NOTES ON INFORMATION

FOR: BHMCT 2nd SEM

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INFORMATION RACK:

An Information rack is composed of two index listings of in-house guests. One by the guests last name and another by assigned room number. An Information rack is commonly used to assist Front Office employees with proper routing of telephone calls, mails, messages and visitors inquiries. The Information rack normally consists of aluminium slots designed to hold guest information slips. These slots can be easily arranged and rearranged to fit the immediate needs of the hotel. Computer systems eliminate the need for an Information rack since guest name and room number data are easily retrievable through computer system.

ROOM RACK

This is the most important piece of Front Office equipment in non-automated and semi-automated hotels. The room rack is an array of metal file pockets designed to hold room rack slips that display guest and room status information. The Room rack is normally recessed into the front desk counter , tilted against the desk, or mounted below or behind the desk. When key slots are added to the Room rack, it can serve as combination room and key rack.

The Room rack contains a summary of information about the current status of all rooms in the hotel. A room rack slip or in some hotels, the guest registration card itself can be inserted into the Room rack to display guest information, room number and room rate. At one glance the room rack informs the front office assistant of the occupancy and housekeeping status of all rooms. The room rack may also contain information about room types, features and rates. This information may be used to match available room with guest request during the registration process. Need for room rack is eliminated in a computerised system.

MAIL AND KEY RACK

A key rack is an array of numbered compartments used to store guest room keys. To minimise the number of racks in the front desk area, hotels may combine the key rack with either the room rack or the mail and message rack. A combination of these is either a free standing wall unit, an under the counter row of compartments, or a set of drawers. Some front offices use rack as room divider by placing it between the front desk and the telephone operators.

When mail and message compartments of the rack are open from both sides, telephone operators and front office assistants have equal access to rack contents.

If guest room telephones are equipped with 'message lights', they can be used to notify guests when they have messages at the desk. In room message lights can be activated with a control switch beside each room's slot in the mail, message and key rack.

LUGGAGE CONTROL AND BELLBOYS CONTROL

Many guests arrive at the hotel with heavy baggage or several pieces of luggage. Guests receive help from the bell attendants. Bell attendants provide baggage service between the Lobby area and the guest room.

ACTIVITIES AT THE BELL DESK ON ARRIVAL:

1. Bell boy returns to the bell desk with errand card and hands it over to the bell captain.
2. Hotel tags are prepared and fixed by the bell boy in the presence of the guest to identify the luggage and avid confusion or mistakes.
3. Bell boy escorts the guest to the room with the luggage.
4. Places luggage on the luggage stand or as directed by the guest.
5. Returns to the bell desk and punches time of return on the errand card.
The details on the errand card are filled up by the bell captain. He also makes entries of the details into his control sheet on the bell boys return.

The errand card contains details such as the description and the number of pieces of baggage, the time at which the bell boy left the counter, time of return etc.

When a guest complaints he might tell you so many things along with the actual problem. But you have to try and the important message from the complaint, i.e. find out the root cause.

1.Think how you can help
Considering the nature of the problem and the complaint, decide the plan of action quickly.

2. Act immediately
Take immediate action and take the action in front of the guest so that he feels that he is taken care of.

3. Follow-up
Merely taking action is not sufficient, so follow-up with the other departments, if the complaint has been handled.

4. No false promises
It is very dangerous to make false promise. If you can't solve a particular problem do not promise, otherwise you may loose not only one customer but many.

5. Ask senior
If you feel you can't solve a certain problem or you are not authorized to take a decision, ask your senior to help you.

PAGING

Paging is used to locate a guest in the hotel. Guests may require this paging service during their stay in the hotel. Sometimes when a expecting a phone call or a visitor but he doesn't want to wait for him in his room, and either goes to any of the public areas or goes out of the hotel; then in such cases he will leave the information about his whereabouts at the front desk. For this purpose he has to fill in a 'Location form'

Location form tells about the whereabouts of the guest in case he is not in his room and is expecting a telephone call or a visitor. Sometimes this form is kept in the stationary folder in the guest room but more commonly it is with the front desk. The receptionist on the guest's behalf can fill this in. it is made in duplicate; one copy is kept in the "Key and Mail rack", the second copy goes to the telephone operator. Paging can be done for a guest whose location is known or for a guest who has not left any location form.

PROCEDURE FOR PAGING

1. Page Board System:

When a phone call is received for any guest or a visitor comes to visit the guest who is not in his room, the reception desk personnel will write the name and/or room number of the guest on both the sides of the Page board. This will be handed over to the bellboy. If the guest location is known, bell boy will carry that board to specific public area and will ring the bells attached to the board. This draws attention of the guest and the concerned guest gets his message.

Disadvantages:

• Time consuming- if the guest does not specify his location page board will have to be carried to all public areas of the hotel.
• When bell boy moves with the board and the bells are ringing, he might disturb many guests in the area.

2. Channel Music Or Public Address System:

When there is a phone call for a guest who has to be paged, the receptionist switches off the channel music of the lobby and other public area of the hotel. With the help of a microphone she announces the name and/or the room number of the guest, which is transmitted to all public areas simultaneously.

MESSAGE & MAIL HANDLING

MESSAGE HANDLING

Receiving messages for in-house guests in their absence, recording them and communicating them to the guests as soon as possible is an important function of the front desk staff. The efficiency and professionalism of the hotel and the attitude of the staff is reflected by the way this function is carried out by the staff. Usually when a guest goes out of his room he would leave his room key at the counter where the information clerk would put it in the appropriate pigeon hole of his room in the mail and key rack.

The guest may leave a filled "Location Form" indicating where he will be for the next few hours.
There are only two ways that a person can contact an in-house guest.

(1) In case of a phone call the telephone operator will connect it to the room of the guest. Since the guest is not in the room the call comes back to the operator who connects it to the Information Section of the Front Desk. After checking that the guest has left his key at the desk (as confirmed by the key being in the "Mail and Key Rack") the telephone call is transferred to the "Message Desk". The message clerk prepares the message slip in triplicate. It is important to read back the message to the caller and confirm the details before signing off. The top two copies are given to the Information Clerk who puts it the room no on the forms (from the Information Rack). The Top Copy is sent to the room to be slipped under the door. The Second Copy is put in the appropriate room no pigeon hole of the Mail and Key Rack. In addition, for further safety, an "attention card" or a "mail and message advise card" is put on the door knob of the room or "message light" is activated in those hotels which use electronic systems. The message details may also be fed into the computer and the guest may view it on the screen of the T.V. in his room.

2) In case of the visitor coming to the hotel , he is asked to first try the house telephones to contact the guest. When he finds the guest is not in his room he comes to the Information Desk and fills in the message slip in triplicate as given above.

MESSAGE SLIP

To _____ Room No _____
Date _____ Time _____
DURING YOUR ABSENCE

Mr. / Mrs / Ms. _____
Of _____
Tel No _____

Called by Telephone
Please call him/her

Came to see you
Will return

Wants to see you
Urgent

MESSAGE_____
_____

Received by _____

MAIL HANDLING

Importance :

Mail handling procedure is a very important function which the Front Office staff has to handle in a hotel. A receptionist in a hotel has to be very careful that all the mail receives due attention and are attended to without any delay to avoid embarrassment.
Types of mail - Incoming & Outgoing, Ordinary & Registered :
Basically while discussing there are two types of mail. Incoming & Outgoing.

Incoming Mail :

Various types of mail may be received in a hotel, like mail for Hotel Management and Hotel staff and mail for guests. In addition the mail may be an ordinary mail or registered/recorded mail etc.
Staff has to be extra careful about recorded mail. All incoming mail must be DATE AND TIME STAMPED. A proper record of all the recorded mail is kept as per requirement i.e., the entries are made in either registered letter book, parcels book or telegram book etc.

No such record is maintained for ordinary mail. After having date and time marked the mail, it is sorted and classified under 3 main categories.

(1) HOTEL MAIL is identified by the designation of a senior manager of the hotel e.g. General Manager, Banquet Manager etc. This mail is delivered to the office of the managers concerned.

(2) STAFF MAIL is identified by the presence of the name of employee, designation and department mentioned in the address. This is usually sorted and delivered through the Time Office.

(3) GUEST MAIL : Any mail that is left is supposed to be guest mail Guest Mail may belong to any one of the following categories:

(1) Present Guest Mail
(2) Past Guest Mail
(3) Future guest Mail
(4) Wrongly Addressed Mail

PRESENT GUEST MAIL

The guest mail is first arranged in ALPHABETICAL ORDER and then checked against the INFORMATION RACK to identify the PRESENT GUESTS. Wherever applicable the room no is entered in pencil on the letters and then they are put in the appropriate room no pigeon hole in the MAIL AND KEY RACK to be handed to the guests when they come to deposit or collect their keys

Any mail that is left still belongs to guests who have already departed (past guest) or to guests who have still to arrive (future guests)

PAST GUEST MAIL

Sometime the hotel receives mail for the guests who have already departed from the hotel after having stayed for some period. The hotel to avoid any embarrassment as to what to do with such mail and how to hand it over to the person quickly, ask the departing guest to leave their forwarding address and for how long they would want their mail to be redirected to that address. A special program called "Mail Forwarding Card" is used for this.

Many hotels keep these cards in the stationery folder in the room while others keep these slips at the Front Desk and give them to the guest at the time of departure. This card contains the address to which and the dates/period till by which the guest would like all the mail received by the hotel after his departure to be forwarded. These cards are filed alphabetically and when the expiry date is reached they are cleared out systematically. Any letter received after the expiry date is either returned back to the sender or in case the permanent address of the guest is available, is redirected to him at his permanent address.

The remaining mail is still in alphabetical order and checked against the Mail Forwarding Cards and where applicable they are Redirected. Details of mail redirected is entered on the reverse of the Mail Forwarding Car