

## **Operating Principles Guidelines**

Operating Principles are your staff member's "guidelines for decision making" that will provide a framework for making moment-to-moment and long term decisions.

Where the Strategic Objective is the "what" of your organization, Operating Principles are the "how."

Based on what you believe and how you think you can make your world super-efficient, these are your personal rules of how you and your people will make decisions.

## **Centratel's 30 Principles**

1. Company decisions must conform to the Strategic Objective, 30 Principles, and Working Procedure documents.
2. We are the highest-quality answering service in the United States. We do whatever it takes to make sure the quality of service to our clients is unmatched anywhere.
3. We draw solid lines, thus providing an exact status of where things stand. Documented procedures are the main defense against gray-area problems.
4. "Get the job done." Can the employee do his or her job, or is there always a complication of one kind or another? This ability to "get the job done quickly and accurately without excuses or complications," is the most valuable trait an employee can possess.
5. Employees come first. We employ people who have an innate desire to perform at 100 percent. We reward them accordingly. The natural outcome is that we serve our clients well.
6. We are not fire-killers. We are fire prevention specialists. We don't manage problems; we work on system-improvements and system-maintenance in order to prevent problems from happening in the first place.
7. Problems are gifts that inspire us to action. A problem prompts the act of creating or improving a system or procedure. We don't want setbacks, but when one occurs, we think, "thank you for this wake-up call," and take system-improvement action to prevent the setback from happening again.
8. We focus on just a few manageable services. Although we watch for new opportunities, in the end we provide "just a few services implemented in superb fashion," rather than a complex array of average-quality offerings.
9. We find the simplest solution. Ockham's Law, also called the Law of Economy, states, "Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity the simplest solution is invariably the correct solution."
10. The money we save or waste is not Monopoly money. We are careful not to devalue the worth of a dollar just because it has to do with the business.
11. We operate the company via documented procedures and systems. "Any recurring problem can be solved with a system." We must take the time to create and implement systems and procedures, but in the end, it is well worth it. Our staff must know what management expects and if there is a recurring problem, a written procedure must be created to stop that problem from happening again. On the other hand, we don't bog down the organization with systems and procedures that target once-in-awhile problems. Sometimes we elect to not create a procedure.
12. "Just don't do it." Eliminate the unnecessary. Think simplicity. Automate. Refine to the smallest amount of steps or discard altogether. Would a simple "no" save time, energy, and/or money? Sometimes, elimination of a system, protocol, or potential project is a good thing.

13. Our documented systems, procedures, and functions are “off the street.” This means that anyone with normal intelligence can perform procedures unassisted. The real-world evidence of this is we can hire an individual “off the street” who has good typing skills, and have him or her processing calls within three days. Before we implemented our systemized training protocol, it would take six weeks to train a TSR. For this result, systems have to be efficient, simple, and thoroughly documented.
14. Do it NOW. All actions build on “point-of-sale” theory. We don’t delay an action if it can be done immediately. Just like any major retail outlet, we “update inventories and databases at the exact time the transaction takes place.” There is no paperwork floating around the office after a physical transaction. We ask, “How can we perform the task NOW without creating lingering details that we must clean up later?”
15. We glean the Centratel mindset from Steven Covey’s books including *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, *First Things First*, and *The Eighth Habit*. As well, we consider *From Good to Great* by Jim Collins; *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber, and *Release the Giant Within* by Tony Robbins.
16. We pattern personal organization upon Franklin Covey theory. We use personal organizing systems that are always at hand. We prioritize, schedule, and document. The system is always up-to-date and we use it all the time. (For Centratel, this system is Microsoft Outlook).
17. Sequence is critical. We work on the most important tasks first. We spend maximum time on “non-urgent/important” tasks via Steven Covey’s time-matrix philosophy.
18. We double-check everything before its release. If a penchant for double-checking is not an innate personal habit, then it must be cultivated. Double-checking is a conscious step in every task, performed either by the individual managing the task, or someone else.
19. Our environment is spotless: clean and ordered, simple, efficient, functional. No “rat’s nests,” literally or figuratively.
20. Employee training is structured, scheduled, and thorough. Assertive client contact is also structured, scheduled, and thorough.
21. We are deadline-obsessed. If someone in the organization says they will be finished with a task or project by a certain date and time, then he or she commits to finishing by that deadline (or, if legitimate delays intrude, advises their co-worker well in advance that the deadline is impossible).
22. We maintain equipment and keep it 100 percent functional at all times. If something is not working as it should, fix it now—fix it now even if it’s not necessary to fix it now. It’s a matter of good housekeeping and of maintaining good habits. This is just the way we do things.
23. Mastery of the English language is critical. We are aware of how we sound and what we write. We do whatever we can to improve. We are patient as a co-worker corrects us.
24. We study to increase our skills. A steady diet of reading and contemplation is an important part of personal and job self-development. It is a matter of self-discipline.

25. As opposed to “doing the work,” the department manager’s job is to create, monitor, and document systems (which consist of people, equipment, procedures, and maintenance schedules).
26. The CEO/General Manager oversees department heads and systems. It is the CEO/GM’s job to direct, coordinate, and monitor the entire operation.
27. We avoid multi-tasking activities. When communicating with someone else, we are 100 percent present. We give full attention to the person in front of us. We focus on listening and understanding. Read the classic *Treating Type A Behavior and Your Heart* by Meyer Friedman. “Mindfulness” is paying complete attention to one thing at a time: Read *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn.
28. When in the office, we work hard on Centratel business. We keep our heads down; we focus, and, in turn, the company pays very well. That’s “the deal.” The workweek is a maximum of 40-45 hours.
29. “Complete” means complete. “Almost” or “tomorrow” is not “complete.” In particular, this is germane to administration staff’s use of Outlook task functions.
30. This can’t be legislated, but we strive for a social climate that is serious and quiet, yet pleasant, serene, light, and friendly. Centratel is a nice place to work.