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SeasonREADY: WorkBased Methodology for Seasonal Hospitality Workers

Training material for the up skilling of seasonal hospitality workers

Module 4: Front office





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Explanation of Symbols

For the facilitation of your study the icons below are introducing to you some different activities in this document

	Theory – Information
	Think about it
	Additional information from external resources
	Video
	Reflection exercise
	Apply what you have learnt



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	Solve a problem with peers
	Self assessment exercises
	Review



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Introduction

After the end of this module you will be able to:

- Understand the procedures and daily operations within the front office department of an SMHE
- Understand why guest care and assistance is important
- Be acquainted with the retail sales operations within the front office department
- Understand the role of front office within a SMHE
- Understand the principles of effective communication with other hotel departments
- Have detailed knowledge about the usage of information systems in front-office operations
- Have a comprehensive understanding of principles and techniques for the provision of effective services to clients in front office
- Know about problem-solving techniques and decision-making processes
- Be aware of time-management principles and techniques

Subunit 4.1: Front office operations

The best description of the front office is as the nerve centre or hub of a hotel. The primary function of the front office is to be a facilitator between guests and other departments of the hotel. Also, front office supports and helps in providing services to the guests. You must remember that the front office employee will make the first and last impression on the guests, so the role of the front office is crucial for the success of the whole hotel. Front office staff must be well prepared to handle various tasks and activities during their usual work day. Some of the most important operations of front office are:

- Reservations
- Reception, guest arrival
- Guest services, providing assistance and information
- Accounting procedures and controls (charging, invoicing, payments, cash handling, etc)
- Telephone exchange (making and answering phone calls, putting callers on hold, transfer, taking messages)
- Communication with other hotel departments
- Night audit
- Selling services



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Reservations

Every stay at hotel starts with making a reservation. That can be done via on-line booking form, telephone, e-mail or directly in the hotel. Regardless of the source, the main thing to remember is that front office employees must be as polite and friendly as they can, to carefully listen what exactly the guest want during their stay and to put everything correctly in the computer program. After making the first draft of the reservations the best thing to do is to repeat each detail with the guest to be sure that you have understood well all items of the reservation. For example, you should check with the guest whether you have correctly entered everything related to the name of the guest, date of arrival, number of rooms, type of room, related services and date of departure. After creating reservation, you should either send the reservation by e-mail, if it was made over a phone or internet booking, or print it and show it to the guest if the reservation was made in the hotel.



If you want to learn how to be more successful in reservations sales, check out this link

[7 trainers tips hotel reservations sales success](#)



Guest arrival

The guest has surely got the first impression of the hotel by making the reservation but now is the time to use communication (verbal and nonverbal) skills to make the guest feel as pleasant as possible (see more about these skills in module 2). The registration process begins when a guest requests to check into the hotel. The front desk employee begins the check-in process with a display of hospitality toward the guest; important elements include **eye contact**, a **warm smile**, an inquiry regarding **travel experience** and the like. You also always need to be **attentive**, **patient** and **cordial**, and to think about the tonality and intensity of volume while speaking. During checking in it is important to go through all reservation items to eliminate possible complaints or omissions.



Do you know how to achieve that your guest at the hotel feels like at home?

Remember to always call the guests by their surname and name because they will surely feel more comfortable and they will be pleased that you have made an effort to remember their name.



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Check this website to see how to make a great first impression on guests

[Making a great first impression](#)



Watch also this useful video about how to make a good first impression

[7 Psychological Tricks To Make a Good First Impression](#)



Guest services, assistance and information

After the check in of the guests is done front office employee should provide them with important information about the hotel such as time of breakfast, lunch or dinner, working hours of other departments such as wellness or gym, information regarding their room such as heating and cooling system, minibar, safe deposit box or where to find towels for swimming pool or the telephone number of the front office if they have any additional inquires. Keep in mind that the guest will always first ask for help at the front office so front office staff needs to be able to provide information about all hotel's and destination's services. Remember that you need to try to make the guest feel satisfied and to give him/her maximum help and care during the stay. Employees must remember to chat with the guests, not their co-workers.



Check the text about providing quality guest service in hotel industry:

[Providing Quality Guest Service In Hotel Industry](#)

Read more about how to improve guest services:

[4 simple ways to improve guest services in your hotel](#)



Accounting procedures and controls (charging, invoicing, payments, cash handling, etc.)

During the check-in, it is recommended to check with the guests when they would like to pay for their stay in the hotel- in advance or at their departure. If they are paying during the check out make sure they have understood and agreed to all terms of their stay to avoid possible complaints afterwards. Before the actual payment you can print a copy of the invoice from your computer system and go through it, together with the guest, checking all the items of the reservations like room tariff, local taxes and any additional costs for other hotel's services. If the guest agrees with everything the payment can be done. Also, you need to be prepared that guests will pay in different currencies so you **have to track rates on daily basis** for most common currency



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payments. If the guest pays with the credit card you need to know how to use POS system and if the payment is done in cash remember to first count the rest of the money below the counter to make sure that you return to the guest correct amount and repeat it again in front of the guest.



Telephone exchange (making and answering phone calls, putting callers on hold, transfer, taking messages)

The telephone should be answered as quickly as possible, certainly by the third ring. Firstly you need to introduce yourself and the hotel and then offer your assistance. If at that point some important thing comes up and you are forced to put your guest on hold, remember that no one likes to be put on hold, but when necessary, the guest should be thanked for waiting. If the guest wants to leave a message be sure to write down everything she/he has said and give the message to whom it is addressed as soon as possible. Whenever you speak with a guest, you should end the conversation with the statement: *“Please call on me if I can be of any further assistance”*. Also, respect the privacy of your guests. Do not give confidential information over the phone, for example credit card number.



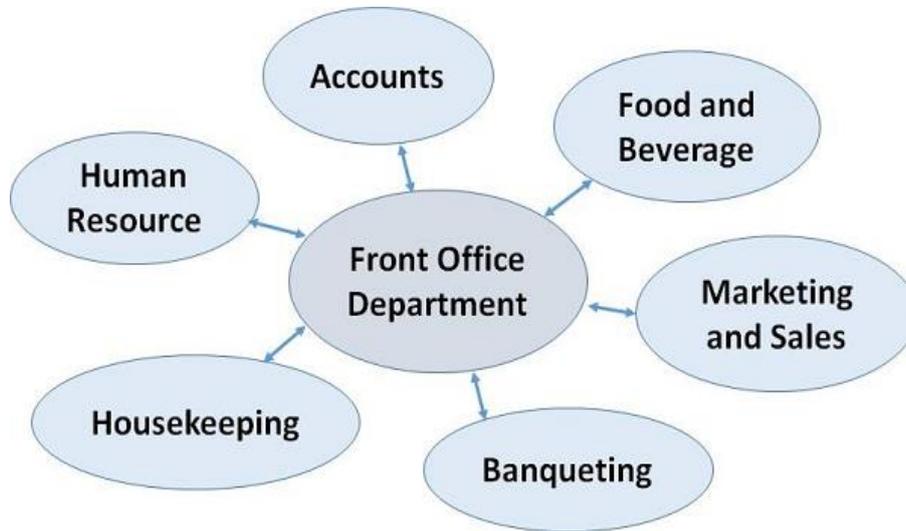
Communication with other hotel departments

As we have already pointed out, the front office is the hub of the hotel. The front office in any type of lodging property provides the face and voice of hospitality for the organization around the clock. All information about the guests, their needs and complaints will go through the front office. So, it is important that the transfer is done effectively and efficiently. It is always important to have all answers ready because guests usually call the front office to get the information regarding all other departments of the hotel. For example, if the guest calls to make reservations for dinner at the hotel’s restaurant make sure to know today’s menu or if the guest wants to go to some beauty ritual at the hotel’s wellness be able to provide all prices and recommend the best option for the guest.

Generally, the front office must collaborate with the housekeeping department, to prepare the rooms, clean the room upon request of the guest, provide additional items in the room like towels, ironing board, spare bed etc. It is in constant contact with the restaurant in order to provide information about the menu, room service, special diets of some guests and similar. Also, the guests call the front office to get the information about the wellness in the hotel, working hours, all services offered, temperature of the pool and to make reservations. Some other departments with which front office needs to have the contact are the technical/maintenance service in case of some malfunction



or technical issue occurring in the room, and other internal or external services and facilities (medical service taxi, shops etc.).



Source: https://www.tutorialspoint.com/front_office_management/front_office_management_communication.htm



Read more about the hotel's interdepartmental communication: **Effective Interdepartmental Communications**



Night audit

Although night audit might seem as a working shift when there is not much work, it can be an intensive labour instead. The night shift is intended to conclude everything from that day before and to prepare everything for the next one. So, night auditor must balance all guest transactions of the day.



Selling point. The role of front office in sales

The sales of hotel's services start with making the **reservation**. You offer to the potential guests the accommodation at the hotel, **type of the room**, wheatear they would like to have also **meals** included, **taxi transfers** from the airport or bus station and similar. The second point of the selling process starts while **checking in**, at this point you can present in more detail all services the hotel provides- **swimming pool, restaurant, sport facilities, playground** for children, swimming lessons, bicycle or car rent etc. Pay attention to what services you will emphasize depending on guest's personal needs and preferences. For example, the wishes and needs of younger guests differ significantly from those of families with children or elderly guests.



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Try to think what could be the services which you could offer to a young couple, and which one to a family with 2 children who is staying at the hotel for a week during the summer season?



Watch the video how to improve your selling skills
TED selling techniques



Activity 1

You have just received a call from the room where a young couple is staying. The young man tells you that tomorrow during the dinner he will propose his girlfriend to become his future wife. Think of all possible ways to help him. Which departments would you contact? Which services can you offer?

And if you receive a call from a mother of three children with an inquiry about all activities you have available for children so that she could have an afternoon rest?



Review





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Assessment

1. While checking-in you should (choose all that applies):
 - a. Ask the guest to pay the whole amount immediately
 - b. Be polite
 - c. Go through all items of the reservation together with the guest
 - d. Chat with your colleagues

2. When a guest arrives you should (choose all that applies):
 - a. Keep quiet until the guest asks you something
 - b. Offer to the guest your assistance
 - c. Always be very serious and do not smile
 - d. Always call the guest by his/hers surname

3. From the video about the selling skills, TED technique consists of which of the following questions (choose all that applies):
 - a. Tell me more about it
 - b. Explain to me
 - c. Describe how
 - d. You should try this

4. Front office is in continuous contact with which of the following hotel departments (choose all that applies):
 - a. Marketing
 - b. Housekeeping
 - c. Food & beverage
 - d. Maintenance

Subunit 4.2: Technology used in front office operations

Today, **computer literacy** is of crucial importance for the front office. Basic computer skills are not enough, it is necessary to acquire additional knowledge to be able to perform front office operations sufficiently accurate and precise.



Usage of informational systems in front office operations

Think of your computer as an add-on that helps you in the entire process of your business. Communication through **e-mail** is steadily on the rise, and a large number of reservations are made through the **booking pages**. So, you need to know the basics of **communication via e-mail**: how to start it, in which way to write the content and how



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to end it. Each e-mail intended for guest needs to start with 'Dear Sir/Madam' and end with phrase like 'staying at your disposal' or 'at your service'.

Also, you will need to learn basic knowledge how to use Excel. You can keep the record off all reservations in Excel, and store information like how long the guests have stayed, how much have they spent, which type of room did they book etc.

Furthermore, you web browser should always be opened because you never know which inquiry will you get from your guests. You should always have quick access to information like **weather forecast, timetable of buses, airplanes and ferries**, road condition, traffic and similar. Also, the web site of the local tourist board can offer you all information concerning touristic attraction, various events like concerts, theatre plays, festivals, sport activities, exhibitions and restaurants in which the hotel guests could be interested in.



Active listening from peer lessons

Do the following simple exercise with your peers. One of you is partner A and the other one is partner B.

Partner A: Think of some destination where you would like to travel and imagine that you are there. Ask your partner as many questions as you want about the destination.

Partner B: Use your mobile phone or the computer to browse through the web to find the answers to all questions from your partner.

Did you achieve to find everything? Which websites did you visit while searching? What were the most useful ones?



Software system

Each hotel has its software where all the information related to the guests is recorded. This software is organized around the functions needed to assist in delivering services to the guests. Some functions of the common software can be:

- Reservations
- Registration
- Room status
- Call accounting
- Check-out
- Night audit
- Reports
- Housekeeping
- Maintenance
- Marketing and sales
- Profit
- E-mail
- Time clock

So, each front office employee will need to learn how to use it during everyday business.



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Here is one example how does a reservations screen in the software looks like:

DOCUMENT - Reservation 2025219 CHECKED IN

Name **Samuels** Phone 433 794-5834 Agent [dropdown]

First Name Pete Member Type [dropdown] Company Metro Design [dropdown]

Title [dropdown] Country US [dropdown] Member No. [input] Group [dropdown]

Language E [dropdown] VIP [dropdown] Member Lvl. [input] Contact [dropdown]

City Guide Ro Zip 68942 State NE [dropdown] Source [dropdown]

More Fields Original Arrival 12/27/05 Room New Gu Stays 0 Last Rate [input]

Arrival 01/01/06 Sunday [calendar icon] Res. Type CHECK [dropdown] Checked In Guest Balance 912.79

Nights 10 [calendar icon] Market ALL [dropdown] ALL Disc. Amt. [input] % [input]

Departure 01/11/06 Wednesday Source AIR [dropdown] Airline Reason [dropdown]

Adults 1 Child 0 Origin [dropdown] No Post [checkbox]

No. of Rms. 1 [input] Payment CA [dropdown] Specials [dropdown]

Room Type DLX [dropdown] Credit Card No. [input] Comments Check financials [dropdown]

Room 523 [dropdown] DNM [checkbox] CC Name [input] Exp. Date [input] Promotions [dropdown]

Rate Code DAILY [dropdown] Fixed Rate [checkbox] CRS No. [input] Item Inv. MEN781 [dropdown]

Rate [input] 275.00 [input] Curr. USD [dropdown] Approval Code [input] Preferences FLWR [dropdown]

Packages BICYCLE [dropdown] Approval Amt. [input] Features [dropdown]

Block Code [dropdown] ETA 10:22 AM Suite With [input] For MW 8/12/14 [dropdown]

Turndown Confirmation [checkbox] Tax Type 0 [dropdown]

Traces Comments Preferences Profile Notes No Post Item Inventory

Save OK

Options Close

Created By CHAD On 12/27/05 Updated By DOCUMENT On 01/03/06

Source: https://docs.oracle.com/cd/E53533_01/opera_5_5_1_0_core_help/reservation.htm



Check out this video to see how does reservations in the software looks like

Hotel room Booking Software- Demo



Review

Each front officer should be computer literate. Every hotel uses some kind of software, so if you will work at the front office, you will surely need to learn how to use it. Besides being able to use computer software properly, every employee must have the skills to use Excel and must know where and how to get all the information on the



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internet that hotel guests are looking for.



Assessment

1. You can use Excel in front office operations to (choose all that applies):
 - a. Keep a record of arrival of guests
 - b. Calculate of monthly earnings
 - c. Write an e-mail
 - d. Calculate the monthly occupancy of the room

2. Some functions of the common software can include (choose all that applies):
 - a. Registration
 - b. Reports
 - c. Room status
 - d. Microsoft Office
 - e. Maintenance

3. Information that can be relevant to the guests is (choose all that applies)
 - a. Weather forecast
 - b. Timetable of ferries
 - c. TV program
 - d. Touristic attractions in the destination

Subunit 4.3: Managing and supporting front office operations



Attributes of front office staff

According to Rupesh Patel, these are the most important 10 Traits of a Great Front Desk Performer ¹

1. Empathy and caring

You should always approach the guest with empathy and care. When guests approach the front desk to check in, they may be tired from their travel. Understanding how that guest is feeling and being empathetic can provide comfort to guests as an overall experience factor.

2. Willing to go above and beyond

Apart from everyday standard reception tasks you can never know which

¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-traits-great-front-desk-agent-rupesh-patel?trk=mp-reader-card>



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problem you may be facing. You will sometimes need to go above and beyond to satisfy all needs of the guests and ensure that they feel happy and satisfied.

3. Ability to Anticipate Guests' Needs

When guests arrive at the hotel, front officer should be able to “read” them and anticipate their needs. Of course, you will gain this skill through experience, but you can anticipate some of the needs of your guests right from the start. For example, if you see during check-in that there is a family with a small child, you can immediately offer an additional bed and all services and activities the hotel provides for young children, as well as activities outside of the hotel.

4. Engaging and Inquisitive

Some of the guests will be in the mood to talk to you and some will not. You need to recognize if the guest is in the mood for talking and in that case, you should know how to ask the right questions and see how the hotel can deliver a great and personalized experience for guests.

5. Calm, Composed

Front office job sometimes can be very stressful, especially during the peak season. Front office employees should be prepared that the guests are sometimes impatient or rude. Nonetheless, the best thing to do is to always stay calm.

6. Always Smiling

It was already mentioned that a front officer must always have a smile on his/her face. Maybe, sometimes you will not be in a good mood, but remember that you always have to come to work with a smile and leave the work also with a smile.

7. Knowledgeable about the Local Area

As it has also already be, you need to be familiar with the basic offer and attractions of the destination and have a quick access to information about current events.

8. Resourceful

You also need to be prepared for other questions and complaints from guests. For example, a guest may complain that the room number does not match his wishes, and you must be prepared for such a situation and know how to settle it as soon as possible so that the guest is satisfied.

9. Energetic

Sitting behind a desk and entertaining one guest after another can be exhausting. However, a front officer cannot show signs of tiredness or fatigue.

10. A Great Ambassador for Hotel

As a front officer, you will be the first and the last person for contact with the guest and the impression you give will certainly be part of their satisfaction, so you will be the “face of your hotel”. Take this as advantage and present



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yourself and the whole hotel in the best way you can.



Here are some interesting and useful articles about attributes of front office staff

5 Essential Traits a Front Office Staff Should Have

Qualities of front office staff



Watch also these slides about qualities of front office staff

Qualities of Front Office staff



Are you aware that as a front office employee you are in constant contact with people so that your appearance also affects their impression?

It is very important to take care of appearance and hygiene. For example, female workers must always have hair removed from the face and men should be freshly shaved.



Time management essentials

As it was already mentioned, a usual day at the front office, especially during the peak season can be very exhausting. Many telephone calls, guests checking in, inquires and complaints from the guests etc. According to Alex Gaggioli there are seven steps to manage daily checklist of all operations²:

1. **Compile a list of daily reports**
2. **Prepare for your incoming guests**
3. **Prepare for outgoing guests**
4. **Know who your continuous guests are**
5. **Make a list of daily events, activities, and holidays**
6. **Prepare list of daily tasks**
7. **Prepare for the next day**

² <https://www.cloudbeds.com/articles/optimize-property-front-desk-operations/>



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Learn more time management and efficiency at the front office

How to Optimize Your Front Desk Efficiency Keeping Your Cool



Problem solving and decision making

Six Steps in Handling Guest Complaints

In dealing with guest's complaints, there are several steps to follow:

- 1) Addressing the guest
- 2) Giving attention
- 3) Determining the solution options
- 4) Finding answers
- 5) Taking action
- 6) Checking up

Addressing the Guest

The guest may be bothered by a problem for a long time or maybe the incident has possibly occurred more than once. So, when the guest finally decides to lodge the complaint, he or she may be extremely emotional in the way chosen to confront the employees. When a guest comes forward with a complaint, the employee receiving it should address the guest with attention.

Attention

The next step involves paying attention to what the guest is saying. The employee should listen to the guest and try not to speak while the guest is talking. The best approach for the employee is to keep a pleasant expression and to nod in agreement. The employee should never argue with the guest about what is being said.

Determination

Now it is time to determine exactly what the problem is. The employee should focus on the facts of the problem and deal with the problem, not the personality. The employee can focus his or her questions on clarifying the problem and repeating to the guest in his or her own words what the problem is, always including who, what, where, and when in this analysis.

Answers

At this point, the guest is ready to hear some answers to the problem he or she has brought forward. You need to figure out the guests' feelings and the best way to do it is to imagine yourself in their position. The employee might offer a solution to the



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problem. If the guest is not satisfied with that solution, an alternative one can be suggested.

Action

Action should be taken immediately after the complaint is discussed. When the guest sees that the front officer is trying to solve the problem, he or she will be satisfied. For example, if the solution means that housekeeping must be called, a note should not be made to call later. The call should be made while the guest is still there.

Check-up

After the problem is solved, the guest should be contacted to ensure that he or she is satisfied with the solution. This is just one more way of showing the guest that the problem has received attention and that the hotel wants to be sure that he or she is satisfied. When guest complaints are handled in this manner, a bad situation can be turned around into a positive experience. Through a problem resolution process such as this, the hotel may gain a loyal customer and very positive word-of-mouth advertising.



Read more about general advises for problem solving and decision making

Effective Problem Solving and Decision Making



What do you think: which word that can never be said out load in front of the guest when she/he has some complaints?

The right answer is the word 'problem'. You should never say that any complaint cannot be resolved and that you have a problem with it. Your answer to each complaint must first contain the guest's apology, and the answer how to resolve it. If you are not sure right away how the issue should be resolved, ask your supervisor for the help.

If there is a bigger mistake on the side of the hotel, it is possible to offer to the guest a free service as an excuse.



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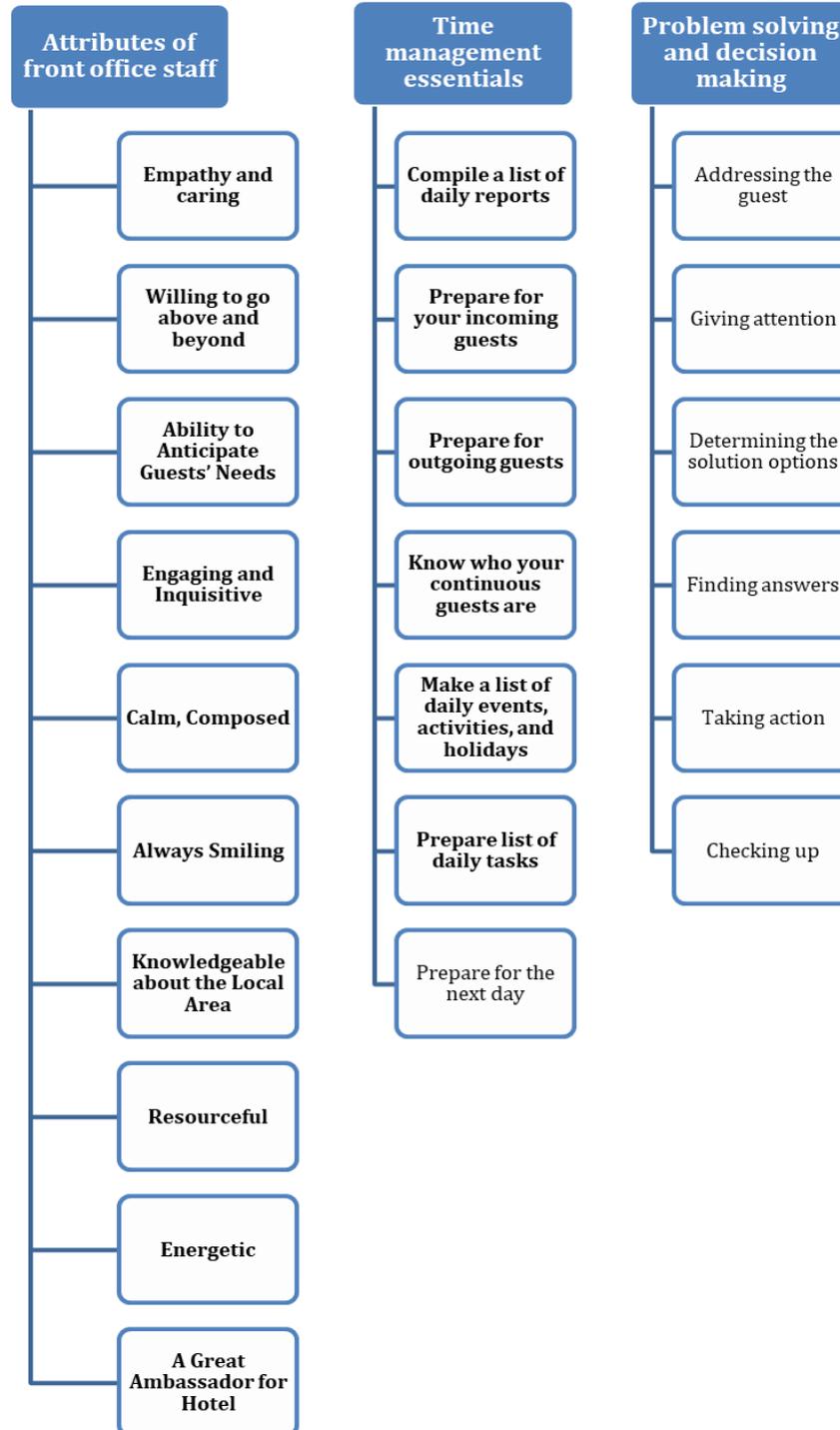


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Review





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Assessment

1. Which of the following are attributes of front office staff? (Choose all that applies):
 - a. Empathy and caring
 - b. Calm, composed
 - c. Entertaining
 - d. Resourceful

2. Which answer does not belong to the 7 steps to manage daily operations as proposed by Alex Gaggioli:
 - a. Compilation of list for daily reports
 - b. Arrange your lunch breaks for the week
 - c. Making a list of daily events, activities and holidays

3. Which are some of the steps to handle guest complaints (Choose all that applies):
 - a. Determining the solution options
 - b. Finding answers
 - c. Taking action
 - d. All the above

Interconnection activity





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Final activity for application

After having completed this module think:

What should I change in my behaviour when I start to work at front office?

A person who is visibly upset approaches you and asks you to help her. What would you apply in this situation from things you have learned from the subunit about Problem solving?

Answers to activities

Activity 1

First you can contact the restaurant and ask for a special menu which you can offer to your guest. You can also contact the local flower shop to arrange some beautiful bouquet. You can also ask your guest if he wants to order a player or singer at the dinner. While they are having dinner, housekeeping can arrange the room in a special way.

You can organize a baby sitter, explore on Internet all activities in the destination for children, include the child in the organized events that other children from the hotel are attending etc.

Answers to assessment questions

Subunit 4.1

- 1: b, c
- 2: b, d
- 3: a, b, c
- 4: a, b, c, d

Subunit 4.2

- 1: a, b, d
- 2: a, b, c, e
- 3: a, b, d

Subunit 4.3

- 1: a, b, d
- 2: b
- 3: d



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