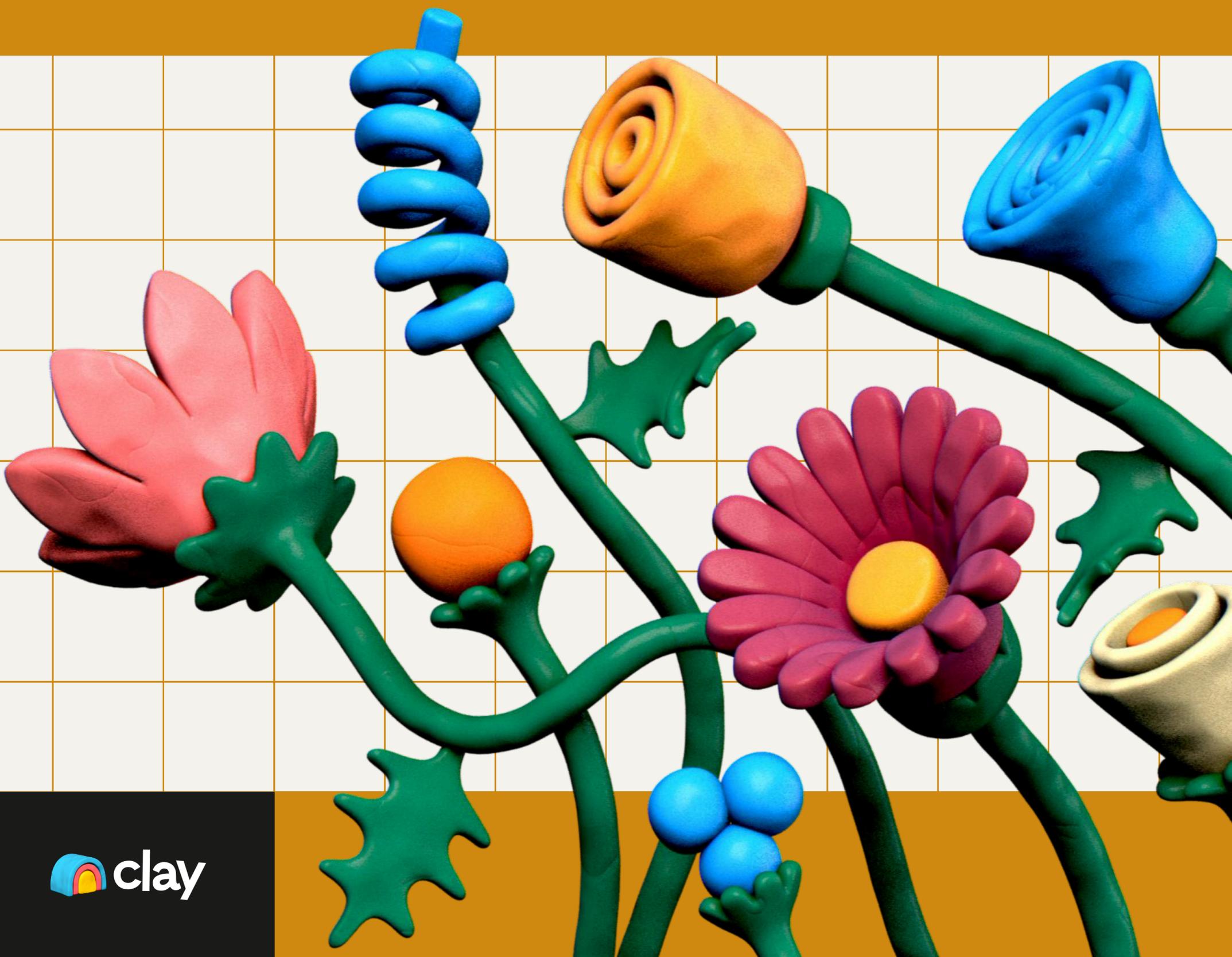


2026

Clay's Operating Principles



Key guiding principles



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.



Non-Attached Action

Move quickly without holding on tightly.

Bring together Kareem's mindset of non-attachment with Varun's bias toward action. You're thoughtful, but you don't overthink. You take action, but you're not overly attached to any one outcome. It's about being intentional and adaptable without getting caught up in ego or perfectionism.

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.

Communication

Assume missing context, before assuming intent

When something feels off, assume you're missing context, not that someone meant harm. Be generous in how you interpret, and direct in how you clarify.

Resolve ambiguity before you pass it on

Don't pass on ambiguity. Ask the next question, suggest a path forward, or take a first pass.

Show your work-in-progress

Share early and often, even if it's rough. Share a messy doc, Loom, or Slack. Visibility creates momentum and lets others unblock you faster.

Close the loop

Don't leave threads hanging. If you own something, circle back. Say something like "no update yet," "this is blocked," "I'm deprioritizing this," etc.

Surface risk early

We raise risks, concerns, and bad news as soon as we see them, even when information is incomplete. Surprises are more damaging than mistakes. We appreciate early signal-sharing, not false certainty or polished narratives.

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.

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.

Add deadlines to important work

Important projects/tasks need a due date, even if they aren't urgent. Schedule it so there is some deadline and pressure. Without a deadline on the calendar, it's human nature for things to slip. You can always move the date if needed.

Scheduling & meetings

Don't rush but be efficient with your time.

Be efficient with your time. Do you need a 30mins meeting? Could it be a 15-20min check-in? To change your default meeting durations, go to Google Calendar settings → general → event duration.

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.

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.

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.

Ask for "no," not "yes"

Encourage decision-making by making it easier to say no rather than yes. For example, there's a difference between "Can I post this on LinkedIn?" and "I'm going to post this update on LinkedIn on Friday unless I hear differently from you." The first puts the burden on someone else to decide/respond, while the second shows ownership while still leaving space for input. Read more [here](#).

Optimize for the company, not your function

Winning in one area doesn't count if it harms the business overall. At times, this means choosing outcomes that are worse for your own org but better for Clay. We expect leaders to surface these tradeoffs explicitly and prioritize the collective outcome.

Commit to goals that are more likely than not

We do not sign up only for what feels guaranteed. We set goals we believe have a >50% chance of success, and balance ambition with achievability. We communicate confidence levels clearly, avoid sandbagging or vague commitments, and update expectations early as we learn more.