how the founders viewed each other - each being essential to the other two.