

On successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain the functions of the front office department.
- Define the organization of the front office department.
- Explain the key positions of the front office.
- Explain the day-to-day front of house operations.
- Describe the different registration procedures.
- List the four steps of the guest cycle.
- Define revenue and sales indicators.

Front office Department

Front Office Operations

The front office is the nerve centre or hub of a hotel.

It is the department that makes the first and last impression on the guests, and the place that guest's approach for information and service throughout their stays.



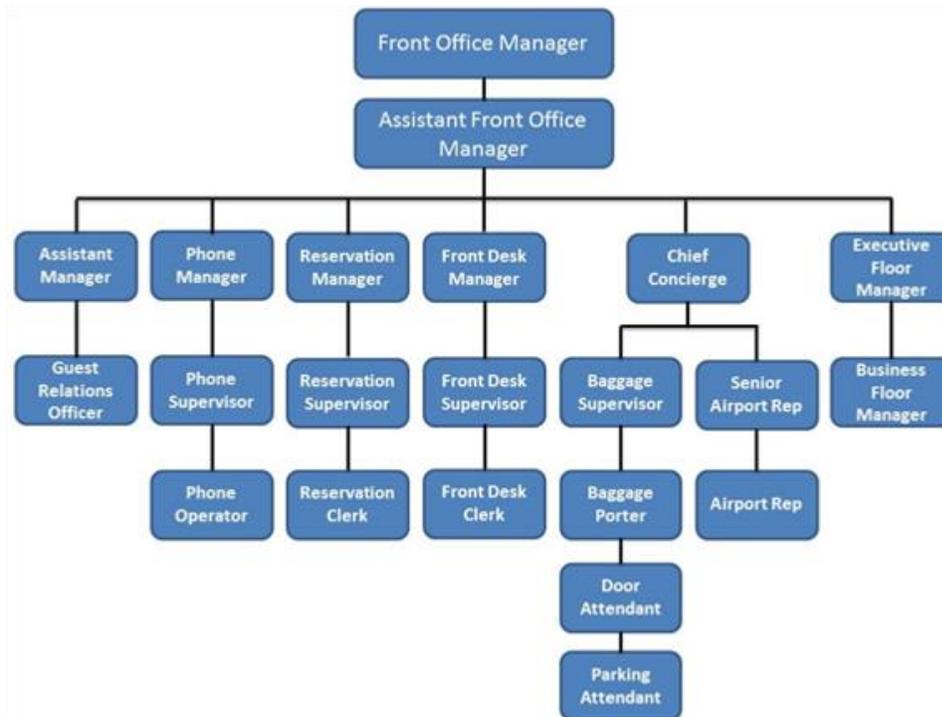
The three main functions of the front office are as follows:

- Selling rooms
- Maintaining balanced guest accounts
- Providing services and information to guests

Organisation of the Front Office Department

The attached image shows an example of an organizational chart for the front office of a large hotel.

This illustrates the structure and lines of communication which operate within the front office department.



Duties of Key Positions

Front Office Manager

The front office department is headed by the front office manager (FOM) whose main duty is to enhance guest services by constantly developing services to meet the needs of guests.



The front office manager performs the following duties:

- Monitoring reservation status

- Looking over market mix and preparing occupancy forecasts

- Determining rate structures and supervising policies

Reviewing occupancy and average room rate

Reviewing arrivals and departures daily

Making staffing adjustments needed for arrivals and departures

Reviewing, checking, and meeting VIPs and entertaining them

Assistant Manager

The Assistant Manager represents the management in handling the daily operations and functions of the hotel and may directly report to the general manager in some hotels.



The main duties of the assistant manager include:

Responsibility for developing and executing plans developed by the owner, general manager and other members of the management team

Checking on operations, providing feedback and offering assistance when needed.

Completing, reviewing and summarizing statistical reports and sharing them with the general manager.

Assuming responsibilities for the daily operations and management of the hotel.

Guest Relations Officer

The Guest Relations Officer reports directly to the assistant manager.

They review the hotel arrivals list daily and attend to customer inquiries and assist them with their needs.



Duties for the guest relations officer can include:

Greeting all arriving individual guests, especially those under commercial accounts

Provide local information for guests

Promoting in-house functions, facilities and services

Assisting front desk staff when they are busy and assisting guest to check out

Telephone Department

The telephone department is headed by the telephone services manager.

The telephone supervisor and telephone operator process all incoming and outgoing calls through the hotel switchboard. Staff in this department generally possesses good language and communication skills.

In order to provide better service, some hotels have introduced the “one-stop service” with all guest requests being carried out through the telephone department.

One Stop Service

For example, if a guest called in and wanted to place a booking with the coffee shop, the line would be transferred by the telephone operator directly to the coffee shop.

With the one stop service, the telephone operator will take the booking for the guest. This can speed up the booking process and leave the guest with a better impression.

Phone department members need to:

- Provide general information regarding the hotel or local attractions to guests
- Place international calls, morning calls and wake-up calls as required by guests
- Administer the paging system of the hotel, which provides a communication service between certain hotel staff and management staff
- Administer the in-room movie system of the hotel
- Stay familiar with the names of Very Important Persons (VIPs) in the hotel

- Protect guest privacy by not disclosing room number or guest information
- Communicate with management, engineering, security and guests

Reservations

The **reservations manager makes decisions on whether room reservations should be accepted** when the hotel is fully booked. That is, to stop taking reservations or to allow overbooking of rooms.

The **reservations supervisor will monitor all the room reservations** taken and report to the reservations manager when abnormal situations happen. For example, there is a larger number of room cancellations than usual.

The **reservation clerk will handle all reservations** and should be aware of the different sources that reservations may originate from.

Reservation Clerk

Duties include:

- Handle reservation requests and prepare reservation confirmation slips
- Request guests to confirm or guarantee their room reservations
- Keep records of each reservation and the number of room reservations taken
- Provide the front desk with details of reservations due to arrive the next day
- Prepare VIP lists
- Update guest history records

Reservation Sources

Listed below are some of the different sources that reservations may originate from:

- Direct reservation via telephone, fax, letter, e-mail or Internet
- Reservation network systems such as Leading Hotels of the World (LHW)
- Travel agents
- Tour operators
- Meeting planners
- Walk-in

Reservations

When a reservation request is accepted, **the details of the room reservation will be recorded on a reservation form.**

Reservation information details include the guest name, length of stay, room type and rate, method of payment, guest contact information and special request

Guaranteed Reservations

For guaranteed reservations, the hotel will hold the room for the guest overnight or during the guaranteed period as the guest has prepaid for the room but no refund will be given if the guest does not show up.

Non-Guaranteed Reservations

A non-guaranteed reservation means that the hotel will hold the room until a stated cancellation time, normally up to 6 p.m. on the arrival date and then release the room for sale if the guest does not arrive.

Overbooking

Overbooking occurs when a hotel takes more reservations than the number of rooms available. It is a common practice of hotels which contributes to a higher chance of full house while reducing the loss of last minute cancellations.

For those who cannot get a room upon arrival, the hotel will have no choice but **walking the guests.** This means that the hotel has to reject the guests, by turning away a guest with a reservation the hotel has breached the contract which can lead to legal actions.

Therefore, 'walking the guests' should only be handled by experienced receptionists or front desk managers. The proper procedure includes the following:

Apologize - Hotel staff should apologize to the guest.

Provide Alternatives - A free room in an alternate hotel, free transportation, or calls. Provide a free room upgrade or discount coupons.

Provide Assistance - Take care of the guest's baggage and arrange transportation to alternate hotel.

Follow-up - Call the alternate hotels to pay special attention to the unhappy guests.

- It is common practice for hotels to overbook during peak season in order to ensure full occupancy, as some guests are likely not to show up. Overbooking refers to a situation whereby the hotel takes more reservations than the number of available rooms. Usually, the reservations clerk will request guests to

guarantee their booking during peak season. Major problems of overbooking which should be noted, include damage to the hotels reputation, increase in guest dissatisfaction and complaints. Generally, receptionists should be able to anticipate overbooking and take appropriate actions prior to a guests arrival.

Front Desk (Reception)

The front desk is headed by the front desk manager whose main duty is to ensure that the hotel achieves the highest possible level of room occupancy and the maximum revenue.

Assisting and reporting to the front desk manager is the front desk clerk.



The duties of the Front Desk Manager may include:

- Overseeing the smooth running of the front desk
- Compiling staff duty roster
- Greeting important guests, VIPs
- Assigning rooms to guests
- Dealing with group arrivals
- Handling guest requests and complaints

Front Desk Clerk

The duties of the front desk clerk include:

- Greeting the guest
- Providing information and promoting hotel facilities and services to guests
- Checking in the guest
- Maintaining guest account
- Checking out the guest

Administering the safe deposit system of the hotel

Providing foreign currency exchange service to guest

Concierge

The concierge department is comprised of a large group of staff, which includes:

The chief concierge is the overall in charge of this section. He/she normally works at a desk in the main foyer. The following guest services are provided by the concierge:

- Providing information/advice on hotel products/services
- Confirming airline passages and purchasing airline tickets
- Reserving tables at restaurants and tickets to shows
- Arranging the hire of the hotel limousine or other transportation services
- Handling guest requests and inquiries

Airport representative's duties include:

- Greeting hotel guests at the airport
- Arranging hotel transportation for guests from the airport to the hotel
- Answering inquiries from guests
- Taking hotel room bookings
- Assisting departing guests at the airport
- Liaising with airlines for special arrangements for guests

The hotel drivers, duties include:

- Taking guests to and from the airport
- Upon request, acting as a personal driver for a guest

The parking attendant duties include:

- Parking cars for guests
- Assisting the door attendant in ensuring that traffic flow at the hotel main entrance is free flowing

In general, the **door attendant** works outside the hotel's entrance.

Door duties include:

- Greeting all new arrivals
- Providing door service to guests
- Summoning baggage porter to assist arriving guests
- Calling taxis and providing the hotel address card for guests
- Paying taxi fare on behalf of the hotel guests who do not have local currencies
- Directing traffic and parking of vehicles at the main entrance

The baggage supervisor duties include:

- Answering telephone calls from guests regarding baggage pick up from rooms
- Assigning baggage porters to handle the guest baggage
- Receiving guest deliveries
- Handling guest requests for postal services

The **baggage porters** duties include:

- Handling guest baggage
- Escorting guests from the front desk to their rooms
- Running errands for the executive office and hotel guests
- Delivering mail/messages to guest rooms
- Handling storage of guest baggage/belongings for late check-out

The Executive Floor

The executive floor manager oversees the smooth operation of the executive floors and business centre.

Business travelers who require an **environment in which to conduct business with comfort and privacy** may choose the executive floor for an additional fee.

The executive floor is usually the top floor of a hotel. Guests of the executive floor will enjoy a range of complimentary exclusive privileges and benefits which vary from one hotel to another.

Examples are as follows:

- Express check-in and check-out services on the executive floor

- Complimentary breakfast buffet, afternoon tea, and all-day refreshments in the executive floor's lounge

- Complimentary in-room local calls and high-speed Internet access

- Garment ironing service

- Complimentary use of the hotel's fitness centre and boardroom

- Personalised business and concierge services