

Building Great Service Business SOPs

Standard Operating Procedures for Home Service Contractors using Aptora Software

Notice: This is a free abbreviated sample of Aptora’s complete system of SOPs for HVAC contracting companies. There are dozens of other SOPs. Your company should begin with the top five or six that are essential to running the business. This sample complements the Aptora LIVE webinar “Build the How-To Manual for Your Business with SOPs.”

Aptora Corporation
8877 Bourgade Street
Lenexa KS 66219
913.492.9930
<https://www.aptora.com/>

This document was written by James R. Leichter, president of Aptora. This work is the result of writing extensive policy and procedure for his businesses as well as the many businesses he works with directly.

Document Properties

These properties update automatically and should not be manually edited. This information should be included in your SOPs.

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Understanding Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

“A good enough SOP well implemented now, beats an excellent SOP implemented someday.”

-James R. Leichter

- 1.—Excellent
- 2.—~~Very Good~~
- 3. Good Enough
- 4.—~~Not Ready~~

Defining Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are fully documented, step-by-step instructions that outline how to perform specific tasks or processes within a business. For field service contractors, SOPs cover essential functions, such as scheduling service calls, handling customer communications, processing work orders, or performing maintenance checks. They ensure consistency, efficiency, and quality by providing a clear framework that employees can follow, regardless of experience level.

Creating and adhering to SOPs is especially important for small, privately-owned field service businesses. SOPs minimize errors, improve customer satisfaction, and allow the business owner to delegate responsibilities confidently, reducing the time spent on troubleshooting or retraining. By standardizing processes, SOPs empower teams to work independently and uphold high standards, which is essential for maintaining a professional reputation and scaling operations as the business grows.

SOP Fun Facts

Here are a few "fun facts" about SOPs:

Military Origins: SOPs trace their roots to the military, where standard procedures were developed to ensure safety, consistency, and efficiency in high-stakes situations. This concept has since been widely adopted in various industries to maintain quality and safety.

NASA-Approved: NASA relies heavily on SOPs for every mission, covering every detail from takeoff to landing. These meticulous procedures ensure that astronauts have step-by-step guidance for both routine tasks and emergencies, contributing to mission success and safety.

Quality Control Heroes: Many iconic brands like McDonald's and Starbucks attribute their success to SOPs, which ensure customers have a consistent experience, no matter the location. SOPs keep "secret formulas" and workflows consistent, leading to reliability and trust in the brand.

Not Just for Big Companies: While they are often associated with larger companies, SOPs can be especially beneficial for small businesses by providing a framework that allows for growth without compromising quality. For field service contractors, this consistency can be a game-changer when customers call back or refer your business to others.

Improving Over Time: SOPs are meant to evolve. As businesses find better, faster, or safer ways to complete tasks, they can update their SOPs to reflect these improvements, making it an ongoing process of refinement rather than a one-time documentation task.

The Rules of Pro-American Service: Policy versus Procedure

At Pro-American Service, we value clarity and structure in our operations, which is why we have distinct policies and procedures in our operations manual. Policies are firm rules that must be consistently followed. They are the non-negotiable standards that maintain our company's integrity and compliance. Think of them as the fundamental rules of the game, like 'offsides' in football – they keep the play fair and orderly.

Procedures, on the other hand, are the official company methods and practices that employees are expected to understand and implement to the best of their abilities. They're akin to playing 'Zone Coverage' on the football field – there's a strategy and a technique that, when followed, optimizes team performance.

When a policy is not adhered to, it's a matter of concern that is addressed through our established human resources guidelines. Continual non-compliance could, unfortunately, result in termination of employment, as it goes against the core rules that govern our workplace.

As for procedures, we provide the necessary training and resources to ensure every team member is equipped to perform them. If an employee struggles with a procedure despite proper training and understanding, we explore potential reassignment to a role better suited to their skills. If reassignment is not viable, it may lead to termination, like how a sports team might trade a player who isn't fitting into the game plan.

We approach these matters with the utmost respect for our employees and always seek to support them in meeting the expectations of their roles.

Policy Examples

1. Employee work hours, start time and end time. Getting to work on time.
2. When and how to complete a certain form or document. How and when to file a time off request.
3. What greeting to use when answering the phone. How and when to enter contact log notes.

Procedure Examples

1. How to present service solutions in the field.
2. Talking points and strategies to use when responding to a sales objection.
3. How to explain how a certain feature works and how a company might consider using it.
4. Tips and guidelines to help you write an informative and SEO friendly blog article.

Why Are SOPs Essential for Bookkeeping?

- **Consistency:** Ensures uniform procedures across team members.
- **Maintainability:** Following one “source of truth” makes it easier to correct problems.
- **Compliance:** Meets financial and regulatory requirements.
- **Training Tool:** Onboards new staff efficiently.
- **Accountability:** Defines clear roles and expectations.
- **Audit Trail:** Creates a documented record of all financial activities.

SOP Rules and Standards

There's no single governing body universally enforcing SOP standards. However:

- ISO (International Organization for Standardization) provides general frameworks for documentation and operational procedures, such as ISO 9001:2015 (Quality Management System).
- Industries might have their own standards. For example, finance and accounting follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) or IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards).

In practice, SOP structures are designed to meet business needs while being clear, accessible, and standardized across an organization.

While no universal standard exists, the following are widely referenced:

1. ISO 9001:2015 – Quality Management Systems
2. GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles)
3. IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards)
4. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Regulations

Common Format

While formats can vary, the typical structure includes:

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Purpose/Scope
4. Definitions/Terminology
5. Roles and Responsibilities
6. Procedure Steps
7. Documentation/Records
8. Quality Control and Assurance
9. References
10. Appendices/Supporting Materials
11. Approval and Revision History

SOP Document Header Information and Properties

For best practices, the SOP header should include key details to ensure it's clear, organized, and easy to maintain. You can see this document's properties at the top of the first page. Here's a list of information typically included:

Title: A concise, descriptive title for the SOP (e.g., Service Call Scheduling Procedure).

File Path: The location of the file is very helpful when people ask, *"Where can I find this document?"*

SOP ID Number: Optional. A unique identifier, especially useful in larger sets of SOPs or in digital systems to track revisions.

Author Name: The person who wrote or created the SOP.

Effective Date: The date when the SOP first went into effect, which helps track its implementation.

Revision Date: The date of the latest revision, ensuring that employees are following the most current version.

Version Number: Useful for tracking multiple updates over time (e.g., Version 2.1).

Audience or Department: The specific team or group the SOP is intended for, such as Field Technicians, Customer Service, or Accounting.

Approval Signature(s): Space for authorized individuals (like a manager or business owner) to sign off, indicating that the SOP has been reviewed and approved.

Purpose or Scope (Optional in Header): A brief line or two summarizing what the SOP covers or its primary purpose.

Including these elements makes it easy to understand who created the SOP, when it was last updated, and who it's intended for, helping ensure it is properly maintained and applied by the right people.

Training vs. SOPs

Understanding the Difference and Their Importance

When learning new software like Total Office Manager® from Aptora Corporation, it's important to differentiate between training and support articles and your company's internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

Training and support articles, videos, and resources focus on how to use specific features of the software. They explain the mechanics, like how to enter a purchase order or manage inventory, so that users can understand the full range of capabilities offered by the software. This is essential for mastering all the tools available.

On the other hand, your company's internal SOPs go beyond simply explaining software functions. An SOP defines how your business specifically uses the software to support daily operations. These procedures reflect your company's unique workflows, such as how orders are processed, who is responsible for certain tasks, and what the approval steps look like. SOPs give your employees clear, detailed steps tailored to your operations, ensuring everyone follows the same processes consistently.

This SOP assumes the reader knows the basics of using Total Office Manager and related Aptora software. It's crucial to thoroughly train your team in the full functionality of the software before creating your SOPs. By understanding all the features available, you can then decide which ones fit best with your business needs and integrate them into your custom SOPs. This ensures your employees are not only trained in the software, but also follow a structured, repeatable process that's aligned with your company's goals.

Miscellaneous Tips

Use employee titles and not their names. Employees change positions and responsibilities, but the appropriate titles should be more constant.

Example Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Introduction

This SOP example illustrates the importance of clarity and detail, even for a seemingly simple process. A good SOP leaves very little to chance and avoids misunderstanding and inconsistent results. Consider using this example as a template for your company.

Title: Brewing a Cup of Coffee Using a Drip Coffee Maker

Document ID: SOP-ACC-OF-001

Version: 1.1

Last Updated: 1/7/YYYY

Effective Date: 2024-08-01

Department: Administration

Approval and Revision History				
Date	Version	Prepared By	Changes Made	Approved By
12/4/YYYY	1.0	James Leichter	Initial release of the SOP	James L.
1/7/YYYY	1.1	Kathy Harler	Correct some minor typos	James L.

Purpose

This SOP outlines the step-by-step process of brewing a single pot of coffee using a drip coffee maker. It ensures consistency and prevents common mistakes that lead to bad coffee (e.g., weak, too strong, or bitter). The SOP was written for the “ACME Express Brewer,” model AEB500.

Scope

This procedure is intended for anyone who needs to brew coffee using the model AEB500 standard drip coffee maker, including first-time users. This SOP assumes the coffee maker has already been set up for use.

Schedule and Responsibility

- The company will provide a quality coffee maker or machine and provide as much coffee as needed.
- A full pot of coffee shall be made each morning at 8:00 AM during normal office hours.
- The Receptionist shall be responsible for this task.
- Other employees are welcome to make coffee as desired, but they must follow these rules or risk losing that privilege.

Procedure

1. Check Coffee Maker and Supplies

- Ensure the coffee maker is clean and free of any leftover coffee grounds or filters.
- Ensure that the coffee maker is plugged into an electrical outlet. The red colored ‘Power’ light should be illuminated. Do not press the ‘Brew’ button.
- Ensure that the coffee maker is positioned on a safe, flat, and dry surface.
- Confirm you have the following:
 - Ground coffee (medium grind made for drip coffee machines)
 - Clean, fresh, and cool or cold water

- Coffee filters (appropriate type and size for the machine)
- Coffee cup(s) or a carafe (appropriate size for the output of the machine)

2. Insert the Coffee Filter

- Open the coffee maker's top lid.
- Place a paper coffee filter into the basket (if using reusable filters, ensure it's clean and seated properly).

3. Measure and Add Coffee

- Using a tablespoon, measure **1 tablespoon** of ground coffee for **every 6 ounces of water**. (If unsure, use the measurement lines on the carafe to estimate water volume.)
 - Example: For 4 cups of coffee (24 oz), use 4 tablespoons of ground coffee.
- Add the ground coffee into the coffee filter, making sure the grounds are evenly spread out.

4. Add Water to the Reservoir

- Clean and inspect the carafe before each use.
- Fill the carafe with **fresh, clean, and cool or cold water**. You may use the company provided bottled water or water from the water dispenser.
- Open the water reservoir lid and pour the water into the reservoir slowly.
 - Be careful not to overfill, check for a **MAX** fill line.

5. Turn On the Coffee Maker

- Place the carafe on the warming plate. Be sure it is positioned properly.
- Close any open lids (filter basket, water reservoir).
- Press the button labeled "Power." The "Brew" button should illuminate with the color green.
- Press the green '**Brew**' button to start the coffee brewing process. The button will turn red during the brewing process and back to green when the process has been completed.

6. Wait Until Brewing is Complete

- The brewing process will take about **5 to 10 minutes**, depending on the amount of water added.
- Do not remove the carafe until the brewing cycle finishes, or you may spill coffee.

7. Serve the Coffee

- Once the brewing is complete, carefully pour coffee from the carafe into a coffee cup.
 - **Warning:** Be careful as the coffee is very hot and may burn you.
- Place the carafe back onto the warming plate.
- Add any desired cream, sugar, or flavoring to the coffee cup.

8. Turn Off the Coffee Maker

- Even though the machine will turn off automatically, if you are not going to use the machine immediately, press the **Power** button to turn it off.
- Leave the carafe on the warming plate if you want to keep the coffee hot.

9. Clean Up

- Remove the used coffee filter and dispose of it in the provided trash receptacle (or wash the reusable filter out in the sink).
- Rinse the carafe and filter basket to prevent residue buildup.
- Wipe any spills on the coffee maker or counter.

Tips for Consistency

- Use the same water-to-coffee ratio every time for predictable results.
- Use fresh, clean, and cool or cold water. Avoid using water that has been sitting out. You may use the company provided bottled water or water from the water dispenser.
- Clean the coffee maker regularly to prevent buildup of oils and old coffee grounds.

Troubleshooting

- **Red power light is not illuminated:** This light indicates that the coffee maker has power, but it is not necessarily brewing. Be sure the electrical outlet has power. Test the electrical outlet by plugging in a known working appliance to the same outlet. Try plugging in the coffee maker to another outlet that you know works.
- **Coffee tastes too weak:** Use slightly more ground coffee next time.
- **Coffee tastes too strong or bitter:** Use slightly less ground coffee or avoid overfilling the basket.
- **Machine overflows:** Check the filter placement or water level to ensure it's not overfilled.

This example SOP ensures that everyone follows the same precise steps, eliminating guesswork and personal preferences that can lead to inconsistent results. Clear, step-by-step instructions help avoid mistakes and provide a solid baseline for making adjustments based on taste preferences.

Frequently Asked Questions

None

Scheduling and Dispatching a Demand Service Call

[Click here to open a help topic](#) for using the Schedule Board.

Objective

To provide clear and efficient steps for scheduling and dispatching demand service calls, ensuring all customer interactions and work orders are processed accurately and timely.

Recommended Setup

1. **Monitor Setup:** Use a dual-monitor configuration for optimal workflow:
 - **Monitor 1:** Open the Customer List.
 - **Monitor 2:** Open the Scheduling and Dispatching Board.

Procedures

Step 1: Customer Verification

1. **Answer Incoming Call:** Greet the customer and begin by searching for their information.
2. **Locate Customer Record:** In the Customer List on Monitor 1:
 - Use the "**Phone (All)**" or "**Address**" fields to search for the customer.
 - Verify their contact information to ensure it's current.
3. **New Customer Setup:** If the caller is not in the system, create a new customer profile, entering all required contact details accurately.

Step 2: Work Order Creation

1. **Open New Work Order Form:** With the customer information verified or created, begin a new work order.
2. **Determine Scheduling Details:**
 - **Confirm a Service Date and Time:** Discuss availability with the customer.
 - Check the Scheduling and Dispatching Board on Monitor 2 for the open slots.
3. **Match Technician Skills:** Use the profile feature on the Dispatching Board to view technicians' availability based on skill sets. Ensure the work order type aligns with the technician's assigned skills.

Step 3: Assign Technician

1. **Assign an Appropriate Technician:**
 - Check the skill match notification for any warnings that the technician may not be fully qualified for this type of work.
 - If a warning appears, verify with the technician or select a different technician if needed.
2. **Set the Status to Dispatched:** Once the technician is confirmed and the work order details are complete, change the work order status to **Dispatched**. This action ensures that the technician receives the work order on their device in the field.

Step 4: Work Order Completion and Invoicing

1. **Technician Invoice Generation:** The technician will complete the work order and create an invoice directly from it in the field.
2. **Collect Payment:** Whenever possible, the technician should collect payment upon job completion.

Step 5: Data Entry and Required Fields

1. **Complete Required Fields:** Ensure all mandatory fields are populated before saving the work order or invoice.
 - Fields marked as 'Required' are necessary for accurate reporting and processing.
 - If uncertain, select "**Unknown**" from the list or manually type "Unknown" in applicable fields to allow follow-up.

Step 6: Office Review of Mobile Invoices

1. **Review for Completeness:** Each mobile invoice is reviewed upon receipt to confirm all required data is accurate.
2. **Final Invoice Classification:** After saving, each mobile invoice becomes a standard invoice within the system, which can be viewed under the "Type" column as "**Mobile Invoice.**"

Managing a Work Order and Creating an Invoice in Aptora Mobile II

Mobile User Setup

Management will set up each mobile user according to the permissions and settings section outlined at the end of this SOP.

- Each mobile user must first be added to Total Office Manager or Aptora 360° as a user. They do not need any software permissions for the desktop software. They only need a username and password.
- In AMII, add the terms, conditions, and work descriptions as outlined. Set Display Settings.

Process for Technicians

This process is for service and maintenance technicians. Installers follow a different process. If you are an installer, please see the appropriate SOP.

1. Logging into Aptora Mobile II

- a. Open the Aptora Mobile II app on your device.
- b. Enter your Username and Password, then click Log In. Optionally, check "Keep Me Logged In" for convenience.

2. Open Work Order and Begin Travel

- a. From the home page click My Work Orders. Carefully locate the next work order that you should be working on. Tap on the work order to open it. Look at the details of the work order. If necessary, click on the address to open a map for location and directions. Tap the phone number if you need to call the customer.
- b. When you are ready to begin the drive, tap the En-Route button.

3. Arrival and Diagnostics

- a. When you arrive at the location, tap the Working button. You are now finished with the app until you have determined the work that needs to be done.
- b. When you have determined the absolutely required repairs (the repairs that are needed to address the problem described by the customer), click the Items tab.

4. Build the Work Order for Pricing

- a. From the Item tab, click the Add Services button. If you do not see the Add Services button, click the Add Items button.
- b. Search for the first task. Select the task that best describes the work you are doing. If you are selecting multiple tasks, the most expensive task should be selected first. You can repeat the process of searching and selecting tasks until all tasks have been added to the work order. Tip: Check the box labeled "More Options." In the Item Category dropdown list, select "Commonly Used" or an appropriate category.
- c. Click the Back button to return to the main page of the work order.
- d. If needed, add items to the task. Expand the Group item and click the Add Items button.

- e. The last item you must add is numbered “Absolutely-Required.” This item will add a subtotal to your work order with the text “Absolutely Required Repairs” along with a description of what that means.

5. Present Your Initial Solution – Absolutely Required

- a. When you are ready to present your solution to the customer, click the hamburger menu and tap print preview. Verify that the pricing and other details are correct and explain your recommendations as usual. The last thing that you want to say to the customer is this *“Once I complete my work, I will run your system for about 10 minutes or so. I’m in no hurry. I will make sure that everything else is working properly. If I detect anything else that requires attention, I will be sure to tell you about it. Nothing else happens without your approval. May I go ahead with the repair?”*
- b. We may require a preauthorization signature under certain circumstances. That button is located near the bottom of the work order. Tap that button and hand your mobile device to the customer for a signature. Ask them to enter their name. When they return the device to you, verify that they have entered their name and enter it if necessary. You are now ready to proceed with your work.
- c. Once you have done your work, carefully test this system to determine if other important work is needed. Repeat the process outlined earlier until all work is complete. If additional work is recommended, follow the steps in “Final Recommendations Solution – Highly Recommended.” Otherwise, skip that section and move to the next.

6. Present Your Final Recommendations Solution – Highly Recommended

- a. Add tasks or items as needed. The process is the same as what you did before.
- b. The last item you must add is numbered “Highly Recommended.” This item will add a subtotal to your work order with the text “Highly Recommended Repairs” along with a description of what that means.
- c. Present your highly recommended repairs. Explain that these repairs, while not absolutely necessary, are highly recommended to get their system back to, at least as close as possible, to the original factory specifications for efficiency, output, and reliability.

7. Finalize the Work Order with Detailed Service Notes

- a. Now that the work is complete, add detailed descriptions of that work. Click the hamburger button, select edit and enter notes into the Technician’s Notes text box.
- b. You may manually type your description into the Technician’s Notes text box, or you may use the voice to text feature on your mobile device. You may also tap the Add Descriptions button which will take you to a list of professionally written repair descriptions. You may search for descriptions and add one or more of them to the work order. This process is very much like adding items to the work order. Tap the hamburger (menu) button and click Save.
- c. You are now ready to email the work order or create an invoice. From the General tab, check the “Term” field. If the terms of the work order are COD, create an invoice. If the terms of the work order involve the office mailing an invoice, get a final signature on the work order and email the work order (if that is the policy).

8. Create Invoice from Work Order

- a. Tap the hamburger menu button and click Create Invoice. Check the Include Items option and uncheck the option to complete the work order.
- b. Remind the customer of the total amount due and ask them what form of payment they would like to use. Click the hamburger button and select Capture Signature. Hand the mobile device to the customer. Ask them to sign in the box and to type their name in the “Name” field.
- c. When the mobile device is handed back to you, verify that you have a signature and printed name. Enter their printed name if needed. Be sure you have their full name and that it is correctly spelled.
- d. Receive one or more payments on the invoice. If the customer is using a credit card, click the hamburger button and select Process Credit Card. When the customer is using any other form of payment, select the Payment Options button.

9. Email the Invoice

- a. When the invoice is fully paid (no balance remains), click the hamburger button and select Email PDF Invoice. If the customer has an email address on file, it will appear in the email dialog box. Verify that the email address is correct. Update or add an email address as needed. Click the send button.
- b. If the customer does not have an e-mail address or prefers that a hard copy be mailed to them, check the two be printed option on the invoice. That tells the office to mail a hard copy of the invoice.
- c. Tap the home screen button (bottom left). Tap the *open work order notification* at the top of the screen. Tap the Stop button at the top. You will be asked if you wish to stop your timesheet. There will be an option to also complete the work order. Be sure that you check the appropriate box and tap the OK button.

10. Repeat the Process for Next Work Order

- a. This work order is now fully complete, and you are ready to repeat the process. Check to see if you have another work order. Be careful to pick the work order that needs to be addressed next. Repeat the same steps.

11. Logging Out

- a. After completing your tasks, log out of Aptora Mobile II to secure the system.

Notes

- In this context, “Tasks” are typically Group items. A Group item is made up of two or more items grouped into one item. Group items are typically used when both labor and parts are needed. Example: Fan motor replacement.
- We may use Service items as flat rate tasks. Service items are typically used when only labor is needed for that task. Example: Condensing unit coil cleaning.
- If the customer is not present to sign the work order and or invoice, sign your own name and enter “Verbal Approval by <their name> in the Print Name box.

Required Settings and Permissions

Common Permission Settings for Technicians

For a typical company, with typical mobile users working as service and maintenance technicians, the following are very common settings in the permissions screen. Please be sure to test all your permissions and settings and make sure they fit your company's individual needs. Pay particular attention to any permission that has an asterisk (*) next to it. Those permissions often protect sensitive information.

Accessing the User Permissions Screen

From the Home screen, click the hamburger button (top right), click More > Settings > User Permissions. From the user list, click the employee you wish to edit.

Tip: Once you have verified that you have one employee setup properly, use the "Copy To User" feature to quickly copy their permissions to other users.

Permissions and Their Checked Options:

Login (required to use mobile) = List (absolutely required)

Load Calculator = List, Edit

Mobile Invoices = List, Edit, Add, View

My Inventory = List

My Timesheets = List

My Work Orders = List

Purchase Orders = List, Edit, Add

Timesheets = List, Edit, Add, Delete

Work Orders = List, Edit, Add, Delete

Item Pricing: Work Orders = List

Lists: Service Descriptions = List, Edit

Lists: Work Order Contact Log = List, Edit

Lists: Work Order History = List

Settings: View = List, Edit

Flip Switch Settings Marked as "Yes":

Customer

Allow User to Upload Files to Customer: Job Document Links. = Yes

Document

Allow User to Edit Category and Description. = Yes

Estimate

Only Include Estimates Created by or Assigned to User.

Invoice

Allow Multiple Invoices to be Created from a Work Order *. = Yes

Allow Multiple Invoices to be Created from an Estimate *. = Yes

Timesheet

Allow Timesheet Stop Watch Feature. = Yes

User

Allow User to Upload Photos. = Yes

Allow User to View Assets Not Assigned to Them. = Yes

Work Order

Show Next Work Order After Today. = Yes

Only Display One Work Order at a Time. = Yes

Required Settings

Work Order Terms

Work Order Authorization Granted

I have the authority to grant permission for your company to provide the services you have outlined. I hereby grant your company and its employees to proceed with the work you have outlined and fully agree to pay the dollar amount quoted according to the terms offered.

Invoice Terms

Invoice Acceptance

The charges were explained to me and the work was done to my complete satisfaction. I have read and understand the terms outlined on the reverse side of this agreement. I have the authority to order the above work and do so order as outlined above. It is agreed that the seller will retain title to any equipment or material furnished until the final and complete payment is made, and if settlement is not made as agreed, the seller shall have the right to remove same, and the seller will be held harmless for any damages resulting from the removal thereof.

Terms and Conditions

Payment is due upon receipt. For those customers who have an open account established with our company, the terms are NET 15 Days. A monthly service charge of 2.0% or the maximum amount allowed by law shall be assessed on all accounts that become past due. No services shall be rendered for any customers with a past due account. You agree to pay all reasonable collection costs.

Notice of Possible Mechanic's Lien

We reserve the right to assert a mechanic's lien on your property for labor and materials provided to your property. We waive this right once your invoice has been paid in full.

Receiving Customer Payments and Preparing Bank Deposits

Purpose

To ensure accurate recording, processing, and depositing of customer payments to maintain financial accuracy, prevent errors, and ensure accountability in bank deposit handling.

Scope

This SOP applies to all employees involved in receiving customer payments, managing undeposited funds, and preparing and verifying bank deposits. This includes bookkeepers, accounts receivable staff, and managers responsible for deposit verification.

Definitions

- **Accounts Receivable (AR) Account:** A financial account where unpaid customer invoices are tracked.
- **Deposit Receipt:** A document provided by the bank confirming the amount and date of a deposit.
- **Deposit Slip:** A document provided by the depositor that itemized the deposit items. This is given to the bank along with the funds to be deposited.
- **Payment Method:** The method used by customers to make payments, such as cash, check, or credit card.
- **Undeposited Funds:** A temporary holding account where payments are recorded until they are deposited into the bank.

Policy

1. Payment Entry Accuracy:
 - All customer payments must be recorded in Total Office Manager using the "Receive Payments" function.
 - Payments should be matched to the correct AR account and invoice.
2. Handling Undeposited Funds:
 - Payments are grouped under "Undeposited Funds" before being processed into the bank deposit.
 - Credit card payments should be directly deposited into the designated bank account.
3. Deposit Frequency:
 - Bank deposits must be prepared daily unless the total is under \$50. In such cases, deposits can be combined with the next day's receipts.
4. Verification Process:
 - Every deposit must be verified against the payment records in Total Office Manager and the physical funds received.
 - Deposit receipts must be initialed by the person making the deposit.
5. Reconciliation:

- Bank deposits must match the bank statement and Total Office Manager records during monthly reconciliations.

6. Deposit Receipts Retention:

- Deposit receipts must be verified and retained until the reconciliation is complete.
- After reconciliation, deposit receipts may be shredded, scanned, or filed electronically, per company policy.

Procedure

1. Receiving Payments

1. Navigate to Customers > Receive Payments in Total Office Manager.
 - You may also open Receive Payments from the invoice you are receiving against.
2. Select the customer and ensure the correct A/R account is chosen.
3. When selecting the A/R Account, select the 'Group with Other Undeposited Funds' option.
4. Enter payment details:
 - Payment method (e.g., Cash, Check, Credit Card)
 - Check number (if applicable)
 - Payment amount
5. Apply any customer credits if available.
6. Add memos if necessary (e.g., Paid in Full, Paid in Person).
7. Save and close to record the payment.

2. Handling Undeposited Funds

1. Payments are automatically grouped under "Undeposited Funds" unless specified otherwise in preferences.
2. Verify the undeposited funds balance regularly to identify discrepancies or stale payments.

3. Preparing Bank Deposits

1. Navigate to Banking > Make Deposits in Total Office Manager.
2. Review the list of payments in the "Payments" window.
3. Match each payment to the physical cash, checks, or other forms of physical payment.
4. Check off each payment once verified.
5. Add any memos if applicable.
6. Set the deposit date to match the expected bank processing date.
7. Generate and print a deposit slip if required or use slips provided by the bank.

8. Save and close to finalize the deposit.

4. Make the Bank Deposit

1. An authorized person will take the deposit to the bank.
2. A Deposit Receipt will be obtained by the depositor.
3. The depositor will verify the Deposit Receipt against the amount being deposited. If they match, the depositor will circle the amount and initial the deposit slip.
4. The depositor will submit the Deposit Receipt to the Accounts Receivable Manager for review.

5. Verifying Physical Deposits

1. Ensure the Deposit Receipt was initialed by the person making the deposit.
2. The Accounts Receivable Manager will verify the total deposit amount matches the physical funds indicated by the bank and Total Office Manager's records.

6. Bank Reconciliation

1. During monthly reconciliation, verify:
 - Deposit entries in Total Office Manager match bank statements.
 - Undeposited funds do not include outdated or erroneous entries.
2. Investigate and resolve any discrepancies promptly.

6. Handling Discrepancies

1. Missing Payments: Verify payment records, customer accounts, and bank records.
2. Incorrect Deposit Amount: Identify the source of error (e.g., PayPal fees, incorrect entry) and correct it in Total Office Manager.
3. Stale Undeposited Funds: Backdate deposits, add memos, and ensure correct AR accounts are used.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Accounts Receivable Staff:** Enter payments, prepare deposits, and verify deposit slips.
- **Managers:** Oversee deposit preparation, review deposit slips, and conduct bank reconciliations.
- **Authorized Deposit Personnel:** Make bank deposits and ensure deposit slips are returned and initialed.

Best Practices

1. Ensure customer payment details (method, check number, amount) are accurately recorded.
2. Use consistent discount and adjustment accounts for minor discrepancies.
3. Retain deposit slips until monthly reconciliation is complete.
4. Regularly review undeposited funds to prevent stale entries.

5. Always verify physical funds match Total Office Manager records before finalizing deposits.

Compliance and Audits

- Regular audits of undeposited funds and bank deposits will be conducted.
- Compliance with these procedures is mandatory.

Checklist for Daily Deposits

- ☐ All payments entered correctly into Total Office Manager.
- ☐ Payments matched to the correct AR account.
- ☐ Undeposited funds reviewed and cleared.
- ☐ Physical cash/checks verified against Total Office Manager records.
- ☐ Deposit date set correctly.
- ☐ Deposit slip printed and initialed.
- ☐ Deposit slip submitted for verification.

SOP and Workflow Related Definitions

These definitions are specific to the workflow and SOP in this manual. For an exhaustive list of terms and definitions, please see your Total Office Manager® user manual.

Back-Order: An order for an item that cannot be fulfilled immediately due to insufficient stock. A Back Order occurs when a customer orders an item that is currently out of stock but will be fulfilled and delivered once the inventory is replenished. Aptora's Total Office Manager tracks back-ordered items until they are received and shipped. When a purchase order contains items that have not been received, those items are labeled as backordered.

Change Orders (in Estimates): Modifications or updates to an approved estimate, typically reflecting changes in scope, materials, or costs. Change orders ensure that project documentation remains accurate and both parties agree on the adjustments.

Enter Bill for Received Items: A form is used to convert an Item Receipt into a vendor bill once you've received the vendor's invoice for previously received inventory or services. It records the financial obligation to pay the vendor. It matches inventory already received with the vendor's invoice. They prevent duplicate entries by ensuring the inventory isn't added again when entering the bill. They maintain accurate up-to-date Accounts Payable (A/P). They pull details directly from the original Item Receipt to ensure consistency. Navigate to: Vendors > Enter Bill for Received Items

Estimate Stage: A user-defined list of milestones related to the process of sales and estimating.

Estimate Status: Indicates the current state of an Estimate, such as None, Pending, Awarded, Not Awarded, In-Progress, Closed, Revised, or Closed. It helps track the progress of estimates through the sales cycle.

Item Receipt: A form used to record inventory items received from a vendor before an actual bill (vendor invoice) is received. It adjusts inventory levels immediately upon receiving goods and allows receiving inventory without immediately entering a bill. Navigate to: Vendors > Receive Items

Job Material: Materials or inventory items specifically designated for use on a particular job or project. These items are tracked separately to ensure accurate job costing and inventory control.

Job Materials Staging Area: A designated physical or virtual space where materials and equipment are gathered and organized before being dispatched to a job site or picked up by the technicians assigned to the respective work order. This ensures that all required materials are accounted for and ready for delivery, minimizing delays and errors.

Marketing Campaign: A specific initiative or project designed to promote a product, service, or event under one Marketing Type. Examples: "Summer AC Tune-Up Special" (under Online Advertising), "Free Water Heater Inspection" (under Direct Mail), "Fall HVAC Replacement Sale" (under Radio Ads), and others. Purpose: Allows businesses to drill down into specific campaigns to measure their ROI (Return on Investment), track costs, and evaluate their success in generating leads and closing sales. Analogy: Think of Marketing Campaign as an individual "project" or "ad run" under a broader Marketing Type.

Marketing Type: A broad category that defines the general source or method by which a lead was generated. Examples: Online advertising, social media, direct mail, word of mouth, trade shows, referrals, radio or TV ads, and more. They help categorize leads into overarching groups to identify which types of marketing are most effective at driving interest and engagement. Analogy: Think of Marketing Type as the "category" or "medium" of your advertising efforts.

Open Purchase Order: A Purchase Order that has been issued but has not yet been fully received. It indicates that items or services are still pending delivery.

Pick Ticket: A list of inventory items, quantities, and storage locations needed to fulfill an order or prepare items for a job. It may include item number, quantity needed, quantity on hand, item location, back-order status, and more. Purpose: Streamlines the process of collecting and organizing items before shipping, installation, or delivery. Location: They are printed within an Estimate.

Purchase Order: A commercial document issued to a vendor to request goods or services, specifying item quantities, descriptions, prices, and delivery terms. It acts as a legally binding agreement once accepted by the vendor.

Required Fields: Certain text boxes, selections lists, and other data entry controls can be set as required on a user basis or a global basis. The form cannot be closed until required fields are populated. Tip: Always include an “Unknown” option inside selection lists.

Sales Opportunity Manager (SOM): A complete CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system integrated into Aptora's Total Office Manager software suite. The system can manage and track sales leads, oversee and evaluate marketing campaigns, track campaign expenditures and revenue generation, and generate reports with key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure campaign effectiveness and sales closure rates. The SOM allows businesses to structure their sales and marketing activities efficiently, ensuring every sales lead is accounted for and followed up systematically.

SOM Stage: Represents the distinct phases or milestones in the sales process tracked within the Sales Opportunity Manager (SOM), such as Lead Generation, Initial Contact, Proposal Sent, and Negotiation. These stages help monitor and forecast sales performance.

SOM Status: Refers to the current state or progress of a sales lead or opportunity within the Sales Opportunity Manager (SOM). Common statuses include New, In Progress, Won, Lost, or other custom statuses defined by the company.

Vendor Packing Slips: A document provided by the vendor with shipped goods, detailing the items included in a shipment, their quantities, and descriptions. It serves as a reference for verifying received items against purchase orders and item receipts.

Workflow (Software Workflow): A predefined sequence of tasks and actions within Aptora software that guide users through a business process, such as inventory management, order fulfillment, or sales opportunity tracking. It ensures tasks are completed efficiently and consistently.

How to Use AI to Create SOPs

AI such as ChatGPT® can be extremely helpful with creating SOP for any company. We have included notes about how we have used ChatGPT to create SOP and (hopefully) useful tips on how to use this game-changing tool in your company.

Example Prompts We Have Used

1. Prompt for Making SOP from Webinar Transcripts

I conducted a webinar to train someone on the CRM system in our software called Total Office Manager. The system is called Sales Opportunity Manager. It manages sales leads and marketing efforts. I have attached the transcripts. The topic was 'Managing Sales Leads and Marketing Efforts.' The process includes adding sales leads, assigning those leads to salespeople, tracking their progress, rehashing leads, and closing the leads. It also covers tracking marketing campaigns, marketing methods, and marketing ROI.

Please read the transcripts and rewrite them into an article written to teach the reader how to do what the video teaches. Finish the article with a summary and recap by listing the steps for entering and managing sales leads and marketing campaigns in the software. If you are unsure about anything in the transcript or you suspect the speech to text got something wrong, please ask me to clarify things for you before writing the article. Thank you for helping with this project.

2. Another Option for the Same Purpose

I have attached a transcript made while I was doing live online virtual software training for a user of Total Office Manager. My student was a warehouse worker for an HVAC company. The topic was 'Ordering and Receiving Inventory.' This process includes adding Purchase Orders and adding Item Receipts into Total Office Manager. Please read the transcript and rewrite it into an article written to teach the reader how to do what the video teaches. Finish the article with a summary and recap by listing the steps for entering a Purchase Order (PO) and entering an Item Receipt in the software. Please note that 'Purchase Order' and 'Item Receipt' are the names of the two forms that we are entering into the software. In other words, the user is creating a new Purchase Order and a new Item Receipt. If you are unsure about anything in the transcript or you suspect the speech to text got something wrong, please ask me to clarify things for you before writing the article. Thank you for helping with this project.

3. Help Explaining a Concept

Since you are such a great writer, please help me with this task. I am trying to help companies write Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). This is different than training them on how to use the software. Briefly explain to the reader the difference in a training/support related help article and a company's own internal SOP like what I am creating today with your help. We need to convince them that it is important to train in how to use all aspects of the software so that they may then decide what features to use, how to use them for their specific business operations, and write clear SOP for employees to follow. Thanks!

4. Using QuickBooks as a Reference Point

Using your knowledge of QuickBooks desktop edition, I would like you to write a standard operating procedure like what we have been doing here. For this one, you will cover the process of entering a bill for items received, entering a bill that is not related to items that have been received, and paying bills. Examples of this type of work include receiving items that somebody has ordered on a purchase order and then eventually entering the bill and paying the bill. It would also include paying a bill for rent or entering and paying a bill for office supplies. To help you determine what you are writing about, here are the names of the menu items we are writing about in QuickBooks: Receive Items, Receive Items & Enter Bill, Enter Bills, and Pay Bills. Please stick to the same basic

format that you've been using. Write this SOP for 'QuickBooks desktop edition' but replace the name QuickBooks with 'Total Office Manager.'