

3. Front Office – Structure

Front office area is commonly termed as 'Reception', as it is the place where the guests are received when they arrive at the hotel. It is the first point of interaction between the hotel and the guests. Being the prime interface between the hotel services and the guests, the front office is located near the main entrance of the hotel.

The front office structure can be viewed in two ways: the physical setup and the operational structure of the department.

Physical Setup of Front Office

The physical setup includes key-hanging boards, bell desk and guest-mail handling register. The front desk is equipped with various compartments, the computerized property management system, and an in-house communication system.

Positioning the Front Desk

The front desk is where the guests temporarily await to find an accommodation or to clear their bill. Hence, it needs to be positioned appropriately such that the staff and the guests can use them conveniently. The front desk needs to be:

- Positioned at an adequate height and reach.
- An adequately lit-up area.
- Aesthetically furnished.
- Preferably near the hotel lobby and lift.
- Preferably near the sitting area.
- Wide enough to make the staff member communicate with the guests across the desk.

Front Office Communication

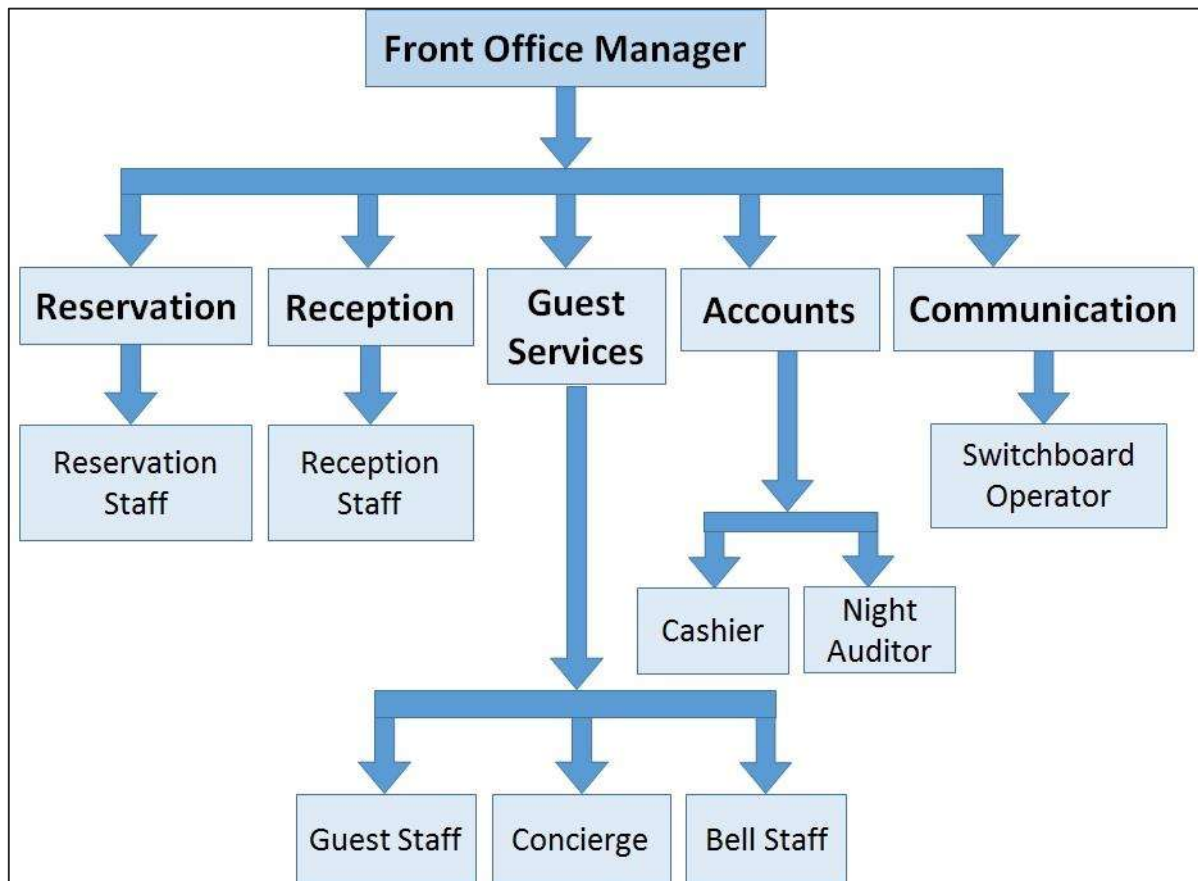
The front office staff needs to communicate with the staff of the same as well as all other departments of the hotel. This is termed as **internal** communication. It mostly relies upon the PBX or IP-PBX system.

When the front office communicates with the potential customers outside the hotel, corporate offices, and other ancillary service providers, then it is an **external** communication.

Any formal communication outside the hotel is mostly carried out using e-mails and phone calls. For sending coupons or other promotional material, renewing agreements with travel agents or airlines, the front office staff may opt for postal mail.

Operational Structure of Front Office

There are lot of staff working under front office manager. The structure of the front office department changes according to the size of the hotel business, physical size of the hotel, and the hotel management policies. Following is the general structure of the front office department:



Hotel Front Office Sections

Front office department manager heads the team of staff working on various activities and responsibilities in the front office department. Few prominent activities that the front office staff is involved in are:

- **Reservation:** It includes handling request of customers for reserving accommodations.
- **Reception:** It includes receiving the guests according to the highest standards and registering them appropriately. It also includes bidding the guests off.
- **Guest Services:** They are also known as Uniformed Services. It includes personalized guest services such as:
 - Handling guest luggage.

- Handling guest mail.
 - Delivering newspapers in accommodations.
 - Paging the guest inside the hotel (locating the guest in the hotel).
 - Arranging for a doctor in emergency.
 - Parking guest's automobiles.
 - Arranging for reservations at the places of entertainment outside the hotel.
- **Accounts:** It mainly includes a front office cashier and a Night Auditor. The cashier is responsible for handling guest payments. He typically reports to the accounts manager rather than the front office manager.

The night auditor performs the duties of front desk reception as well as accounting partly during the night shift. He needs to report to the heads of both departments, front office, and accounting.

- **Communication:** It involves handling communication among various other departments and guests of the hotel.