Front Office Operations

Sample Lesson Plan

PowerPoints:
PowerPoint 1: Competencies for *Front Office Operations*

Competency 1: **Summarize front office operations during the four stages of the guest cycle. (pp. 103–110)**

Key Concepts:
Pre-arrival
Reservations; guest folio
Arrival
World-class, upscale, convention, casino, resort hotels: uniformed staff at entrance
Registration
Establishment of credit
Room Types: Single, double, triple, quad, queen, king, twin, double-double, studio, mini-suite or junior suite, suite, connecting, adjoining, adjacent
Occupancy
Coordinating guest services
Guest relations
Security
Posting of charges
Night audit
Departure
Check-out
Guest history file
Account settlement
Late charges

Text Exhibits:
Exhibit 1: The Guest Cycle and Related Front Office Functions
Exhibit 2: Interaction During the Guest Cycle
Exhibit 3: Room Status Terminology
Exhibit 4: Room Type Definitions

PowerPoints:
PowerPoint 2: The Guest Cycle
PowerPoint 3: Pre-Arrival
PowerPoint 4: Arrival
PowerPoint 5: Room Status Terms
PowerPoint 6: Room Types
PowerPoint 7: Occupancy
PowerPoint 8: Departure

Competency 2: **Describe front office recordkeeping systems and front office documents. (pp. 110–115)**

Key Concepts:
Historically, technology almost nonexistent in the front office until the 1970s
Semi-automated operations through the early 1970s
Computer systems designed for use in hospitality were introduced in the early 1970s
During 1980s, computer equipment less expensive, smaller, easier to operate: user-friendly software; versatile personal computers
Late 1980s: computer systems cost-effective for hotels of all sizes
With today's affordable technology, hotels manage many operations with automated systems
Pre-arrival activities: reservations software may interface with central reservations system or global distribution network

Automatically generate letters of confirmation, requests for deposit, establish credit
　　status, electronic folios
Arrival activities: registration card; registration data retrieved whenever necessary; self
　　check-in/check-out terminals; Internet registration; pre-registration desk
Occupancy activities: POS terminals; two-way interfaces at revenue outlets; continuous
　　trial balances
Departure activities: electronic guest folio; departed-guest information used to create
　　record in guest-history file
Pre-arrival documents: electronic reservation file; letter of confirmation
Arrival documents: registration (paper or electronic); credit established, verified,
　　authorized during check-in
Occupancy documents: electronic guest folio; vouchers to support transactions
Departure documents: guest folios kept current throughout occupancy; various vouchers;
　　guest history file

Competency 3:　Describe the front desk and its support devices, and describe the services and equipment of a hotel's telecommunications area. (pp. 115–122)

Key Concepts:

The front desk and its support devices:
Layout of front desk should provide easy access to the equipment, forms, and supplies
Position flexibility, efficiency, aesthetics, security
Circular desks: guests' ability to approach from all angles
Accessibility: Americans with Disabilities Act; barrier-free facilities
Point-of-sale terminal, credit card reader, smart card, security monitors, time stamps, file
　　boxes
Telecommunications services/equipment:
Types of calls—local, direct-dial long-distance, calling card, credit card, collect, third-
　　party, person-to-person, billed-to-room, international, toll-free, 900 or premium-price,
　　voice over Internet protocol (VoIP)
Equipment and systems
　　　PBX/PABX system
　　　Call accounting system
　　　Guestroom phones
　　　Pay phones
　　　Pagers/cell phones
　　　Automatic call dispensing system
　　　Telephone/room status systems
　　　Internet access
　　　Call detection equipment

Text Exhibits:

Exhibit 5: Sample Layout of a Front Desk

PowerPoints:

PowerPoint 9: Front Office Systems
PowerPoint 10: Front Office Systems—Pre-Arrival Activities
PowerPoint 11: Front Office Systems—Arrival Activities
PowerPoint 12: Front Office Systems—Occupancy Activities
PowerPoint 13: Front Office Systems—Departure Activities
PowerPoint 14: Front Office Documents
PowerPoint 15: The Front Desk
PowerPoint 16: Types of Telephone Calls
PowerPoint 17: Telecommunications Equipment
PowerPoint 18: Telephone Switchboards
PowerPoint 19: Call Accounting Systems
PowerPoint 20: Guestroom Phones
PowerPoint 21: Pagers and Cell Phones
PowerPoint 22: Other Telecommunications Technology

Competency 4: **Identify and describe property management systems used by the front office. (pp. 122–129)**

> **Key Concepts:**
>
> > Front office software packages: reservations management, rooms management, guest account management, general management
> >
> > Reservations management software: availability/forecasting, reservation records, reservation confirmations, room pricing, revenue management
> >
> > Rooms management software: room status, registration, room assignments, room rate information
> >
> > Guest account management software: folio management, credit monitoring, transaction tracking
> >
> > General management software: revenue analysis, operating statistics, financial analysis, guest history
> >
> > Back Office Interfaces:
> >
> > > General ledger accounting software: accounts receivables & payables
> > >
> > > Human resources software: payroll accounting, personnel recordkeeping, labor scheduling
> > >
> > > Financial reporting software: chart of accounts, balance sheets, income sheets, transaction analysis
> > >
> > > Inventory control software: stock levels, purchase order system, stock rotation scheduling
> >
> > System Interfaces:
> >
> > > Non-guest-operated interfaces: point-of-sale system, call accounting system, electronic locking system, energy management system
> > >
> > > Guest-operated interfaces: in-room folio review and check-out, in-room entertainment system, in-room vending machines, in-room fax machine
> > >
> > > Guest services and technology: high-speed Internet access; Internet service in meeting facilities
> > >
> > > Sales automation services: group reservations
>
> **Text Exhibits:**
>
> > Exhibit 6: Front Office Property Management System Applications
>
> **PowerPoints:**
>
> > PowerPoint 23: Property Management Systems
> > PowerPoint 24: Reservation Management Software
> > PowerPoint 25: Rooms Management Software
> > PowerPoint 26: Guest Accounting Management Software
> > PowerPoint 27: General Management Software
> > PowerPoint 28: Back Office Interfaces
> > PowerPoint 29: System Interfaces
> > PowerPoint 30: Sales Automation Systems

Class Activities

Suggested Guest Speaker

Consider inviting a guest speaker to this class session. An appropriate speaker might be a general manager from a local hotel to discuss:

- Moments of truth: the cycle of front office operations—from the guest's point-of-view
- Telecommunications equipment
- The evolution of computerized front office systems
- Interfaces to property management systems
- Support services provided by computer system vendors
- Manual back-up procedures at the front desk

Optional Test

A ready-to-use test containing questions related to the competencies covered by this chapter is included in this session. These questions are similar in format and content to the questions on the Final Exam that the Educational Institute provides and grades for students who are enrolled in this course with the Institute. (If your students are not enrolled in the Institute's course, they will not receive this Final Exam.)

The answers to this session's optional test are:

1-a-C1, 2-d-C1, 3-c-C1, 4-c-C1, 5-d-C1, 6-b-C2, 7-c-C3, 8-d-C4, 9-b-C4, 10-a-C4

Each question is linked to a competency. Competencies are listed on the first page of the chapter and in the Sample Lesson Plan. An answer reading 3-b-C4 translates to:

    3:   the question number
    b: the correct answer
  C4:   the competency number

The pages in the text that are associated with this chapter's competencies are as follows:

C1:   103–110
C2:   110–115
C3:   115–122
C4:   122–129

Note that the answers to test questions may not appear verbatim on the referenced pages. Test questions may assess the examinees' ability to *apply* a concept, not just their knowledge of the concept.

These questions can also be found on the CD-ROM in a rich text format. You can use these questions as a starter to create your own tests.

Individual/Group Activities

Activity 1:   Case Study: "Making the Most of Moments of Truth"
      Instructor's points for guiding discussion on this case study can be found later in this session. This case study covers Competency 1 in this chapter.

Activity 2:   Case Study: "Family Reunions: Worth the Hassle?"
      Instructor's points for guiding discussion on this case study can be found later in this session. This case study covers Competency 1 in this chapter.

Activity 3:   Mini-Case Study: "The City Center Inn: To Change or Not to Change"
      This case study and instructor's points for guiding discussion can be found later in this session. This case study covers Competency 2 in this chapter.

Activity 4:   Mini-Case Study: "Analyzing Operations at the Casa Vana Inn"
      This case study and instructor's points for guiding discussion can be found later in this session. This case study covers Competency 2 in this chapter.

Activity 5:   Mini-Case Study: "Analyzing Check-In Procedures at the K-Street Hotel"
      This case study and instructor's points for guiding discussion can be found later in this session. This case study covers Competencies 1 and 2 in this chapter.

Front Office Operations

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

1. Which of the following is a primary front office concern during the occupancy stage of the guest cycle?

    a.   security
    b.   account settlement
    c.   room assignment
    d.   maintaining the guest history record

2. Uniformed service functions are primary activities in which of the following stages of the guest cycle?

    a.   pre-arrival and arrival
    b.   arrival and occupancy
    c.   occupancy and departure
    d.   arrival and departure

3. A business traveler arrives without a reservation at the Downtown Plaza Hotel. He has several bags with product samples from his business and will be demonstrating them to clients over the next few days. Which of the following types of rooms would best meet the traveler's needs?

    a.   connecting rooms
    b.   adjacent rooms
    c.   a suite
    d.   adjoining rooms

4. Sylvia Pennypincher checks into room 207 for a one-night stay. Early the next morning, Pennypincher leaves the hotel without paying her bill. When checking the 4 P.M. housekeeping report, the front desk finds room 207 listed as vacant and ready for sale and realizes that the guest was a:

    a.   due out.
    b.   sleeper.
    c.   skipper.
    d.   sleep out.

5. On March 1, a guest checks into room 233 and reserves the room for the next three nights. On March 2, the occupancy report from the front desk would list the status of room 233 as:

    a.   DNCO (did not check out).
    b.   a late check-out.
    c.   a sleeper.
    d.   a stayover.

6. Which of the following front office records typically contains personal guest data, the length of stay, and the method of settlement?

    a.   room rack slip
    b.   registration card
    c.   information rack slip
    d.   credit card voucher

7. Which of the following eliminates the need for a telephone operator to intervene and record the times and charges of calls made by in-house guests?

    a.   call detection
    b.   automated call dispensing
    c.   a call accounting system
    d.   a premium-call system

8. Which of the following types of front office software enables a hotel to generate rooms reports, revenue reports, and forecasting reports?

    a. general management software
    b. guest accounting software
    c. rooms management software
    d. reservations management software

9. Which of the following front office applications of a computer-based property management system monitors predetermined guest-credit limits?

    a. reservations software
    b. guest account management software
    c. rooms management software
    d. point-of-sale software

10. Which of the following system interfaces with a hotel's property management system allows guest account transactions to be quickly transmitted from remote revenue centers and posted automatically to electronic guest folios?

    a. a point-of-sale system
    b. general ledger software
    c. financial reporting software
    d. an inventory control system

Case Study: "Making the Most of Moments of Truth"

Points for Instructors

1. **What steps could the staff at Gordon Sumner's hotel have taken to improve their service?**

   The staff at Gordon's hotel had at least three opportunities to serve him well. Yet, during each one of those "moments of truth," they faltered, leaving Gordon with the feeling that he was not important enough to warrant accurate or considerate communication.

   The food and beverage department failed by apparently not communicating important information about restaurant service times to the front desk. If the hours are new or unusual—and they obviously struck Gordon as being out of the ordinary—the food and beverage department should have made certain that everyone with potential guest contact was informed about them. Ultimately, however, it does not matter who was to blame in this instance. What matters is that each department understand how its activities, policies, and performance can affect other departments throughout the operation. It is crucial that front office personnel—who may be the only hospitality staff guests actually speak to—have the training they need to accurately and appropriately answer questions that guests may have.

   At the restaurant, Gordon would have experienced less frustration if the service hours had been posted. Is it possible that Gordon was the first guest ever to arrive and discover that a meal was not available? Probably not. The restaurant should have already established policies and procedures for meeting the needs of guests who want something to eat during off-hours. Perhaps they could establish a service agreement with a nearby local restaurant or offer discount food coupons for use at the food court in the mall across the street. Such strategies would have the added benefit of providing one measure of how many guests the hotel is sending off-site; if the numbers are sufficiently high, it may be worthwhile for the restaurant to re-evaluate its own hours of service.

   Finally, the front desk agent missed an important opportunity to salvage Gordon's service experience. Instead of saying "I'm sorry" and "I hope you'll give us the chance to serve you again," the agent should have asked Gordon if he would like to explain his dissatisfaction. The agent would discover he had failed to provide helpful information initially; he would gather valuable information to pass along to the food and beverage department; and he would convey to Gordon the impression that guest opinions and perceptions are valued and acted upon. Instead, Gordon will probably leave the hotel thinking that the service did not meet his expectations; and, since he is a freelance writer, there is no telling how many others will end up agreeing with him.

2. **What factors were out of Freddie Bulsara's control? How could he have prepared for problems?**

   Freddie could have benefited from remembering one old piece of wisdom: "If something looks too good to be true, it probably is." He should be congratulated for winning two large blocks in one weekend. But he erred in scheduling them so tight together that he was literally counting the minutes between one group's departure and the other's arrival. In another situation—say, on a cruise ship—such precision might be possible. Here, however, too many variables were out of Freddie's control:

   - The dancers' spur-of-the-moment request for a late check-out.
   - Brian's handling of the request.
   - The start and end times of the dancing competition.
   - The Wolves' early arrival.

   As a result, the whole arrangement crumbled. On the other hand, Freddie did have control early on in the process. He could have:

   - Scheduled more time between groups to allow for unforeseen difficulties.
   - Put every part of the booking arrangements in writing.
   - Verified details by phone prior to the weekend—at which time he could also have clarified arrival times and time zones.
   - Met with the dance group on their arrival to review the arrangements and discuss any changes or additional requests.
   - Made contingency plans for what to do with the Wolves if they did happen to arrive early. For example, Freddie might have decided to seat them in the restaurant and bar and offer complimentary appetizers and beverages.

The final point is one Freddie can still put to use. Chances are, the Wolves will be fairly forgiving for the delay in getting into their rooms since it was their carelessness that led to their early arrival. If that is not the case, Freddie can see about some form of compensation—free appetizers and drinks, vouchers for discounted restaurant meals, etc.

3.   What might Reg Dwight's list of affected areas and guest wants/needs include?

Front Desk

They will need additional help to quickly process all of the guests at check-in and maintain accurate records. Since the affected flight was an international one, language difficulties may arise at the front desk. Spanish-, French-, and German-speaking staff members should be called in to help.

Food and Beverage

Guests would likely want snacks, coffee, soda—maybe even kitchen service—at hours when food service is not normally available. Two hundred and sixty people ordering simultaneously from room service would be a disaster—at any staffing level.

Housekeeping

Although all of the rooms should already be prepared for guests; some rooms may need cribs or rollaway beds.

Sales

Lorenzo is the contact for all meetings held in the Carlton and Heritage Rooms. If the hotel was going to use those rooms for emergency storage, sales needs to know about it.

Guest Wants/Needs

- Emergency toiletry kits
- Minor first-aid supplies (for any small scrapes encountered during the exit from the airplane)
  - Band-Aids
  - Antiseptic cream
  - Aspirin
- Laundry service for dirty socks and stockings

Case Study: "Family Reunions: Worth the Hassle?"

Points for Instructors

This case illustrates the frustrations often felt by the front desk and other uniformed services staff who must work effectively with demanding groups of guests. It is typical that small groups such as the Johnson party described above seem much more demanding of time and energy than individual couples or families traveling alone. Discussion both short and in-depth can focus on the role of the front desk agents and uniformed services in meeting the diverse, numerous needs of small groups. It can also focus on the goals and the role of the group sales team in charge of selling the rooms to the small group.

Often, the goals and objectives of the front office and the sales team conflict. In many resorts and hotels, these two departments report to different upper-level managers, further distancing two departments that really should be working closely together. The main goal of the sales team is to sell blocks of rooms. Sales teams sometimes make promises that the front office staff have trouble keeping. In addition, sometimes the sales team will sell a block of rooms but the front office team may have trouble keeping the group together in the same area.

Salespeople usually work a standard work day, sometimes leaving before their groups are all checked in. Solving group problems after the sales team has left for the day becomes the responsibility of the front office staff. If salespeople have made promises, front office staff may not be in the position to honor the promises.

Other departments are also greatly affected by group sales and group business. Affected departments might include housekeeping, food and beverage, and any program-related departments. Group sales must work closely with all departments affected by group business. The instructor may point out how important it is for all departments to communicate before group arrivals and during the group's occupancy stage to deliver quality service and minimize frustration.

The instructor could point out the importance of communications between the front office and the sales team. The front office manager should meet with the sales manager and/or the salesperson who is responsible for arriving groups. In addition, documents that outline details of group activities, charges, leaders, and other important information must be easily accessible for those working the front office. Procedures should be in place in case demands by groups on front office staff are outside the norm.

This case also illustrates the potential value of small group business and how it can be converted into future room nights with the associated revenues over time. The instructor may want to guide the class in calculating the value of future business from a first-time visitor attending a family reunion.

To calculate the value of a frequent guest, the instructor can use an example of an individual business traveler who visits the same business client twice a month for one year. This traveler may stay at a Sheraton, for example, for two nights, eat breakfast each morning and have dinner in the hotel at least one of the nights. Working with the students, the instructor should make an educated guess as to the costs incurred by the guest for a two-night stay at the Sheraton. Finally, the instructor should add up the total guest charges for this individual business traveler for one year. The numbers add up quickly.

Often, if a business traveler is dedicated to a brand he or she is satisfied with, the same person may take a two-week vacation with the entire family at that brand's resort. When travelers are satisfied, they may remain loyal to a particular brand for many years. When the instructor calculates the total revenue from many years of business for one frequent traveler, students get the point that a first-time guest could become a frequent and valuable guest for many years to come.

In-Depth Discussion

Some hotels will have both sales teams and conference coordinators on staff. Once the sale is made, the conference or group coordinator steps in to ensure that the group is taken care of throughout its stay. The instructor can use this case to illustrate how the group coordinator can work with the front office staff to ensure that the group has a good experience. The instructor can assign one or more of the following questions for students to address after reading the case.

1. What are the differences between the goals of the front desk staff, the goals of the sales team who attract these small and sometimes difficult groups, and the goals of the group or conference coordinators who are often responsible for groups once they are in-house?

2.   What strategies would you suggest that the front office manager use to encourage first-time guests to become frequent guests?

3.   What strategies could marketing and sales employ to develop a post-occupancy relationship with small groups to encourage return visits?

Mini-Case Study: "The City Center Inn: To Change or Not to Change"

The City Center Inn has always enjoyed a positive reputation in the community it serves. Built as an independent hotel about 20 years ago, it has 400 rooms and appeals mostly to travelers looking for mid-range prices and service. It also has excellent banquet facilities and is generally recognized as one of the better hotels in town.

Recently, new competition has been built two blocks from the City Center Inn. The new hotel has 300 rooms and also has good banquet space. It is a chain hotel and enjoys a good reputation based upon the chain.

Tom Malone, the hotel front office manager, has begun to see a downturn in hotel business. Some of the City Center Inn's regular guests are not returning. With the permission of the hotel's general manager, Tom calls several of these regular guests to find out why they are not returning. Tom is pleased to find that the guests he calls like the hotel. They believe the food at the City Center Inn is better than at the competitor. The guestrooms are just as clean and comfortable, too. However, the City Center Inn lacks many of the conveniences of the new competition, so the business travelers are going there instead.

Tom made a list of these issues for the general manager. They include:

- No convenient 800 number to call for reservations
- Slow registration processing
- Slow check-out processing
- Frequently inaccurate guest billing
- Lack of frequent guest recognition by the newer front desk employees

The City Center Inn has a semi-automated front desk and all the equipment is in good condition. Reservations are processed manually using typewriters to fill out expected arrivals lists for the front desk. Room status communications between the front desk and housekeeping are also manual, and so is the charge posting function. Tom decides the market is telling the hotel to change, but he is not sure what to recommend to the general manager.

Discussion Questions

1. What alternatives does the hotel have to improve the service issues mentioned by the guests? Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of providing a fully automated hotel versus keeping their current systems.

2. If the hotel's owners decide not to implement a fully automated front desk, what else can Tom do to minimize the problems identified by the guests? Are there other systems besides a front desk computer that can help this situation?

3. What forms and reports should Tom be reviewing to see if they can be simplified or eliminated? What other department managers should he include in this review?

Case Number: 3323CB

The following industry experts helped generate and develop this case: Richard M. Brooks, CHA, Vice President, TWE Group; and Michael L. Kasavana, NAMA Professor in Hospitality Business, *The* School of Hospitality Business, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Mini-Case Study: "The City Center Inn: To Change or Not to Change"

Points for Instructors

1. **What alternatives does the hotel have to improve the service issues mentioned by the guests? Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of providing a fully automated hotel versus keeping their current systems.**

   For example, the lack of a toll-free telephone number could be remedied by adding the service. The benefit would be to provide a more convenient way for guests to make reservations. The drawback is the added cost to the hotel.

2. **If the hotel's owners decide not to implement a fully automated front desk, what else can Tom do to minimize the problems identified by the guests? Are there other systems besides a front desk computer that can help this situation?**

   Alternatives to a fully-automated front desk that will still improve guest service and check-in/check-out speed: preregister each guest, get most guest registration information while making the reservation, and check in groups separately from non-group guests. Check-out alternatives could be to provide a copy of the guest's folio under the door on the expected departure date. Manual procedures can be instituted to ensure accuracy of guest billing. In addition, other equipment can be found to improve communication between departments.

3. **What forms and reports should Tom be reviewing to see if they can be simplified or eliminated? What other department managers should he include in this review?**

   Reports can include the housekeeping report, daily manager's report, and others. In addition, rack slips and registration cards can be preprinted and unnecessary vouchers can be identified for elimination. Other managers that should be consulted during the review include those for all other revenue centers and any manager who uses the reports he is considering altering or dropping.

Mini-Case Study: "Analyzing Operations at the Casa Vana Inn"

The reservations office at the Casa Vana Inn is so busy that the reservations agents do not use the computer system to check room availabilities before recording reservation requests. Their standard procedure is to jot down all the relevant reservation information on a pad of paper, record the information when call volume slows, and then call the guest back to confirm the reservation. Given the fact that the reservations manager, Bradley Lawrence, doesn't trust the computer system, he insists that his staff maintain a reservations rack using typed reservation slips and a set of wooden pockets. Each morning, the reservations agents transfer the reservation slips for those guests expected to arrive that day to the front desk to facilitate a faster check-in.

Upon arrival at the front desk, each guest is asked to complete a registration card. The front desk agent matches the information on this card with the reservation slip to ensure proper check-in procedures. Once the guest leaves the desk for the room, the front desk agent, if not too busy, records the check-in in the hotel's computer system. Although many guests claim to have a reservation, the front desk agent often fails to find a reservation slip that matches the registration information. The front office manager, Mr. Cybex, has been tracking the number of arriving guests claiming to have made a reservation against the number of successful matches with the reservation slips. He is concerned that less than one-half the number of guests stating reservations were made have reservation slips.

The hotel has had to develop new procedures for check-out due to the length of time guests appear to wait in line. At the time of check-out, the front desk agent simply reviews the guest's most current folio, settles the account to an acceptable method of payment, and writes down the room number of the guestroom that has been vacated. Sometime later, after the wave of departures, the front desk agent updates the computer system and calls the room numbers down to housekeeping using the hotel's intercom system.

Discussion Questions

1. What actions should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the reservations department?

2. How effective is the hotel's reservation-to-registration linkage? What could be done to improve this situation?

3. What could be done to improve the communication between the front desk and the housekeeping department?

4. How might an efficient computer system reduce or eliminate many of the problems the hotel is now experiencing?

Case Number: 3323CC

The following industry experts helped generate and develop this case: Richard M. Brooks, CHA, Vice President, TWE Group; and Michael L. Kasavana, NAMA Professor in Hospitality Business, *The* School of Hospitality Business, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Mini-Case Study: "Analyzing Operations at the Casa Vana Inn"

Points for Instructors

1. **What actions should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the reservations department?**
    -   Require reservation agents to use online room availability data to avoid paper records and call backs to guests (time and cost efficiencies).
    -   Gain confidence in the reservation system or remove it. Stop duplicating information onto a reservation rack.
    -   Create a reservation record as a reservation is received. This will avoid the need to create reservation rack slips and will closely align reservations with confirmations and registration activity.

2. **How effective is the hotel's reservation-to-registration linkage? What could be done to improve this situation?**
    -   Stop using the manual reservation rack and employ the reservation system to generate expected check-in list.
    -   Stop requiring guests with reservations to complete registration cards by having pre-printed cards based on captured reservation information in the computer system.
    -   Require front desk agents to check all guests in through the computer system at time of check-in.

3. **What could be done to improve the communication between the front desk and the housekeeping department?**
    -   Automate communications so that the front office can alert housekeeping to current room status and housekeeping can similarly update the front desk relative to altered room status.
    -   Online check-out will send instant room status update to housekeeping department. This avoids later manual changes in room status and eliminates calls to housekeeping with update information.

4. **How might an efficient computer system reduce or eliminate many of the problems the hotel is now experiencing?**
    -   Creation of reservation record at time of reservation ensures confirmation and aligns registrations with reservation records.
    -   Reservation records can facilitate preregistration activities (pre-printed registration cards, expected arrivals list, automatic room assignments, etc.).
    -   Room availability verification to avoid double registration or registration to an "on-change" status room.
    -   Reservation rack is no longer necessary.
    -   Computerization should speed check-in and check-out. It may even allow preregistration activities and express check-out activities.
    -   Online electronic folios should be accurate at time of check-out.
    -   Online check-out provides instant update information for housekeeping department action.

Mini-Case Study: "Analyzing Check-In Procedures at the K-Street Hotel"

Guests have been experiencing extremely slow check-ins at the K-Street Hotel, a 200-room property that caters to the mid-range market. The newly hired front office manager, Janna Black, has analyzed preregistration and registration procedures. She finds that the reservations department furnishes the front desk with a list of expected arrivals each day. She also finds that front desk agents require all guests to complete a registration card when they arrive. This card contains many small spaces in which guests must write their name, address, and appropriate credit information.

Janna comes to the K-Street Hotel from a property with a fully-automated front office. The K-Street Hotel is semi-automated. In one of her first staff meetings, Janna decides to address the problems associated with the current check-in routine. The front desk agents tell her that the source of the lengthy registration problem rests with other departments. They claim that other departments—particularly reservations—fail to relay guest information quickly and accurately. Agents say that this poor communication leads to room rack errors, cashiering problems, and imprecise reservation records. Some agents further claim that these interdepartmental snags inhibit their ability to effectively preregister guests. Finally, the staff suggests to Janna that the hotel change its check-in time from 4 P.M. to noon. They reason that a longer check-in period would give guests the opportunity to register early and would prevent rushes at the desk.

After the meeting, Janna discovers that most guests present a letter of confirmation as part of the registration process. She also finds herself feeling skeptical about the suggested change in check-in times. She foresees the change disrupting work schedules and causing guest confusion; many of the hotel's guests are familiar with the established registration time. But to appear flexible, Janna decides to change check-in time to 2 P.M.

Discussion Questions

1. What actions should Janna take to resolve the reported communication problems between the front desk and other departments?

2. What factors should Janna have considered before changing the hotel's check-in time?

3. How might computerization affect the communication problems the front office is experiencing? What should Janna do before suggesting the installation of a front office computer system to upper management?

Case Number: 3323CD

The following industry experts helped generate and develop this case: Richard M. Brooks, CHA, Vice President, TWE Group; and Michael L. Kasavana, NAMA Professor in Hospitality Business, *The* School of Hospitality Business, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Mini-Case Study: "Analyzing Check-In Procedures at the K-Street Hotel"

Points for Instructors

1. **What actions should Janna take to resolve the reported communication problems between the front desk and other departments?**

   - The new front office manager can meet with the other department heads to determine their concerns. These meetings should be held regularly until the problems are resolved and communications have improved.
   - Streamline the way reservations are given to the front desk. For example, instead of a list being given to the front desk, registration cards typed by the reservation office in advance could be given to the front desk. The typed registration cards could contain all the information necessary to register each guest, instead of a name list only, which the front desk currently receives.
   - Inform the reservations department of changes in expected occupancy due to walk-ins, early departures, or overstays. This will help them fill the hotel better.
   - Other answers are acceptable based upon the chapter content and the experience of the student.

2. **What factors should Janna have considered before changing the hotel's check-in time?**

   - Guest demand for early arrival.
   - Ability of the housekeeping department to get rooms ready earlier than 4 P.M.
   - Guest departure pattern. For example, in some hotels guests tend to leave early to make transportation connections. In other hotels, guests leave late because they want to work or attend meetings at the hotel as long as possible.
   - Other answers are acceptable based upon the chapter content and the experience of the student.

3. **How might computerization affect the communication problems the front office is experiencing? What should Janna do before suggesting the installation of a front office computer system to upper management?**

   Computerization can improve communications between the reservation office and front desk because many of the issues discussed in the case are automatically handled through computers. For example, registration cards can be preprinted with all the guest information, including rate, address, credit card, etc. In addition, as changes occur in occupancy at the front desk, they automatically update reservation information for last-minute bookings.

   Before suggesting the installation of a front office computer system to upper management, the front office manager should:

   - Research all the communications and reporting issues in the hotel.
   - Look at similar properties with computers to identify what problems they have.
   - Research the general cost of a front office computer and identify any cost savings the hotel might gain that would pay for the computer. For example, automatically printing confirmation letters instead of hand typing them would improve guest service.
   - Identify guest service issues that would be improved by the computer. For example, preprinting registration cards with complete information would remove the need for guests to completely fill in cards when checking in. In addition, having the front desk computer provide the credit card verification would also speed up check-in.