

Clay's Operating Principles



Key guiding principle



Negative maintenance

Make things happen and remove bad things.

Examples: Identify what's most important and give it your full attention. By doing 1-2 things at 100%, rather than juggling 5 things at 80%, we maintain quality, prevent burnout, and ensure progress is meaningful. This value also encourages us to lighten the emotional and logistical loads for others, creating a smoother, more efficient workflow.

See more examples here:

[Negative Maintenance Examples](#)

Communication

Have a quiet ego

This is about balancing pride in your work with the humility to know there's always more to learn. Quiet Ego allows us to step back, reflect, and be guided by what's best for the team and the company—not just our individual success. Listen before you speak. Embrace feedback as a tool for growth, and recognize that the best results come from collective effort.

Send messages at any time

It's up to the recipient to decide when to respond and manage their own preferences. Recipients don't need to reply right away if it's after hours unless the message is urgent.

Follow up on unanswered messages

If someone doesn't respond, assume good intent and follow up rather than letting the conversation die.

Update OOO status

Please update your status on Slack when you're OOO or working remotely so the team knows your availability.

Message in public channels

Use public channels whenever possible. This increases visibility, makes information easier to find, and ensures everyone stays informed. Learn more in Clay's Slack Guide.

Use @ mentions for action and CC for visibility

If you need a response or follow-up from someone, use @ to mention them directly in the channel. If you're including others just for awareness, CC them at the end of the message.

Scheduling & meetings

Required meetings

Weekly All Hands and Bi-Weekly Sprint Demos are not optional. Do not schedule things during this time.

Computers shut during Sprint Demos + Customer Spotlights

Please keep your computers closed for Sprint Demos and Customer Spotlights. Teammates have worked hard on their demos and customers are taking time out of their day to be with us. We should be giving our full respect.

Make sure you are on time for external meetings

If we're meeting with a potential candidate, a potential or existing customer, a vendor, etc, please be respectful and show up on time.

Have your cameras on

Please keep your cameras on for company-wide meetings and customer calls.

Never ask for availability or permission (internally)

Always check calendars and book directly. It's the recipient's responsibility to keep their calendar up to date and let you know if they're not available. You can book group meetings over people's 1:1s.

Scheduling & meetings

No standing 1:1s with peers

Only schedule meetings as needed. Recurring meetings should only exist for time-bound projects. You can still meet with peers but they should not be standing.

Don't rush but be efficient with your time

Be efficient with your time. Do you need a 30mins meeting? Could it be a 15mins or 20mins check-in? To change your default meeting durations, go to Google Calendar settings → general → event duration. See full directions [here](#).

Never send a Calendly to a customer or someone you need something from

If they're doing you a favor, you should provide your availability instead. Offer times — you can automate this with Vimcal.

If you're not actively contributing, you don't need to attend

If you're in a meeting and not making decisions or adding information, you don't need to be there. If you just want to stay informed, read the AI summary or watch the recording and skip around to what you need.

Include the agenda link in all recurring meeting calendar invites

Make it quick & easy for your teammates to know what's going to be discussed.

Decision-making & execution

FYI Culture

Keep people in the loop as you go, especially when decisions could have a significant impact. The goal is to balance transparency with momentum. Loop in Kareem and Varun on big or tricky matters, but always maintain forward motion. It's about keeping communication open without creating unnecessary delays.

Ask for "no," not "yes"

Encourage decision-making by making it easier to say no rather than yes. [Read more here.](#)

Good ideas require action

Don't just post an idea and expect others to take it forward. Bring it to the DRI directly or take responsibility yourself.

Decision-making & execution

Make it work, then make it great

The best ideas and projects aren't born perfect—they evolve over time. Approach tasks in stages: get the foundation right first, then enhance it. Seek feedback early and often, making sure to prioritize quality over quantity. Once something is functional, aim to improve it by iterating in small ways or if you know the solution by refactoring it completely.

Social contract for commitments

When agreeing to do something, specify when it will be done, otherwise it creates a burden for the other person in the unknown. If you can't meet that date, it's on you to update the owner with a new timeline.

Focus on the inputs

Focus on doing the right things for our customers and our team based on your own judgement. Don't do something just to hit a certain metric. Prioritize the right actions and behaviors even if that doesn't always lead to revenue.

Finish your project completely before taking on more tasks

It's better to complete your projects 100% and take on less, than be spread too thin. If you multi-task, go back and finish the tasks completely before taking on more.

Don't fail silently

If something is not working that you can see in the company, make that known. Flag things if it's not working or if there's a problem. If you're getting a project too complex, then let us know.

Agreements

Working remotely

When you're working remotely, please let us know where you are and what timezone you're working in.

In-office culture

We prioritize an in-office culture because it's the easiest (and funnest!) way to stay connected! New team members should plan to be in the office every day until they feel settled.

Measuring impact

There are many paths to having impact at Clay, and all of these forms are valued internally and will be rewarded. It's not just about management and seniority levels.

Create tools/ features/etc for our customers or our internal team (i.e., internal tools for the team, features for customers)

Teach users or team members by sharing knowledge (i.e., Yash's videos, GTME's onboarding materials).

Defuse situations by offering solutions or options instead of saying a flat "no." Smoothing and removing problems, you're providing negative maintenance.

Temper. For decisions that are influx, hold the ambiguity yourself, do not spread information that hasn't been decided and stop the spread of gossip or bringing up questions/issues to your manager or during the company Q&As. Suspend confusion by clarifying things for your teammates.

Sharing & giving feedback

Sharing feedback with other teams

Don't be afraid to "step on toes." You should share feedback as an FYI and it's up to that team if they want to implement it. If you want to get that feedback implemented, there are 2 potential paths:

- **Buy in.** You should get buy in if you are not the DRI for something. If you can't get buy in and already shared feedback, ask for support from your manager so they can help you figure out the best way to navigate it
- **Escalate issues.** Depending on the scenario, first raise the feedback/challenge directly with the person involved. If unresolved, bring it up to your manager. If it's still unresolved, escalate the problem to Varun or Kareem depending on the area of the org. This goes hand in hand with the "Don't fail silently" principle.

Thank you!