

# 2024 Presidential Guiding Principle

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## 1. Introduction

When you see someone in front of you who is in trouble, what do you do?

The person I have now become would not hesitate to take whatever action necessary to help that person. That's because, since becoming part of the JC, I've come to understand our mission to work toward a bright and prosperous society.

From a young age, Japanese people are taught to cherish nature, respect the elderly, and be kind to those in need. That's why during the innocence of childhood, when they are still free from concern about society's opinions, they can naturally reach out and lend a hand to those in trouble.

However, as we grow older and become aware of societal norms and the ways of the world, we start to worry about how others perceive us, whether our kindness might go unnoticed, or whether someone else will step in to help. Without realizing it, have we perhaps locked away that simple and pure compassion deep within ourselves?

I realized the mission of the JC movement through my participation in JC activities and was able to change for the better. And I am now convinced that as an organization the JC awakens within us the simple and pure kindness that we have locked away, and that gives shape to what we took for granted when we were boys and girls.

That's why the JC can increase the number of young people who can turn their simple and genuine desire to make their town better, to help someone, into action. By doing so, the town improves, local businesses grow stronger, and ultimately, I believe this can lead Japan to becoming an even brighter and more prosperous society than it is now.

## My Mission Statement

I had a lawyer friend whom I met when we both passed the bar exam and became judicial apprentices. We became close friends. While I grew up in a privileged environment and became a lawyer with the intention of supporting small and medium-sized businesses, his aspirations were entirely different.

He lost his mother at a young age, his sister ran away and disappeared, and he lived with his father alone. Amidst such circumstances, he went through a troubled phase himself,

eventually becoming a salaryman. However, with a strong desire to help people facing difficulties in similar family situations, he aimed to become a lawyer. He took out a student loan, studied relentlessly, and finally achieved his dream of becoming a lawyer.

After becoming a lawyer, he took on numerous roles as a court-appointed defense attorney in criminal cases and as an official attendant in juvenile cases. He dedicated himself wholeheartedly to individuals who grew up in various family environments and had gone astray, doing his utmost to help those who had made mistakes and committed crimes.

However, just as he reached his seventh year as a lawyer and finally felt capable in his role, tragedy struck. Suddenly, he was diagnosed with mutational malignant lymphoma, and sadly, he passed away a year and a half later. This was precisely during the time when I was serving as the special committee chairperson for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary project of my Local Organization.

And to tell you the truth, two days before his passing, I was summoned by his wife. In a hospital room, he shared his final words with me.

He said, "I'm trusting in you to do it, on my behalf."

He might have meant it in a different sense. Nonetheless, I felt that he entrusted me with the desire to become someone who not only sees lawyering as a profession but also as a person who helps the vulnerable and rescues those in need.

From then on, I no longer hesitated to put into action the simple compassion that I had kept locked within me – the desire to help those in need, to improve the town for the children. I embraced the JC movement with even greater determination than before.

### **The JC Movement: Close at hand**

The city of Kobe, where I live, experienced the devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake on January 17, 1995, at 5:46 AM. With a magnitude of 7, the earthquake claimed over 5400 lives and caused the collapse of around 150,000 houses. At that time, I was still in fifth grade, and a close friend of mine had his world shattered when his home collapsed. In an instant, he lost his grandmother, parents, and younger brother, leaving him alone with his older brother.

Witnessing the horrifying power of natural disasters that could effortlessly steal smiles from people's faces, I came face to face with the preciousness and fragility of life.

When the earthquake struck, JCI Kobe made the immediate priority to ensure the safety of its members' families and employees, and to safeguard their businesses. They decided to halt all activities except for information gathering. On the other hand, JCI Japan acted swiftly after the earthquake. The National President and Executive Vice Presidents chartered helicopters to

transport relief supplies to the disaster-stricken areas, set up a donation account, and initiated fundraising efforts. By the following morning, a network was established to deliver relief supplies from various Local Organizations across Japan to the affected areas. Moreover, they managed the allocation of human support.

"We can't keep dwelling in sorrow forever. We must rebuild our town, protect our families, and continue economic activities. Now is the time when the true value of JC is being tested. With the pride and confidence of JC members, we must be the first to stand up."

These were the words conveyed by Jun Yamamoto, the 1995 National President of JCI Japan. Mr. Yamamoto lost his own family in this disaster. Despite that, he exhibited strong leadership and, driven by the conviction that we must not create more sorrowful people through such disasters, he took action alongside numerous members for the sake of the country and the community.

Witnessing the courageous actions of many senior members who headed to the disaster-stricken areas, along with the resolute words of leaders, I became convinced that regardless of how challenging the circumstances might be, the essence of the JC movement lies in wholeheartedly helping and bringing smiles to those in need, without expecting anything in return, as long as there are people facing difficulties in front of us.

Currently, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has put world peace in jeopardy, and society as a whole is enveloped in a variety of anxieties. It is precisely in such a situation that all members of JCI Japan must put their simple and pure kindness into action. We must extend the JC movement even further towards creating a brighter and more prosperous society, joining forces to bring about a Japan and a world overflowing with people's smiles. This, indeed, is the mission entrusted to us, the JAYCEEs, at this very moment.

## **2. Achieving a society where the wealth of Japan can be truly felt**

### **Japan's Challenges**

Compared to other developed countries, Japan is experiencing one of the most advanced cases of an aging population with declining birth rates. Due to a decrease in birth rates, Japan's total population reached 125.5 million in 2022, marking the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of population decline. Moreover, due to the impact of extended average lifespans, the population of elderly individuals aged 65 and over has reached 35.58 million, with the elderly dependency ratio continuing to rise to 28% of the total population. Furthermore, by 2070, the total population is estimated to fall below 90 million, with the elderly dependency ratio projected to reach 39%.

The decline in the working-age population will lead to a reduction in the labor force across

various industries, intensifying the shortage of manpower. Furthermore, population decline will contribute to a contraction of the domestic market, diminishing the appeal of Japanese companies as investment destinations for domestic demand. This, in turn, creates an environment less conducive to innovation, raising concerns about further weakening of economic growth potential.

In addition, as the aging rate increases, social security benefit costs, including healthcare expenses, will rise. With the economy slowing down, income won't increase, yet the burden of social insurance contributions for the younger generation will grow.

Another pressing issue is the significant decline in Japan's international competitiveness. The international competitiveness of Japan, which was once hailed as the world's top during the bubble era, has fallen in rank over the course of 30 years. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2022, Japan now ranks 34<sup>th</sup> out of 63 countries. Despite being the world's third-largest economy in terms of GDP, Japan is facing a critical situation in terms of competitiveness. Over these three decades, not only have the gaps with Western countries widened significantly, but Japan also lags behind countries like Malaysia and Thailand in the Asia-Pacific region.

The reason behind this is that Japan's ability to adapt to societal changes and advancements in science and technology is relatively low. It's said that Japan lags behind globally in learning and disseminating advanced digital technologies, leading to a decline in business efficiency – a significant contributing factor. Additionally, while research and development expenditures by Japanese companies rank third worldwide, they are considerably smaller compared to the United States and China. Despite this, due to sluggish decision-making within companies and a lack of international experience among those in management, Japan struggles to capitalize on the outcomes of research and development.

Amidst these societal challenges that Japan faces, particularly among the younger generation of its citizens, there's a prevailing sense of uncertainty. Many can't envision Japan's future development and growth, leading to a vague and unsettling apprehension about their own future prospects.

### **The Potential of Japan**

However, within Japan's corporate landscape, there are remarkable companies that have achieved growth through groundbreaking technologies and innovative ideas. There's a fresh momentum emerging, where even from local regions, companies are stepping up to compete on the global stage. Furthermore, Japanese companies continue to receive high praise for their robust research and development capabilities and their capacity to produce high-quality products. Additionally, the semiconductor industry is expected to further expand in the

medium to long term, and with proactive overseas investments, there's potential for Japan to lead the world.

Especially noteworthy is Japan's expertise in low-carbon and carbon-neutral technologies, along with its substantial environmental investments, which are considered among the world's finest. This not only holds promise for Japan but also conceals significant potential to contribute to the global GX (Green Transformation) movement.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic causing a halt in the rise of labor force participation rates among those aged 65 and above, and the strengthening of measures to curb foreign workers entering Japan, resulting in a net outflow, there's a potential to increase the number of foreign workers by establishing attractive systems for foreign workers who aspire to work in Japan. Furthermore, it's been said that Japanese women wish to have an average of 2.1 children, and if the financial burden of childcare and education can be alleviated, there's a possibility to slow down population decline.

Moreover, there has been a significant recovery in areas that were struggling during the pandemic, such as inbound tourism, domestic tourism, and event demand. The weaker yen has also been boosting direct investment from abroad, which could further energize regional economies, leading to substantial revitalization.

### **The Potential of JCI Japan**

The founding principles of JCI Japan state: "Through mutual enlightenment and service to society, we aim to collaborate with youth worldwide, study the current state of the economy and society, clarify its future direction, become a powerful driving force in the business world, and contribute to the development of the Japanese economy." Similarly, JCI Tokyo's founding principles assert that "the reconstruction of a new Japan is the responsibility of us, the youth," emphasizing the close partnership between domestic and international economies. In essence, the JC is an organization where members gather, mutually enlighten each other, serve the community, study the economy and society, and contribute to the advancement of the Japanese economy.

That's precisely why, in the midst of rapid changes brought by the times, we have defined the evolving vision of achieving a "bright society," and consistently progressed forward without halting our journey even amidst major disasters and events like the COVID-19 pandemic. We have addressed societal challenges, cultivated leaders, and have continued to do so. Throughout history, young people have always seen challenges as opportunities and have instigated change. Faced with the issues of declining birthrates, aging populations, and decreasing populations that advanced nations grapple with, we can envisage new social security, taxation, infrastructure, and social system approaches rooted in the societal

framework. We can offer proposals that consider the next generation and proactively move towards a positive future.

### **A society where people can experience abundance**

In the face of the various challenges Japan currently faces, what do we need to ensure for ourselves in order to help the citizens, who are struggling with uncertainties about their future and harboring vague anxieties, experience a sense of prosperity and bring smiles to their faces?

I believe that by harnessing digital technology to maximize labor productivity, we can increase the national income and create an environment where people feel secure to have and raise children, thereby reducing the decline in population growth rates. Moreover, improving working conditions for women and foreign workers is crucial to reshaping the structure of the workforce and ensuring a significant increase in labor force. Additionally, it's important to strive towards creating an inclusive society where the elderly, disabled individuals and others can live vibrant lives.

Labor productivity is an indicator that reveals how much value has been added by the input of labor, and when labor productivity is high, it signifies that the per capita national income will also be elevated.

Therefore, by effectively utilizing rapidly advancing digital technologies such as AI and IoT, not only can we enhance the efficiency of various industries and increase labor productivity, leading to higher national income, but also through digital transformation (DX), we can generate new value by revolutionizing customer experiences in both the online and offline realms. This can be achieved by introducing new products, services, and business models, thereby establishing a competitive advantage. As a result, just as envisioned in the Digital Garden City State concept, it becomes feasible to create job opportunities in different regions and shape the movement of people.

That's why it's essential for members of the Junior Chamber to function as young business leaders, not only enhancing operational efficiency and productivity within their respective industries through digital technology, but also utilizing these technologies for the advancement of their local communities. Additionally, they should explore the possibility of commercializing the allure of local traditions, cultures, and more. This perspective is crucial for engaging in regional revitalization efforts.

Furthermore, to mitigate the declining population and counteract the phenomenon of fewer children being born, it's essential to enhance the employment situation for young individuals before marriage. Offering economic support to those aspiring to get married and providing

assistance with children's education are also important measures. Moreover, in order to maximize the labor force, it's crucial to not only welcome foreign workers but also establish an environment where everyone with the desire to work can do so. This includes creating conditions that allow highly capable women to continue working in leadership positions even after childbirth and during child-rearing. This effort is particularly urgent.

Furthermore, healthy elderly individuals possess a strong sense of engagement with their communities and society due to reasons such as promoting health, making contributions, and finding purpose. Leveraging the knowledge and experiences of these seniors and creating systems that enable active participation in communities and society, including interactions with multiple generations, especially children, is crucial. We believe that there is a demand for support and initiatives aimed at fostering such an environment.

### **3. Japan's Role in the World**

#### **Bringing about World Peace through the Spirit of Harmony**

Japan is often referred to as the country of **wa** (harmony), which originates from the mythical world depicted in the **Kojiki** (Records of Ancient Matters). This concept of **wa** encompasses three aspects: harmony between humans and nature, harmony among people, and harmony among nations.

Throughout history, Japanese people have revered all aspects of nature, believing that every element in this world is inhabited by a divine spirit. This tradition led to the worship of countless deities known as the **yao-yorozu-no-kami** or "eight million gods." As we receive the blessings of nature and live under its protection, a sense of compassion towards it emerged, allowing for coexistence rather than confrontation, thus forming a harmony between humans and nature.

Similarly, the concept of harmony among humans highlights that each individual possesses an irreplaceable uniqueness, and their worth is equal. This embodies a society where these diverse qualities come together harmoniously. Japanese people have an attitude of understanding and empathy, valuing acceptance and recognizing differences rather than asserting dominance or imposing one's views.

Moreover, as the spirit of **wa** extends beyond Japan, when each ethnicity and nation safeguards its own identity and capabilities while engaging in dialogue, it becomes possible to achieve global peace. This notion envisions the establishment of harmony between countries.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia that began last year is still ongoing, and if we look around the world, conflicts and civil strife have broken out in more than 50 regions. The causes of these conflicts vary from poverty, religious differences, ethnic differences, and regime

instability, but if we had respected each other and engaged in dialogue, these catastrophes might not have occurred.

JCI's international network spans the entire globe. It's crucial to leverage this network to the fullest extent and collaborate with young leaders worldwide to cultivate a deeper understanding: that one's own happiness is intricately linked with the well-being of others. To persistently uphold a self-centered perspective, resorting to intimidation or denying others' existence is absolutely unacceptable.

### **Promotion of Global Expansion for Japanese Companies and Regions**

In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of foreign visitors to Japan exceeded 31.88 million. And now, for the current month of March 2023, after the impact of COVID-19, the number has exceeded 1.8 million, showing a rapid recovery trend. Additionally, the individual consumption expenditure of foreign visitors to Japan from January to March 2023 is estimated at 1.146 trillion yen, recovering to around 90% of pre-pandemic levels.

Japan possesses four key attributes – nature, culture, climate, and cuisine – making it one of the world's leading countries in terms of appeal. By fully showcasing the attractions of the various regions of Japan, there is a promising potential for even greater economic benefits from inbound tourism.

In this context, products from local industries including traditional Japanese crafts such as eyewear, knives, leather goods, lacquerware, and sake (a traditional Japanese alcoholic beverage produced from fermented rice) are being recognized for their Japanese quality. As a result, cross-border ecommerce to countries like the United States and China has been gaining momentum.

On the other hand, even small and medium-sized enterprises that possess products that are marketable abroad often fail to recognize their own potential in those products. They might not know where to start when it comes to promoting them through new channels like ecommerce. This has led to many companies being unable to take that initial leap and explore new avenues.

That's why it's essential to utilize JCI's international network to not only showcase the attractions of various regions across Japan to the world but also to leverage ecommerce for facilitating the global expansion of Japanese products.

## **4. The significance of JCI Japan**

### **Thorough support for Local Organizations**

There are Local Organizations facing challenges due to a decline in membership numbers and the relatively short duration of members' involvement. These issues have made it difficult



for them to establish and sustain the activities of the JC. Moreover, some of these Local Organizations are even struggling with the viability of their organizational existence.

However, the Junior Chamber is an organization that aims to address societal challenges in various regions and make them brighter and more prosperous. Over the years, it has consistently produced leaders who work towards resolving social issues in their respective areas.

In this context, JCI Japan has returned to its roots as a general liaison and coordination organization, collecting information from each Local Organization, analyzing the original situation, and clarifying the issues facing each of them so that Local Organization support by Bloc Councils and District Councils can be further enhanced.

Now is the time to fully leverage the various tools, knowledge, and experience that JCI Japan possesses for LOM support. With a focus on the medium to long term, close collaboration between Bloc Councils, District Councils, and Local Organizations is essential. We must work together to ensure that Local Organizations of the necessary scale can continue to exist in the required regions. This requires a thorough commitment to providing comprehensive LOM support.

### **Promotion of partnerships**

In order to organize activities and regular meetings within Local Organizations, adequate budgets and human resources are essential. Depending on the number of members, securing these resources can be quite challenging in some cases.

However, we are committed to expanding the JC movement in order to address local societal challenges and make our communities brighter and more prosperous. In each region, there should be numerous companies and organizations that share our vision and are willing to collaborate, as they resonate with our ideals.

While it may be challenging to recruit members directly from such companies or organizations, forming partnerships with a diverse range of entities that share the same vision can prove to be valuable. Collaborating with these like-minded organizations in organizing events and initiatives can be an effective approach to accelerate the improvement of our communities.

### **Establishing Cutting-edge Branding Ahead of the Times**

JCI Japan has consistently utilized platforms such as ***We Believe*** and social media networks to disseminate information about various events and initiatives, such as the Kyoto Convention, Summer Conference, National Convention, and the activities of our Local Organizations. The purpose behind these efforts goes beyond informing our nationwide members and senior members; it also aims to create external awareness. This external awareness is crucial not

only for promoting understanding but also for facilitating seamless cooperation and collaboration in future project development. Moreover, it contributes to increasing the number of individuals who aspire to become members of JCI Japan.

We have moved from an era when there was only the Junior Chamber to the present time often referred to as the era with both the Junior Chamber and other organizations, and it is precisely because of this transition that we need to deeply comprehend the unique principles, strengths, and appeal that are exclusive to JC. In order to achieve this, we must undertake initiatives that involve Local Organizations nationwide and conduct activities that make these qualities widely known among numerous citizens. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to practice branding through trust and empathy, allowing us to build a strong sense of connection and understanding.

## **5. Conclusion**

“Humans do not fully comprehend that the future lies within their grasp.”

Many Japanese people harbor anxiety about the future, making it difficult for them to envision a brighter tomorrow.

However, if we allow ourselves to be consumed by anxiety and give up on taking action, we will never be able to pass on a better future to the next generation.

Only we who are living in the present have the power to give solid form to that future.

And this life and the future that will unfold from the present will do so as a direct result of the tremendous efforts made by those who came before us.

Now, let us awaken the simple and pure kindness that we all possess and take action now.

We, JC, can change the future.

Let's make Japan a place of abundance overflowing with smiles.

Be proud of YOURSELF.

Be proud of JAPAN.

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