

10. Front Office – SOPs

In any business organization, common procedures occur in sequence. They are linear. In addition, some procedures also repeat over a time. The organization needs to find out such linear and repeating procedures to compile them into sets of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

These procedures when compiled step by step, can prove to be an excellent learning material for training the newly joined staff in a short period of time.

Let us learn about a few SOPs followed in the front office department.

SOP for Handling Guest Luggage

This is a procedure followed by the bell desk staff at the time of the guest's arrival and departure. It goes as follows:

Handling Luggage on Guest Arrival

- As a bellboy look for the new arrival of guest.
- The guest vehicle stops at the hotel entrance.
- Go ahead and open the vehicle door.
- Greet the guest as, "Welcome to (hotel_name), I am (own_name). Do you need any help with your luggage?"
- Help the elderly/disables guests to get out of the vehicle if required.
- Take the luggage in charge and ensure that nothing is left in the vehicle.
- Ask the guest's name politely as, "May I know your name Sir/Madam?"
- Tag the luggage with the guest name.
- Ask if anything fragile or perishable is in the luggage.
- Add this information on the luggage tag.
- Inform the guest that their luggage is with you.
- Escort the guest to the hotel reception.
- Inform the guest that you will be taking care of their luggage.
- With the other front office staff, find out the accommodation number allotted to the guest.
- Write the accommodation number on the luggage tag.
- Confirm if the guest registration formality is complete.
- If the room is ready, take the luggage to the room by the staff elevator.
- Place the luggage on the luggage rack.
- If the room is not ready, then take the luggage to the store room.

- Record the luggage details into the Daily Luggage Register.



Handling Luggage on Guest Departure

- Inform the guest that you are going to guest's accommodation to collect the luggage.
- Have an informal conversation with the guest as, "Mr./Ms. (Guest_Name), I hope you enjoyed your stay with us. Do you need an airport transport?"
- Collect the luggage from the guest room.
- If the guest needs to store the luggage for long term, tag the luggage with the guest name, accommodation number, date and time of collection, contact number, and receive the guest's signature on long-term luggage request form.
- Ensure with the guest that nothing perishable is there in the luggage.
- Store the luggage on the designated departure area.
- If the guest is leaving the hotel immediately after check-out, then bring the luggage to the lobby.
- If a transport vehicle is ready to go then place the luggage in the vehicle.
- Request the guest to verify the loaded luggage.

- Update the departure luggage movement on the Daily Luggage movement register.

SOP for Handling Reservation Request

The SOP goes as follows:

- Pick up the incoming call in three rings.
- Greet the guest in the audible voice, introduce yourself, and ask how you can help the guest as, "Good (morning/evening), this is Mr./Ms. own_name, how may I help you?"
- Wait for the guest to respond.
- The guests say that he/she needs an accommodation in your hotel.
- Tell the guest that it's your pleasure.
- Take a new reservation form.
- Inform the guest about the types of accommodations in your hotel and their respective charges.
- Ask for the guest's name, contact number, and type of accommodation the guest wants.
- Ask for the guest's dates of arrival and departure.
- Check for availability of the accommodation during those dates.
- Briefly describe the amenities the hotel provides to its guests.
- If the accommodation is available, inform the guest.
- If exactly the same kind of accommodation is not available, ask the guest if he/she would care for another type of accommodation.
- Note down the guest's requirements related to the accommodation.
- Ask the guest if an airport pickup/drop service is required.
- Ask how the guest would settle the bill: by cash, credit, or direct billing.
- If the guest prefers by cash or by card, then insist to pay the part of cash in advance against booking charges or credit card details of the guest.

- Inform about reservation with the guest name, contact number, accommodation type required, payment method, and confirmation number.
- Conclude the conversation as, "Thank you for calling hotel_name, have a nice day!"

SOP for Guest Check-in

The SOP goes as follows:

- Upon the guest's arrival, greet the guest.
- Ask the guest for his/her name politely.
- Search the reservation record in the PMS.
- Generate and print a registration card.
- Handover a GRC to the guest for verifying printed details.
- Request the guest to show the ID card from an authorized institute.
- Request to show passport and visa in case of foreigner guest.
- Request the guest to fill in the following details on the GRC:
 - Salutation
 - Designation
 - Organization
 - Business or Residence Address with City and ZIP Code
 - Purpose of Visit
 - Contact Number in case of Emergency
 - Passport Details
 - Visa Details
- Inform the guest about any early/late check-out policies.
- Request the guest to sign on the GRC.
- Counter-sign the GRC.
- Update the details on the guest record.
- Create a guest account.
- Prepare copies of driving license/passport and visa.
- Attach them to the GRC and file the entire set.

SOP for Handling Wake up Calls

There are manual and automatic wakeup calls.

Handling Wakeup Call Manually

- The guest can request for a wakeup call at the front office directly or by calling from his/her own accommodation.

- Ask the guest for a wake-up time and any immediate special request after getting up.
- Open the Wakeup Call Register and enter the following information:
 - Salutation
 - Guest Name
 - Accommodation number
 - Wakeup date
 - Wakeup time
 - Any Special immediate request such as tea/coffee, etc.
- Conclude the conversation by greeting the guest again.
- Pass the special request for tea/coffee to the room service staff.
- At the time of wakeup call, follow the given steps:
 - Confirm the current time.
 - Call the guest's accommodation number on telephone.
 - Greet the guest as per the time and inform about the current time and the progress on guest's special request.

Handling Wakeup Call Automatically

Most hotels facilitate their guests to set automatic wakeup call using their phones or televisions. The housekeeper must ensure that the printed instructions about setting an automatic call are kept handy and visible.

The guest can set automatic call which is notified at the PBX system and the PMS system. Even if the guest has set up an automatic call, it is the responsibility of the front office staff to give a manual wakeup call to the guest to avoid any chances of inconvenience.

SOP for Guest Check-out

The process of checking out generally is initiated by the guest. The guest calls up front office and asks to keep the bill ready.

- The guest arrives at the front desk.
- Greet the guest.
- Print a copy of guest folio.
- Hand it over to the guest for verification.
- If there is any discrepancy, assure the guest about its solving.
- Resolve the discrepancy immediately.

- Apologize to the guest for inconvenience.
- From the guest database, ensure the guest's preference of payment method. Recite it to the guest.
- Settle the guest account.
- Print the receipt and give it to the guest.
- Ask the guest if he/she needs any assistance for luggage.
- Ask the guest if the transport facility to the airport is required.
- Greet the guest for giving an opportunity to serve as, "Hope you enjoyed your stay with us. Thank you. Good (morning/afternoon/night).

SOP for Processing Cancellation Requests

The guests initiate the cancellation of the reserved accommodation. The SOP goes as:

- Request for the guest's full name and reservation number.
- Search the guest database for the given name and reservation number.
- Recite the guest name, accommodation details and the date of reservation.
- Ask the guest if he/she would like to postpone it.
- Request the guest for reason behind cancellation.
- Record the reason in the PMS.
- If the cancellation is being done by a person other than the guest, record the person's name, contact number, and relation with the guest for information.
- Inform the caller about any cancellation charges applicable according to the hotel policies.
- Cancel the reservation in the PMS.
- Inform the guest about e-mail for cancellation charges. Send the cancellation charges plus cancellation number to the guest by e-mail.

SOP for Controlling Guest Room Keys

The front office staff needs to manage at least two sets of the keys. The number of sets may vary according to the guest policy. Accommodation numbers are not written on the keys, which creates problems when the keys are misplaced within or around the premises.

Giving Accommodation Key to the Guest

- Request for the guest's last name and accommodation number.
- Check the information told by the guest against the one recorded in PMS.
- If there is any deviation, request the guest to provide photo ID card.
- Do not give away the accommodation key without proper authentication.
- If the doubt about the guest arises and the guest refuses to cooperate, then inform the front office manager immediately.
- If any other superior front office staff member recognizes the guest, then you can give away the duplicate key.
- If the guest has lost the key and needs a new one, then ascertain that the guest has lost it.
- In the above case, program a new key with the same code.
- Present the newly created key to the guest.
- You must not issue accommodation keys to any person that claims to be sent by the guest for getting the keys. Yet, you can give them to a non-guest, if the guest has sent the person with a written authority letter addressed to the front office team. In such case, confirm by calling the guest and accompany the non-guest to the accommodation.



Giving Occupied Accommodation's Key to Staff

The authorized staff on duty is allowed to access the occupied guest accommodation for the purpose of professional work.

For example, the keys can be given for preparing vacated accommodation, laundry staff, mini-bar staff, and bell-boy to take out the guest luggage.

SOP for Turning Away Reservation Request

One thing for sure, always try to solve the guest's accommodation problem as far as possible. Try selling hotel service by giving options than plainly denying to what the guest wants.

There are a number of reasons why a reservation staff needs to turn down the reservation request. These are few important ones:

- The hotel is fully booked during busy seasons.
- Guest is not interested to reserve after knowing rates.
- The type of accommodation the guest desires is not available.

This is how you turn down a reservation gracefully:

- When the guest calls to enquire, answer the call as, "Good (morning, evening), this is own_name from reservations. How may I help you?"
- The guest says he/she would like to reserve an accommodation.

- Reply as, "Certainly (Sir/Madam). May I request you for your name, mobile number and email ID please?"
- The guest tells the same.
- Further ask, "And your company/travel agency name is?"
- The guest replies, "I am from (Company/TA name)".
- Ask the guest about check-in and check-out dates required for reservation.
- Request the guest to hold the line till you search for availability of the desired accommodation.
- Inform the guest approximately how much time you would take to find out.
- Put the call on hold and check availability.
- Convey the non-availability of the desired type of accommodation to the guest politely as, "Sorry sir/madam, "(all the accommodations are occupied/the desired type of accommodation is not available)".
- Suggest the guest about a nearby sister-concern hotel, if any.
- Suggest the guest to take other similar kind of accommodation by describing its amenities.
- If the guest doesn't agree to it, turn away politely as, "Sorry sir, then we don't have any other available accommodation."
- Record the guest data in the PMS along with the 'Turn away' reason.