

8. Front Office – Communication

Healthy communication in the organization fosters mutual trust and sense of cooperation among the staff members and the guests as well as between the staff members and the management body. Front office communication with other departments can make or break the guests' stay at the hotel.

As the front office is responsible to sell the hotel accommodations, it is a major driving force for generating revenue. Hence, communication within and out of front office department needs to be vibrant and positive.

Importance of Front Office Communication

Front office department is responsible for communicating with all other departments in the hotel as well as different sections within the department. To get the front office and back office jobs done successfully, the front office staff members need to communicate with their peers as well as the colleagues and subordinates.

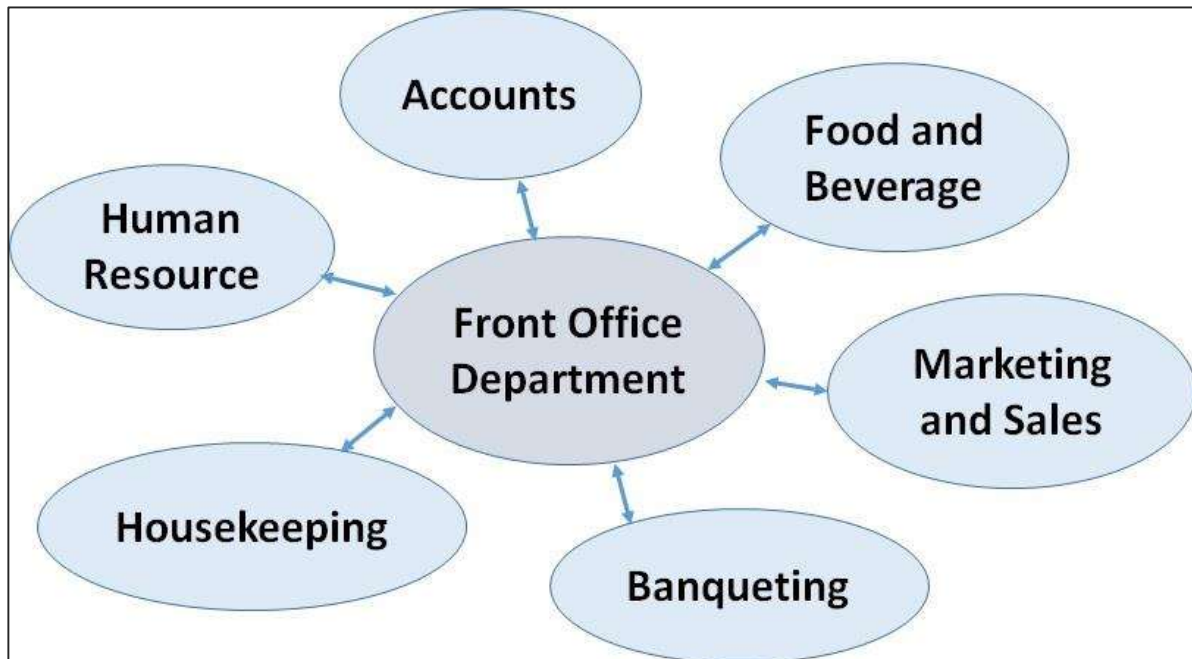
Within the department, the staff of front office communicate with each other to provide the best possible guest services such as reserving accommodations, registering guests, managing guest accounts, handling guest mails, and personalized guest services.

Interdepartmental Communication

Front office interacts with various departments since the guest inquire about reservation through the entire guest cycle up to the guest's departure.

Here is how front office needs to communicate with the other departments:

- **Communication with Human Resource:** Front Office department is engaged with the HR department to interview, help shortlist them, and select the most eligible employees. It also contacts the HR department for employee training and induction programs, salaries, leaves, dues, and appraisals.
- **Communication with Accounts:** As front office department handles guest accounts with a complete responsibility, the staff needs to often interact with the back-office accounting colleagues regarding payment settlements or dues of guests or non-guests, discount offers, and coupons settlement. It also needs to sort out and get actual status of night auditing with accounts.



- **Communication with Food and Beverage Department:** Since front office department is the one where the guests speak about their food and beverage requirements during reservation, the front office needs to communicate with the food and beverage sections frequently.
 - It also keeps the track of guest's purchases from the restaurant, the bar, or coffee shops in the hotel.
 - It conveys special requests of the guest regarding food and beverage to the F&B department.
 - It deals, accepts, and reserves banquet inquiries and coordinates them with the respective departments.
- **Communication with Marketing and Sales Department:** Sales and Marketing department highly relies upon front office inputs about the guests. The guest history compiled by the front office department is an excellent source for segmenting the customers, prepare customer-oriented packages, and plan and execute the campaigns.

The front office staff contacts marketing and sales department in case there is a need to prepare electronic marquees or message boards for promotions.

- **Communication with Housekeeping:** The front office staff needs to interact with the housekeeping department on the concerns such as:
 - Readiness of vacated accommodation for selling.
 - Security of the accommodation.

- Guest's complaints and requirements about any amenities is initiated at the front desk.
- Guest's requirement of removing soiled dishes or linen from the accommodation.
- In addition, the housekeeping department relies upon front office staff for the number of accommodations sold, departures, walk-ins, stay-over guests, and no-shows. Timely distribution of the accommodation sales helps the housekeeping manager to plan employee personal leaves and vacations.
- **Communication with Banqueting:** The front office and banqueting department needs to interact with each other on the concerns such as:
 - Expected number of guests to attend the banquet.
 - Showing directions of the venue to the unfamiliar banquet guests.
 - Posting of daily messages on felt board regarding venue, occasion, hosts and guests.
 - Settling of the city account against the banquet service for the guest.

Switchboard Operators

A vital link between the prospective guests and the hotel itself is switchboard operator who represents the hotel. When the customers call the hotel, the call first arrives at the switchboard operator.

Using knowledge of the portfolio, tone of speaking, and the command over language the switchboard operator can handle the influx of the calls. The operator represents the competency of the hotel in the market while speaking with the customers. Generally, the switchboard operator greets the guests and transfers their call to appropriate department.



There are two schools of thoughts regarding the area where a switchboard operator should work. Some experts say that they should be visible and some expert advice to assign a separate aloof place for them in the hotel. Today, the task of a switchboard operator for transferring the incoming calls to various departments is computerized and requires less human involvement.

The switchboard operators are informed not to transfer any call to the executive chef or to the banquet manager during busy work hours. Hence, the operator needs to take the message accurately and pass them on to the respective persons on time.

Do's and Don'ts of Hotel Communication

Communication necessarily is about verbal language as well as body language. Here are some common Do's and Don'ts the front office staff follows while communicating:

Do's of Hotel Communication

- Always present yourself with a **warm smile**.
- Always stand and walk erect which reflects your **confidence**.
- Get hold on to your domain subject. Try to **know more about your portfolio**. This saves you from the embarrassing situations when you are expected to answer the guests.
- Before you start speaking, find out important points about the issue.

- Speak in **audible voice**.
- Use **simple** and **correct language**.
- Use a language that can be understood by everyone.
- If you need to talk to your colleague in the presence of guest, talk in a standard language of communication.
- Speak only if it is going to be useful to the guests and colleagues. Always speak by **maintaining eye contact** with the listener.
- In case your conversation is interrupted, continue it with a short recap of what has been already discussed.
- While you listen, always pay undivided attention to the speaker. **Communicate to understand**; not to react.
- If the guest asks you to arrange for too many things, then repeat them for confirming.
- Ask politely if you have missed to hear any point the guest or the colleague is putting forward.

Don'ts of Hotel Communication

- **Do not use jargon** or words such as "hmm-hmm", "yep", and alike. Instead, use "perfect", "absolutely", and similar words.
- **Do not speak too fast**, too slow, or in too low or high voice.
- **Do not interrupt** the speaker.
- Do not speak with the colleagues, if it is not related to the business during working hours.
- **Do not speak under assumptions**.
- **Do not hastily arrive at the conclusion** unless you know.
- Do not run around the area of work.
- Do not appear harsh with your subordinates.
- **Do not appear untidy** on work.

Essential Attributes of Front Office Staff

Front office communication not only includes verbal or textual communication but also body language of the staff.



Following are some essential attributes the front office staff must have:

- Pleasant, sturdy, and agile personality
- High sense of good conduct and hygiene
- Ability to solve problems and decide quickly
- Salesmanship
- Integrity
- Punctuality
- Knowledge of etiquettes, and manners
- Command over language
- Confident yet polite nature
- Capacity to tackle situations of emergency
- Integrity and honesty