Front Office Management

BLOCK 1:
IMPORTANCE OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN A HOTEL

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Ahmedabad

"Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one."

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

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ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self-instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual-skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to effect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self-instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)

PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included may tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect.

All the best for your studies from our team!

Front Office Management

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BLOCK 1: IMPORTANCE OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN A HOTEL

Introduction to the Block

A hotel is termed as a home away from home and hence hospitality is an important consideration for both the guest and the organization (hotel) every guest expects and deserves hospitable treatment. Providing hospitality to meet guests' needs involves not only a positive attitude but also to the type of services that make the guest's stay enjoyable and hence for that interdepartmental communication and coordination is very important and this unit deals with the same. In particular, it is focused on how the front office relates to employees in all departments— marketing and sales, housekeeping, food and beverage, banquets, controller, maintenance, security, and human resources.

In addition, computer applications are central to front office operations in today's modern hotels. For new properties, computers are standard equipment; for existing hotels, computers are being integrated into everyday operations to assist in providing hospitality to guests. Computer applications include routinely processing reservations as well as handling registrations, guest charges, guest checkout and the night audit. These applications are encompassed by the term property management system (PMS), a generic term for applications of computer hardware and software used to manage a hotel. First unit will introduce you to interdepartmental communication whereas second unit will give you an insight into Property Management Systems

UNIT 1 INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Role of Front Office

1.3 Marketing and Sales Department

1.4 Housekeeping Department

1.5 Food and Beverage Department

1.6 Banquet Department

1.7 Accounts

1.8 Maintenance or Engineering Department

1.9 Security Department

1.10 Human Resources Management Department

1.11 The Role of Total Quality Management in Effective Communication

1.12 Case Studies

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1.13 Let Us Sum Up

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the need and importance of coordination and communication between front office and various other departments.

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- State the need and importance of interdepartmental and intradepartmental coordination and communication.

- List the reasons for communication between front office and various other departments
- Relate the Importance of TQM in communication

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit explains the interdepartmental communications that must be maintained in a hotel. In particular, it is focused on how the front office relates to employees in all departments— marketing and sales, housekeeping, food and beverage, banquets, controller, maintenance, security, and human resources. Guest needs are met when employees cooperate and communicate to provide hotel services. The front office manager must take an objective view of these communications, considering the needs of the guest, the actions of the employees, and the policies and procedures in effect. There are times when segments of the communication system will seem overwhelming, but the professional hotelier improves with each new challenge.

The front office plays a pivotal role in delivering hospitality to guests. It sets the stage for a pleasant or an unpleasant visit. Guests, often in an unfamiliar surroundings and wanting to proceed with their business or vacation plans, are eager to learn the who, what, when, where, and how of their new environment. Requests for information often begin with the concierge bellhop, telephone operator or front desk associate, because these employees are the most visible to the guest and are perceived to be the most knowledgeable. These employees are believed to have their finger on the pulse of the organization and the community. Their responses to guests' requests for information on public transportation, location of hotel facilities, special events in the city etc. indicate how well the hotel has prepared them for this important role.

Front office Duty Managers must take an active part in gathering information that will be of interest to guests. They must also be active in developing procedures and processes for the front office to disburse this information. The relationships the front office manager and the duty manager develop with the other department directors and their employees are vital to gathering information for guests. Developing positive personal relationships is part of the communication process, but it cannot be relied on to ensure that accurate and current information is relayed. How does the front office manager encourage effective interdepartmental communication (communication between departments)? It is important to note that this discussion is applicable to intradepartmental communication (communication inside a department) as well.

1.2 ROLE OF FRONT OFFICE

The front office is at the centre of the information network and coordinates with the many interdepartmental lines of communication that exist. These lines are based on the direction each department is given to provide hospitality in the form of clean rooms, properly operating equipment, safe environment, well-prepared food and beverages, efficient table service, and professional organization and delivery of service for a scheduled function as well as accurate accounting of guest charges. These general objectives help department directors organize their operations and meet the overall goal of delivering professional hospitality. However, in reality, constant effort is required to manage the details of employees, materials, procedures and communication skills to produce acceptable products and services.

The front office staff interacts with all departments of the hotel, including marketing and sales, housekeeping, food and beverage, banquet, accounts, maintenance, security, and human resources. These departments view the front office as a communication liaison in providing guest services. Each of the departments has a unique communication link with the front office staff. The front office provides the face and voice of hospitality for the organization around the clock. Guests are most likely to approach the front office staff for connections to staff in other departments.

The members of the front office team must know to whom they can direct guest inquiries for assistance. They learn this by means of a thorough training program in in-house policy and procedures and a constant concern for providing hospitality to the guest.

We now look into the details of the need for coordination between front office and other departments in a hotel and how this affects the overall efficiency of both the departments.

1.3 MARKETING AND SALES DEPARTMENT

The marketing and sales department relies on the front office to provide data on guest histories, or details concerning each guest's visit. Some of the information gathered is based on frequency of visits, corporate affiliation, special needs. It is also the front office's job to make a good first impression on every single person entering the hotel, to relay messages, and to meet the requests of guests who are using the hotel for meetings, seminars and banquets.

The guest history is a valuable resource for marketing and sales, which use the guest registration information (details on the registration card, which is filled

by the guest during check in) to target marketing campaigns, develop promotions, prepare mailing labels and select appropriate advertising media. The front office staff must make every effort to keep this database updated and accurate.

The process of completing the booking of a special function (such as a wedding reception, convention or seminar) depends on the availability of rooms for guests.

The marketing and sales executives may have to check the lists of available rooms three or six months, or even a year in the future to be sure the hotel can accommodate the expected number of guests. A database of available rooms is maintained in the property management system by the front office.

The first guest contact with the marketing and sales department is usually through the hotel's telephone operator. A competent operator who is friendly and knowledgeable about hotel operations and personnel makes a good first impression, conveying to the prospective client that the hotel is competent and efficient in its operation. When the guest finally arrives for the function, the first actual contact with the hotel is usually through the front office staff.

The front office associate who makes the effort to determine which banquet supervisor is in charge and communicates that information to that particular guest demonstrates to all that the hotel is dedicated to providing hospitality.

Messages for the marketing and sales department must be relayed completely, accurately, and quickly as these could (and mostly are) related to new business ties and corporate contracts. The telephone operator and the front desk associate is a vital link in the communication between the prospective client and a salesperson in the marketing and sales department.

The Duty Manager should instruct all new front office personnel about the staff in the marketing and sales department and what each person's job entails. (This applies to all departments in the hotel, not just marketing and sales)

Front office employees should know the names of all marketing and sales employees. To help front office staff become familiar with all these people, managers should show new employees pictures of the department directors and supervisors.

Requests for service at meetings, seminars, banquets, and the like are often made at the front office. The banquet manager, the person responsible for fulfilling the details of service for a banquet or special event, or sales associate, who books the guest's requirements for banquets and other special events, might be busy with another function. If a guest needs an extension cord or if an electrical outlet malfunctions, the front desk staff must be ready to meet the guest's needs. The front

office manager should establish standard operating procedures for the front office employees to contact maintenance, housekeeping, marketing and sales, or the food and beverage department to meet other common requests. Knowing how to find a small tool kit, adapters, adhesive materials, extra table covers or window cleaner will help the guest and save the time involved in tracking down the salesperson in charge.

Check your progress 1

1. Explain the coordination of front office with the sales and marketing department.

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1.4 HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT

Housekeeping and the front office communicate about housekeeping room status, the report on the availability of the rooms for immediate guest occupancy. Housekeeping room status can be described in the following communication terms:

- Available Clean, or Ready—room is ready to be occupied
- Occupied—guest or guests are already occupying a room
- Stay over—guest will not be checking out of a room on the current day

- Dirty or On-Change—guest has checked out of the room, but the housekeeping staff has not released the room for occupancy
- Out-of-Order—room is not available for occupancy because of a mechanical malfunction

Housekeeping and the front office also communicate on the details of potential house count (a report of the total number of guests registered in the hotel), security concerns and requests for amenities (personal toiletry items such as shampoo, toothpaste and mouthwash; electrical equipment). These issues are of immediate concern to the guest as well as to supervisors in the hotel.

Reporting of room status is handled on a face-to-face basis in a hotel that does not use a property management system (PMS). The bihourly or hourly visits of the housekeeper to the front desk clerk are a familiar scene in such a hotel. The official reporting of room status at the end of the day is accomplished with a Discrepancy Report—a report prepared by the housekeeper that lists the guest room occupancy status as vacant, occupied, or out of order. Sometimes even regular reporting of room status is not adequate, as guests may be anxiously awaiting the opportunity to occupy a room. On these occasions, the front desk clerk must telephone the floor supervisor to determine when the servicing of a room will be completed.

The housekeeper relies on the room sales forecast—a weekly report prepared and distributed by the front office manager that indicates the number of departures, arrivals, walk-in, stayovers and no-shows—to schedule employees. Timely distribution of the room sales projections assists the executive housekeeper in planning employee personal leaves and vacation days.

The front desk also relies on housekeeping personnel to report unusual circumstances that may indicate a violation of security for the guests. For example, if a maid or houseman notices obviously non-registered guests on a floor, suspicious activity on guest floors, a fire exit that has been propped open, or sounds of a domestic disturbance in a guest room, he or she must report these potential security violations to the front office. The front office staff, in turn, relay the information to the proper in-house or civil authority. The front office manager may want to direct the front desk clerks and telephone operators to call floor supervisors periodically to check activity on the guest floors.

Guest requests for additional or special amenities and guest room supplies may be initiated at the front desk. The prompt relay of requests for extra blankets, towels, soap and shampoo to housekeeping is essential. This is hospitality at its best.

Check your progress 2

1. State the various room type status.

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1.5 FOOD AND BEVERAGE DEPARTMENT

Communication between the food and beverage department and the front office is essential.

Charge Transfers, which are forms used to communicate a charge to a guest's account, are used to relay messages and provide accurate information. Communication activities also include reporting predicted house counts, an estimate of the number of guests expected to register based on previous occupancy activities and processing requests for paid-outs, forms used to indicate the amounts of money paid out of the cashier's drawer on behalf of a guest or an employee of the hotel. These vital services help an overworked food and beverage manager, restaurant manager, or banquet captain meet the demands of the public.

Incoming messages for the food and beverage manager and executive chef from vendors and other industry representatives are important to the business operation of the food and beverage department. If the telephone operator is given instructions on screening callers (such as times when the executive chef cannot be disturbed because of a busy workload or staff meetings, or vendors in whom the chef is not interested), the important messages can receive top priority.

In a hotel that has point-of-sale terminals, computerized cash registers that interface with a property management system, information on guest charges is automatically posted to a guest's folio—his or her record of charges and payments.

When a hotel does not have such terminals, the desk clerk is responsible for posting accurate charges on the guest folio and relies on transfer slips. The night auditor's job is made easier if the transfer slip is accurately prepared and posted. The front office manager should work with the food and beverage director in developing standard operating procedures and methods to complete the transfer of charges.

The supervisors in the food and beverage department rely on the predicted house count prepared by the front office manager to schedule employees and predict sales. For example, the restaurant supervisor working the breakfast shift needs to know how many guests will be in the hotel so he or she can determine how many servers to schedule for breakfast service. Timely and accurate preparation of this communication tool assists in staffing control and sales predictions.

Authorized members of the food and beverage department occasionally ask the front office for cash, in the form of a paid-out, to purchase last-minute items for a banquet, the lounge or the restaurant or to take advantage of unplanned opportunities to promote hospitality. Specific guidelines concerning cash limits, turnaround time, prior approval, authorized signatures, and purchase receipts are developed by the general manager and front office manager. These guidelines help maintain control of paid-outs.

Check your progress 3

1. Explain – Paid outs, Point of Sale Terminals, Guest folio

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1.6 BANQUET DEPARTMENT

The banquet department, which often combines the functions of a marketing and sales department and a food and beverage department, requires the front office to relay information to guests about scheduled events and bill payment.

The front desk staff may also provide labour to prepare the daily announcement board, an inside listing of the daily activities of the hotel (time, group, and room assignment), and marquee, the curb side message board, which includes the logo of the hotel and space for a message. Because the majority of banquet guests may not be registered guests in the hotel, the front office is a logical communications centre.

A daily posting on a felt board or an electronic bulletin board provides all guests and employees with information on scheduled group events. The preparation of the marquee may include congratulatory, welcome, sales promotion, or other important messages. In some hotels, an employee in the front office contacts the marketing and sales department for the message.

The banquet guest who is unfamiliar with the hotel property will ask at the front office for directions. This service might seem minor in the overall delivery of service, but it is essential to the lost or confused guest. The front office staff must know both how to direct guests to particular meeting rooms or reception areas and which functions are being held in which rooms. Front desk clerks, must be ready to provide information for all departmental activities in the hotel.

The person responsible for paying the bills for a special event will also find his or her way to the front office for settlement. If the banquet captain is not available to personally present the bill for the function, the front desk clerk should be informed about the specifics of food and beverage charges, rental charges, method of payment, and the like.

Check your progress 4

1. What do you mean by a marquee and daily announcement board?

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1.7 ACCOUNTS

The cost – controller/auditor (which is a position in the finance department) relies on the front office staff to provide a daily summary of financial transactions through a well-prepared night audit. This information is also used to measure management ability to meet budget targets. Because the front office provides the controller with financial data for billing and maintenance of credit card and city ledgers, these two departments must relay payments and charges through the property management system.

The information produced by the front office is a necessary first step in the process of the factual guest accounting process and the financial assembly of data for the controller. Without accurate daily entry by desk clerks and production of a night audit, the controller does not have the figures to produce reports for the owners, general manager and supervisors. One might expect this communication to be in the form of reports. However, the front office and controller departments often communicate orally. They share a common concern for guest hospitality, and when finances are concerned, oral discussion is inevitable.

1.8 MAINTENANCE OR ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

The maintenance or engineering department and front office communicate on room status and requests for maintenance service. Maintenance employees must know the occupancy status of a room before attending to plumbing, heating, or air-conditioning problems. If the room is reserved, the two departments work out a period so the guest can enter the room on arrival or be assigned to another room. Cooperative efforts produce the best solutions to difficult situations. It is essential for planning essential communication by departmental managers to provide guest services at a time that does not interfere with delivering hospitality.

Likewise, the requests from guests for the repair of heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning units, plumbing, televisions, and other room furnishings are directed to the front desk/telephone operator, which relays them to the maintenance department. The front desk clerk must keep track of the repair schedule, as guests want to know when the repair will be made.

1.9 SECURITY DEPARTMENT

Communications between the security department and the front office are important in providing hospitality to the guest. These departments work together closely in maintaining guest security. Fire safety measures and emergency communication systems as well as procedures for routine investigation of guest security concerns require the cooperation of these departments. Because of the recent series of unfortunate events, the nature of the security hotels offer their guests has changed. All members of the front office team must be on alert for people who do not belong in the lobby and report inconsistencies with the security department. This professional view of security allows the front office to support the security department.

1.10 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

The human resources management department may rely on the front office staff to act as an initial point of contact for potential employees in all departments. It may even ask the front office to screen job candidates. If so, guidelines for and training in screening methods must be provided.

Some directors of human resources management depend on the front office to distribute application forms and other personnel-related information to job applicants. The potential employee may ask for directions to the personnel office at the front desk. The human resources management department may also develop guidelines for the front desk clerk to use in initially screening candidates. These guidelines may include concerns about personal hygiene, completion of an application, education requirements, experience and citizenship status. This information helps the executives in the human resources management department interview potential job candidates.

Check your progress 5

1. Explain the need of coordination between Front office and accounts department.
2. Explain the need of coordination between Front office and maintenance department.
3. Explain the need of coordination between Front office and security department.
4. Explain the need of coordination between Front office and human resource department.

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1.11 THE ROLE OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Total quality management (TQM) is a management technique that encourages managers to look with a critical eye at processes used to deliver products and services. Managers must ask front-line employees and supervisors to question each step in the methods they use to provide hospitality for guests. Examples: "Why do guests complain about waiting in line to check out?" "Why do guests say our table service is rushed?" "Why do guests get upset when their rooms aren't ready on check-in?" Managers and their employees must then look for answers to these questions.

Total quality management was developed by W. Edwards Deming, a management theorist, in the early 1950s. His intent was to offer a new way for American manufacturers to improve the quality of their products by reducing defects through worker participation in the planning process. American manufacturers were reluctant at first to embrace total quality management, but Japanese manufacturers were quick to adopt Deming's principles of streamlining methods to manufacture products such as automobiles. He gave managers tools such as flowcharts to analyze production by dividing the manufacturing process into components and then focusing on the segments of processes that produce the product.

The most important aspect of total quality management in the context of the hotel industry is the interaction between frontline employees and their supervisors. The interaction of employees in a group setting or on a one-on-one basis to determine the root of the problem and how the desired end result can be achieved thrusts them into an atmosphere of cooperation that may not have previously existed. First-shift and second-shift employees, who usually do not understand each other's activities, find they do have common concerns about serving the guest. Housekeeping and front desk employees come to realize that a guest's request for a late checkout plays havoc with the delivery of hospitality.

Total quality management practices ensure that the front office checks with housekeeping to determine room availability in such a situation. The bottom line is that interdepartmental communication is enhanced each time a team of members of various departments meets to analyze a challenge to the delivery of hospitality.

While a guest in room 421 is checking out, she indicates a dripping faucet in that room. After the guest departs, the desk clerk brushes off her remark, saying to a fellow desk clerk, "There are so many dripping faucets in this hotel that one more

won't mean anything." If you were the front office manager and you heard this exchange, what would you do? How would you encourage better communication between the front office and maintenance?

An Example of Total Quality Management in a Hotel

Total quality management in a hotel may be applied as follows: The general manager has received numerous complaints about the messy appearance of the lobby—furniture and pillows are out of place, ashtrays are overflowing, flowers are wilted and trash receptacles are overflowing. The front office manager recruits a total quality management team, consisting of a front desk clerk, a maid, a waiter, a cashier and the director of marketing and sales. The team discusses how the lobby area could be better maintained. The maid says her colleagues are overworked and are allotted only 15 minutes to clean up the public areas on the day shift. The front desk clerk says he would often like to take a few minutes to go out to the lobby to straighten the furniture and pillows, but he is not allowed to leave the front desk unattended. The director of marketing and sales say she is embarrassed when a prospective client comes into the hotel and is greeted with such a mess. She has called housekeeping several times to have the lobby cleaned but is told, "It's not in the budget to have the lobby cleaned six times a day." All of the team members realize the untidy lobby does create a poor impression of the hotel and the situation does have to be remedied.

The team decides to look at the elements in the situation. The furniture is on wheels for ease of moving when the housekeeping staff cleans. The pillows add a decorative touch to the environment, but they are usually scattered about. The waiter jokingly says,

"Let's sew them to the back and arms of the sofa!" Might the ashtrays be removed and receptacles added for guests to use in extinguishing a cigarette? Could a larger waste receptacle with a swinging lid be used to avoid misplaced litter? "The fresh flowers are nice," adds one of the team members, "but many hotels use silk flowers and plants. This must save money over the long run."

The team discussion encourages each person to understand why the maid cannot straighten the lobby every two or three hours and why the desk clerk cannot leave his post to take care of the problem. The employees' comments concerning furniture and appointments foster an atmosphere of understanding. Team members start looking at one another with more empathy and are slower to criticize on other matters. Was the issue of the messy lobby resolved? Yes, but more important, the team members developed a way to look at a challenge in a more constructive manner.

Upon initial review, the problem seems to be that all employees should be encouraged to assist guests in an emergency. However, in this case, the desk clerk has a perception problem about his job. This short-sightedness probably results from poor training, a lack of opportunities for employees from various departments to exchange ideas and socialize, and an atmosphere for employee motivation. The front office manager should discuss the situation with the convention representative and emphasize the benefits of total quality management. Supervisors must concentrate on the guests' needs and foster employee growth and development so their employees will likewise concentrate on guests' needs. These concepts are at the heart of effective interdepartmental communications.

Check your progress 6

1. Explain the concept of TQM.

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1.12 CASE STUDIES

1.12.1 Case Study 1

Situation: Marketing and Sales Knows It All—But Didn't Tell Us

Mr. and Mrs. Oil Magnate are hosting a private party for 200 people in the Chandelier Room of City Hotel. On arriving at the hotel, they approach the front desk and ask if Mr. Benton, the director of marketing and sales, is available. The desk clerk checks the duty board and sees that Mr. Benton has left for the day. He responds, "Sorry, he's left for the day. What are you here for anyway?" The Magnates immediately feel neglected and ask to see the manager on duty. Mr. Gerard, the assistant general manager, arrives on the scene and asks what he can do for the Magnates. Mr. Magnate has a number of concerns: Who will be in charge of their party? Will their two favourite servers be serving the cocktails, appetizers and dinner? Have the flowers that were flown in from Holland arrived? Mr. Gerard says, "Gee, you'll have to speak with André, our banquet captain. He knows everything." When André arrives, he tells the Magnates that Mr. Benton left no instructions about who will be serving the party, and he has not seen any tulips in the walk-in. Mrs. Magnate declares her party will be a disaster. Mr. Magnate decides to proceed with the party and take up the lack of professional service later.

Later has arrived: Mr. Magnate has complained to the general manager and I. M. Owner—the owner of City Hotel—and both are upset about the situation. Mr. Magnate and I. M. Owner are co-investors in a construction project. Even if the two men were not business associates, the treatment of any guest in such a shabby way spells disaster for future convention and banquet sales.

1.12.2 Case Study 2

The computer team of HOTEL ABC is in the process of updating a computer needs analysis in their hotel. The team is ready to decide which new modules should be adopted. Miss Anita, front office manager and chairperson of the committee, is seeking consensus on whether the team should recommend the purchase of a point-of-sale module for the restaurant operation or a guest history module for the marketing and sales department. Mr. John food and beverage manager says the point-of-sale module will pay for itself in six months because guests are walking out of the hotel without having their breakfast charges posted to their folios. Lola, director of marketing and sales, says the purchase of the guest history module will increase business by 25 percent in the first year. The budget will allow for only one purchase. What will be your recommendations to the team?

1.13 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we:

- Stated the need and importance of interdepartmental and intradepartmental coordination and communication.
- Explained the reasons for communication between front office and various other departments
- Pointed out the Importance of TQM in communication

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

The marketing and sales department relies on the front office to provide data on guest histories, or details concerning each guest's visit. Some of the information gathered is based on frequency of visits, corporate affiliation, special needs. It is also the front office's job to make a good first impression on every single person entering the hotel, to relay messages, and to meet the requests of guests who are using the hotel for meetings, seminars and banquets.

The guest history is a valuable resource for marketing and sales, which use the guest registration information (details on the registration card, which is filled by the guest during check in) to target marketing campaigns, develop promotions, prepare mailing labels and select appropriate advertising media. The front office staff must make every effort to keep this database updated and accurate.

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

- Available Clean, or Ready—room is ready to be occupied
- Occupied—guest or guests are already occupying a room
- Stay over—guest will not be checking out of a room on the current day

- Dirty or On-Change—guest has checked out of the room, but the housekeeping staff has not released the room for occupancy
- Out-of-Order—room is not available for occupancy because of a mechanical
- Malfunction.

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

Paid-outs are forms used to indicate the amounts of money paid out of the cashier's drawer on behalf of a guest or an employee of the hotel.

Point-of-sale terminals are computerized cash registers that interface with a property management system; information on guest charges is automatically.

Guest's **folio**—his or her record of charges and payments.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

Marquee - The curb side message board, which includes the logo of the hotel and space for a message.

Daily announcement board, - An inside listing of the daily activities of the hotel (time, group, and room assignment)

Check your Progress 5

Answers 1:

The information produced by the front office is a necessary first step in the process of the factual guest accounting process and the financial assembly of data for the cost controller. Without accurate daily entry by desk clerks and production of a night audit, the controller does not have the figures to produce reports for the owners, general manager and supervisors. One might expect this communication to be in the form of reports. However, the front office and cost controller departments often communicate orally.

Answers 2:

The maintenance or engineering department and front office communicate on room status and requests for maintenance service. Maintenance employees must

know the occupancy status of a room before attending to plumbing, heating, or air-conditioning problems. If the room is reserved, the two departments work out a period so the guest can enter the room on arrival or be assigned to another room. Cooperative efforts produce the best solutions to difficult situations.

Answers 3:

Communications between the security department and the front office are important in providing hospitality to the guest. These departments work together closely in maintaining guest security. Fire safety measures and emergency communication systems as well as procedures for routine investigation of guest security concerns require the cooperation of these departments. Because of the recent series of unfortunate events, the nature of the security hotels offer their guests has changed. All members of the front office team must be on alert for people who do not belong in the lobby and report inconsistencies with the security department. This professional view of security allows the front office to support the security department.

Answers 4:

The human resources management department may rely on the front office staff to act as an initial point of contact for potential employees in all departments. It may even ask the front office to screen job candidates. If so, guidelines for and training in screening methods must be provided.

Some directors of human resources management depend on the front office to distribute application forms and other personnel-related information to job applicants. The potential employee may ask for directions to the personnel office at the front desk

Check your Progress 6

Answer:

Total quality management (TQM) is a management technique that encourages managers to look with a critical eye at processes used to deliver products and services. Managers must ask front-line employees and supervisors to question each step in the methods they use to provide hospitality for guests. Examples: “Why do guests complain about waiting in line to check out?” “Why do guests say our table service is rushed?” “Why do guests get upset when their rooms aren’t ready on check-in?” Managers and their employees must then look for answers to these questions.

UNIT 2 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Property Management System (PMS)

2.3 Guest First Impression

2.3.1 Position of the Front Desk

2.4 Requirements of A PMS

2.4.1 Importance of Needs Analysis

2.4.2 Selecting a Team

2.4.3 Analyzing the Flow of Guests through the Hotel

2.4.4 Communicating Information

2.4.5 Reviewing Administrative Paperwork

2.4.6 Management Review of Information

2.4.7 Evaluate Needs That Have Been Identified

2.4.8 Assessing Needs Based On Findings

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2.9.7 Checkout

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2.9.9 Inquiries/Reports

2.10 Back Office

2.11 Housekeeping

2.12 Food and Beverage

2.13 Maintenance

2.14 Security

2.15 Marketing and Sales

2.16 Let Us Sum Up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the various important points to be considered while selecting and installing a Property Management System (PMS) in a hotel.

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the need of a PMS
- Explain Importance of a needs analysis
- State basic requirements of different departments from PMS
- Discuss details entered in a PMS
- Point out factors to be considered for selection of PMS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Computer applications are central to front office operations in today's modern hotels. For new properties, computers are standard equipment; for existing hotels, computers are being integrated into everyday operations to assist in providing hospitality to guests. Computer applications include routinely processing reservations as well as handling registrations, guest charges, guest checkout and the night audit. **Interfacing**, the electronic sharing of data, of hotel departments such as food and beverage and the gift shop through **point-of-sale**, an outlet in the hotel that generates income (restaurant, gift shop, spa, garage); maintenance through monitoring of energy and heating and cooling systems; and security through control of guest keys are just a few of the applications that are explored in this unit

2.2 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PMS)

Upon the commencement of a career in the hospitality industry, one would want to develop a thorough understanding of front office computer applications. This does not refer to one particular computer hardware or software system; training at any property will include specific operating procedures to produce reports or review information from the database. Instead, this unit provides general information on which one can base their understanding of computer applications at the front desk. These applications are encompassed by the term property management system (PMS), a generic term for applications of computer hardware and software used to manage a hotel.

You will notice that PMS is not confined to the front office; it interfaces with housekeeping, food and beverage, marketing and sales, accounts, engineering, security, and other departments, all of which are service departments of a hotel. Each department plays a role, along with the front office, in serving the needs of the guest— before, during, and after the guest's stay. The front office staff coordinates the communications, accounting, security and safety requirements of the guest. As the nerve centre of the hotel, the front office handles most of the recordkeeping and so benefits most from a computerized system.

The first part of this unit sets the stage for adopting a PMS. Software and hardware are discussed, as are other considerations in choosing a PMS. The final section of the unit discusses the various computer modules of the PMS as they apply to the hotel industry.

Check your progress 1

1. What do you mean by PMS?

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2.3 GUEST FIRST IMPRESSION

The front desk has always held a position of importance in the hotel operation.

It is one of the first points of contact with the guest, and, as such, its ambience sets the tone for the hotel. Neatness, orderliness, attractiveness, quality and professionalism are just a few of the impressions that the front desk should convey to a guest. The guest wants to feel important, safe, and in the hands of professionals. The impression conveyed by the physical layout of the desk assists the front office in creating a positive image for the operation.

Providing hospitality to the guest and promoting in-house sales are of great importance to the continued financial success of the operation. To provide an environment in which these objectives can be met, a well-planned physical arrangement of the front desk is important.

2.3.1 Position of the Front Desk

Equipment: The front desk should be positioned so that it accommodates the guest while enabling employees to work efficiently. Guests who wait in line for ten minutes only to be told they are in the wrong line will have a negative first impression. Likewise, an associate who has to wait to use a printer or share a computer terminal will not be as efficient. As you become familiar with the practice of processing guests at the front desk, you will see how easy it is to plan a layout of the physical equipment needed.

Guest Safety: The position of the front desk is usually determined by the main entrance of the building and the location of the elevator. The front desk clerk and the night auditor must be able to see anyone who enters the hotel; this helps ensure a safe environment for the guest. Positioning the front desk on the same side as the main entrance and the elevator is not recommended. The view is essential to the Duty Manager, who assists security in monitoring the activities in the hotel lobby.

In light of the security issues that emerged after 9/11, the positioning of the front desk is even more important, allowing the front desk staff to be the front-line sentinels of the hotel. Although they may not leave their post, they must be trained to be observant and efficient in summoning the right people to investigate a situation. Positioning a hotel front desk facing the main entry and exit allows the desk clerk to more easily monitor who is entering and leaving the building—an important advantage when considering hotel security. International translation cards, which assist foreign guests in translating travel phrases of their native language into English, are frequently kept at front desks. Foreign visitors and hotel desk clerks find these cue cards helpful.

Check your progress 2

1. Write a short note on equipment positioning at the front desk.

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2.4 REQUIREMENTS OF A PMS

One of the features of the PMS is that it can be configured according to the needs. This section focuses on the components that should be included when deciding to adopt a PMS. The decision-making process begins with understanding the importance of a needs analysis performed by a team of front-line staff members. The needs analysis should focus on the flow of the guests through the hotel and interdepartmental communication needs. A review of administrative paperwork produced by management in all areas of the hotel is also a consideration. After management has gathered relevant data concerning operational needs, it must objectively determine whether a computerized system/PMS will help improve guest service. Other important concepts covered here include software selection considerations and computer hardware terminology. A review of how people interact with computers and how a hotel must make provisions while hardware is being installed is also offered. The importance of computer training and planning a backup power source for continued computer operation in case of a power failure or software crash is reviewed. The often-overlooked maintenance agreement and the important financial payback complete the discussion of selecting a PMS.

2.4.1 Importance of Needs Analysis

Selecting new equipment for a hotel property is best done after a needs analysis is performed. A needs analysis indicates the flow of information and services of a specific property to determine whether the new equipment—in this case, computers—can improve the flow. The bottlenecks that occur at registration or the lack of information from the housekeeping department on the occupancy status of a room can be alleviated by the use of computers at the front desk. Only after the completion of an operational flow analysis can computer applications are developed to improve the situation. The importance of needs analysis can be most clearly seen when you consider what can go wrong if such an analysis is not made. The first area of concern for property owners and managers is cost, both initial and long-term cost. As technology has evolved and the equipment become more common, the cost of computerizing a hotel has decreased and the payback period has shortened. However, even with these lower costs, installing and operating a PMS is not inexpensive, and the cost of installing and operating a system that does not meet the specific needs of a particular property is exorbitant.

A system that works well for one downtown hotel may not meet the needs of a downtown hotel in another city or of a motel in the same area. All the technological gadgetry in the world will not impress a guest if the equipment fails to deliver service.

The system must meet the needs of the staff as well as the guests. An inappropriate PMS will produce control reports that are not useful to management; the functions of such software therefore are limited, and the cost of the system exceeds its value. For example, a hotel owner who believes that a PMS will speed registrations and decides to purchase a system that does not allow housekeeping staff to input room status will be disappointed.

The following list shows the procedure for performing a needs analysis.

- Select a team to analyze needs.
- Analyze the flow of guests through the lodging property.
- Analyze the flow of information from other departments to the front office.
- Analyze the administrative paperwork produced in other departments.
- Review the information gathered in steps 2, 3 and 4.
- Evaluate the needs that have been identified—such as control reports, communication and administrative paperwork produced in other departments—in terms of importance.
- Combine needs to determine desired applications.

2.4.2 Selecting a Team

The first and most important step in performing a needs analysis for adopting a PMS in a hotel is to select a team to determine the reports and information being generated. The analysis team should include employees at both the management and staff levels. Such a team is better able to see all aspects of the operation; management can provide input on the overall objectives, while staff is more aware of day-to-day needs. The front office manager who feels the reservation system is inefficient may find that the associate not only agrees but also can offer suggestions for improving the situation. This associate may not know the first thing about flow analysis processes—preparing a systematic drawing of the operations included in a particular function—but the hands-on information provided will assist the front office manager in evaluating the reservation system. In another instance, the general manager may request that certain additional room sales analysis reports be produced by the marketing and sales department only to find the front office manager producing that information.

2.4.3 Analyzing the Flow of Guests through the Hotel

The second step in the needs analysis is to analyze the flow of guests through the visit to the property, which provides a structure for this detailed analysis process. The guest stay does not start at registration but at the time, a reservation is made. (In reality, the guest stays starts even before this, because guests often select a property as a result of marketing efforts.

Issues that can be analyzed are quite diverse. They include the ease with which the telephone system can be used, the availability of room occupancy status for guests on any specific date, the length of time it takes to complete a reservation request, the method used to confirm a reservation, the procedure used to block rooms, and the means of finding a single reservation. Also subject to analysis are the methods for gathering guest information upon check-in and the processes for ensuring the correct posting of guest charges, the time required for a guest to check out, the procedure used to resolve a guest's dispute of charges, and the process for posting meal and phone charges just before checkout.

How are the daily room charges and taxes posted to the rooms? How long does it take to do this? Are any vital statistics not being produced by completion of the night audit report? How is the information assembled in the night audit? How long does it take to produce this information? Also, determine if guest information already on hand from reservation, registration and guest accounting is being applied for additional visits.

2.4.4 Communicating Information

The third step in the needs analysis process is to look at the information flowing from other departments to the front office. How is information concerning occupancy status received from the housekeeping department? How can a guest report an emergency or fire on the property? How do the food and beverage department and gift shop report guest charges? How does the marketing and sales department determine if blocks of rooms are available on certain dates? How does the engineering department monitor energy use in guest rooms? How does the security department ensure the integrity of guest keys? How is email used? A good PMS can embrace all of these lines of communication.

2.4.5 Reviewing Administrative Paperwork

The fourth step is to review the administrative paperwork produced in the hotel that is necessary to assist management. How does the human resources department maintain personnel files and former employee records? How is direct mail advertising generated in the marketing and sales department? How are function

books and individual function sheets maintained? How are tickler files (files used to prompt notice of when certain events will be occurring) maintained? How are work orders processed? What method is used to devise daily menu specials?

2.4.6 Management Review of Information

In the fifth step of this analysis, management must take charge of reviewing the information compiled to determine if needs are being met. Is the marketing and sales department making mistakes because incorrect information concerning the inventory of available rooms is provided by the front office staff? Are desk clerks unable to check the occupancy status of a guest room because the housekeeping department is not providing immediate information? Have misquotes on room rates caused lost revenue for the hotel? Is the night auditor unable to retrieve room status information to confirm or guarantee reservations? The significance of each need and the consequences if the need is not met are then established. Customer satisfaction and quality of service as well as financial implications are considered. How often have conventions not been booked because accurate information on room availability was not at hand? How much revenue was lost as a result? How frequently does a general manager receive complaints because a guest was sent to a room that was under repair or not cleaned? How often must the front office manager adjust a guest's room rate because of a misquote? How does the number of guaranteed reservations compare with the number of confirmed reservations? Why are guaranteed reservations not requested by the night auditor?

2.4.7 Evaluate Needs that Have Been Identified

This step requires a discussion between department managers as to the significance of the reports produced as they relate to producing customer service and financial success of the operation. Each module in the PMS will have a related cost, and the justification for that cost can be simplified if all discussions focus on the goals of the operation.

2.4.8 Assessing Needs Based on Findings

The final step in the analysis is to combine operational and administrative needs to determine which computer applications are appropriate for the property. Often the shared use of a room inventory database is well worth the financial investment. A word processing program to produce direct mail letters, regular correspondence and daily menus may also justify a particular module of a PMS. The needs analysis enables you to know what you need and what you do not need and will help you choose from the many systems available.

Check your progress 3

1. State the importance of need analysis.
2. Describe the procedures in brief required for performing need analysis.

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2.5 CHOOSING SOFTWARE

Selecting software, the computer programs or applications that process data such as guest information and aid in financial transactions and report generation, is more important than selecting hardware, or actual computer equipment such as central processing units, keyboards, monitors and printers. The effectiveness of a PMS depends on selecting software that allows management to increase guest satisfaction and to access financial and informational data for control purposes. The information obtained from the needs analysis provides a framework for evaluating the numerous software packages on the market today.

Each software package offers numerous features; it is important to choose one package that is most appropriate for your needs. Software on the market today includes guest service, accounting and information options that are standard in the hotel industry. Investigate the guest service features, accounting options and information applications to determine which PMS is best for your property. Software vendor personnel will discuss with you the options that fit the size of your hotel and the needs of the guests. Hoteliers should also look forward and think of expansion

and growth of their property, or perhaps change in the mix of their market. For example, one hotel may plan to add 200 rooms to the same market, while another hotel may not add any rooms but have a shift in guest type from 20 percent family and 80 percent business to 80 percent family and 20 percent business. Now the family market is doing much more dining in the restaurant (indicating a need for a point-of-sale system that interfaces with the PMS), purchasing more in the gift shop, (another need), and indicating more gift purchases for day-trip packages (yet another need).

If you feel the applications of a particular software package will not help you manage your property, that adding a particular guest service will not increase guest satisfaction, that no significant savings will result from producing more sophisticated accounting reports, or that the arrangement of historical information about guests will not be beneficial, then you should not adopt that PMS. You control the software selection; its function is to help you do a better job. Only you can decide which applications are most useful in your facility.

Examples of how the PMS modules can be applied include the following:

The marketing and sales department in any size hotel will clearly find that computerization of client files, meeting room information, and guest history is useful. Preparation of direct mail for a smaller property perhaps would best be outsourced, while a larger property may make better use of a PMS module. The travel agent mode for maintaining a database of travel agents and processing their fees is useful to any size property. The night audit is almost a universal necessity to properties of all sizes. The former eight hours of labour over balancing the guest ledger and city ledger are replaced by a few keystrokes, in some cases. The front desk module, with its applications for check-in, check out, room status, postings to guest accounts, advance deposits and cashier options, are also acceptable at both small and large properties. The call accounting system is an option that found its way into the hotel's front desk (even at smaller hotels because of the deregulation of telecommunication systems in the U.S.) before some of the other modules, such as the point-of-sale in the restaurant. A maintenance module is more appropriate for a large hotel, whereas a small hotel can rely on an in-house email system, telephone, or paper mail system. These examples, as any other technologies that are developed, should always be evaluated against goals of the hotel, the needs of guest, and a budget.

Future hoteliers should maintain a library of current PMS vendors. The Internet provides a useful and immediate resource for most hoteliers. This first step is accomplished by going to your favourite Web browser and typing in such

key phrases as "property management system", "hotel PMS" "hotel computer" or "HITEC" (Hospitality Industry Technology Exposition and Conference, which features all the latest computer software for the hospitality industry.) Another method of keeping your PMS file up to date is to attend local and regional trade shows. Stopping by a booth at the hotel show and discussing your current needs with a software vendor will assist you in maintaining awareness on the developments in the industry and matching them with the needs analysis of your guests.

Check your progress 4

1. Explain how PMS modules can be applied in choosing software for an organization .

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2.6 BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS FROM PMS

Marketing and Sales

- Client file
- Travel agent
- Direct mail
- Meeting room information
- Guest history

Night Audit

- Room and tax posting
- Various operational reports

Accounting

- Accounts payable
- Payroll
- Accounts receivable
- Profit-and-loss statement
- General ledger
- Balance sheet

Human Resources Management

- Personnel files
- Time and attendance

Reservations

- Room availability
- Yield management

Front Desk

- Check-in
- Guest credit audit
- Room status
- Advance deposits
- Postings to guest accounts
- Cashier

Call Accounting

- Guest information
- Phone call posting

Housekeeping

- Room status

Maintenance

- Work orders

Food and Beverage

- Point-of-sale
- Inventory
- Menu profitability
- Recipes

Check your progress 5

1. List the basic requirement of various departments from PMS module.

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2.7 USE OF DETAILS ENTERED IN A PMS

The ability to interface among computer databases (sharing or networking of information) is very important. This concept must be designed into the PMS for it to contribute to the effective delivery of hospitality to the guest and to generate a return on its investment. As computer applications become more sophisticated, sharing databases is essential. For example, the information secured at the time a reservation is made can be used by the marketing and sales department to generate more business. The point-of-sale data captured in the restaurants can be reviewed by front office staff to check how they can sharpen their hospitality delivery skills for guests on arrival. For example, if the staff knows a guest likes to order a certain Italian pastry as part of his meal, then they can perhaps use that as part of the welcoming chat upon arrival. Alternatively, if a review of a guest folio reveals that she played a particular sport during her previous stay, the staff could mention the opportunity to set a start time for that sport. All of these ideas help make the guest feel important and help make a positive return on the investment for the PMS.

The positioning of the hardware at workstations should be based on the same workflow analysis used for any new process or equipment. Consider the needs of the guest (who will be the end user), the employee who will operate the equipment and the other staff who will want access to information. The information you gain from the needs analysis will assist you in explaining your particular needs to the computer consultants who will install your PMS.

Check your progress 6

1. How the details entered in a PMS can be used by different departments in a hotel.

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2.8 OTHER FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

The other factors that are needed to be considered while installing a PMS system are as follows:

- Ergonomics
- Vendor Claims
- Hardware Installation Plans
- Computer Training Programs
- Backup Power Sources
- Maintenance Agreement

2.8.1 Ergonomics

The installation of the electronic cables that connect all of the hardware must also be analyzed. Installation and replacement of cables that run through walls and floors can be costly. Proper computer functioning requires an air-conditioned environment; in guest service areas, this may not present a problem, but in other areas, it may pose difficulties. **Ergonomics**, the study of how people relate physiologically to machines, is also a consideration for the front office manager. Glare and flicker from the **cursor**, a flashing point on a monitor that indicates where data can be entered, and movement on screens can cause eyestrain. In fact, it is fairly common for computer operators to require lenses to correct eyestrain. Another common complaint is neck pain due to improper positioning of the monitor. The swivel base provided on most hardware helps eliminate these problems.

Pain in the wrist may also occur if the keyboard is positioned above the waist of the operator. Carpal tunnel syndrome, or compression of a nerve in the wrist and fingers, is another unfortunate result of overuse of computer keyboards. Because carpal tunnel syndrome causes extreme pain for a computer operator, the keyboard should be positioned at or below waist level. In addition, pain in fingers and hands can occur with extensive entry of data on a keyboard.

PMS Other factors to consider in choosing a PMS are vendor claims, installation plans, training, backup power sources and maintenance.

2.8.2 Vendor Claims

The prospective PMS purchaser should contact current users of the system being considered and ask relevant questions like: How easy is it to operate this system? How useful are the reports you obtain? Has the vendor been available to help train staff and provide emergency service? Answers such as "I don't know how the property could manage without it" or "It is difficult to operate, and the reports are awkward" may alert you to potential advantages or problems. (Remember, however, that different properties have different needs and priorities; because the system provides an option you consider unimportant is meaningless for your purposes.) Consider the amount of time these properties spend on needs analysis. A visit to the hotel property is worth the effort. Learning how different features of the system work, how various departments interact with the PMS and what kinds of forms are used will help you with part of your decision. You will also develop a feeling for how guest services are affected.

2.8.3 Hardware Installation Plans

A careful plan for hardware installation will help the management maintain a desirable level of guest service and employee morale. First, it is the key to determine who will install wiring or cables. Next to be determined is which hardware will be installed and at what times, followed by which departments will receive hardware first and what methods will be required to get all departments of the property **online**, a term used to indicate that a computer is operational and connected with a central computer. This information should be used to develop a flowchart, which will help departments adapt and interact using online operations.

2.8.4 Computer Training Programs

The training offered by a computer company ranges from classes held at the corporate headquarters to on-the-job training sessions and informal consultant hot lines. The staff that will use the computers must be thoroughly trained if the equipment is to be put to its best use. Training at the terminals should be preceded by an explanation of how the system will help staff members in their work. Some computer companies lend a dummy computer setup to a lodging property so the staff can experiment with the training modules. This allows them to make mistakes in private and to become familiar with the keyboard configuration. Documentation of procedures will also assist the staff in developing an awareness of the system's capabilities, as will individual hotel-developed step-by-step computer application cue cards.

It is also important to note that employee resistance to change can be overcome with a user-friendly training program. The team concept will help employees overcome resistance to change because they are included on the team. Members of the needs analysis team will see an idea develop from concept to fruition. Many employees resist change because they fear they will be unable to perform a new task; a training program that allows adequate time and practice will help introduce the technology and decrease this fear.

2.8.5 Backup Power Sources

What happens if the power goes out? This concern, as well as the possibility of **brownouts**, partial loss of electricity, and **blackouts**, total loss of electricity, is addressed by computer dealers. Battery-powered temporary energy units are used when power is lost or cut to ensure that operational data are not lost. Hotel managers who have experienced power losses are well versed in maintaining communication among the departments and posting charges as required. Once the power returns in full, the staff can catch up on posting to the electronic folio.

2.8.6 Maintenance Agreements

One final consideration in adopting a PMS is the maintenance agreement, which should spell out the related costs of repair and replacement of hardware and software. Allowance for emergency service and times available for general service should also be listed. Loaner or backup equipment availability enhances the attractiveness of the agreement.

Purchasing or leasing a PMS for hotel use is a major financial decision. Such an investment can tie up cash flow. If the costs and benefits are not realistically projected, profits may be in jeopardy. The first part of this unit stressed the importance of performing a needs analysis. Hotel properties that match computer applications with needs by going through this process will achieve the most realistic assessment of costs versus benefits when adopting computers.

The controller of a hotel property usually prepares a budget in consultation with the general manager. Sales of room-nights, food and beverages, and other products and services are projected. Considered with these projections are the related costs of producing those goods and services. The controller is usually aware of the specific costs in each department—the amount of overtime pay required at the end of the month to produce the monthly inventory in the food and beverage department, the extra part-time help required to staff the front desk for a busy checkout or check-in period, the cost to produce a direct mail piece for the marketing and sales office,

and the fee charged by the outside accountant to produce a monthly profit-and-loss statement. This knowledge is helpful in determining how much money can be saved if a PMS were to be introduced. The amount of money that can be saved (along with tax depreciation advantages) must be equal to or greater than the total amount spent on the computer system. Sometimes management may feel that less tangible benefits, such as greater service to the guest or improved morale among employees, justify the cost even when actual monetary savings are not quite equal.

The decision about whether to purchase or lease must also be made. The outright cost of purchase, related finance charges (if applicable), discount for cash, and depreciation are only a few of the points to review if the hotel decides to purchase. These considerations must be weighed against continuance of cash flow, application of lease payments to the purchase price, and tax advantages of leasing.

Determining the **payback period**—the time required for the hotel to recoup purchase price, installation charges, financing fees, and so forth through cost savings and increased guest satisfaction—will also assist management in deciding whether or not to install computers.

Remember that the adoption of a PMS includes the management of all guest services and accounting functions. While the needs of the front desk alone—for a call-accounting system or the rental of a reservations system—may not justify the expense of a PMS, the needs of all departments can make such a system cost-effective. The property management system is organized around the functions needed to assist in delivering service to the guest. The software options listed earlier in this chapter are only a few of the many available to hoteliers. For purposes of this review, assume that the lodging property is equipped with a state-of-the art PMS and that the system is up and running. The software program **main menu** lists on the screen all the available individual programs (modules) included in the system. These modules lie at the heart of the front office manager and his or her staff's ability to deliver excellent service to the guest because of the underlying role of communication between departments and sharing of financial information. The PMS has become so much an essential part of lodging operations that to operate a hotel without one would be very difficult. The front office manager relies on the reservation module almost hourly to check changes that may affect the day's service and financial operations. The night audit, if completed as it was in previous years—tallying columns or using a mechanical audit machine—would take much training and many labour hours. The posting module is another timesaver that produces a much more accurate and efficient-looking guest ledger.

Check your progress 7

1. What are the various other factors that are needed to be considered before installing a PMS module in a hotel?

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2.9 INDIVIDUAL MODULES OF THE PMS

The following discussion of individual modules and subprograms highlights the applications of these software options in a property management system.

2.9.1 Reservations

The reservations module consists of subsystems that can receive individual guest or group data, check a guest's request against a data bank of available rooms, and store this information. The guest data are received through a personal phone call, through another computer in the referral system, or via the Internet. All of the possibilities or room types and locations, room rates, and special requests can be matched with the existing room inventories. Information concerning guarantees with credit cards or confirmed reservations is captured at this time. Details on deposits, blocking, times of arrival and departure, VIP guest lists, and projected occupancies, and reports on these reservation functions assist the front office manager.

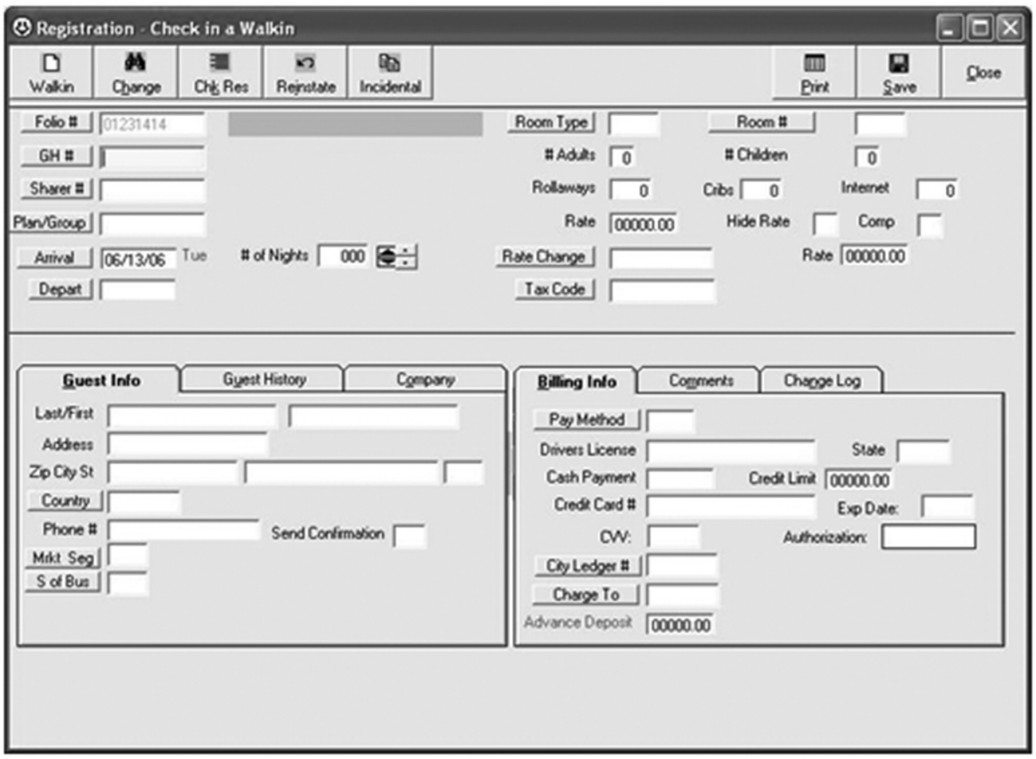

Fig. 2.1: Reservations module

2.9.2 Revenue Management

It is a process of planning to achieve maximum room rates and most profitable guests (guests who will spend money at the hotel's food and beverage outlets, gift shops, etc.), encourages front office managers, general managers, and marketing and sales directors to target sales periods and develop sales programs that will maximize profit for the hotel. This module shares similar databases with the reservations module—room inventory, room rates, reservation status, and guest information. If a hotel is entering a maximum demand and sales period, the yield management module allows the reservations manager to block out that period to prevent guest requests for room reservations for less than the minimum time. In addition, the computer prompts the reservations clerk on which room rate category to apply. Daily reports on how well the front office achieved maximum yield of rack rates (the highest room rate charged in a hotel) provides feedback to the general manager and owners. A history of guest sales in food and beverage also assists sales and marketing managers in determining if a group reservation has potential for profitability.

2.9.3 Registration

Guest registration modules have greatly improved the check-in process. Because information has already been captured at the time of reservation, less time is required for registration. The front desk clerk need only verify the guest's request for room type, location and rate with room inventory and room status. Provisions for walk-in guests without reservations are similarly handled. Method of payment is also established. The hard plastic key can be issued after the security module has changed the entrance code for the room. The guest registration procedure can also be completed by the self-check-in process, a procedure that requires the guest to insert a credit card having a magnetic stripe containing personal and financial data into a self-check-in terminal and answer a few simple questions concerning the guest stay.

Also note the inclusion of the intranet in this module; it greatly supports the communication process required by the front office staff in delivering hospitality at the time of check-in. As an example of how this module works, consider the guest who flies to Chicago from Dallas, signs a guest registration form, waits until the desk clerk checks the status of the room, and receives a key—check-in is complete. All guest information was captured when the initial reservation at the Dallas Limited-Service Inn was made. The data bank of room occupancy information provided by the housekeeper is available to the front desk via the computer. The front desk clerk chooses the room the guest will occupy and issues a key. The total time required for registration is less than five minutes.

2.9.4 Room Status

Access to the room status module provides information on availability of entry to a guest room. There are two types of room status: reservation and housekeeping. Reservation status can be open, confirmed, guaranteed or repair. Housekeeping status can be ready, on change, or out of order. Reservation status is maintained by the reservation department or reservation system, while housekeeping status is provided by the housekeeping department. The room status feature is one of the most valuable features of the PMS. It streamlines the operation problems of check-in and assists other departments as well. This module, which may share the same room data bank with reservations, provides reports used by the housekeeper, front office manager and staff, maintenance engineer, night auditor, reservations clerk, and marketing and sales department. The housekeeper must know which guest rooms have been occupied and need cleaning; desk clerks must know if the guest room is reserved or open for sale; the maintenance engineer must plan for routine painting and refurbishing; the night auditor must verify which rooms have

been sold to complete the night audit; the reservations clerk needs information on the availability of guest rooms; and the marketing and sales department must have current information on room availability for conventions. This is another module that might include the intranet; however, room status information is immediate in nature, and the posting of a message with a delayed response time may not be appropriate.

2.9.5 Posting

The posting module of a PMS often supplies one of the first benefits realized by the front office manager: Immediate posting of charges incurred by the guests. Not only is the posting operation streamlined but also accuracy is ensured. A PMS allows the posting to occur at the point of sale in the restaurant, lounge or gift shop. Similarly, room and tax charges or telephone calls can be posted to the electronic folio in a very short time. Transfers and adjustments of guest charges (with approval by management) to folios are easily made. Charges incurred on behalf of the guest can be posted to the electronic folio by entering room number, amount of charge, department and transaction type. These data are stored in memory and retrieved after an inquiry, during report generation, or at checkout. The accuracy of these charges still depends on the employee operating the point-of-sale terminal in the restaurant. Entering an inaccurate room number (room 412 entered as 712) or a reversed amount ($32.23 entered as $23.32) will still result in an incorrect posting.

Our guest at the Limited-Service Inn in Chicago wants to charge his valet expense of $20.95 to his room account. After the desk clerk has processed the paid-out to the delivery person, this charge is posted to the electronic folio by entering the room number, amount of charge, department and type of transaction. The night auditor verifies the integrity of all department totals.

2.9.6 Call Accounting

The call accounting module of a PMS is a system that automatically posts telephone charges and a predetermined mark-up to a guest's folio (Figure 4-12). The individual subscriber to the telephone system (the hotel property) can charge a service fee for any local or long-distance call. The hotel can now use the telephone system to generate profit rather than to simply supply service to the guest. The ability to make a profit through adding service charges, combined with the increased frequency and accuracy of electronic posting, has made the call-accounting option a desirable one. However, with the increased use of cell phones, phone cards, and personal digital assistants (PDAs), telephone revenue has declined in some properties. The PMS call-accounting feature retrieves data for time, charges and

service fee and then posts these charges to the electronic folio. The accuracy of processing telephone charges is greatly increased through the use of a PMS call-accounting feature.

2.9.7 Checkout

The inconvenience of guest checkout (long lines, disputes over charges) is greatly reduced with the PMS checkout feature, which prints out an accurate, neat and complete guest folio in seconds.

Disputes over guest charges still occur at the time of checkout, but not as often. The posting of a long-distance telephone call to room 295 instead of room 296 is less likely to occur with a PMS, because the PMS interfaces with the call-accounting system and the phone charge is automatically posted to the guest's electronic folio.

Efficiency at time of checkout is also improved when the desk clerk retrieves a hard copy of the folio and presents it for review to the guest. The guest has already indicated method of payment at check-in. An imprint of the credit card has been made, or prepayment has occurred. The floor limit, an amount of credit allowed by the credit card agency, and house limit, an amount of credit allowed by the hotel, have been monitored by the PMS. These controls help avoid high debt balances; the amount of money the guest owes the hotel. Last-minute purchases of products or services are automatically posted at the point-of-sale terminals.

The guest completes the checkout process by confirming the method of payment. The associate may suggest making future reservations at this property or other properties in the chain or referral group. Transfers to the city ledger are made electronically at this time. Cashier activity reports are monitored, as is other information about the day's checkouts (such as number of guest departures and time of departures). A PMS can generate a **paid in advance** (PIA) listing, which monitors guests who paid cash at check-in. It could also be programmed to prevent guests from charging products or services to their guest folio.

Guests can avoid checkout lines by using **in-room guest checkout**, a feature of the property management system that allows the guest to use a guest room television to check out of the hotel. For this process, the night desk staff slips a copy of an updated guest folio under the door the night before checkout. The guest enters a few digits on the television control panel to start the process. After he or she answers questions about multiple guest accounts in the same room, accuracy of charges, and method of payment, for example, the process is complete. The guest can pick up a copy of the folio at the front desk if desired.

2.9.8 Night Audit

The night audit has always been labour-intensive. In addition to acting as an associate and posting the room and tax charges, the night auditor must balance the guest transactions of the day. To extend credit to guests, debits and **credits**, the amount of money the hotel owes the guests, must be balanced daily. The debits originating from the various departments must be checked against the totals posted to the guest folios. The credits, in the form of guest payments, must be accounted for by reviewing the guests' outstanding balances. Although this sounds like a simple process, the procedure can be very extensive. However, nowadays, this process is simplified by the complete automation of the PMS.

The PMS simplifies the night audit by producing totals from departments and guest folios. These data are assembled into standard report forms. Financial information is presented in the daily report, used by the management of the property to determine the financial success of a particular day.

2.9.9 Inquiries/Reports

The **inquiries/reports** feature of the PMS allows management to retrieve operating or financial information at any time. The front office manager may want to check the number of available rooms in the room inventory for a particular night, the number of guests expected to be checked in, the number of guests to be checked out for the day, the current room status from the housekeeping department, or the **outstanding balance report**, a listing of guests' folio balances. These reports can be produced easily on a PMS. The inquiries/reports feature of the PMS enables management to maintain a current view of operations and finances.

Check your progress 8

1. List the different modules that could be included in PMS.

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2.10 BACK OFFICE

The hotel's accounting office, known as the back office, uses the accounting module of a PMS, which assists in the overall financial management of the hotel The PMS simplifies the accounting processes, which include the labour-intensive posting procedure of accounts payable, which is the amount of money the hotel owes vendors; the transfer of accounts receivable, which is the amount of money owed to the hotel, based on the guest ledger and city ledger; compilation and production of the payroll; budget preparation; the production of the profit-and-loss statement, which is an official financial listing of income and expenses; and the balance sheet, which is an official financial listing of assets, liabilities, and owner's equity at a certain point. For example, financial information concerning a certain vendor is entered once on a terminal located in the back office. This information is then reflected throughout the accounting process. Likewise, the financial information produced through the night audit can be accessed for various reports. These and other features assist in streamlining the accounting process. The intranet is another feature on this module that is most useful in communicating to front desk staff about situations where a guest's charges may need clarification after check out or about cost centres that have incurred charges that need clarification.

Check your progress 9

1. How is PMS useful in the operations of the back office?

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2.11 HOUSEKEEPING

Obtaining current information concerning guest room status has always caused problems for the front desk staff. Guests become impatient when they are delayed check-in. Desk clerks who have not received a room release from housekeeping have no choice but to remain calm and try to appease the guests. The process of obtaining ready status is quickly achieved with a PMS. The maid or houseman enters the ready status immediately through a computer terminal on the guest floor instead of waiting to report a block of rooms to the floor supervisor. The housekeeper no longer needs to make several trips per day to the desk clerk to release blocks of rooms. The efficiency of this module depends on the continued efforts of the housekeeping staff in reporting room status.

Assigning room attendants to clean rooms can be done easily. Labour analysis of number of guest rooms cleaned by room attendants and number of labour hours required to clean guest rooms is performed faster, and the daily housekeeper's report is quickly generated.

Inventory of equipment and guest room supplies is also readily available. Maintenance requests for guest rooms can be communicated instantly through the PMS. The maintenance department staff can also check room status information to determine if the housekeeping staff noted repairs to be made. If the maintenance department wants to take a room out of service for a few days to perform repairs, this information can be relayed to the housekeeping and front desk staff through the housekeeping module on the intranet.

Check your progress 10

1. How is PMS useful in the operations of Housekeeping department?

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2.12 FOOD AND BEVERAGE

The food and beverage module reduces paper flow (vouchers) as well as telephone calls from the restaurants and lounges to the front desk. It also facilitates the accounting process, verifying the integrity of the point-of-sale system. Cashier reports (cash, credit, room service) are easily produced. Other features include inventory control and calculation, recipe development, pricing, item profit evaluation, and sales projections. Sales production analysis and labour analysis are also possible with this module.

Check your progress 11

1. How is PMS useful in the operations of Food and Beverage Department?

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2.13 MAINTENANCE

Using a PMS streamlines the processing of work orders. Repair orders are entered by various department members. Incomplete jobs can be prioritized, and completed jobs can be analyzed for cost. Inventories of equipment and parts can be maintained. The maintenance module is also used to track energy costs and areas of use. In fact, heating and air conditioning in guest rooms can be activated at the front desk. This module enables the management of a hotel to analyze operational information of this vital department.

Check your progress 12

1. How is PMS useful in the operations of Maintenance Department?

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2.14 SECURITY

Electronic key production has enhanced key control. Each guest receives an electronic key that has a unique electronic code, because the PMS changes the key configuration or combination for each new guest room. Blank key cards (plastic or metal) can be coded at the front desk for each new guest.

Continual monitoring is a feature of the security module of the PMS. Fire alarm systems, including sprinklers and smoke detectors in guest rooms, public areas and operational areas are kept under constant surveillance via a fire safety display terminal. An alarm system or a voice telephone monitoring system alerts guests to a fire anywhere on the property. Elevators return automatically to the main lobby or other designated floor. Burglar alarms are also monitored through this module. The security feature of a PMS monitors security codes in other modules as well.

Check your progress 13

1. How is PMS useful in the operations of Security?

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2.15 MARKETING AND SALES

The marketing and sales department makes extensive use of the PMS .This department can retrieve guest histories—information on guests' previous stays that reveals geographic origin, telephone information, organizational affiliation, credit card usage, room accommodation preferences, and the like—from reservation and registration files. The source of the reservation (secretary, group, travel agent), type of accommodation requested and ZIP code of business office or personal domicile are only some of the data that can be obtained from the reservation files. Additional marketing data (newspapers read, radio stations listened to, source of recommendation) can be collected at the time of registration to give the marketing and sales department information on advertising media for target markets.

Another PMS application that the marketing and sales department can use is the ability to produce direct mail letters, which are letters sent directly to individuals in a targeted market group. Individual letters advertising certain products and services, together with mailing labels, can be prepared. Weekly function sheets, listings of the daily events in a hotel such as meetings, banquets and receptions, can be produced by assessing individual banquet sheets, listings of the details of an event at which food and beverages are served. Information on clients can be stored and updated as required. Contracts can also be produced. Tickler files on upcoming events are a great asset in keeping an edge on the competition. In addition, monthly newsletters can be produced through the word processing and desktop publishing applications. This module maintains reserved occupancy status of meeting and banquet rooms—a great organizational feature.

Check your progress 14

1. How is PMS useful in the operations of sales and marketing department?

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2.16 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we:

- Pointed out the need of a PMS
- Stated the importance of a needs analysis.
- Explained basic requirements of different departments from PMS.
- Discussed the use of details entered in a PMS.
- Identified factors to be considered for selection of PMS.

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

1 PMS means Property management system a generic term for applications of computer hardware and software used to manage a hotel.

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

The front desk should be positioned so that it accommodates the guest while enabling employees to work efficiently. Guests who wait in line for ten minutes only to be told they are in the wrong line will have a negative first impression. Likewise, an associate who has to wait to use a printer or share a computer terminal will not be as efficient. As you become familiar with the practice of processing guests at the front desk, you will see how easy it is to plan a layout of the physical equipment needed.

Check your Progress 3

Answer 1:

A needs analysis indicates the flow of information and services of a specific property to determine whether the new equipment—in this case, computers—can

improve the flow. The bottlenecks that occur at registration or the lack of information from the housekeeping department on the occupancy status of a room can be alleviated by the use of computers at the front desk. Only after the completion of an operational flow analysis can computer applications be developed to improve the situation. The importance of needs analysis can be most clearly seen when you consider what can go wrong if such an analysis is not made.

Answer 2:

Following are the procedures required for performing need analysis:

Selecting a Team: The first and most important step in performing a needs analysis for adopting a PMS in a hotel is to select a team to determine the reports and information being generated. The analysis team should include employees at both the management and staff levels. Such a team is better able to see all aspects of the operation; management can provide input on the overall objectives, while staff is more aware of day-to-day needs.

Analyzing the Flow of Guests Through the Hotel: The second step in the needs analysis is to analyze the flow of guests through the visit to the property, which provides a structure for this detailed analysis process.

Communicating Information: The third step in the needs analysis process is to look at the information flowing from other departments to the front office.

Reviewing Administrative Paperwork: The fourth step is to review the administrative paperwork produced in the hotel that is necessary to assist management.

Management Review of Information: In this step of this analysis, management must take charge of reviewing the information compiled to determine if needs are being met.

Evaluate Needs that Have Been Identified: This step requires a discussion between department managers as to the significance of the reports produced as they relate to producing customer service and financial success of the operation.

Assessing Needs Based on Findings: This step is to combine operational and administrative needs to determine which computer applications are appropriate for the property.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

While selecting software, the computer programs or applications that process data such as guest information and aid in financial transactions and report generation, is more important than selecting hardware, or actual computer equipment such as central processing units, keyboards, monitors, and printers. The effectiveness of a PMS depends on selecting software that allows management to increase guest satisfaction and to access financial and informational data for control purposes. The information obtained from the needs analysis provides a framework for evaluating the numerous software packages on the market today.

Check your Progress 5

Answer:

Basic Requirements of different departments from PMS

Marketing and Sales

- Client file
- Travel agent
- Direct mail
- Meeting room information
- Guest history

Night Audit

- Room and tax posting
- Various operational reports

Accounting

- Accounts payable
- Payroll
- Accounts receivable
- Profit-and-loss statement

- General ledger
- Balance sheet

Human Resources Management

- Personnel files
- Time and attendance

Reservations

- Room availability
- Yield management

Front Desk

- Check-in
- Guest credit audit
- Room status
- Advance deposits
- Postings to guest accounts
- Cashier

Call Accounting

- Guest information
- Phone call posting

Housekeeping

- Room status

Maintenance

- Work orders

Food and Beverage

- Point-of-sale
- Inventory
- Menu profitability
- Recipes

Check your Progress 6

Answer:

The ability to interface among computer databases (sharing or networking of information) is very important. This concept must be designed into the PMS for it to contribute to the effective delivery of hospitality to the guest and to generate a return on its investment. As computer applications become more sophisticated, sharing databases is essential. For example, the information secured at the time a reservation is made can be used by the marketing and sales department to generate more business. The point-of-sale data captured in the restaurants can be reviewed by front office staff to check how they can sharpen their hospitality delivery skills for guests on arrival. For example, if the staff knows a guest likes to order a certain Italian pastry as part of his meal, then they can perhaps use that as part of the welcoming chat upon arrival.

Check your Progress 7

Answer:

Following are the various other factors that are needed to be considered before installing a PMS module in a hotel:

Ergonomics: Ergonomics, the study of how people relate physiologically to machines, is also a consideration for the front office manager. Glare and flicker from the cursor, a flashing point on a monitor that indicates where data can be entered, and movement on screens can cause eyestrain. In fact, it is fairly common for computer operators to require lenses to correct eyestrain.

Vendor Claims: The prospective PMS purchaser should contact current users of the system being considered and ask relevant questions like: How easy is it to operate this system? How useful are the reports you obtain? Has the vendor been available to help train staff and provide emergency service? Answers such as "I don't know how the property could manage without it" or "It is difficult to operate, and the reports are awkward" may alert you to potential advantages or problems.

Hardware Installation Plans: A careful plan for hardware installation will help the management maintain a desirable level of guest service and employee morale.

Computer Training Programs: The training offered by a computer company ranges from classes held at the corporate headquarters to on-the-job training sessions and informal consultant hot lines. The staff that will use the computers must be thoroughly trained if the equipment is to be put to its best use.

Backup Power Sources: What happens if the power goes out? This concern, as well as the possibility of brownouts, partial loss of electricity, and blackouts, total loss of electricity, is addressed by computer dealers.

Maintenance Agreement: One final consideration in adopting a PMS is the maintenance agreement, which should spell out the related costs of repair and replacement of hardware and software. Allowance for emergency service and times available for general service should also be listed. Loaner or backup equipment availability enhances the attractiveness of the agreement

Check your Progress 8

Answer:

Following are the various other factors that are needed to be considered before installing a PMS module in a hotel:

Ergonomics: Ergonomics, the study of how people relate physiologically to machines, is also a consideration for the front office manager. Glare and flicker from the cursor, a flashing point on a monitor that indicates where data can be entered, and movement on screens can cause eyestrain. In fact, it is fairly common for computer operators to require lenses to correct eyestrain.

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Following are the different modules that could be included in PMS:

Reservations: The reservations module consists of subsystems that can receive individual guest or group data, check a guest's request against a data bank of available rooms, and store this information Revenue management: It is a process of planning to achieve maximum room rates and most profitable guests (guests who will spend money at the hotel's food and beverage out lets, gift shops, etc.), encourages front office managers, general managers, and marketing and sales directors to target sales periods and develop sales programs that will maximize profit for the hotel.

Registration: Guest registration modules have greatly improved the check-in process. Because information has already been captured at the time of reservation, less time is required for registration. The front desk clerk need only verify the guest's request for room type, location and rate with room inventory and room status

Room Status: Access to the room status module provides information on availability of entry to a guest room.

Check your Progress 9

Answer:

The hotel's accounting office, known as the back office, uses the accounting module of a PMS, which assists in the overall financial management of the hotel The PMS simplifies the accounting processes, which include the labour-intensive posting procedure of accounts payable, which is the amount of money the hotel owes vendors; the transfer of accounts receivable, which is the amount of money owed to the hotel, based on the guest ledger and city ledger; compilation and production of the payroll; budget preparation; the production of the profit-and-loss statement, which is an official financial listing of income and expenses; and the balance sheet,

which is an official financial listing of assets, liabilities, and owner's equity at a certain point. For example, financial information concerning a certain vendor is entered once on a terminal located in the back office. This information is then reflected throughout the accounting process. Likewise, the financial information produced through the night audit can be accessed for various reports.

Check your Progress 10

Answer:

The process of obtaining ready status is quickly achieved with a PMS. The maid or houseman enters the ready status immediately through a computer terminal on the guest floor instead of waiting to report a block of rooms to the floor supervisor. The housekeeper no longer needs to make several trips per day to the desk clerk to release blocks of rooms. The efficiency of this module depends on the continued efforts of the housekeeping staff in reporting room status. Assigning room attendants to clean rooms can be done easily. Labour analysis of number of guest rooms cleaned by room attendants and number of labour hours required to clean guest rooms is performed faster, and the daily housekeeper's report is quickly generated.

Inventory of equipment and guest room supplies is also readily available. Maintenance requests for guest rooms can be communicated instantly through the PMS.

Check your Progress 11

Answer:

The food and beverage module reduces paper flow (vouchers) as well as telephone calls from the restaurants and lounges to the front desk. It also facilitates the accounting process, verifying the integrity of the point-of-sale system. Cashier reports (cash, credit, room service) are easily produced. Other features include inventory control and calculation, recipe development, pricing, item profit evaluation, and sales projections. Sales production analysis and labour analysis are also possible with this module.

Check your Progress 12

Answer:

In maintenance department PMS streamlines the processing of work orders. Repair orders are entered by various department members. Incomplete jobs can be prioritized, and completed jobs can be analyzed for cost. Inventories of equipment and parts can be maintained. The maintenance module is also used to track energy costs and areas of use. In fact, heating and air conditioning in guest rooms can be activated at the front desk. This module enables the management of a hotel to analyze operational information of this vital department.

Check your Progress 13

Answer:

Electronic key production has enhanced key control. Continual monitoring is a feature of the security module of the PMS. Fire alarm systems, including sprinklers and smoke detectors in guest rooms, public areas and operational areas are kept under constant surveillance via a fire safety display terminal. An alarm system or a voice telephone monitoring system alerts guests to a fire anywhere on the property.

Check your Progress 14

Answer:

This department can retrieve guest histories—information on guests' previous stays that reveals geographic origin, telephone information, organizational affiliation, credit card usage, room accommodation preferences, and the like—from reservation and registration files. The source of the reservation (secretary, group, travel agent), type of accommodation requested and ZIP code of business office or personal domicile are only some of the data that can be obtained from the reservation files. Another PMS application that the marketing and sales department can use is the ability to produce direct mail letters, which are letters sent directly to individuals in a targeted market group.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

1. Front Office Management, Sudhir Andrews, Tata McGraw-Hill, 2007, ISBN: 9780070655768

2. Accommodation operations and Management, Kaushal S K, Frank Bros & CO, ISBN: 8184090730

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

Activity 1

- Visit a 5 star property in your vicinity and try to find out the ideal interdeparmental communication.

Activity 2

- Find out the various Project Management Systems used by 5 star hotels and how are they beneficial.

GLOSSARY

Amenities	(personal toiletry items such as shampoo, toothpaste, and mouthwash; electrical equipment)
Available Clean, or Ready	room is ready to be occupied
Brownouts	Partial loss of electricity is addressed by computer dealers.
Blackouts	Total loss of electricity is addressed by computer dealers.
Call accounting	module of a PMS is a system that automatically posts telephone charges and a predetermined mark-up to a guest's folio.
Charge Transfers	which are forms used to communicate a charge to a guest's account, are used to relay messages and provide accurate information.
Daily announcement board	An inside listing of the daily activities of the hotel (time, group, and room)
Dirty or On-Change	guest has checked out of the room, but the housekeeping staff has not released the room for occupancy.
Ergonomic	The study of how people relate physiologically to machines.
Fire safety display terminal	An alarm system or a voice telephone monitoring system alerts guests to a fire anywhere on the property.
Floor limit	An amount of credit allowed by the credit card agency, have been monitored by the PMS.
House limit	An amount of credit allowed by the hotel, have been monitored by the PMS.

House count	A report of the total number of guests registered in the hotel.
In-room guest checkout	a feature of the property management system that allows the guest to use a guest room television to check out of the hotel.
Interfacing	The electronic sharing of data, within an organization.
Occupied	guest or guests are already occupying a room
Out-of-Order	room is not available for occupancy because of a mechanical malfunction.
Marquee	The curb side message board, which includes the logo of the hotel and space for a message.
Paid-outs	Forms used to indicate the amounts of money paid out of the cashier's drawer on behalf of a guest or ban employee of the hotel.
Room sales forecast	A weekly report prepared and distributed by the front office manager that indicates the number of departures, arrivals, walk-ins, stayovers and no-shows—to schedule employees.
Stayover	Guest will not be checking out of a room on the current day

Enrolment No. ☐

1. How many hours did you need for studying the units?

Unit No	1	2	3	4
Nos of Hrs				

2. Please give your reactions to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Item	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Give specific example if any
Presentation Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Language and Style	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Illustration used (Diagram, tables etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Conceptual clarity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Check your progress Quest	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Feed back to CYP Question	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

3. Any Other Comments

Front Office Management

BLOCK 2:
INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATION AND ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATION IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University
Ahmedabad

"Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one."

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

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ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self-instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual-skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to effect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self-instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)

PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included may tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect.

All the best for your studies from our team!

Front Office Management

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Front Office Management

BLOCK 2: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATION AND ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATION IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

UNIT 1
INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATION 2

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PUBLIC RELATIONS 16

BLOCK 2: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATION AND ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATION IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Public Relations is a distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics (guests, travel agents, tour operators, its employees) involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest.

Public relations is a highly effective tool for generating awareness and visibility for an individual property, hotel chain or brand. It can deliver a message of credibility that no advertising program can come close to. Public relations is so much more than the distribution of press releases it's about telling a story- a compelling story- that will generate genuine interest and enter into the consciousness of potential guests. It is about gaining recognition and mitigating negative attention. It is about defining who and what a hotel is, and delivering that message to the public. In unit one we have compared the scope of public relation and publicity in relation to hospitality industry. In unit two we have concentrated on public relation and the relation with internal and external factors.

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATION

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Origin of Public Relations

1.3 What is Public Relation?

1.3.1 Practical Definition

1.4 Public Relation Techniques

1.5 Public Relation Process

1.6 Publicity

1.7 Let Us Sum Up

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the importance of public relation in hospitality industry and the techniques used by the industry. This unit also compares the scope of public relation and publicity in relation to hospitality industry.

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain public relation
- Illustrate the techniques of public relation
- Discuss what publicity
- State the public relation process

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Public relation plays an important role in the success of an organization. This has given rise in methods and activities employed to establish and promote a favourable relationship with the customer. Organizations are working with their

employees to collect information to build a reputation with their clients, therefore public relation have gained momentum.

It is important for an organization to function as properly as possible and obtaining accurate political, cultural and physical environment, which closely makes it necessary for two-way effective communication between the organization and the external groups (guests, travel agents, tour operators etc) with which it deals. Communication between these groups should be controlled so that conflicts minimize. Hence, for the above-mentioned purposes good Public Relation is required and thus, it has been recognized as an excessively critical function.

1.2 ORIGIN OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

The origin of public relation goes back to the existence of man on earth. Although the phrase "public relations" was invented in the twentieth century, the practice of public relations had been since the dawn of recorded history.

Edward Bernays, one of the seminal figures in modern public relations stated that 'the three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society informing people, persuading people or integrating people with people. This implies that the means and methods of accomplishing public relation have changed as society has changed'.

1.3 WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATION?

Public relations is the "management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics upon whom its success depends.

Public Relation understands relationship between all the parts and roles within the organization. This could mean guests, tour operators, travel agents, government sector and the public sector. Many organizations spend millions on advertising and public relations.

It has been described as the management function that helps establish and maintain

Mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and corporation between an organization and its public. In other words, a management function is responsible for two-way adequate communication.

Public relations efforts must ensure that not only the organization understands its target customers but also the target customers must equally understand the organisation. It must understand its reasons for whatever action is taken by the organization. As a public relations officer or manager of your firm, for instance, it is your duty to ensure that mutual understanding is achieved between your organization and the guests or target customers. .

'Sustained effort' means that it is not enough to start the plan but it should be carried through to a logical end. Public relations is an art because it involves artistic skills, fine arts, language, writing, public speaking, etc. It is a social science because it uses social scientific instruments to understand and predict human behaviour. It attempts to understand its surrounding environment and relates with it mutually. It advises the organisation so that the policies of the organisation are in line with the expectations of its target customers.

It implements programmes that will favour both the organisation and the target customers in a win-win outcome.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) says, "public relations is concerned with or devoted to creating mutual understanding among groups and institutions." The PRSA recognizes the place of groups and institutions or organizations in the public relations process. It admits that these entities have interests that need to be protected. It also presupposes a streamlining of these benefits for mutual good. The concept of mutuality in this definition makes you as a public relations man or woman an intermediary between your organisation and its publics. This shows that you should be able to align the interests of these two parties for their mutual advantage. You do this by convincing your organisation those public relations attempts to put the broad interest of the public first before the special interest of the organisation. By doing this, the organisation is indirectly serving its own interest; hence, PR has what is called "enlightened self interest".

1.3.1 Practical Definition

The British Institute of Public relations (BIPR) defines public relations as 'the deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics." This definition shows that public relations means creation or establishment of mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (guests, travel agents, tour operators etc.). It also suggests that public relations is not a haphazard process. It must be consciously designed. Planning calls for attention, deliberation, research, anticipation, analysis and consequences.

Public Relation is also defined as deliberate, planned and sustained effort to established natural understanding between the organization and its public.

Check your progress 1

1. Write in brief about origin of public relation.
2. What is public relation?

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1.4 PUBLIC RELATION TECHNIQUES

The main techniques in Public Relation for promotion of tourism and hospitality industry include organizing functions for travel agents, tour operator, editors and journalist and media to visit the organization and give knowledge about it. These people generally write about the organization visited in well-known magazines and helps in building image of the organization. Public relation techniques used by hospitality sectors

- Organizing trade in connection with various factors of an organization
- Organizing Press in connection with tourism and hospitality to determine information about the organization
- Arranging cultural, musical and other shows, exhibitions and events on various important days like world tourism day.
- Arranging seminars and workshops in the place for promotion of tourism industry.
- Organizing various types of contests.
- Encouraging large stores to organize fashion shows in the premises of organization so that it will promote the hotel as well as will help in building new clientele relationship.

- Providing advice to the organization concerning policies, relationships and communication with its various publics.
- Determining attitudes and behaviours of publics through research in order to plan public relations strategies of the organization with its publics. Such research can be used to (1) generate mutual understanding or (2) influence and persuade publics.
- Disseminating planned messages through selected media to publicise the organisation's interest.
- Developing employee/member relationship by responding to concerns, informing, and motivating and organisation's employees or association or club members.
- Developing effective involvement in public policy and helping an organization to adapt to the public expectations.
- Relating directly with legislature and regulatory agencies on behalf of the organisation. Lobbying can be part of the government affairs programme.
- Identifying and addressing issues of public concern that may affect the organization in a negative way.
- Relating with other organizations of the same industry and with trade associations.
- Relating to different individuals and groups in various cultural settings.

Check your progress 2

1. List the different public relation techniques used in hospitality industry.

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1.5 PUBLIC RELATION PROCESS

The definition of Public Relations as relations with the public through publicity, those functions of a corporation, organisation, branch of military service, etc., concerned with informing the public of its activities, policies, etc., attempting to create favourable public opinions.

Public Relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance, based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communications.

1. **Research-listening:** This involves gathering the opinions, attitudes and reactions of those concerned with the acts and policies of an organisation, then evaluating the inflow. This task also requires determining facts regarding the organisation

2. **Planning-decision making:** This involves bringing these opinions, ideas and reactions to bear on the policies and programmes of the organisation. It will enable the organisation to decide a course in the interests of all concerned "Here's what we can do”.

3. **Communication-action:** This involves explaining and enacting the chosen course to all those who may be affected and whose support is essential "Here's what we did and why."

4. **Evaluation:** This step involves evaluation of the programme and its effectiveness.” How did we do?"

- The first phase of Public Relations process involves identifying and listing out the information or message to the communicator.

- The second phase of Public Relations involves ascertaining the existing image or awareness level about the issue in the target group or common public.

- The third phase of Public Relations is to develop communication objectives and priorities.

- The fourth phase of Public Relations deals with developing the message and choosing the media to transit the message.

- The fifth phase of Public Relations includes the implementation of the message and media, coordination or the dissemination of message.

- The sixth phase of Public Relations includes communication process to check

whether message reached properly and the expected action or behaviour or knowledge on image factors.

- The seventh phase of Public Relations, case the message did not reach properly identified the reason for the ineffectiveness and rectification of the same and disseminates the revised message.

Now, let us briefly see the above component

1. Listing and prioritizing of information is to be disseminated

a. The new policy of the Government or organisation

b. The change in the existing policy

c. The new scheme promoted.

d. The change in the existing scheme

- The first phase of Public Relations process is identifying and listing out the information or message to the communicator.
- The second phase of Public Relations is process to ascertain the existing image or awareness level about the issue in the target group or common public.
- The third phase of Public Relations is developing of communication objectives and priorities.
- The fourth phase of Public Relations is deals with developing the message and choosing the media to transit.
- The fifth phase of Public Relations is the implementation of the message and media, coordination or the dissemination of message.
- The sixth phase of Public Relations is communication process to check whether message reached properly and the expected action or behaviour or knowledge on image factors.
- The seventh phase of Public Relations in case the message did not reach properly identified the reason for the ineffectiveness and rectification of the same and disseminates the revised message.

Now, let us briefly see the above component

1. **Listing and prioritizing of information is to be disseminated**

a. The new policy of the Government or organisation.

b. The change in the existing policy.

c. The new scheme promoted.

d. The change in the existing scheme.

Public Relations activity starts with identifying the message to be disseminated and prioritized.

2. **Ascertaining the existing knowledge level or understanding the perceptions of the public:** The organisation can check a quick survey among the target group of the public to ascertain the knowledge level of the issue for which the organisation is planning to initiate Public Relations process and in case of the image it is essential to know whether the image is positive, neutral or negative in terms of the assessment or in terms of the organisation or both.

3. **Communication objectives and prioritise:** Based on the knowledge level or image factor, communication objectives are to be established which is possible to evaluate and the top management approval is required.

4. **Message and Media:** After choosing the objective, the content of the message need to be developed. While developing the message we should keep in mind the media in which we are going to use for disseminating that message. TV/ Visual media may be effective for showing the demonstrating awareness.

5. **Implementation of message and media:** Based on the expected reaching level and target group, the budget is to be prepared and message is transmitted through the appropriate media's.

6. **Impact assessment:** After release of the message, it is essential to study the impact at interval by interacting with the target group.

7. **Message redesigned:** In case, the interaction of the target group reveals the message did not reach as expected the modification in message or media need to be done and the revised message should be disseminated.

The research process

Opinion, market and academic researchers have developed a pattern of research that involves nine basic steps

- Statement of the problem
- Selection of a manageable portion of the problem
- Definition of concepts and terms
- Literature search
- Development of a hypothesis
- Determination of a study design
- Gathering of the data
- Analysis of the data
- Recording of the implications, generalization, conclusions.

Research for analysis of a specific problem should include these elements

- A broad overview of what has gone before that influences the present situation
- Changes expected in the environment in the next year or so that could affect the organisation.
- Social, political and economic trends foreseeable in the next five to ten years that could affect the organisation; and
- What the organisation can do to influence the public to accelerate favourable trends and slow down unfavourable ones

Check your progress 3

1. Write in brief about the public relation process?

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1.6 PUBLICITY

The technique or process of attracting public attention to people, products, etc., as by the use of the mass media is known as publicity.

Publicity is a social lubricant that plays a fundamental part in marketing. It is a technique of telling stories of organizations or an organization. Publicity is one of the most effective promotional tools available to the hospitality industry. Publicity supports advertising, lending creditability with unbiased third party mentions and endorsements.

Publicity can be planned as well as unplanned, such as when a celebrity visits your establishment and talks positive to media about his or her stay then the establishment gets unplanned publicity.

Planned publicity such as getting the word out about expansions and special programs is more likely to promote your firm in positive ways. In other words, well-planned publicity can attract new business, remind previous guest about your establishment and build community goodwill. It aims to provide information and to promote goodwill enhancing the image of the organization in long run, which helps to gain recognition, control attention, build image and win approval of target customers.

Check your progress 4

1. What do you mean by publicity?

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we:

- Explained what is public relation
- Discussed the techniques of public relation
- Stated Publicity
- Illustrated analysis of a specific problem

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer 1:

The origin of public relation goes back to the existence of man on earth. Although the phrase "public relations" was invented in the twentieth century, the practice of public relations had been since the dawn of recorded history.

Edward Bernays, one of the seminal figures in modern public relations stated that 'the three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people. This implies that the means and methods of accomplishing public relation have changed as society has changed'.

Answer 2:

Public relations is the "management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics upon whom its success depends.

Public Relation understands relationship between all the parts and roles within the organization. This could mean guests, tour operators ,travel agents, government sector and the public sector . Many organizations spend millions on advertising and public relations.

It has been described as the management function that helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and corporation between an organization and its public. In other words, it is a management function that is responsible for two way adequate communication.

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

Following are the different public relation techniques used in hospitality industry:

- Organizing trade in connection with various factors of an organization
- Organizing Press in connection with tourism and hospitality to determine information about the organization
- Arranging cultural, musical and other shows, exhibitions and events on various important days like world tourism day.
- Arranging seminars and workshops in the place for promotion of tourism industry.
- Organizing various types of contests.
- Encouraging large stores to organize fashion shows in the premises of organization so that it will promote the hotel as well as will help in building new clientele relationship.
- Providing advice to the organization concerning policies, relationships, and communication with its various publics.
- Determining attitudes and behaviours of publics through research in order to plan public relations strategies of the organization with its publics. Such research can be used to (1) generate mutual understanding or (2) influence and persuade publics.
- Disseminating planned messages through selected media to publicise the organisation's interest.
- Developing employee/member relationship by responding to concerns, informing, and motivating and organisation's employees or association or club members.
- Developing effective involvement in public policy and helping an organization to adapt to the public expectations.
- Relating directly with legislature and regulatory agencies on behalf of the organisation. Lobbying can be part of the government affairs programme.
- Identifying and addressing issues of public concern that may affect the organization in a negative way.

- Relating with other organizations of the same industry and with trade associations.
- Relating to different individuals and groups in various cultural settings.

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

The definition of Public Relations as relations with the general public through publicity, those functions of a corporation, organisation, branch of military service, etc., concerned with informing the public of its activities, policies, etc., attempting to create favourable public opinions.

The first phase of Public Relations process involves identifying and listing out the information or message to the communicator.

The second phase of Public Relations involves ascertaining the existing image or awareness level about the issue in the target group or common public.

The third phase of Public Relations is to develop communication objectives and priorities.

The fourth phase of Public Relations deals with developing the message and choosing the media to transit the message.

The fifth phase of Public Relations includes the implementation of the message and media, coordination or the dissemination of message.

The sixth phase of Public Relations includes communication process to check whether message reached properly and the expected action or behavior or knowledge on image factors.

The seventh phase of Public Relations, case the message did not reach properly identified the reason for the ineffectiveness and rectification of the same and disseminate the revised

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

The technique or process of attracting public attention to people, products, etc., as by the use of the mass media is known as publicity.

Publicity is a social lubricant that plays a fundamental part in marketing. It is a technique of telling stories of organizations or an organization. Publicity is one of the most effective promotional tools available to the hospitality industry. Publicity supports advertising, lending creditability with unbiased third party mentions and endorsements.

Publicity aims to provide information and to promote goodwill enhancing the image of the organization in long run, which helps to gain recognition, control attention, build image and win approval of target customers.

UNIT 2 PUBLIC RELATIONS

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Public Relation and Man

2.3 Public Relation in Hotel

2.4 Qualities of a Public Relations Officer

2.5 Public Relation in Tourism

2.6 Public Relation Tactics

2.7 Public Relations and Internal, External Public Relations

2.7.1 Internal Public Relations

2.7.2 External Public Relations

2.7.3 Importance of External Public Relations

2.8 Let Us Sum Up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to study public relation.

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the role of public relation in a hotel.
- State the qualities of a public relation officer.
- Discuss the role of public relation in tourism sector.
- Point out public relation tactics.
- Exemplify internal public relation and external public relation.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Mexican statement "Public Relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders as well as planning and implementing a programme of action that will serve the interest of not only the organisation but also that of its publics." It suggests that public relations borrow knowledge and expertise from other fields, like psychology, politics, sociology, languages, etc. Public relations are an art because it requires artistic skills, knowledge of fine arts, command on language, writing, public speaking, etc. It is a social science because the public relation officer has to deal with humans and need to understand and predict human behaviour using social scientific instruments. It attempts to understand its environment and relates with it accordingly.

Public relations monitors, surveys and researches issues and happenings in the environment. It advises the organisation so that the policies of the organisation are updated and formed in line with the expectations of its publics.

This unit describes the components of Public relations, the Internal & External Publics of the organization and the importance of public relation in an organization and it also elaborate about the tools used for public relations and in this unit, we have discussed about the traits of public relation officer.

2.2 PUBLIC RELATION AND MAN

Public relation influences presentation of personal image of an organization. It also includes action to discover and eliminate sources of misunderstanding. The public relation officer must also possess qualities like self-confidence, diplomacy, good manners, clear communication, personal appearance, ability to remember face and name. PR also helps to design the image of tourism industry to create more favourable climate. Which plays an important role in developing the public relation?

Conclusion

- PR includes everything that is calculated by mutual understanding between the organization and its public.
- PR influences presentation of personal image of an organization to its public.
- It includes action to discover and eliminate sources that creates misunderstanding.
- PR helps to build relations and influence our target customers.

Check your progress 1

1. What are the domains of public relation?

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2.3 PUBLIC RELATION IN HOTEL

Public relations have many objectives to achieve in a hotel industry. One can use any one of them or any group of them or all of them for an organization, which will be helpful for PR program professional PR directs every activity towards reaching a selected objective.

Hence following are important roles that are achieved by PR, in hospitality industry

- To create and build a favourable image of a hotel to its public (guests, tour operators, travel agents)
- Promotion of hotel products, resources and events are done through PR.
- Public relations help to create goodwill of the employees for themselves.
- Fostering goodwill and communication of sections in which the organization has their unit.
- PR creates goodwill of stockholders and it is constituted in the industry.
- PR overcomes misconception and prejudice.
- Public relation creates goodwill with the suppliers.
- It helps to create goodwill with other institutions.

- Goodwill of the rest of the industry or of the competitions.
- Goodwill of dealer and attention of other dealers.
- Ability to attract the best personnel.
- Educate the public to use products and services.
- Educate and to make the public aware of the products and facilities of a hotel to its target customers.
- Investigation of the attitude of various groups towards the company.
- Goodwill of the customer and supporters
- Formation of strategies for the present and future policies of an organization.
- Directing the course of change in an organization.

Check your progress 2

1. How is pubic relation effective in hotel industry?

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2.4 QUALITIES OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

A guest relations executive, also known as a guest relations manager, guarantees the comfort, safety and satisfaction of patrons at hotels and resorts. A guest relation executive commonly assists the hotel manager in supervising employees in the areas of administration, housekeeping and customer service. If problems or concerns regarding guest accommodations or service arise, he/she is expected to address and resolve them with charm and professionalism.

In a hotel a Public relations officer /guest relation officer has to supervise staff and look after customer service, a guest relations executive is required to give her personal attention to guests designated as dignitaries by her superiors. The GRE/ PRO needs to make personal contact with these guests at least once a day during their stay and to personally inspect their rooms on a daily basis to make sure they are well stocked and in good condition. She is expected to have a clear understanding of all hotel policies and procedures, including those related to hotel safety and evacuation procedures in case of emergencies. A guest relations executive typically prepares daily, weekly and monthly reports for review by the hotel manager, general manager and other executives.

A hotel environment usually fluctuates between being very busy when guests are checking in and out and serene and quiet in the interim. A guest relations executive spends a good part of his workday walking through all sections of the hotel to spot possible areas of contention and prevent them from escalating. A guest relations executive must periodically return to his desk to complete paperwork and handle hotel correspondence. A guest relations executive's attire is expected to be business-like and fashionable. Working hours for this position are frequently long, and typically include some nights and weekends.

1. Self Confidence

It is one of most important trait needed in a public relation officer because the PRO has to meet people from different groups, organizations and institutions .He/she should be able to deal with different people of different sectors with equal ease and with confidence.

2. Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the greatest attribute needed by a Public relation officer, as very often, there are situations where a person is in an irritated mood and diplomatic dealing helps to act as a diluting affect on the moment.

3. Good Mannerisms

PRO is a person who represents his office organization and has to meet large number of people including social political and VIP people to VIP grade. He/she should be able to deal with them politely with good mannerism to project a good image of organization as well as himself.

4. Clean and correct communication

A Public relation Officer has to deal with it is essential that PRO should be well versed and fluent in language. He should have a command over the local language and one foreign language including English, which is compulsory factor. This will help in dealing confidently and conveying message dearly.

5. Personal Appearance

PRO should look professional and impressive for that he/she should maintain their uniform and dress clean and well ironed. He / she should be well groomed and they should keep a check on their personal hygiene i.e. their nails have to be cut neatly, hair to be tied properly for lady PRO and to be cut neatly for a male PRO (Public Relation Officer), check on the body odour as bad body odour may drive the guest or target customer away and will also create a bad impression about the hotel for which they are working.

6. Ability to remember face and name

A PRO comes in contact with large number of people, whom he/she should be able to remember by face and name as it gives a personal touch to your conversation also the person feels good.

7. Knowledge

A PRO should have complete knowledge about the goods and services he/she is selling or promoting. He / she should be aware of market policies and the image of the hotel in the market. This knowledge helps in giving suggestions for various regards of customer's anticipations, their complaints etc. He/she should also be aware of new market policies to attract potential customers.

8. Time management

As the PRO/Guest relation assists the hotel manager in the operation of many areas of the hotel or resort, his/her skills in project coordination and time management must be excellent. His / her focus should be guest comfort, although he/ she may be required to help wherever he /she is needed. The ability to quickly develop creative solutions to guest and personnel problems is required.

Check your progress 3

1. Write about the different traits of a Public relation Officer.

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2.5 PUBLIC RELATION IN TOURISM

PR involves in designing the image in tourism industry. PR is an art of implementing two-way communication and understanding between two companies and its groups with which it is concerned in course of its operation.

In the field of tourism, the need is to make complete information available to the tourist. It involves factors to create and improve the image to tourist product. Through news media, favourable acceptance for every tourist destination by the public can be created. In other words, no other business is more concerned with PR than tourism. It is also an important factor in creating and maintaining positive image for country and its tourist destinations. PR is also oriented towards creating destination.

For a tourist destination, the objective of PR may be divided in two parts.

- Parting and distribution of information.
- Creating of favourable image to the tourists.

What a PR professional should know?

- It is hard to listen easy to talk.
- Hard to agree easy to argue

- Hard to remember easy to forget.
- Hard to see the whole picture easy to highlight a small section of it.
- Hard to co-operate with other on common problems.
- Easy to attack the other and thus make the problem

Check your progress 4

1. Write about role of public relation in tourism.

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2.6 PUBLIC RELATION TACTICS

- Reaching the employees through a variety of internal newsletters and meetings with staff or department heads is the role of internal PR activity for personnel development.
- Coordinating relationship with electronic print media, which include arranging of a related promotional interaction media enquiry. A good deal of media relations is spent attempting to gain favourable news converges for the firm / Hotel.
- Organizing interaction with community open houses, travel agent and employees.
- Managing relations with the internal community including the firm's present and potential stockholder.
- Supporting activities with customers and potential customer, ranging from hard shell product promotion to staff consumer advisory services.

- Co-coordinating with institutions through reprints of speeches, annual reports quarterly statement product and company, brochures.
- Co-coordinating relationship with outsiders such a supplies dealers non-profit organization and competitors.
- Managing the image of the organization.
- Coordinating the photographic services of the organization to do this work or task well, PR staff is required to possess knowledge of topography layout and art.
- Conducting opinion for researcher, which involves in the assisting in the public policy through co-ordinations and inter personal studies of key public?
- Managing the gift and evaluating philanthropic proposals and allocating the organizations available resources.
- Co-coordinating special events with travel companies, such as their celebrations exhibitions dinners and general meetings
- PR counselling involves addressing administrator, on alternative options and recommend choice, in the light of public responsibilities.

Tools of Public Relation

- Printed Words (Print Media)
- Spoken Words (Broadcast Media)
- House Journal
- Handbook & Booklets
- Meetings& Mass meetings
- Letters
- Group Discussion
- Hording and Boards Work shops
- Posters
- Seminars
- Annual Reports

- Public Address System
- Press Conference
- Audio visuals
- Traditions Media aids like-
- Photo graphs Puppets
- Visuals Dances
- Exhibitions Songs
- Film Drama
- Transparencies Village activities
- Motions Picture Road shows
- Information Technology
- Computers\Internet
- Floppy
- CDs
- Ratio Paging
- Tele Conferencing

Check your progress 5

1. Write in short about public relation tactics and tools.

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2.7 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERNAL, EXTERNAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The famous proverb says that charity begins at home, holds true for PR department in an organization. Any company, which wants to establish itself, very successfully on the Public relation scenario, first has to achieve corporate level help from its internal public. No company can be successful from outside; if its internal public is not in agreement with its policy's decisions and implementation. A public is any group that has an actual or potential interest or impact on organization ability to achieve its objectives.

2.7.1 Internal Public Relations

Depending upon its functioning accordingly. This public may be the parts of the organization, or it may be outside the organization. Their formal and informal influence is to be always kept in mind, while conducting company's affairs.

The internal public can be classified in the following category-

Investor is the one who has financial stake in the company either as shareholders or as long term or short-term creditors.

Employees

Employees are also the part of internal public of an organization. Company needs their co-operation, understanding and support in all its activity including the PR.

Suppliers

Suppliers provide raw material to the hotel. The raw material is processed by the company depending upon its technology and converted into finished product, company sells this finished product at a higher price, than the cost of raw material and therefore suppliers have direct and crucial role in functioning and profitability because they and its business associates help to make profit.

Distributors

Distributors and the link between company and its dealers / retailer they perform the important task of merchandising a product of the company from one place to another by ensuring its state and timely delivery to the dealers of the company. Their association with the company is on a continuous basis and normally for much longer periods in comparison with the suppliers.

They include promoters; friends and relations by the directors, chartered accountant, governing auditor and consultant's lawyers any who may be engaged on a regular basis or on occasional basis.

2.7.2 External Public Relations

The various constituents of external public are

- Consumer
- Community
- Mass media
- Government
- Financial Institutions
- Action group and
- General public

Present era belong to marketing where everything that happens in the company revolves around the customer. He is not an intruder on our premises, but our guest. He is an inspector of our quality, and is always right. A customer is not means of business but he is public may become a customer of the company's product or services in future, depending upon his opinion and the goodwill of the company.

Community

Community represents the public, which stays in the close proximity of the hotel. These people undergo change in their lifestyle depending upon the business activity. The increasing cost of living congestion, pollution, health hazard sanitation and various social problems like, gambling, drinking, etc near various large organizations in our country is the testimony of this transformation a company brings in its neighbourhood. Therefore, it becomes a social and moral obligation of the hotel industry to compensate community for these losses, by making its humble contribution to improve living in some manner. Industry can help the community by improving job opportunities, providing health services, giving education, environment protection etc.

Mass Media

Mass media includes both print as well as electronic media. Mass media gives mass exposure to the company activity, which in turn helps the public to from an impression about the Hotel. By the ever-increasing popularity of electronic

media, print media is losing its importance. Mass media have always remained a very strong source of voicing opinion, building propaganda and influencing the behaviour of the masses. In addition, it will remain so forever.

Government

India is a country with mix economy. The government dictates the policies of all major organizations(big hotels) and controls tax policies like increase in sales tax or vat applied to the services provided and also the government keeps on increasing the luxury taxes which results in increase of prices of the hotel services and lodging facilities. The Public relation professional have to encourage their company as a whole to make healthy relations and desirable practices, so as to focus attention of the government on their genuine problems and build up positive public opinion in their favour through their trade associations.

Financial Institutions

The relationship with the financial institutions has always been very important for normal banking facility, over draft or credit for merchandising. Hotels are heavily dependent on the functioning and the patronage of financial institutions at their branches, regional zonal head quarter level. The financial institutions in our country can be divided into two categories that is public and private sector.

Action Group The concept of an action group is relatively very raw in our country. In addition, within a short time has become very popular. Social organizations that work for consumer or Labour problems, environmental problem etc are enacting as major action groups. The formation of consumer protection act has been to major milestone in this regard. Prior to the consumer protection act 1986 the lawyers' solicitors, jurist, press bureau created and various groups that acted as action groups. Although they are less in number but have a very high potential to harm or influence the interest the company. They should also be included in the PR list of the company so that they get PR literature of the company, regularly and are invited to all the social and cultural functions of the company to create positive image of the company in their mind.

General Public

They are the largest of all the external public of a company. They are the ultimate judge of all the activities of the hotel based on which it will survive or die. Interaction with this public is through mass media, like newspapers and magazines,

radio, televisions exhibition banners hoardings; leaflets etc. More and more company are realizing the importance of PR and advertising it wherever it is important instead of concentrating on the product or the brand image building company are showing an increased concern in issues such as environmental protection, pollution control and noise pollution to improve the quality of life of public. This helps to create a responsible image of their company in front of public.

2.7.3 Importance of External Public Relations

The Importance of external public relations can be made out from the fact that without them the company cannot exist. This includes the community mass media govt. financial institutions, action group and public. Hence, not only because of external environment but also because of internal environment factors, companies have to respond more positively to public. The success of any business of any organization depends on how it will adopt and relate with its External Public.

Check your progress 6

1. How is Public Relation required for internal public of an organisation?
2. How is Public Relation required for External public of an organisation?
3. Write the importance of external public relation.

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we:

- Stated the role of public relation in a hotel
- Discussed the qualities of a public relation officer
- Illustrated the role of public relation in tourism sector
- Explained public relation tactics
- Pointed out tools of public relation

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

Following are the domains of public relation:

1. PR includes everything that is calculated by mutual understanding between the organization and its public.
2. PR influences presentation of personal image of an organization to its public.
3. It includes action to discover and eliminate sources that creates misunderstanding.
4. PR helps to build relations and influence our target customers

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

Following are important roles that are achieved by PR, in hospitality industry:

1. To create and build a favorable image of a hotel to its public(guests, tour operators, travel agents)
2. Promotion of hotel products, resources and events are done through PR.
3. Public relations helps to create goodwill of the employees for themselves.
4. Fostering goodwill and communication of sections in which the organization has their unit.

5. PR creates goodwill of stockholders and its constitute in the industry.
6. PR overcomes misconception and prejudice.
7. Public relation creates goodwill with the suppliers.
8. It helps to create goodwill with other institutions.
9. Goodwill of the rest of the industry or of the competitions.
10. Goodwill of dealer and attention of other dealers.
11. Ability to attract the best personnel.
12. Educate the public to use products and services.
13. Educate and to make the public aware of the products and facilities of a hotel to its target customers.
14. Investigation of the attitude of various groups towards the company.
15. Goodwill of the customer and supporters
16. Formation of strategies for the present and future policies of an organization.
17. Directing the course of change in an organization.

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

Following are the various traits required in a Public relation Officer:

1. Self Confidence

It is one of most important trait needed in a public relation officer because the PRO has to meet people from different groups, organizations and institutions. He/she should be able to deal with different people of different sectors with equal ease and with confidence.

2. Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the greatest attribute needed by a Public relation officer as very often there are situations where a person is in a irritated mood and diplomatic dealing helps to act as a diluting affect on the moment.

3. Good Mannerisms

PRO is a person who represents his office organization and has to meet large number of people including social political and VIP people to VIP grade. He/she

should be able to deal with them politely with good mannerism so as to project a good image of organization as well as himself.

4. Clean and correct communication

A Public relation Officer has to deal with it is essential that PRO should be well versed and fluent in language. He should have a command over the local language and one foreign language including English, which is compulsory factor. This will help in dealing confidently and conveying message dearly.

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PRO should look professional and impressive for that he/she should maintain their uniform and dress clean and well ironed. He / she should be well groomed and they should keep a check on their personal hygiene i.e. their nails have to be cut neatly, hair to be tied properly for lady PRO and to be cut neatly for a male PRO, check on the body odour as bad body odour may drive the guest or target customer away and will also create a bad impression about the hotel for which they are working.

6. Ability to remember face and name

A PRO comes in contact with large number of people, whom he/she should be able to remember by face and name as it gives a personal touch to your conversation also the person feels good and special which in turn may result in repeat business for the hotel if he is fully satisfied with your services.

7. Knowledge

A PRO should have complete knowledge about the goods and services he/she is selling or promoting. He / she should be aware of market policies and the image of the hotel in the market. This knowledge helps in giving suggestions for various regards of customer's anticipations, their complaints etc. He/she should also be aware of new market policies to attract potential customers.

8. Time management

As the PRO/Guest relation assists the hotel manager in the operation of many areas of the hotel or resort, his/her skills in project coordination and time management must be excellent. His / her main focus should be guest comfort, although he/ she may be required to help out wherever he /she is needed. The ability to quickly develop creative solutions to guest and personnel problems is required.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

PR involves in designing the image in tourism industry. PR is an art of implementing two-way communication and understanding between two companies and its groups with which it is concerned in course of its operation.

In the field of tourism the need is to make complete information available to the tourist. It involves factors to create and improve the image to tourist product. Through news media, favorable acceptance for every tourist destination by the public can be created. In other words, no other business is more concerned with PR than tourism. It is also an important factor in creating and maintaining positive image for country and its tourist destinations. PR is also oriented towards creating destination.

Check your Progress 5

Answer:

Following are the tools and tactics used in public relation:

1. Reaching the employees through a variety of internal newsletters and meetings with staff or department heads is the role of internal PR activity for personnel development.
2. Coordinating relationship with electronic print media, which include arranging of a related promotional interaction media enquiry. A good deal of media relations is spent attempting to gain favorable news converges for the firm / Hotel.
3. Organizing interaction with community open houses, travel agent and employees.
4. Managing relations with the internal community including the firm's present and potential stockholder.
5. Supporting activities with customers and potential customer, ranging from hard shell product promotion to staff consumer advisory services.
6. Co-coordinating with institutions through reprints of speeches, annual reports quarterly statement product and company, brochures.
7. Co-coordinating relationship with outsiders such a supplies dealers non-profit organization and competitors.
8. Managing the image of the organization.

9. Coordinating the photographic services of the organization to do this work or task well, PR staff is required to possess knowledge of topography layout and art.
10. Conducting opinion for researcher, which involves in the assisting in the public policy through co-ordinations and inter personal studies of key public.
11. Managing the gift and evaluating philanthropic proposals and allocating the organizations available resources.
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Audio visuals

Traditions Media aids like :-

Photo graphs Puppets

Visuals Dances

Exhibitions Songs

Film Drama

Transparencies Village activities

Motions Picture Road shows

Information Technology

Computers\Internet

Floppy

CDs

Ratio Paging

Tele Conferencing

Check your Progress 6

Answer 1:

Following are the internal publics with whom internal public relation has to be maintained.

1. Investors

Investor is the one who has financial stake in the company either as shareholders or as long term or short-term creditors.

2. Employees

Employees are also the part of internal public of an organization. Company needs their co-operation, understanding and support in all its activity including the PR.

3. Suppliers

Supplies provide raw material to the hotel. The raw material is processed by the company depending upon its technology and converted into finished product, company sells this finished product at a higher price, than the cost of raw material and therefore suppliers have direct and crucial role in functioning and profitability because they and its business associates help to make profit.

4. Distributors

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Their association with the company is on a continuous basis and normally for much longer periods in comparison with the suppliers.

They include promoters; friends and relations by the directors, chartered accountant, governing auditor, consultant's lawyers any who may be engaged on a regular basis or on contract basis.

Answer 2:

The various constituents of external public are

- Consumer
- Community
- Mass media
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- General public

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radio, televisions exhibition banners hoardings; leaflets etc. More and more company are realizing the importance of PR and advertising it wherever it is important instead of concentrating on the product or the brand image building company are showing an increased concern in issues such as environmental protection, pollution control and noise pollution to improve the quality of life of public. This helps to create a responsible image of their company in front of public.

Answer 3:

The Importance of external public relations can be made out from the fact that without them the company cannot exist. This includes the community mass media govt. financial institutions, action group and general public. Hence not only because of external environment but also because of internal environment factors, companies have to respond more positively to public. The success of any business of any organization depends on how it will adopt and relate with its External Public.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

1. Front Office Management, Sudhir Andrews, Tata McGraw-Hill, 2007, ISBN: 9780070655768

2. Accommodation operations and Management, Kaushal S K, Frank Bros & CO, ISBN: 8184090730

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

Activity 1

- An unnatural death(suicide) occurred in Hotel XYZ which resulted in fear among the in-house guests also brought bad name for the organisation now what would be the PR's role in clearing the hotels image and bringing back clientele to the hotel.

Activity 2

- A hotel has organized a celebrity event on the eve of New Year and has sold tickets for the same, but due to last minute flight, cancellations the celebrity could not reach the destination and that left the guests in complete dismay and anger and has also resulted in bad name for the hotel. What should be the GRE's role in calming the guest and managing the media persons?

GLOSSARY

Comprehensive Glossary is placed at the end of Block 1.

Enrolment No. ☐

1. How many hours did you need for studying the units?

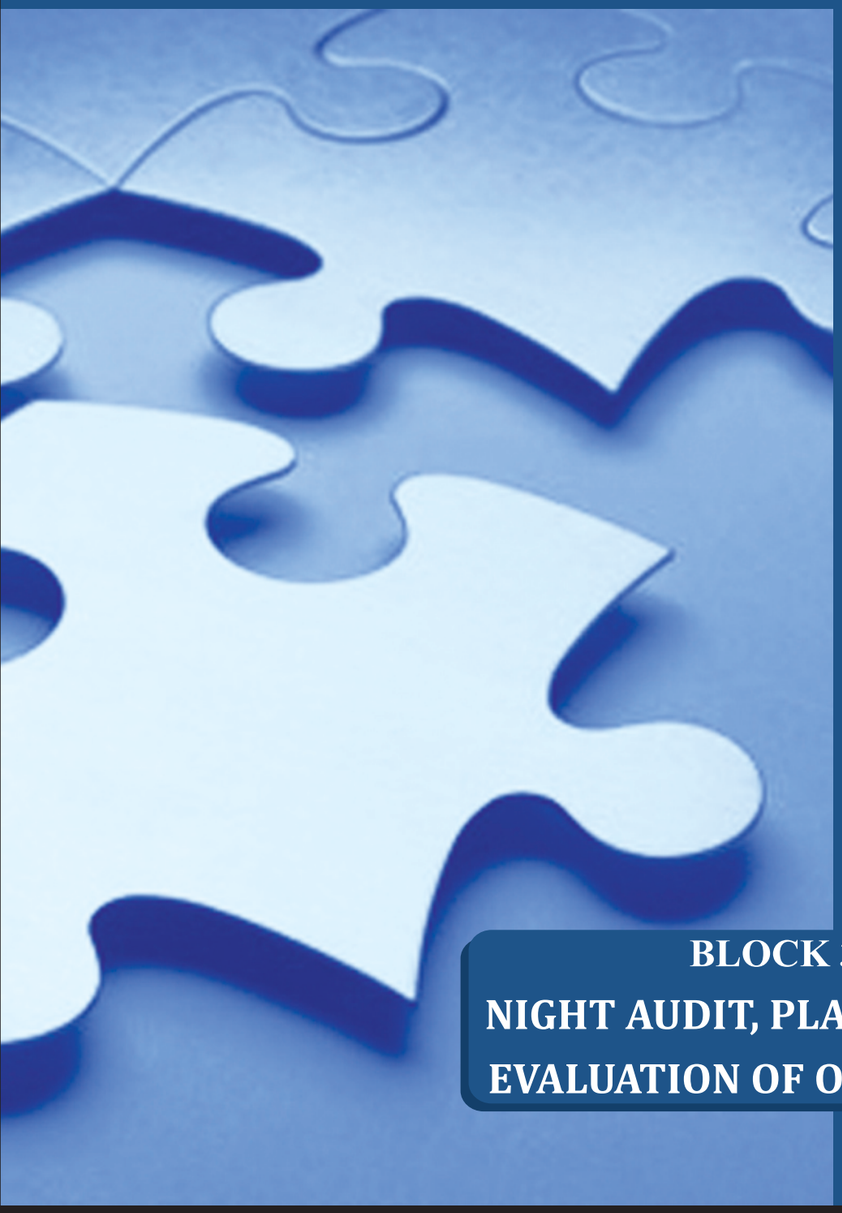
Unit No	1	2	3	4
Nos of Hrs				

2. Please give your reactions to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Item	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Give specific example if any
Presentation Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Language and Style	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Illustration used (Diagram, tables etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Conceptual clarity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Check your progress Quest	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Feed back to CYP Question	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

3. Any Other Comments

Front Office Management



BLOCK 3:
NIGHT AUDIT, PLANNING AND EVALUATION OF OPERATIONS

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University
Ahmedabad

"Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one."

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

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Front Office Management

Front Office Management

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ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self-instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual-skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to effect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self-instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)

PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included may tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect.

All the best for your studies from our team!

Front Office Management

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Front Office Management

BLOCK 3: NIGHT AUDIT, PLANNING AND EVALUATION OF OPERATIONS

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BLOCK 3: NIGHT AUDIT, PLANNING AND EVALUATION OF OPERATIONS

Introduction to the Block

The hotel during daytime is full of activities. Number of transactions takes place at various points in the hotel like the restaurants, business centre, spa and other service outlets. It is during the night at Particular time the day's transactions are tabulated and at the same time crosschecked. This task is performed at the front office by the night auditor. Night audit is actually the audit process of taking inventory of the day's work. In other words, it is the activity of checking and confirming that whatever transactions have been done during the day is correct and complete. Any mistakes made during the day of transaction posting can be checked and rectified at the time of night audit.

The first unit in this block elaborates on the detailed tasks involved in the night audit process as it is a very important process and every staff of the front office must be aware of the same.

The second unit in this block deals with the managerial function of front office. A hotel has many different functions to be performed by different people at different sections. As per the functions, they have their own system of managing and organizing their daily tasks and staff. All these individual departments ultimately lead to attainment of the goals set up by the hotel, both in monetary terms and in terms of guest satisfaction and customer retention.

Planning is an important management function without which it is not possible for front office (or any other department) to achieve its goals. Although the activities at the sight may appear to be a routine job, in reality lot of organization goes into its proper execution. It is also at the same time important to ensure if we have met our objectives, i.e. it is important for the management to continuously evaluate and monitor daily activities.

UNIT 1 THE NIGHT AUDITOR

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Functions of Night Audit

1.2.1 Purpose of Night Audit

1.3 Role of Night Auditor

1.4 Trial Balance / Accounts Receivable

1.5 Posting of Room Charges

1.6 Distributing Charges

1.7 Audit Procedure Credit

1.8 Other Duties of Night Auditor

1.9 Let Us Sum Up

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the procedure for night auditing in detail and the various steps involved in the same.

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the role of night auditor
- State functions of the night audit.
- Discuss the distribution of charges.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The hotel during daytime is full of activities. Number of transactions takes place at various points in the hotel. It is during the nighttime that the day's transactions are tabulated and at the same time crosschecked since generally this is a quieter period for the front office staff with least amount of guest interaction. This task is performed at the front office by the night auditor. He is in fact a person who acts as an internal auditor for the whole day's financial transactions.

1.2 FUNCTIONS OF NIGHT AUDIT

Night audit is the audit process of taking inventory of the day's work. In other words, it is the activity of checking and confirming that whatever transactions have been done during the day is correct and complete. Any mistakes made during the day of transaction posting can be rectified during this time. Accounts such as rooms, food and beverages, taxes, phones and others are corrected and each account is balanced. Since hotel business is a round-the-clock business, in hotels, the auditing is done during the night and hence it is called night auditing. In hotels operating manually and mechanically, the best-suited time for the process is midnight as the activities are minimum during this time. In hotels operating on computer i.e. fully automatic system, the audit and posting can be done without disturbing the night auditing process and hence the work of auditing can be done at any time. This work in an automatic system is mainly creating and distribution of reports, called as 'Early Bird' or 'Flash' information about previous day.

1.2.1 Purpose of Night Audit

The purpose of night auditing is mainly to inform the management about the total amount of revenue generated on a day and how much the hotel is owed by the guests both in-house and checked-out and producing operational and management reports. The 'Early Bird' or 'Flash' reports help accounting department to compile a more extensive daily report for posting to the general ledger. An effective night audit increases the probability of correct account settlement and avoids disputes with the checking-out guest. It verifies posted entries to non-guest accounts also, monitors guest credit limits, balance all front office accounts and sorts out any room status discrepancies.

Check your progress 1

1. Explain in brief the process of Night Audit

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1.3 ROLE OF NIGHT AUDITOR

The basic function of night auditor is the responsibility of overall operations of the hotel as per the policy and procedure laid down, closing and balancing of the front office accounts recoverable. An auditor can handle 200-250 rooms normally; while with a computer even a larger hotel may be managed by him.

Job Description of a Night Auditor:

1. Receiving and recording guests' payments.
2. Preparing a list of those accounts, which are above a particular amount /limit?
3. Making a list of walk-in guests during the day as per the policy.
4. Filing of reports and keeping it updated at all times.
5. Make sure that all reports and vouchers on hotel's checklist are on GM's table for review and approval.
6. Prepare the aging report for city ledger and 'Hold Bucket' on every 15th and 30th or 31st of the month.

7. Handle all other internal control items concerning company policy and procedure.

8. Night auditor ensures that hotel receives payment for goods and services sold to the guest.

Broadly the functions of Auditor are Cross Checking for every revenue generating transaction section of the hotel, the originating revenue centre documents, the type i.e. cash charge or paid outs and the monetary value of the transaction, front office posts to appropriate guest or non-guest account. Transactional documentation identifies the nature and amount of the transaction and is the basis for data input into accounting system. This documentation consists of guest checks. An accounting system should provide independent supporting documents to verify transactions. Night audit should crosscheck the information on room revenue with room rate posting on guest folios against housekeeping reports of occupied rooms and front office room rack to avoid any occupancy error. The night auditor relies on transactional documentation to prove that proper accounting procedures were followed. The auditor's review of daily posting reconciles front office account against revenue centre and departmental stores.

Credit Monitoring

Various factors such as credit card Company, credit limit, guest's credit profile (status/reputation), hotel's house credit limits, etc. are instrumental in fixing line of credit with guest by the hotel. At the end of each business day, the night auditor should identify each account, which have either reached or exceeded their assigned credit limit. A list of all such accounts called 'High Balance Report' is made and such accounts are called High Balance Account. A simple basic posting formula given below should be used:

Previous Balance + Debits - Credits = Net Outstanding Balance

Daily and Supplemental Transcripts

The word 'transcript' means a daily report showing guest's transactional activities for that day and 'supplement transcript' refers to non-guest's account. Combined together they represent all transactions for anyone day and form the basis of a consolidated report of front office accounting data against which department totals can be matched. The total of charged purchases reported by various revenue generating centres should equal to total amount of charged purchases posted to guest and non-guest accounts. An out-of-balance condition among non-guest accounts will help night auditor detect and correct errors.

Check your progress 2

1. Broadly outline the functions of Night Auditor.

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1.4 TRIAL BALANCE/ ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

When a guest goes to the bar or restaurant (and consumes drinks or food) or avails of laundry facilities, or makes telephone calls, etc and does not pay cash but signs a voucher (an undertaking that he agrees to the specified amount and shall pay later or during checkout) and also the room charges etc. are all examples of financial transaction where amount is to be received by the hotel from the guest and these are called' accounts receivables' for the hotel. Similarly, this heading will also cover any previous outstanding balance of the guest, transfer of some other persons' outstanding account to his account (with his due approval) and any credit card receivable.

Any 'returned checks and charge backs', (maybe a guest' previous skipper account) etc. It can further be said any credit sale of services, amenities and facilities by various departments of the hotel (where the guest has agreed to pay the amount of the transaction later either himself or through some other party and to which hotel has consented) in all accounts receivable financial transactions. Such transactions increase the outstanding balance on guest folio and it is important that hotel maintain records of the same. Also V.P.O can be put under this category, as these are the amounts paid by the hotel on his behalf and which the guest has agreed to pay later)

Check your progress 3

1. Explain the term "Accounts Receivable"

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1.5 POSTING OF ROOM CHARGES

The night audit team's primary responsibility is to verify the posting of charges within the guest ledger. All transactions, including room rates, outlet/ancillary postings, banquet charges and other miscellaneous charges, must be posted correctly in order for the hotel to accurately report financial data. This verification process will vary primarily between manual and automatic posting environments.

A room rate posting report will be generated for inclusion into the night audit report that verifies the rates for all the rooms within the hotel occupied for management review. The posting of outlet/ancillary charges must be verified as well as the room rates. The food/beverage auditors usually refer to this data. Again, in a manual environment, the night audit team may post each charge to the appropriate guest ledger account.

Check your progress 4

1. What are the charges that are verified during the Night Audit?

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1.6 DISTRIBUTING CHARGES

The night auditor should use source document to balance all revenue centre departments i.e. balance all front office accounts against departmental transaction information. First, balance all departments and then look for individual posting errors within an out-of balance department. The process of balancing departments is called 'trial balance' and this uncovers any corrections or adjustments to be made during the night audit process and can be done before posting room and tax charges so that if the trial balance is correct and the final balance is wrong then the error is in room and tax charge. In case of a mechanical system, the posting machine will run a D-report. The night auditor's D-report reflects a typical day's guest Dr. and Cr. activities in the following sequence.

- Items marked as' A' is the machine printed totals or the memory totals of the Dr. Departments.
- Items marked 'B' are the machine printed totals of the Cr. departments. Any corrections listed on the correction sheet are added up by the departments, written in the correction column of the report and deducted from the machine totals. The result is the net total.

- Item marked 'C' is the net day's difference-total Dr. reduced by the total Cr.
- Item marked 'D' is the figure of opening Dr. balance taken from yesterday's D-report and represents the total of all guests' account at the beginning
- By adding C' and 'D' the net outstanding result is calculated. This represents the total of all guests' account.
- Item marked 'E' represents the last two total amounts and is the machine additions to the final balance on each folio for both transit guests and city ledger accounts.

The night auditor can declare the audit balance when both amounts of net outstanding are identical. In addition, the night auditor may include the calculation of certain statistics such as room occupancy, ARR, average revenue per available room (total room revenue/ number of rooms available for sale) and the compiling of summary report for management.

This report shows the total of amount of charge posted to the guest account by departments. Many times the trial balance does not tally due to errors in communication or posting of amount.

Check your progress 5

1. Explain Trial Balance.

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1.7 AUDIT PROCEDURE CREDIT

Credit Monitoring

Various factors such as credit card Company, credit limit, guest's credit profile (status / reputation), hotel's house credit limits, etc. are instrumental in fixing line of credit with guest by the hotel. At the end of each business day, the night auditor should identify each account, which have either reached or exceeded their assigned credit limit. A list of all such accounts called 'High Balance Report' is made and such account is called High Balance Account. A simple basic posting formula given below should be used:

Previous Balance + Debits - Credits = Net Outstanding Balance

Credit Security Measures

1. For a walk-in guest with light or scanty baggage or a doubtful character ask for at least three days' advance and inform various sections not to give any credit to the guest. The notification slips may have abbreviation APC (all payment cash). This is done by through the PMS in 5 star hotels wherein there is an option of marking the guest as a “no post” which means that no department can post any kind of charges in the guest folio and they have to collect cash from the guest in these circumstances.

2. Where the guest, after registering and within first few days’ shows unusual accumulation of charges and when the guest's account reaches a certain limit previously set by the hotel, it is the duty of front office to list such a guest's accounts for credit investigations and for the payment of these charges.

Check your progress 6

1. What do you mean by High Balance Report?

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1.8 OTHER DUTIES OF NIGHT AUDITOR

In case of small and medium size hotels, the night auditor, in addition to his normal duties may also act as night manager or night receptionist and may be required to perform the functions of 'graveyard' shift. He usually works from 11.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. (next day). A particular hour called as End of the Day-- (which is an arbitrary stopping time of business), is fixed. Usually the night audit begins at 1.00 a.m. and also the hotel business day ends at 1.00 a.m. Usually the period from 1.00 a.m. (when the audit work starts) to the time when audit work is completed is called as Audit Work Time and any transactions during this period are posted in next business day. The night audit process is complete when the totals for guests, non-guests and departmental accounts are 'In Balance' or proven correct and is not showing any 'Out of Balance' position (a condition when charges and credits posted to guests and non-guests accounts during the day don't match with the ones posted on to the individual revenue source)

Check your progress 7

1. When is the process of Night Audit complete?

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1.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we:

- Explain the role of night auditor
- Point out functions of the night audit.
- State the distribution of charges.

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

Night audit is actually the audit process of taking inventory of the day's work. In other words, it is the activity of checking and confirming that whatever transactions have been done during the day is correct and complete. Since hotel business is a round-the-clock business, in hotels the auditing is done during the night and hence it is called night auditing. The purpose of night auditing is mainly to inform the management about the total amount of revenue generated on a day, and how much the hotel is owed by the guests both in-house and checked-out and producing operational and management reports

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

Broadly the functions of Auditor are Cross Checking for every revenue generating transaction section of the hotel the originating revenue centre documents the type i.e. cash charge or paid outs and the monetary value of the transaction. Front office posts to appropriate guest or non-guest account. Transactional documentation identifies the nature and amount of the transaction and is the basis for data input into accounting system Night audit should cross check the information on room revenue (which he receives from folio bucket) with room rate posting on guest folios against housekeeping reports of occupied rooms and front office room rack to avoid any occupancy error etc. The auditor's review of daily posting reconciles front office account against revenue centre and departmental stores..

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

When a guest goes to the bar or restaurant (and consumes drinks or food) or avails of laundry facilities, or makes telephone calls, etc, and does not pay cash but signs a voucher (an undertaking that he agrees to the specified amount and shall pay later) and also the room charges etc. are all examples of financial transaction where amount is to be received by the hotel from the guest (guest has to pay) and these are called' accounts receivables' for the hotel.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

The night audit team's primary responsibility is to verify the posting of charges within the guest ledger. All transactions, including room rates, outlet/ ancillary postings, banquet charges, and other miscellaneous charges, must be posted correctly in order for the hotel to accurately report financial data. All the above mentioned charges are verified during the Night Audit process.

Check your Progress 5

Answer:

The night auditor should use source document to balance all revenue centre departments i.e. balance all front office accounts against departmental transaction information. First, balance all departments and then look for individual posting errors within an out-of balance department. The process of balancing departments is called 'trial balance' and this uncovers any corrections or adjustments to be made during the night audit process and can be done before posting room and tax charges so that if the trial balance is correct and the final balance is wrong then the error is in room and tax charge.

Check your Progress 6

Answer:

Various factors such as credit card Company, credit limit, guest's credit profile (status / reputation), hotel's house credit limits, etc. are instrumental in fixing

line of credit with guest by the hotel. At the end of each business day, the night auditor should identify each account, which have either reached or exceeded their assigned credit limit. A list of all such accounts called 'High Balance Report' is made and such account is called High Balance Account.

Check your Progress 7

Answer:

The night audit process is complete when the totals for guests, non-guests and departmental accounts are 'In Balance' or proven correct and is not showing any 'Out of Balance' position (a condition when charges and credits posted to guests and non-guests accounts during the day don't match with the ones posted on to the individual revenue source.

UNIT 2 PLANNING AND EVALUATION OPERATIONS

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Management Functions

2.3 Establishing Room Rates

2.3.1 Method of Room Rates Determination

2.4 Forecasting Room Availability

2.5 Budgeting for Operation

2.6 Evaluation of Front Office Operation

2.7 Let us Sum up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the management functions and the method of establishing room rates, forecasting room availability and preparing the budget for daily operations.

After going through this unit, you should be able to know:

- State the management function of front office
- Explain the ways of establishing room rates
- Point out forecasting of rooms availability
- Discuss the importance of budgeting
- Analyze evaluation of front office operation

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the managerial function of front office. Planning is an important management function without which it is not possible for front office (or any other department) to achieve its goals. Although the daily activities may appear to be a routine job, in reality, lot of organization goes into its proper execution. It is also at the same time important to ensure if we have met our objectives, i.e. it is important for the management to continuously evaluate and monitor daily activities.

2.2 MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

A hotel has many different functions to be performed by the different people at the different sections. As per the function's, they have their own system of managing and organizing their function, jobs, staff. All this individual department ultimately lead to attainment of the goals set up by the hotel.

Front office has sections, which deal with reservations, reception, billing and payments. The florist contact of most would be guest with hotel is with the department whether it is us a telephone or personal keeping its specific nature of duties the office has various managerial function to be performed. Each staff of front offices has indefinite lasses, but here under, we may consider some of officials to outline their function briefly. Management function includes planning, organizing, directing, co-ordination, controlling and evaluating.

Planning

The front office planning involves three steps procedure:

- Collecting of information / data in order to chalk out broad policies relating to room occupancy, standards of service, types of discounts, packages deals, staff records.
- Developing a blue print for the structure, flow of activities, so that the planning details can be transitioned into action, whatever the department aspires like occupancy percentage, guest satisfaction - all have to be achieved with proper operational system.
- At the same time, deciding upon the investment is also a vital part of planning. The front office has to plan for expansion modernization.

Organising

Putting the resources and activities into right system, within the structural and financial contract of an organization,

- Segmentation of activities at the front office - looking into the nature of duties to be performed, they are broken down into reception, registration cashier etc.
- Each unit is with its proper authority and delegation to form a manageable group. This enables each unit to perform up to its optimum level of efficiency.
- Identification of staff skill and allotting a job effectively - like a person with communication skill will be placed to handle enquiries.
- Each unit has to be provided with suitable resources to complete their activities.
- Legal distribution of workload, making roasters with proper breaks & off so that stress and fatigue can be avoided.

Directing

Front office has number of staff who carries out various operations. They need to be guided properly to complete their task. It is done by instructing, guiding, supervising, teaching and reviewing.

- **Instructing:** The front office head should give clear instructions to the work force to carry out the plans of the department. This should be in either writer or verbal form.
- **Guiding:** The objective of guiding is to make the staff achieve the standard of performance expected.
- **Supervising:** This function involves keeping a watch on the staff work and oppressing them at right time.
- **Teaching:** The practices and procedures to be followed have to be thorough and performed before the employees.
- **Reviewing:** The operation system and the performances have to be reviewed from time to time.

Co-ordinating

Front office department has to work in close relation with almost all the other departments and at the same time has to co-ordinate amongst its own section. Co-ordination is an important management function to bind together and harmonize all activities of the department.

Controlling

Control is a necessary managerial function preformed to increase the utility of all the available resources, monitoring any deviation and take corrective action.

Evaluating

This is important management function, which involves comparing actual results with, expected. Evaluation is to be done for activities, staff performances etc.

Check your progress 1

1. Explain the management function of "Directing"

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2.3 ESTABLISHING ROOM RATES

Determination of room rates and price structure of various products may be considered in two different settings-existing hotels and hotel yet to be opened. In an existing hotel there will be some information on which room rates and price structure can be decided upon, whereas in case of hotel yet to be opened. A right philosophy and proper method of pricing need to be used.

There is no relationship between the price level of a hotel room or food and beverage operation and its volume of sales. Although the volume of sales will (in the majority of cases) fluctuate from one day to another and often shows a seasonal trend. The volume of sale in respect to a longer period will generally be higher when the price level of the establishment is lower and vice-versa. Over a longer period therefore, the lower the price level of the establishment, the higher usually its volume of sales and conversely, the higher the level of charges the lower the volume of sales."

2.3.1 Method of Room Rates Determination

Mainly two methods of room rates determination are used - Rule of thumb, Hubbart's Formula.

- **Rule of thumb:** A very traditional way of charging room rate. In this system "One Rupee" rate is fixed for every Rs. 1000/- spent on room construction cost.

Hubbart's formula: The formula considers the following:

- The operational costs/expenditures and include a certain percentage of returns on land and building and another percentage on hotel keeping capital.
- Deduct from the above cost the incomes received through rentals, food and beverage sales and other miscellaneous sales.
- Divide the remaining for charging room rates by projected number of rooms occupied.

A practical example of the calculation of average room rate with the help of Hubbart's formula is given below.

Investment	
Cost of Land, Building, Furniture and	Rs.37, 60, 00,000
Fixtures Working Capital	2, 40, 00,000
Total Investment	Rs. 40, 00, 00,000
Financing of Investment	32, 50, 00,000
Debt at 10% Interest Equity	7, 50, 00,000
Total Financing	40, 00, 00,000

Projected Number of Rooms Occupied (75% Occupancy)	60,000
Desired Return on Equity at 15%	1, 50, 00,000
Income Taxes at 50%	1, 50, 00,000
Required Profit before Income Taxes	3, 000, 00,000
Interest Expense (Rs. 32, 50, 00,000 at 10%)	3, 25, 00.000
Required Profit before Interest and Taxes	6, 25, 00,000
Estimated Depreciation, Municipal Taxes and	3, 75, 00,000
Insurance Required House Profit	10, 00, 00,000
Budgeted Deductions from Income	3, 30, 00,000
General and Administrative Expenses	3, 30, 00,000
Advertising and Sales Promotion	2, 60,00,000
Heat Light and Power	86,00,000
Repairs and Maintenance	1,24,00,000
Total	8,00,00,000
Required Gross Operating Income	18,00,00,000
Estimated Departmental Profit Excluding Rooms	
Food and beverage	2,95,00,000
Telephone	45,00,000
Laundry	40,00,000
Others	1,20,00,000
Total	5,00,00,000
Required Rooms Department Profit	13,00,00,000
Estimated Rooms Department Expense	25,00,000
Required Rooms Department Revenue	13,25,00,000
Hence, the Required Average Room Rate	2,208.23
(Rs. 13,25,00,000 + 60,000)	

A modified formula for calculation of room tariff

Formula

a. All operating and overhead expenses under appropriate heads including depreciation (excluding initial depreciation on hotel building, if any) calculated either by the written down value method as allowed by the Income Tax Act, 1961 or straight line method as permitted by Section 205 (2) (b) of the Companies Act, 1956 subject to the condition that the method once adopted is consistently followed in the subsequent years.

+ Actual interest accrued for the period on all borrowings.

+ A net return of 15% on the net fixed assets (without revaluation).

+ Net working capital.

Loans, both short term and long term.

Investment in other activities, after allowing for the national income tax liabilities.

+ A pre-tax return of 10% on long-term borrowings only.

Check your progress 2

1. Explain Hubbarts formula.

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2.4 FORECASTING ROOM AVAILABILITY

If a hotel wants to take effective action in circumstances of relocating a guest during full occupancy, it must be able to forecast the final level of bookings. One way of doing this would be to take each market segment in turn. However, experience suggests that the best approach is to try to predict the total number of guests expected and then break this down into different segments in the light of previous experience. Since this 'top down' approach is working with larger numbers than those for any individual segment, it tends to be more successful.

The simplest of the forecasting techniques is 'time series analysis'. This tries to smooth out the inevitable random fluctuations by assuming them equal to the average of the equivalent nights in the past. However, there is not much point in taking more than three or four years into consideration because circumstances change so much that earlier figures will be irrelevant. An analysis which always uses the most recent set of nights is known as a 'moving average forecast'. The equation for a four-year moving average for demand next year is as follows:

$$\frac{F(y + 1) = D(y) + D(y - 1) + D(y - 2) + D(y - 3)}{4}$$

Where: y is the current year

F is the forecast demand and

D is actual demand for the equivalent night in the year indicated.

The moving average approach suffers from the disadvantage that it gives equal weight to each of the years in the calculation, including the one furthest away from the present day. A technique called. 'Exponential smoothing' can be used to produce forecasts in the light of the most recent results. The formula is as follows:

$$F (y + 1) = ¢ D(y) + (l - ¢)F(y)$$

Where: y is the current year

F is forecast demand

D is actual demand for the equivalent night in the year indicated and a is a 'smoothing constant' between ¢ and I (e.g. O.1)

The effect of the smoothing constant is to emphasize the most recent results. The larger it is, the more weight is given to that result.

There are many other statistical techniques, some of them very sophisticated, but we do not propose to deal with them here because their use is limited as far as hotels are concerned. The problem such establishments face is that because demand is not only seasonal but varies from one day of the week to another the only real basis for analysis is the same night last year the year before and the year before that. Each night in the series is thus twelve months apart and a lot can happen in that period. For example, there can be:

- Changes in the economic environment, such as booms or slumps.
- Fluctuations in exchange rates.
- Security threats, whether real or
- 'One-off' local events, such as major exhibitions.
- The marketing activities, such as advertising campaigns or special promotions.
- A change in the competitive position, such as the opening of a major new hotel nearby.

These considerations limit the effectiveness of purely statistical techniques. Because of this, it is more usual to combine their predictions with what are called judgmental' inputs to produce the final forecast. This is usually done by a yield management team of .two or three senior staff, including the front office or reservations manager and the sales manager. The team's task is to look at whatever forecast the statistical techniques might have produced and then modify this in the light of new factors like the ones listed above.

Check your progress 3

1. What do you mean by a Time Series analysis?

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2.5 BUDGETING FOR OPERATION

Budgeting refers to formulation of plan for future activity, which lay down carefully constructed objectives and programs of activities and provides a yardstick by which deviation from planned achievement can be measured.

Essentials for successful budgeting

1. The objectives to be achieved must be determined.
2. The budget period must be fixed.
3. Key facts like sales, availability of equipment, raw material etc must be determined.
4. Ideas and suggestions from a11 responsible for budget should be taken.
5. The main responsibility for the administration of the budgeting programme is usually delegated to an executive known as the budget officer/budgetary controller. He may be the controller or chief accountant, or cost accountant or an official specially appointed for the task. His duties will include the following:
   - To co-ordinate the efforts of all those engaged in preparing budgets.
   - To helps draw up budget in time and if necessary, to change them.
   - To collect data on actual costs and compare it with the budgeted performance.
   - To feed back information concerning significant deviations from the budget preparation of budgets.

In preparation of budget the whole hotel operation is divided and cost and profit centres need to be established. This will fix responsibility on individual for the control of each item of income and expenditure. Each departmental heads is involved in the budgeting of his own area. He becomes aware of his responsibility and the part he plays in the over a plan of the business. He feels involved committed and motivated. Control is exercised at the source and will involve the delegation of duties and liaison between the different functions of business for success. The manager must involve his staff, motivate them and seek a teamwork approach.

The starting point for the process of budgeting is the determination of the profit target. Budgetary control is the best system through which the profit target is achieved.

Check your progress 4

1. State any 3 essentials of successful budgeting.

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2.6 EVALUATION OF FRONT OFFICE OPERATION

It is important all the efforts put in by any department / unit has to be evaluated at a certain period. This is done to check whether we have achieved our set goals efficiently. The front office compares the actual results, like room sales, occupancy, ARR with the expected one and to what extend have we attained them, Evaluation can be done in various ways such as (a) staff appraisal, where performance of the staff is evaluated to determine their efficiency of work (b) Appraisal of working conditions and systems regarding Front office operations (c) Evaluation of sales to different type of rooms (a) Evaluation for profitability involves estimates sales, costs and profit figures.

Check your progress 5

1. State the ways of evaluating the work of a department.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we:

- Stated the management function of front office
- Discussed the ways of establishing room rates
- Explained forecasting of rooms availability
- Pointed out the importance of budgeting
- Analyzed evaluation of front office operation

Check your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

Front office has number of staff who carry out various operations. They need to be guided properly to complete their task. It is done by intrusting, guiding, supervising, teaching and reviewing.

- **Instructing:** The front office, head should give clear instruction to the work force to carry out the plans of the department. This should be clear either in writer or verbal from.
- **Guiding:** The objective of guiding is so as to make the staff achieve the standard of performance expected.
- **Supervising:** This function involves keeping a watch on the staff work and oppressing them at right time keep record on the sale record.
- **Teaching:** The practices and procedures to be followed have to be through and performed before the employees.
- **Reviewing:** The operation system and the performances have to be review from time to time.

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

Hubbart's formula: The formula considers the following:.

- The operational costs/expenditures and include a certain percentage of returns on land and building and another percentage on hotel keeping capital employed.
- Deduct from the above cost the incomes received through rentals, food and beverage sales and other miscellaneous sales.
- Divide the remaining for charging room rates by projected number of rooms occupied.

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

The simplest of the forecasting techniques is 'time series analysis'. This tries to smooth out the inevitable random fluctuations by assuming demand to be equal to the average of the equivalent nights in the past.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

Essentials for successful budgeting

1. The objectives to be achieved must be determined.
2. The budget period must be fixed.
3. Key facts like sales, availability of equipment, raw material etc must be determined.

Check your Progress 5

Answer:

Evaluation can be done in various ways such as (a) staff appraisal, where performance of the staff is evaluated to determine their efficiency of work (b) Appraisal of working conditions and systems regarding Front office operations (c) Evaluation of sales to different type of rooms (a) Evaluation for profitability involves estimates sales, costs and profit figures.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

1. Front Office Management, Sudhir Andrews, Tata McGraw-Hill, 2007, ISBN: 9780070655768

2. Accommodation operations and Management, Kaushal S K, Frank Bros & CO, ISBN: 8184090730

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

Activity 1

- Visit a nearby 5 star property and find out all the different software used in all the different parts/departments of the hotel.

Activity 2

- Prepare an operational budget for a 3 star hotel with 60 rooms for the entire financial year keeping in mind the staffing requirements. Make and state assumptions wherever necessary.

GLOSSARY

Comprehensive Glossary is placed at the end of Block 1.

Enrolment No. ☐

1. How many hours did you need for studying the units?

Unit No	1	2	3	4
Nos of Hrs				

2. Please give your reactions to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Item	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Give specific example if any
Presentation Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Language and Style	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Illustration used (Diagram, tables etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Conceptual clarity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Check your progress Quest	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Feed back to CYP Question	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

3. Any Other Comments

Front Office Management

BLOCK 4:
IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University
Ahmedabad

"Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one."

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

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ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self-instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual-skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to effect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self-instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)

PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included may tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect.

All the best for your studies from our team!

Front Office Management

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BLOCK 4: IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION AND FRONT OFFICE

Objectives, Introduction, Front Office Communication, Importance of Communication, Types of Communication, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Non verbal Communication, Flow of Communication, Log Book, Front desk log book, Importance of Telephone Directory , Procedure of Mail Handling , Classification of Incoming Mail, Handling of Parcel and Registered Mail, Handling of Hotel Mail, Handling of Outgoing Mail, Handling of Telephone Service, General Telephone Manners, Telephone Communication, Use of Telephones in Departmental Operations, Let Us Sum Up

UNIT 2 BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

Objectives, Introduction, Essentials of Effective Letter/Email Writing, Language of Business Writing, Appearance of Business Letter/Email, Parts of Letter, Planning the Letter , Composing the Letter, Types of Letters/Emails, Complaints Letters, Enquiries and Replies, Let Us Sum Up

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Ambedkar
Open University

Front Office Management

BLOCK 4: IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

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BLOCK 4: IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Introduction to the Block

Studying the communication process is important because you coach, coordinate, counsel, evaluate and supervise throughout this process. It is the chain of understanding that integrates the members of an organization from top to bottom, bottom to top, and side to side. Over time, technology has progressed and has created new forms of and ideas about communication. These technological advances revolutionized the processes of communication. It is thus a process by which meaning is assigned and conveyed in an attempt to create shared understanding. The first unit of this block emphasizes the communication in the front office and the procedures handled in the process.

The importance of communication in all business organizations has been emphasized in the earlier blocks. A very important part of this communication is email which is an indispensable mode of modern communication. The composition of an email is important for its effectiveness. The second unit in this block details the factors to be considered for ensuring the effectiveness in communication. Email is widely used as a form of business communication and overall it is a highly effective communication tool. Email is inexpensive, only requiring an Internet connection that is generally already present in all business organizations. Although a printout of emails is possible, emails often stay as soft copies because archiving and retrieving email communications is easy to do. From the CEO to the janitorial staff and even temporary employees of the business can send and receive email communications.

Although it cannot and should not replace all face-to-face communication and others forms of communication, internal email usage can cover many areas within the business. Many businesses use email as part of its marketing efforts to share information with prospects, customers, vendors.

Business emails should be concise and to the point. Proper grammar and spelling is very important in business emails because it reflects on you and your abilities. Attachments should be prepared in a format that any recipient can easily access/download. This block discusses the importance of communication in detail, while first unit talks of communication and front office; the second unit introduces you to business communication.

UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION AND FRONT OFFICE

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Front Office Communication

1.3 Importance of Communication

1.4 Types of Communication

1.4.1 Written Communication

1.4.2 Oral Communication

1.4.3 Non verbal Communication

1.5 Flow of Communication

1.6 Log Book

1.6.1 Front desk log book

1.7 Importance of Telephone Directory

1.8 Procedure of Mail Handling

1.8.1 Classification of Incoming Mail

1.8.2 Handling of Parcel and Registered Mail

1.8.3 Handling of Hotel Mail

1.8.4 Handling of Outgoing Mail

1.9 Handling of Telephone Service

1.9.1 General Telephone Manners

1.9.2 Telephone Communication

1.9.3 Use of Telephones in Departmental Operations

1.10 Let Us Sum Up

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed communication and front office

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- State the Importance and different types of communication
- Identify the role of communication to fulfil front office responsibilities
- Elucidate the use of different communication records as logbook and information directory.
- Explain the different telephonic guest services provided by front office and Telephone Manners.
- Judge the handling of hotel mail
- Analyze the communication between front office and other departments of the hotel.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process whereby information is in the form of a package and is channelled and sent by a sender to a receiver via some medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback. The whole process of communication is incomplete till the sender receives the feedback. Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another; it involves a sender transmitting an idea, information or feeling to a receiver. However, the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication in order for the act of communication to occur. The message is communicated to the recipient without his knowledge of such communication. Communication requires that all parties have an area of communicative commonality. Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmit. Many of the problems that occur in an organisation are the either the direct result of people failing to communicate, which leads to confusion and can cause good plans to fail.

1.2 FRONT OFFICE COMMUNICATION

Communication in front Office is extremely essential for the proper co-ordination between the various departments of the hotel and it is equally essential that there is a good communication within the department also. The front office is the nerve centre of the hotel. It has to be connected with the various departments of the hotels for providing various services to the guest and for its own easy operation, communication amongst the department staff is equally important. Various means and records are used for communication. There are many methods of communication within organizations. In case of hotels the communication include the telephone, letters, fax, emails, computerized displays, CRS system (central reservation system) and printouts, various reports (generated within the organisation and from outside the organisation), memos, forms of one kind or another publicity, advertisements, hotel directories, brochures, notice boards, placards and other static displays, public address systems, paging system automated alarm systems and face-to-face conversations.

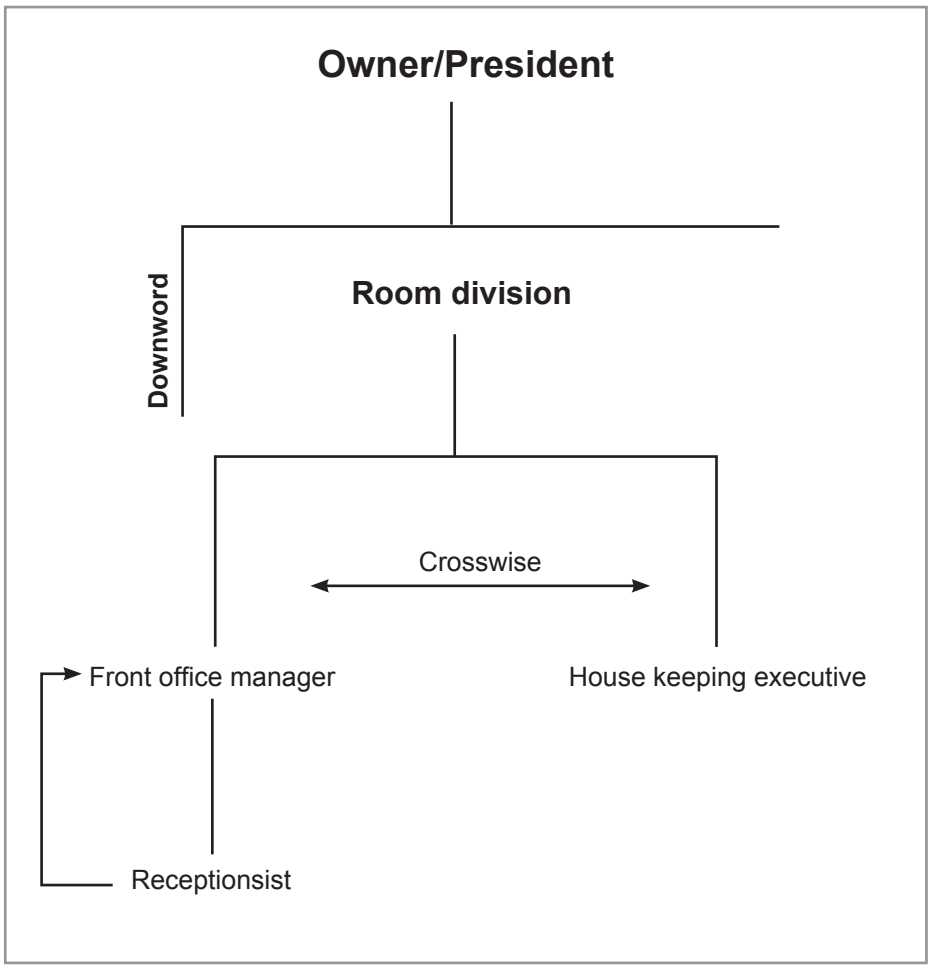

Fig. 1.1: Flow of Communication

Check your progress 1

1. Write a short note on communication in front office.

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1.3 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Good communication is essential for establishing a long lasting relationship with the guests. Opinion of the guest depends upon their experience at the hotel. As hotel is both, product and service industry where apart from accommodation, food etc, what guest seeks from the hotel is the friendly treatment from the hotel staff. Thus effective communication is very necessary to comfort the guests. As the communication with the guest is important, communication within the departments of the hotel is equally important.

Following are the different reasons for effective communication:

Decision making: decisions are made by the management on the basis of information provided to them. Clear and proper communication enables them to take the decisions effectively.

Delegating the authority: managers take decisions and execute them through their subordinates. If the instructions given are clear, it will enable them to function with efficiency.

Job satisfaction: open communication and frequent discussion, feedback from the staff boosts the morale of the staff members. If employees feel that they are heard and can resolve their differences, then they will be satisfied, and perform the job for their own satisfaction.

Planning: reservation diary, staff briefings, occupancy status report, sales report are the different tools of communication through which management gathers information. This information is very essential for future planning.

Check your progress 2

1. List the different reasons for effective communication.

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1.4 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is grouped in 2 groups as Verbal communication and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is further sub grouped into 2 as written and oral communication. Nonverbal communication has many elements such as body language, eye contact, voice etc.

1.4.1 Written Communication

Written communication is done by the means of written symbols. It can be in the form of letters, fax, memos, reports ,notes, write ups, manuals, emails etc. information that is not written properly create confusion and misleads the readers. Written communication serve as permanent records which can be stored for future use. In case of the readers belonging to different geographical areas where accents are different, written communication becomes easier to understand. High cost, time consuming, increased paper work and no immediate response are the demerits of written communication.

1.4.2 Oral Communication

Spoken words make oral communication. Both sender and receiver of the information use words to express themselves. It is easy, effective and gives immediate response. To understand the information communicated by others, one should be able to listen carefully which requires voluntary attention and understanding. E.g. while recording complaints of unhappy guests, conversing with the travel agents or while taking instructions from management, one has to listen patiently which enables the employees to perform up to the satisfaction of the speaker. Effective listening by both management and employees results in increased productivity. But well it has disadvantages of lack of authenticity and record maintenance.

1.4.3 Non Verbal Communication

Communication is also possible without words. This type of passing of information speaks about the relationship among people and is often more important than conveying through words. Non verbal communication means the messages are sent through body language, posture and facial expressions. But it is also very important to note that same gestures mean differently in different cultures. There is no one action which means the same all over the world thus it becomes very necessary that the message should be understood in the same manner as it is being sent.

Check your progress 3

1. Explain the non verbal mode of communication.

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1.5 FLOW OF COMMUNICATION

Upward communication: when the information flows from subordinates (e.g. various reports or recommendations etc) to management .i.e. from lower level to upper level it is called as upward communication. Suggestion boxes, review reports, complaints etc help the management to know about the feeling of their staff members as well as feedbacks from the guest as this is taken by the lower management people.

Downward communication: it flows from upper level to the lower level when the managers inform, instruct, advice their subordinates about different policies, procedures etc. it can be in the form of memos, letters, mails ,notices etc. care should be taken to balance it with adequate upward communication.

Horizontal communication: It takes place amongst the groups of same level in the organisation. It enables to share information amongst the peers' thereby building co -operation among the various branches of the same organisation.

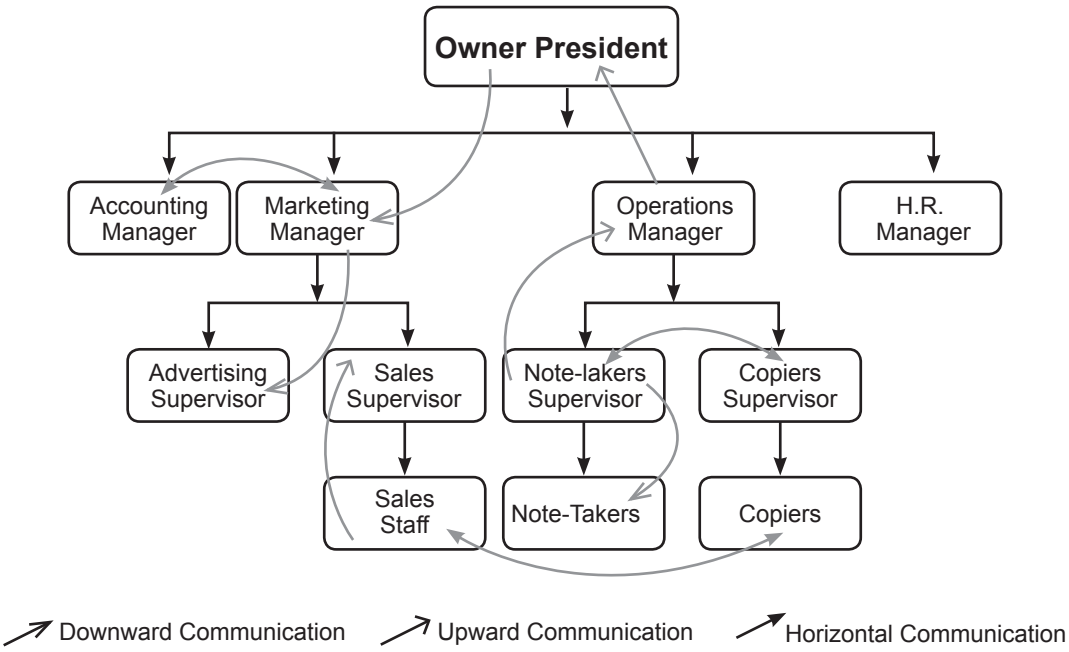

Fig. 1.2: Example of flow of communication

Crosswise communication: it flows in all directions and is flown across all levels. Any employee can communicate to other employees of any level .in certain situations, bypassing vertical and horizontal channels speeds up action and prevents misunderstanding.

Now let us see different tools used by the hotel for effective communication.

Check your progress 4

1. List the different types of flow of communication and explain any one.

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1.6 LOG BOOK

The front desk operates in different shifts. There are different staff members working at different hours of the day. This gives rise to 'communication' between one staff members to other shift staff. Guest information that requires in-depth explanation or other matters regarding the operation is communicated via 'pass on log'. The pass on log takes the form of a large book, thus get its name 'log book'. It documents daily activity and other issues so that a permanent record exists.

It is a written recorded form of communication within the department. It is used to transfer any message, instructions, to the next shift, or for any person in particular. This enables the staff to pass information like any VIP in house, VIP's arrival, for any important event, function in the hotel. This record helps in smooth functioning and of co-ordination amongst departmental staff.

1.6.1 Front Desk Log Book

Hotel ABC

Log Book

Reception

Day ------- Date _____

Sr. No. details Remarks Sign

Day / date: on day when any 'log' is made

Fig. 1.3: Log Book

Check your progress 5

1. Give the format of a log book.

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1.7 IMPORTANCE OF TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

The front office department is the '**source of information'** for all the guests. It needs to provide information about the various facilities and services of the hotel and gives important information about the city such as the routes to the nearest airport or railway station or hospitals and banks.

The front office staff must be able to respond in a knowledgeable way when guests contact the front desk for information. In order to provide this service satisfactorily the front office accumulates such data in the form of information directory'. The information directory includes the following.

- Local restaurant recommendations
- contacting a taxi company
- Directions to the local companies
- Directions to the nearest shopping centre, chemist, entertainment centres, cinema halls, places of interest in the city (spiritual, historical, scenic/wildlife sanctuaries etc.)
- Information regarding religious places
- Location of nearest branches of various banks, automated teller machine.
- All information regarding guest services and facilities
- Information about the policies of the hotel.

Check your progress 6

1. State any 4 points on which information should be present in the information directory.

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1.8 PROCEDURE OF MAIL HANDLING

Handling of mail is an important function performed at the front desk. This has to be done with efficiency, to avoid any delays or mistakes. In case of any error or delay in handling, mail could lead to a dissatisfaction of a guest.

1.8.1 Classification of Incoming Mail

- Mail for the guest
- Mail for the hotel

Mail Handling Procedure for each guest type

The first step that is involved is received by the hotel at the bell desk or at the information counter is sorting and once the mail is sorted out into guest mail and hotel mail, it is arranged alphabetically. Once this is done, the mail is dated and stamped.

The guest mail can be classified into:

a. Mail for in-house guest

b. Guests expected on that day

c. Guest who have already checked out

d. Guest not yet arrived.

Let us see in detail, the treatment needed to be given in case of above-mentioned categories:

a. Mail for in-house guest: When a mail is received for in-house guest, if he is in the room then he should be intimated about his mail. If he may ask for the mail to be delivered to his room by the bellhop then send the mail to the room .If the guest is not in the room, then the mail should be handed over to him when he returns. For intimating the guest, a 'mail advice slip' is put on the key knob of door so that when the guest goes into the room, he would know about the mail that the hotel has received. For this purpose, hotels also use message light on telephones, or on the door.

b. Guests expected on that day: If the guest is to arrive on that day, the mail is kept at the reception and it should be mentioned on the reservation slip (on the PMS). Upon arrival of the guest, the mail is handed over to him.

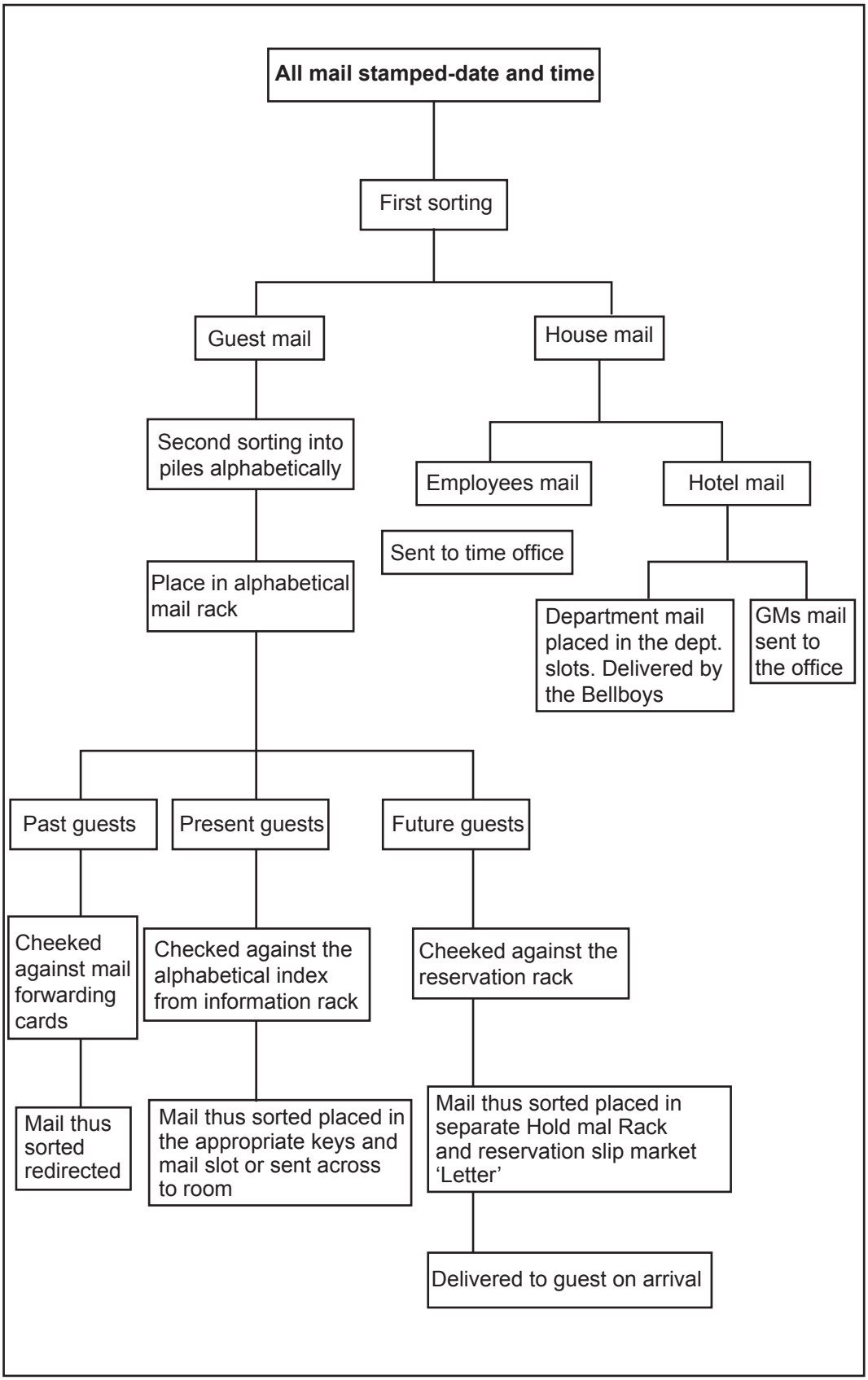

Fig. 1.4: Flowchart showing incoming mail handling procedure

Mail Advise slip

Attention

Name of Hotel _____

Name_____ Room No. _____

Please contact information or telephone operator for

Mail --- message

Parcel-- for

Date _____

Time _____

Signature

Mail forwarding Address Slip

Mail forwarding Instructions

Name _____ Room_____ Date

In case of any mail room

Add _____

_____

_____

Note: this address will be on file for 15 days, unless otherwise requested

Please hand over this slip to reception.

Fig. 1.5: Mail advice slip

c. **Guest who have already checked out** : The mail of a guest that have checked out, the guest would have left a 'Mail forwarding slip', the mail is forwarded according to the instructions on the slip. In case when the guest has left no instructions than the mail is returned after 15 days, as per policy of the hotel.

d. **Guest who has not arrived-** if the guest has not yet arrived, but mail on his name has arrived to the hotel, then it as to be arranged datewise , alphabetically at the reception and will be handed over to him as he arrives.

1.8.2 Handling of Parcel and Registered Mail

Whenever the hotel receives a registered mail, parcels etc for the guest, a separate register is maintained by the staff. At the time of receiving and when such article is delivered, this register has to be updated.

Parcel / Registered Mail Register:

Sr. no.	Room No.	Name of the guest	From	Description of the mail	Date time of receiving	Received by	Date and time of delivery	Delivery to	Sign

Fig. 1.6: Mail/parcel register

1.8.3 Handling of Hotel Mail

Mail could be of individual staff, any department or management senior staff. In case of junior staff mail, the mail is sent to 'time office' where the staff coming on duty or going off duty can collect the mail. In case of hotel departmental mail or senior staff mail, it is sent to their office.

1.8.4 Handling of Outgoing Mail

A guest who desires to send a mail, the senior bellhop is responsible for it. He weighs it, puts appropriate value postage stamps on it and posts it. V.P.O (Value paid out) Voucher is made for the same and guests signature is obtained on the voucher.

Note: All these mail handling is noted down in the 'Front office mail log book, in some hotels.

Check your progress 7

1. State the procedure of mail handling of an in house guest.

2. Give the format of a mail/parcel register

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1.9 HANDLING OF TELEPHONE SERVICE

Communication is an important function all the time for any hotel for effective and efficient operation. Telephone is a tool through which the hotel can communicate to the outside world and within the hotel itself. Providing satisfactory telephone services lead to a 'satisfied guest', so the hotel management renders superior telephone services through the telephone department. Satisfying the personal requirement of the guest demands cheerfulness, speed, accuracy and cooperation in telephone service.

1.9.1 General Telephone Manners

Various services in the hotel are provided by the telephone department. Each such service needs to be handled promptly and courteously. At the same time, thorough knowledge of the required procedures must be known.

Complaints: A guest might call up the reception if he has some difficulties during his stay. Once the complaint is heard, connect him to the concerned departmental in charge say "One moment please, I will connect you with the supervisor". While doing so show your genuine concern for his problems. Do not ever sound to be indifferent at any moment while you are conversing.

Handling outgoing calls: The guests are given direct dialling in their rooms, but in certain cases, the guest may ask the operator to get the number. The operator has to say "May I help you please", in a cheerful voice.

In case the number that is being dialled is busy, get back to the guest saying, "I am sorry the number is busy. May I call you again?" Prior to connecting the numbers to the guest please make sure that if the dialled number is correct or not, only then connect it to the guest.

Connecting in-House: The guest is provided with all the in-house service numbers in good hotels, but in small hotels, this may not be the case. In addition, when the numbers are provided, the guest may still ask the operator to get him the required services. In such cases do not feel bugged up, inform the appropriate service department to get in touch with the guest. Make sure that you get the correct room number of the guest.

Handling incoming calls: All the incoming calls have to pass through the telephone operator. When the operator picks up the incoming calls, the operator should wish the time of the day and announce the name of the hotel. "Good Morning, Hotel ABC'. Whenever receiving a call for a certain room, always ask for the name of the person who is calling. Then connect the room guest only after announcing the name of the person who is calling. In case there is no response, ascertain if any message is to be left and connect the party to the information desk for receiving the messages by saying" I am connecting you to the information desk, you may please leave the message with them. In some hotels the calls for guest may be directly transferred to the reception desk

Prior to connecting a call to the guest room,

- Check that if there is any 'Do not disturb' intimation left by the guests.
- If so politely take down the message.

- It may also be that the guest is expecting a call and he may be in the hotel premises but not in the room.
- If he has left a 'where about' slip then transfer the call to that particular area.
- Care must take that do not connect a call of a party, when the guest has instructed earlier that this particular party call should not be connected.

The telephone operator also deals with calls for official purpose of the various department and staff. The call in this case is directly connected to the particular department

Time Request: The operator may be requested to tell the time, give the time shown on the clock in a manner of, 'eight minutes after seven', "Seventeen minutes to ten" etc.

Wake up calls: Receiving and handling wake call is a very important service provided by the telephone operator. Here the guest requests the operator to be called at a specified time. One has to note down carefully the room number of the guest so that this wake-call is not given to any wrong guest due to negligence. Similarly make sure that the time of wake-call is accurately jotted down in 24hrs clock time so that there is no confusion about request am / pm. While receiving a wake call be extra attentive, and repeat the details to the guest. Entries are made in proper column of wake call sheet. While giving a wakeup call the operator has to say 'Good morning, Mr. Sharma it is 3 O' Clock. When there is no response, the operator has to keep calling. It may also occur that the guest may receive the call but may not comment. In such cases, also the operator has to keep calling until she/he is sure of the acknowledgment. When the task is completed, the wake call sheet needs to marked, appropriately. In some cases, the guest may receive the call but may request you to call back after some time, repeat the time given and again update the wake call sheet.

STD/ ISD Calls: In this age of where every person moves with a mobile phone the role of telephone operator has considerably changed, but in spite of this, the guest may still want to use the landline telephones to make long distance call. At though hotels give direct dialling facility, the STD/ISD services may not be provided. For this, the guest has to request the telephone operator; the operator connects the number, notes down the duration to charge the guest accordingly.

Handling calls for checkout guests: The telephone department must be aware of all the checkouts of the day. A notice about departed guest is received from the Information Assistance. The operator needs to update this information, so

that when he/she receives a call for the checkout guest she can inform the caller. The operator has to say, “Mr. ABC was staying with us, but has checked out today.

It is a well-known fact that Telephones are an important means of communication. However, this needs to be handled with proper etiquettes so that the telephone service are appreciated and help in creating good image. They could be:

- Organise and plan your daily duties. Keep pencil and notepad ready.
- Answer all calls courteously and promptly.
- Identify your establishment, department, yourself.
- Ask caller's identity.
- Should not sound mechanical; instead speak clearly, slowly with voice modulations at the appropriate instances.
- Do not rush.
- Make notes, write clearly and legibly.
- Repeat the information taken down.
- Inform the caller courteously when you are transferring the call.
- Complete the call.

1.9.2 Telephone Communication

While communicating on telephone the following point must be kept in mind

- The caller may not be visible, but he can feel your expressions, so always be courteous, as it is only the voice that conveys feelings so practice proper voice modulation.
- Learn to be a good listener.
- The caller has a purpose to call you. Do not keep the caller on hold for too long.
- If you are handling a person and you receive a call, pick-up the phone by the third ring.
- Do not pronounce names wrongly.

- Always remember that while receiving an outside call, that you could be the first person that caller is coming in contact with.
- Do not pass on any information you are not sure about.
- Make entry into logbook for any specific request, or incomplete task.

1.9.3 Use of Telephones in Departmental Operations

In order to perform all the departmental functions, the various departments communicate with each other through telephone department. The telephone department has to co-ordinate with the other departments. The coordination with front office involves receiving VIP, special guest names request. The housekeeping receives complaints from the guest for any maintenance, which is routed through telephone exchange. The food and Beverage department also deals with telephones for room service; banquet events being held in the hotel.

Check your progress 8

1. State the process of handling incoming mail and wake up calls.
2. Write a short note on Scanty Baggage.

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1.10 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we:

- Stated the Importance and different types of communication
- Discussed the role of communication to fulfil front office responsibilities
- Elaborated on the use of different communication records as logbook and information directory.
- Illustrated the different telephonic guest services provided by front office and Telephone Manners.
- Understood the handling of hotel mail
- Analysed the communication between front office and other departments of the hotel

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

The front office is the nerve centre of the hotel. It has to be connected with the various departments of the hotels for providing various services to the guest and for its own easy operation, communication amongst the department staff is equally important.

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

1. Decision making
2. Delegating the authority
3. Job satisfaction
4. Planning

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

Non verbal communication

Communication is also possible without words. This type of passing of information speaks about the relationship among people and is often more important than conveying through words. Non-verbal communication means the messages are sent through body language, posture and facial expressions. But it is also very important to note that same gestures mean differently in different cultures. There is no one action, which means the same all over the world thus it, becomes very necessary that the message should be understood in the same manner as it is being sent.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

1. Upward communication
2. Downward communication
3. Horizontal communication
4. Crosswise communication - it takes place amongst the groups of same level in the organisation. It enables to share information amongst the peers' thereby building co -operation among the various branches of the same organisation.

Check your Progress 5

Answer:

Refer to Fig 1.2

Check your Progress 6

Answer:

1. Local restaurant recommendations
2. Directions to the nearest shopping centre, chemist, entertainment centres, cinema halls, places of interest in the city (spiritual, historical, scenic/wildlife sanctuaries etc.)
3. Location of nearest branches of various banks, automated teller machine.

Check your Progress 7

Answer:

Mail for in-house guest: When a mail is received for in-house guest, if he is in the room then he should be intimated about his mail. If he may ask for the mail to be delivered to his room by the bellhop then send the mail to the room .If the guest is not in the room, then the mail should be handed over to him when he returns. For intimating the guest, a 'mail advice slip' is put on the key knob of door so that when the guest goes into the room, he would know about the mail that the hotel has received. For this purpose hotels also use message light on telephones, or on the door.

Answer:

Refer to Fig 1.4

Check your Progress 8

Answer:

Handling incoming calls: All the incoming calls have to pass through the telephone operator. When the operator picks up the incoming calls the operator should wish the time of the day and announce the name of the hotel. "Good Morning, Hotel ABC'. Whenever receiving a call for a certain room, always ask for the name of the person who is calling. Then connect the room guest only after announcing the name of the person who is calling. In case there is no response, ascertain if any message is to be left and connect the party to the information desk for receiving the messages by saying" I am connecting you to the information desk, you may please leave the message with them. In some hotels the calls for guest may be directly transferred to the reception desk

Wake up calls – Receiving and handling wake call is a very important service provided by the telephone operator. Here the guest requests the operator to be called at a specified time. One has to note down carefully the room number of the guest so that this wake-call is not given to any wrong guest due to negligence. Similarly make sure that the time of wake-call is accurately jotted down in 24hrs clock time so that there is no confusion about request am / pm. While receiving a wake call be extra attentive, and repeat the details to the guest. Entries are made in proper column of wake call sheet. While giving a wakeup call the operator has to say 'Good morning, Mr. Sharma it is 3 O' Clock. When there is no response, the

operator has to keep calling. It may also occur that the guest may receive the call but may not comment. In such cases also the operator has to keep calling till she/he is sure of the acknowledgment. When the task is completed the wake call sheet needs to marked, appropriately. In some cases the guest may receive the call but may request you to call back after some time, repeat the time given and again update the wake call sheet.

Answer:

Scanty Baggage: “Skippers” are those guests who leave the hotel without paying their bills. This is made possible because the “skipper” comes with little luggage to avoid bringing the attention of the bell boys to his “secret” check out. Alternatively, if he has just a briefcase, he may leave the hotel under the pretext of a business call. The bell boys have to be alert to notify the front office about guests with scanty baggage so that a necessary advance is taken from them and a close watch is kept on them

UNIT 2 BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Essentials of Effective Letter/Email Writing

2.3 Language of Business Writing

2.4 Appearance of Business Letter/Email

2.5 Parts of Letter

2.6 Planning the Letter

2.7 Composing the Letter

2.8 Types of Letters/Emails

2.8.1 Complaints Letters

2.8.2 Enquiries and Replies

2.9 Let Us Sum Up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the importance of letter/email writing, composing the content of a message and the format of various types of letters.

After going through this unit you should be able to:

- State Importance of letter writing
- Analyse Various types of letters
- Identify Effective methods used for writing.
- Illustrate official correspondence

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit contains the necessary skills required for writing, like note making and developing them into drafts while using cohesive devices and abbreviations. Different types of letters, e-mails, with samples, are covered in this unit.

A Business letter/email has a distinctive structure and appearance .Each of the part has a specific style, position and function which has been established by custom and is followed because it is convenient for handling and processing correspondence in an organization's office. A letter/email is usually an organization's first contact with another organization or person, and makes an important impression. Since, nowadays, literally all of the communication in business organizations are through emails, we will also study the ways of writing emails along with letter writing.

To make your writing task easy, you should learn to put yourself in the shoes of the reader of your letter/email. When writing a letter/email or report, think of your readers' likely response to the contents, the style and the tone. If your readers are laymen, the technical jargon that you use may not be understood at all. At the same time, if the readers are experts, who understand technical language, you should not go on explaining the terms in the detail. While concentrating on the style of writing, use formal tone for the business letter/email and try not to impress your readers with complicated words. The simpler you write, the better it is understood. Or it may just not serve the purpose and land unread in the trash bin.

2.2 ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE LETTER/EMAIL WRITING

Letters/emails are written for getting and giving quotations, making and answering enquiries, contacting potential customers, persuading potential customers to buy, making and;" answering complaints, making credit inquiries, collecting dues, and maintaining relations with various members of the public. Maintaining customer relations and handling. Problems require some very skilful letter writing. Good companies take every opportunity to write letters/emails to customers in order to create and maintain goodwill.

Letters/emails must aim at getting a favourable response from readers. In order to write good letters/emails you need knowledge of language and a clear, concise style of writing. You also need knowledge of the working, procedures, policies and aims of your organization. As a person, you must be sincere, confident, self-respecting and friendly; these qualities are reflected in the style of the letter/email.

Electronic media like fax and e-mail have high speed and can transmit the written word instantaneously. Messages are now more informal and conversational in style. Letter writing style is changing as a letter may be a confirmation or a follow-up of an earlier message sent by telephone or e-mail or fax.

Cs of Effective Letter/email Writing

The qualities which are essential for a good letter/email are collectively called the Cs of communication because most of them begin with the letter C. The main qualities are correctness, clarity, conciseness and courtesy. Other related qualities are completeness, coherence, compactness, confidence, consideration, friendliness, directness and vigour; these qualities are found in any writing which takes care of the first 4 Cs.

1. Correctness

A letter must be correct/email in every respect:

- In spelling, grammar and use of language. Incorrect language spoils the message, distracts the reader's attention and creates a poor impression of the sender; it may also convey a wrong meaning. All spellings must be checked; spelling of names must be checked with extra care; names if written with incorrect spellings always offend. Note that the computer cannot check all spellings; it will accept both "steal" and "steel" as correctly spelt words.

- In appearance and form of layout - Poor and untidy appearance, with corrections made in ink or carelessness in the layout, creates a poor impression of the company. Appearance depends on placing the parts of layout correctly on the letterhead and having proper margins on all sides.

- In the information it conveys - Wrong or incomplete information is the most harmful thing in a letter/email; it leads to waste of time in making corrections and can lead to loss of goodwill and loss of business. All dates and days, time, numbers and facts must be in agreement. Nothing is more confusing than mismatched information. Correctness depends on completeness. A letter/email is complete only when it presents all the ideas and information required for the particular situation.

- In tone, formality and style. - The tone of every letter/email must be appropriate to the occasion, the content and the relationship between the writer and the reader. An overdone apology can sound childish or undignified; a grudging or patronizing agreement to grant a request can sound unpleasant.

2. Clarity

The message of the letter/email must be clear at the first reading. The information explosion of today takes up so much of everyone's time; people appreciate a letter/email that takes very little time to read and understand. Clearly written messages avoid misunderstanding and save time.

Clarity depends upon five factors:

- Simple, common everyday words which everyone can understand. Never send the reader to the dictionary. There should be no technical terms unless absolutely needed and if you are communicating within the profession. Abstract words like-beautiful and unjust are often misunderstood as they convey different ideas to different persons. It is better to use concrete words with a definite meaning, or to give concrete examples and description.

- Short and simple sentences - Long sentences confuse the reader, and often confuse the writer also. Phrases and clauses; should not be added on to a sentence. Each bit of important information should be given in a separate sentence. Sentences with an average sentence length of 15 to 20 words keep the writing clear. This does not mean all sentences should have the same length. Longer sentences are balanced with shorter ones, but the average sentence length should be well below 20 words.

- Proper punctuation - It helps to provide pauses and stops and to break up groups of words into sensible units. Besides the full stop, there are other, shorter pauses like the semi-colon and the comma which help to break up a sentence into readable units. A sentence can often be made easier to follow by using a punctuation mark.

- Giving definite and concrete details with figures and names.

- Logical sequence of ideas - Making a clear plan for the letter/email ensures that the ideas are in logical order; coherence, that is, logical connection of ideas makes any composition easy to read.

3. Conciseness

Conciseness means expressing much in a few words; in business writing it means keeping to the point, using as few words as possible without sacrificing clarity or courtesy. It does not necessarily mean being brief; it means making every word count. Some companies lay down a limit of one page for inter-office memos in order to ensure concise writing.

Conciseness can be achieved by:

- Leaving out unnecessary modifiers; for example, some writers talk of "new innovation"; (can there be an old innovation?) or "very unique" (unique means only "one of its kind"). Other examples are: "advance plans", r "actual experience", "cylindrical in shape", "three cubic meters in volume".

- Reducing less important ideas to phrases or single words like,

Phrase	Short Phase
In the form of	as
In many cases	often
Exhibits the ability to	can
On the event of	if
At a later date	later

- Making sure that only the necessary and relevant details are included

Using more words than necessary confuses the idea as in the following sentence:

- Our experience with having Mr. X as credit customer has been fairly favourable and we are of the opinion that he may be allowed to enjoy the benefits of a credit account of a moderate amount.The writer may have been trying to be non-committal but the sentence does not convey any clear meaning. It is easier to understand if it is concisely written.

- Our experience with Mr. X as credit customer has been favourable and we consider' him to be safe for a credit account of up to Rs. 60,000/-

Conciseness and clarity are closely related; giving clear and definite details often "f-reduces the length of a sentence; for example:

4. Courtesy

Courtesy is consideration for other people's feelings. It is seen in an individual's behaviour with others. A well-mannered and courteous person shows consideration and thought for others. In a letter/email, the style, the manner and the choice of words reflect the courtesy of the writer. Some simple rules for courtesy are:

a. Use the courtesy words please, thank you and sorry as the situation requires.

b. Express appropriate feeling according to the situation.

c. Make the other person feel comfortable. This is an important factor of courtesy. Care and consideration for the reader is reflected in the letter/email

Requests must also be made courteously:

- We would appreciate it very much if you could send your cheque within three days of receiving our bill.

d. Be attentive and prompt in responding - Every letter/email should be answered within twenty-four hours.-If it is a letter of complaint, the response should be immediate; it is courteous to make a phone call immediately on receiving a complaint or hearing about a problem. Everyone appreciates prompt attention.

e. Let the tone, the choice of words and the style of the message reflect your consideration for the feelings and needs of the reader. This is particularly important if the message to be conveyed is likely to be unpleasant for the reader. A courteous letter/email has the best chance of getting a favourable response. Seeing the situation as the reader sees it, and taking care of his/her needs, is courtesy. You must have an awareness of how the words sound to the reader.

Check your progress 1

1. List the C's of effective letter/email and explain any one in brief.

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2.3 LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS WRITING

Modern business language is simple, easy to understand, friendly and courteous. Personal relations with customers can be cultivated by writing friendly letters/emails in a natural and informal style. Old fashioned business language is not suitable for modern business methods and practice.

Messages convey messages; letters/emails must also build goodwill and create positive and pleasant feelings in the reader. Whatever the intended message may be, the writer must try to get a favourable emotional response from the reader. A large amount of written material reaches the desk of every businessman executive; there is a great deal of competition for the reader's attention and interest. The brief contact with the reader which a letter makes must be pleasant and memorable. The manner in which a company's letters/emails are written contributes a great deal to its public image.

Avoiding Business Jargon

Jargon means the vocabulary and phrases peculiar to a particular trade or profession. Business jargon refers to the words and phrases which businessmen used in the old days for writing letters. Today, business people are well educated and write good English. Letters, emails, memos and notes and reports are written in modern, simple style which is easy to understand.

Unfortunately, some companies still continue to write in the old-fashioned style. They fail to make personal contact with the reader; they are to be strictly avoided.

Organize the message to suit the reader's convenience. Appeal to the common; human needs and desires like desire for security, status, leisure, comfort, need for sympathy, courtesy and consideration.

A customer who has not paid his dues can be approached by pointing out that he would be free of commitments and would protect his own reputation if he paid', promptly. A difficult situation like refusing credit terms can be tactfully handled by, stressing the customer's own advantage in buying on cash, such as freedom from* commitments, gains in the form of discounts, and avoidance of risk.

The purpose of a letter/email is to create a response. The letter should try to influence the reader's feelings, thoughts and actions in such a way that the response will be beneficial to both the reader and the writer. The goal of writing is not merely to tell, something but also to create a favourable reaction to the message.

It is important that the emotional response of your reader should be favourable to you. A sales letter may convince an executive of the value of computerizing the office work, but he may feel emotionally inclined to go to a competing firm. A collection letter may convince a reader intellectually that he will benefit by paying off his debts but emotionally, he may feel dislike for the creditor who urges him to pay.

Check your progress 2

1. Explain what you mean by "Business jargon"

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2.4 APPEARANCE OF BUSINESS LETTER/EMAIL

Typing must be neat, without cancellations or corrections. There should be equal spacing between words and between lines, and double spacing between paragraphs and different parts of the letter/email. For a letter, the margins are usually one-and-a-half inch on the left, one inch on the right, and at least one inch at the bottom. If a continuation sheet is used, it must have the same margins as the first page.

A suitable style of layout is selected by every organization and all typists are expected to use the adopted style. Most word processing packages offer the choice of full block or modified block style of layout. Templates can be created and stored in computers.

Paragraphing is necessary for breaking up a composition into readable, logical and progressive units. It is also needed for a pleasing appearance. A large block of writing is not pleasant to see; it is restful to the eyes to see a good amount of white space between the reading materials. In business letter/emails, paragraphing is important for appearance as well as for composition. Middle paragraphs which carry the main message of the letter; and a short 1 closing paragraph which may be only one sentence.

Check your progress 3

1. Write a short note on Paragraphing.

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2.5 PARTS OF LETTER

Different parts have their own fixed location on the sheet; there is a slight variation from left to right in the different styles of layout; their order of appearance from top to bottom is the same in all styles.

The main parts of the letter/email, apart from the text of the message are: Date, inside address, Salutation, Complimentary close and Signature. In addition to these, the following details are included, according to the requirement of each message: Appropriate salutation, Subject line, Attention line, Message content, closing lines, Signature.

Date

Every official document/email must be dated. The date provides an important point of reference in further correspondence and in following up the with the issues.

Recipient Address

Recipient address is the name and address of the receiver as it appears on the envelope/email. The recipient's name should be verified to ensure that it reaches him/her.

Attention line is used only if, from previous communication, you know the-name of the person in the organization who is handling the matter about which you

are writing. The letter/email is addressed to the organization, but directed to the attention of the individual, by name, so that the letter is sent to that person without delay. It is not used if the letter is addressed to an individual by name.

The Attention line is placed in the subject line. It does not affect the salutation.

Subject line

Subject line gives a brief indication of the subject of the letter/email. It adds' to the clarity of the letter, especially if the letter is long. It helps to focus the reader's attention. It is also used for classifying and filing the letter.

It is placed above the salutation; in full block form. In modern practice, for writing letters, the subject tine is placed at the margin below the salutation, without any introductory word. It may be in capitals or initial capitals and underlined; e.g.

Salutation

The salutation begins at the margin, just before the message content. It is followed by a comma; in American practice it is followed by a colon.

If the letter/email is addressed to an organization, the salutation is plural. If the letter is addressed to a particular official mentioned only by designation, e.g., "The Sales Manager" the salutation is singular: Sir or Dear Sir. If the official is a lady, the salutation is Madam or Dear Madam.

It is quite common, now, to address business letters to an official by name and designation, e.g., Mr. A.P. Shah, Sales Manager, or Ms A.B. Coelho, Finance Manager, In this case, the salutation is Dear Mr. Shah or Dear Ms Coelho. Ms can be used; before a lady's name as it stands for both Miss and Mrs.

Complimentary Close

The complimentary close is written two line spaces below the last line of the text of the letter/email; it is placed on the right.

The most common form is: Yours faithfully; other common forms are: Regards, Warm Regards, Thanks and Regards etc.

Signature

The signature is placed just below the complimentary close. The name of the signatory is typed three or four line spaces below and the designation/title is typed below the name.

Most companies include the name of the company just below the complimentary close, or below the name and designation of the person.

Reference section

The reference section includes: enclosures, names of parties to receive copies (CC), the 'type of delivery service to be used and initials of the persons who dictated and typed the letter.

Enclosures/attachments

Enclosures/attachments are related documents sent with a letter/email; bills, cheques, quotations, brochures, price-lists, etc., which has been mentioned in the letter/email and are sent as enclosures/attachments. If there are many enclosures, they are numbered and placed behind the letter in the order of their serial number (in case of a letter)

Copies

When a matter concerns **more** than the two parties, a copy of letters/email related to the matter is sent for information to the other parties who are concerned.

If the receiver of the letter/email is not to be informed that copies have been circulated to others, bcc (blind copy circulated) is shown on the office file copy and on the 'bcc': copy; it is not shown on the copy to be received by the recipient of the letter.

Postscript

Postscript is a bit of **writing,** not more than three lines, added to the letter/email after the signature and after enclosures/attachments; it is signed again, without the complimentary close, by the same person. It is used for conveying a small bit of information which is not a part of the main message of the letter/email; it is an extra or unrelated point.

Postscripts should never be used for adding something which was forgotten while preparing the letter/email. The idea of using P.S. to add a forgotten point is outdated with word processors. Even if a manual typewriter is being used, the letter must be typed again.

Check your progress 4

1. What are the important parts of a business letter/email?

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2.6 PLANNING THE LETTER

Careful planning is the basis of success in most tasks. Thinking, reasoning and planning before writing a letter/email has many advantages.

It gives you time to calm any emotions like anger which can spoil the communication if it is reflected in the letter/email. It helps to make sure that all information and ideas are included and are correct.

It enables you to compose the letter/email in a logical order and in the style most suitable to the needs of the reader. It is a good method to separate the two elements of communication: planning the content and choosing the language/style for presentation.

This involves thinking about why you want to communicate (the purpose), to whom the message is to be sent (the receiver), and what is to be achieved by the communication (the desired receiver-response).

Decide on the content and write it down in the form of notes. Make sure that all information is included, and number the points in the logical order in which you want to use them, a letter/email is a short composition and it is easy to arrange the collected notes in the structure of a letter.

The first point takes one or two sentences, the second one form the main content and may need more than one paragraph. The third and the fourth can be

combined as they form the ending of the letter/email and each takes only a sentence. The main message of the letter/email should be carefully structured and the points arranged in a suitable order. Always put the reader's interests first; the order should be suitable to the reader's interest and convenience. Some possibilities are:

In a reply, use the order of the original; this is courteous to the reader as it uses the order of the reader's priorities.

- In conveying a series of events, use chronological order; the events will be conveyed in the order in which they occurred.
- Ascending or descending order of importance may be used, depending on which wilt be more useful/comfortable/easy for the reader.

Check your progress 5

1. State and explain in brief the ideal order of a business letter/email.

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2.7 COMPOSING THE LETTER

At the stage of composing, give attention to the language and style. Consider the recipient; a good deal depends on how much the recipient knows, what is the relationship between the sender .and the recipient, what is the recipient's attitude to the issue being discussed in 'the letter; all these aspects can influence the recipient's response.

Opening and Closing a Letter

The first and the last paragraphs are important places in a short composition like a letter/email. Use them both to the maximum effect. Do not begin by repeating what is said in the subject fine or end by making a flat or useless statement. Each of them has a definite function.

Opening Sentence

Consider these old-fashioned openings.

It has come to our attention that according to our 'records and in connection of... o.

Reference is made to your memorandum of Feb. 6, same subject as above.

None of these sentences make direct contact with the receiver; there is no friendly feeling in them. Such sentences put off the reader at once.

The opening sentence has the important function of establishing good feeling and rapport, and drawing a favourable response from the reader.

Ex - We are glad to say that we can deliver your shelves a week earlier as you requested in your letter of the.

We are extremely sorry to learn from your letter dated 23 September that you were not able to get good photographs.

Showing interest in the reader's needs and paying attention to his feelings and desires creates goodwill at the beginning of the letter.

Closing Sentence

Consider these poor closing sentences:

- May we again express our appreciation for the deposit balance?
- No doubt this account is receiving your attention and we await your remittance in due course for which we thank you in anticipation.
- Hoping that the foregoing one will meet with your approval.

They are almost meaningless; there is no pleasant thought or idea for the reader to remember.

Congratulation, appreciation, etc., are good ideas for either the opening or the closing but not for both in the same letter. If it has been expressed in the opening, it should not be repeated in the closing sentence.

Clarity, goodwill, courtesy, self-respect is most important in the last paragraph

The last sentence has two functions: (i) to tell what is the next action to be taken and who is to take it, the writer or the reader; (it) to win a favourable response for whatever has been said or (iii) if the matter has been finally settled, and no further action or communication is to follow, a goodwill message is a suitable ending.

If the writer is to take the next action, the letter/email may end:

- Our representative will visit you on the 15th at 10 a.m.
- We shall let you know the result as soon as the test is completed.
- If the reader is to take the next action, the letter may end:
- Please sign and return the enclosed card.
- We are expecting your, cheque for us. 40, 000/- within a week.
- May we request you to send us your cheque this week?

In letters/email which try to persuade the reader, the last sentence can add to or take away from the effect of the arguments stated. A firm, persuasive and convicting argument can be spoilt by a weak ending like, "We hope you will see the point" or "We trust the matter is now clear." A confident and lively ending has a better chance of getting action:

- We are sure you will take advantage of this offer and place your order before the 9th.

In the final letter/email, after 'which there will be no further correspondence op the topic, the last sentence conveys a friendly goodwill message:

- We wish you all success in your new business venture.
- We sincerely regret the inconvenience which was caused to you.
- We shall be happy to give you any help which you may need from us at any time.
- Thank you once again for the help you gave us in this matter.
- We do hope we shall have occasion to be working together again.

The last sentence leaves the final impression on the reader's mind, and can be used to remind him about the last date for taking action or impressing upon him the advantage offered or for leaving a pleasant memory.

If you feel doubtful about the last sentence, cover it up, and see how the letter reads without it. If there is no loss of energy or strength, leave it out.

Check your progress 6

1. State the functions of the closing line of a business letter/email.

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2.8 TYPES OF LETTERS/EMAILS

Complaints, Claims and Adjustments

In any business, there will be some mistakes and mishaps; you may not get the goods and services as you had expected and ordered. If things go wrong on your order, you have to inform the supplier about the problem and see that the faults are corrected and adjustments are made.

Make a phone call as soon as the problem is noticed, to inform the supplier of the defect or deficiency, and then confirm it immediately with a letter/email. It is usually sufficient to point out the mistake in the execution of the order and leave it to the supplier to make the adjustment. In the case of a technological product, the seller is usually anxious to make sure that it functions properly with the customer.

When there is a mistake in the execution of your order, you may feel angry, but it is important to control your anger and speak and write calmly. You may have to bear inconvenience even though it is not your fault; but you are not necessarily the loser of money.

As a buyer you have to take steps to reduce the inconvenience, and you must make the supplier take steps to reduce your inconvenience and make adjustments.

Keep in mind the C's of good letter writing:

- State the problem correctly and without exaggeration. Although anger sometimes makes you eloquent, be restrained, and give a factual account of the problem.
- Be clear and concise in describing. Suggest how the problem can be corrected; if you do not know what can be done, ask what the supplier proposes to do.

Do not delay writing the complaint; delay weakens your position and also makes investigation difficult for the supplier.

- Courtesy is of great importance; resist the temptation to accuse the supplier of carelessness, negligence or inefficiency. Do not use offensive and discourteous words like dishonest, careless, unfair, false, disgusted, useless and inefficient. Use passive voice to mention errors. Saying,

"Our consignment of crockery was not packed with the necessary care", is more polite than saying, "You packed our consignment of crockery carelessly.'

2.8.1 Complaints Letters

The most common letters/emails in business are guest enquiries about goods and services and service providers' replies giving information and quotations. Today, a good deal of information about goods and prices is conveyed by telephone or e-mail or fax; but all parts of the country and all people do not have these facilities and prefer to use letters/emails so that they have a document and a record for reference. In these letters, /emails the direct approach is used to save time.

2.8.2 Enquiries and Replies

To ask for information, you can begin directly with a question or request like:

- Could you give us the following information?
- Please send us the following information.
- I would appreciate receiving the following information from you.

The letter/email may also begin with an indication of the need. Indicating the purpose for which the information is needed helps the supplier to give relevant information, especially in the case of products with a vast variety of models. A dealer in computers will be able to give useful information and a quotation only when he knows the buyer's specific need.

- We intend to set up a computer laboratory with capacity for 4O students to work at a time. The room in which the laboratory is to be set up measures 6x7 meters.

- We have been awarded a contract for the construction of a railway bridge across River XYZ. This river is prone to tidal waves. The work is to be completed in four years. We would appreciate receiving the following information from you.

A series of direct questions may follow this opening paragraph.

End the letter/email with a friendly comment which will leave a sense of personal relationship. Endings like 'an early reply would be appreciated" or "Thanking you in advance is weak and outdated. It is more effective to end a letter/email with a more businesslike sentence such as:

We could discuss this personally. If you could meet me in my office next week/ if you could get this data to me by Tuesday, I shall be most grateful replying, please include details of delivery.

Check your progress 7

1. What are the points to be considered while writing a letter/email of complaint?

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2.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we:

- Stated the Importance of letter writing
- Differentiated various types of letters
- Identified Effective methods used for writing.
- Illustrated how to write official correspondence

Check Your Progress Possible Answers

Check your Progress 1

Answer:

Cs of Effective Letter/email Writing

1. Correctness
2. Clarity
3. Conciseness
4. Courtesy

Check your Progress 2

Answer:

Jargon means the vocabulary and phrases peculiar to a particular trade or profession. Business jargon refers to the words and phrases which businessmen used in the old days for writing letters.

Unfortunately, some companies still continue to write in the old-fashioned style. They fail to make personal contact with the reader; they are to be strictly avoided.

Check your Progress 3

Answer:

Paragraphing is necessary for breaking up a composition into readable, logical and progressive units. It is also needed for a pleasing appearance. A large block of writing is not pleasant to see; it is restful to the eyes to see a good amount of white space between the reading materials. In business letter/emails, paragraphing is important for appearance as well as for composition. Middle paragraphs which carry the main message of the letter; and a short 1 closing paragraph which may be only one sentence.

Check your Progress 4

Answer:

The main parts of a business letter/email, apart from the text of the message are: Date, inside address, Salutation, Complimentary close and Signature. In addition to these, the following details are included, according to the requirement of each message: Appropriate salutation, Subject line, Attention line, Message content, closing lines, Signature.

Check your Progress 5

Answer:

The ideal order of a business letter/email is as follows:

a. In a reply, use the order of the original; this is courteous to the reader as it uses the order of the reader's priorities.

b. In conveying a series of events, use chronological order; the events will be conveyed in the order in which they occurred.

c. Ascending or descending order of importance may be used, depending on which wilt be more useful/comfortable/easy for the reader.

Check your Progress 6

Answer:

The last sentence has two functions: (i) to tell what is the next action to be taken and who is to take it, the writer or the reader; (it) to win a favourable response for whatever has been said or (iii) if the matter has been finally settled, and no further action or communication is to follow, a goodwill message is a suitable ending.

Check your Progress 7

Answer:

State the problem correctly and without exaggeration. Although anger sometimes makes you eloquent, be restrained, and give a factual account of the problem.

- Be clear and concise in describing. Suggest how the problem can be corrected; if you do not know what can be done, ask what the supplier proposes to do.

Do not delay writing the complaint; delay weakens your position and also makes investigation difficult for the supplier.

- Courtesy is of great importance; resist the temptation to accuse the supplier of carelessness, negligence or inefficiency.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

1. Front Office Management, Sudhir Andrews, Tata McGraw-Hill, 2007, ISBN: 9780070655768

2. Accommodation operations and Management, Kaushal S K, Frank Bros and CO, ISBN: 8184090730

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

Activity 1

- Visit a 5 star property in your vicinity and try to find out the ideal flow of communication in the front office department in the different circumstances mentioned in the first unit.

Activity 2

- Find out the various software used by the 5 star hotels and how do they help in the communication process.

GLOSSARY

Accounts payable	financial obligations the hotel owes to private and government-related agencies and vendors
Amenities	personal toiletry items such as shampoo, toothpaste, mouthwash and electrical equipment
American plan	a room rate that includes meals, usually breakfast and the evening meal, as well as room Rental in the room rate
Bell captain	the supervisor of the bell staff
Bell staff	people who lift and tote baggage, familiarize guests with their new surroundings, run errands, deliver supplies, provide guests with information on in-house marketing efforts and local attractions, and act as the hospitality link between the lodging establishment and the guest
Chain affiliations	hotels that purchase operational and marketing services from a corporation
Concierge	a person who provides an endless array of information on entertainment, sports, amusements, transportation, tours, church services and babysitting in a particular city or town
Confirmed reservations	prospective guests who have a reservation for accommodations that is honoured until a specified time
Continental breakfast	juice, fruit, sweet roll and/or cereal
Convention guests	guests who attend a large convention and receive a special room rate
Daily blocking	assigning guests to their particular rooms on a daily basis
Demographic data	size, density, distribution, and vital statistics of a population broken down into, for Example, age, sex, marital status and occupation categories

Express checkout means by which the guest uses computer technology in a guest room or a computer In the hotel lobby to check out

Forecasting projecting room sales for a specific period

Franchisee a hotel owner who has access to a national reservation system and receives the benefits of the corporation's management expertise, financial backing, national advertising and group purchasing

Global distribution systems (gds)

distributors of hotel rooms to corporations such as travel agents that buy rooms in large volume

Guest folio a form imprinted with the hotel's logo and a control number and allowing space for room Number, guest identification, date in and date out, and room rate in the upper left-hand corner; it Allows for guest charges to be imprinted with a pms and is filed in room-number sequence

Housekeeping room status terminology that indicates availability of a guest room such as available, Clean, or ready (room is ready to be occupied), occupied (guest or guests are already occupying a room), Dirty or stayover (guest will not be checking out of a room on the current day), on change (guest has Checked out of the room, but the housekeeping staff has not released the room for occupancy), and out Of order (the room is not available for occupancy because of a mechanical malfunction)

House limit an amount set by the hotel that allows for a maximum amount of guest charges

Job description a listing of required duties to be performed by an employee in a particular job

Late charges guest charges that might not be included on the guest folio because of a delay in posting by other departments

Market segments identifiable groups of customers with similar needs for products and services

Market segments identifiable groups of customers with similar needs for products and services

Overbooking accepting reservations for more rooms than are available by forecasting the number of no-show Reservations, stayovers, understays and walk-ins, with the goal of attaining 100 percent occupancy

Paid-outs amounts of monies paid out of the cashier's drawer on behalf of a guest or an employee of the hotel

Property management system (PMS)

a generic term for applications of computer hardware and software Used to manage a hotel by networking reservation and registration databases, point-of-sale systems, Accounting systems, and other office software

Registration card a form on which the guest indicates name, home or billing address, home or billing Phone number, vehicle information, date of departure, and method of payment

Room inspection a final review of the room to assure that all housekeeping tasks have been completed and room furnishings are in order

Up sell to encourage a customer to consider buying a higher-priced product or service than originally Anticipated

Enrolment No. ☐

1. How many hours did you need for studying the units?

Unit No	1	2	3	4
Nos of Hrs				

2. Please give your reactions to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Item	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Give specific example if any
Presentation Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Language and Style	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Illustration used (Diagram, tables etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Conceptual clarity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Check your progress Quest	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Feed back to CYP Question	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

3. Any Other Comments