



HOTEL

SKILLS-TRAINING MANUAL

RECEPTION

EGIDIO MARCATO & CORINNE BELLABY



Hotel Reception Skills Training Manual

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Foreword



Imagine you step into a lobby of a wonderful grand hotel. A warm and welcoming colour scheme surrounds you, the luxurious armchairs that are spread out throughout look too comfortable to sit in, a polished marble reception desk creates a wonderful contrast to the subtle yet handmade wallpaper. Light piano sounds, a mesmerising scent of coffee and almond, and almost soundless conversations from other guests come from the restaurant area. You are greeted by the reception team with a sincere smile, eye contact and your name. They are expecting you, acknowledging your reservation details and preferences, respecting your unique personality and honouring your presence by giving their undivided attention. Everything they say is accurate and gives you reassurance to stay as long as you desire. The reception team seems to read your mind as they anticipate your future needs, your likes and dislikes. You feel special, understood and comfortable.

You feel at home.

Hotel receptionists are the creators of this feeling – they are responsible for the first impression, and create long-lasting relationships.

This book serves as an excellent guide to creating this magic and is dedicated to those who want to learn about the art of hospitality and service excellence. It certainly requires the right skill set to perform the duties of a receptionist well, but it also leaves enough space to showcase and appreciate intercultural relationships, unique personalities and special characters to create memories that last and make you want to come back over and over again. Ultimately, receptionists create loyalty and a sense of belonging.

We, the AICR (Amicale Internationale des Sous Directeurs et Chefs de Réception des Grand Hôtels), are an association that embraces, develops and benchmarks front office operations globally. The authors of this book, Corinne Bellaby and Egidio Marcato, who have been friends and loyal AICR members for decades, have gathered information, material and knowledge from our global network of front office experts and hospitality leaders.

We confirm that every word used in this booklet is written with love for and dedication to the hospitality industry and front office service excellence.

Amicalement,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Roehrle'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Arian Roehrle
AICR International President

Foreword



Working in hospitality isn't just a job, it's a passion, a lifestyle and a colourful mix of people from across the globe. It is our *raison d'être*. We are people-driven and thrive off fulfilling even the most demanding requests and finding solutions to problems you did not even know existed. Day in and day out, we aim to put a smile on peoples' faces and always think about how we can create another unforgettable moment for our guests from near and far.

We are the backbone of the global tourism industry. We strive to provide a first-class experience, no matter if it is your first, second or fiftieth stay. We have colleagues and friends from all over the world and build long-lasting relationships with both guests and co-workers. We have local knowledge and can provide the best advice on which attractions to visit, make a last-minute reservation at the latest trendy restaurant and even get tickets to that sold-out show.

Our hotels act as social hubs, where international and local guests form a community. We keep this community together and create a friendly, warm and vibrant atmosphere to satisfy and delight customers, and make them want to return.

This, and so much more, is our beloved hospitality industry. This skills-training book is a true masterpiece and the very first of its kind for hotel reception. I sincerely hope you enjoy reading this book and get inspired as much as I did.

Wishing you all the very best on your own hospitality journey.

Yours faithfully,

Arlette Scheidegger
President of Swiss Hotel Administration & Management Association
Vice Director at Hotel Continental Park Luzern, Switzerland

Introduction to the Authors

EGIDIO MARCATO

From the Veneto region of Italy, Egidio Marcato studied hotel management in Abano Terme and obtained his diploma in 1977. He subsequently went on to work at a number of prestigious hotels across Europe – including in Baden-Baden, Paris, London, Monte Carlo, Cannes, Lugano – improving his languages, gaining experience at concierge and reception desks, honing his skills, and ultimately working in front office management.

Egidio obtained his Master in Business Administration from Endicott College, Beverly, MA in the United States in 2006.

Always passionate about hospitality, Egidio has worked for over four decades to promote the profession of hotel receptionist. In 1995, he co-founded the AICR* Switzerland competition for the best receptionist, known as the Bucherer Trophy. His commitment to receptionists earned him his appointment in 2015 as president of the jury of the David Campbell Trophy, namely, the AICR competition for the world's best receptionist. In recognition of his vast experience and expertise, SwissSkills appointed him Swiss expert/coach at WorldSkills and EuroSkills for the profession of hotel receptionist. In 2020, he founded his own company, the Swiss Hospitality Guild, a training centre for those wishing to excel in the art of hospitality.

CORINNE BELLABY

Corinne Bellaby was born and raised just outside Leeds in West Yorkshire, United Kingdom. She left grammar school aged 16 and went to work in a bank, but quickly found the day-to-day business of banking to be monotonous; it was from there her hotel journey began.

She has worked for both independent and group hotels in front office and revenue roles. She spent a number of years with Marriott Hotels & Resorts, much of this time in Bermuda, New York City, Austria, France and the Netherlands.

She obtained a Certificate in Education from Huddersfield Polytechnic and a postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies, before going on to teach hospitality students following both hotel reception courses and higher-level hotel management courses. After five years, she was lured back to the hotel industry to continue her love affair with hotel front office and revenue.

Corinne, now retired, has been and continues to be involved with the AICR*, assisting in aspects such as role plays in the competition for World's Best Receptionist. It is through this that she met Egidio, with whom she has collaborated to produce this workbook as an introduction for young candidates entering the hotel reception competition at WorldSkills.

* *International Association of Reception Managers and Deputy Managers of Grand Hotels*



MODULE 1

Introduction
to Hospitality

Introduction to Hospitality

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry covers a number of different sectors, and although many consider them to be separate industries, they are in fact all in the business of customer service. These sectors are travel and tourism, food and beverages, accommodation, recreation.

Despite their differences, they share a common goal, which is to take care of guests, visitors and strangers, and provide refreshment, entertainment and outstanding customer service.

It is one of the largest industries in the world, employs millions of people, and is worth billions of euros worldwide.

DEFINITION

Hospitality is defined as:

“The relationship between a guest and a host, wherein the host receives the guest with some amount of goodwill, including the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.”

wikipedia.org

“The act of being friendly and welcoming to guests and visitors.”

dictionary.cambridge.org

HOSPITALITY THROUGH THE AGES

It is believed that the history of the industry dates back to 15,000 BC, with the first documented instance being of one tribe hosting another at the Lascaux caves in France.

The Greeks developed thermal baths for rest and relaxation, while the Romans built mansions to provide accommodation, specifically for anyone travelling on government business. As civilisation advanced, shelter, rest and food could be found with the advent of monasteries and abbeys.

In early medieval times, weary travellers – most of them on foot – would be looking for a safe place to rest. Casual arrangements would be made between the local people and the travellers, who for the most part would be strangers. Usually, the travellers would be provided with something very basic to eat and ale to drink – in those times, water was unsafe to drink. If they did have any animals with them, then a safe resting place would also be needed for them.

Mongolia's Genghis Khan (1162–1227) developed a road system to enable the transit of letters and goods through his expansive territories. As a result, thousands of resting places, known as 'posthouses', were built. However, it was the Han Dynasty (Chinese) in the third century BC that developed the link between East and West.

In the late medieval era, merchants like Marco Polo (1254–1324) explored the Far East, and these inns began to welcome not just merchants, but also scholars, messengers and other travellers. As commerce developed and the number of travellers increased, the need for hospitality began to grow at the same time.

Moving forward into the Middle Ages, these casual stays evolved and became more than just a place to stay, serving an increasingly mobile class of merchants, nobles, scholars and priests – and so the hospitality industry was born. In the United Kingdom, the monarch and his entourage – which could number at least 1,000 people – would go round the country staying at any of the noblemen's houses that the monarch decided to visit.



The Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s and the growth of industry across all major cities, with ever greater demand from business people for somewhere to stay, led to the opening of professional hotels in the 1800s. Luxury hotels became the place to stay for the world's industrialists and newly rich capitalists. The Langham Hotel in London opened its doors in 1865, becoming the first 'Grand Hotel' to open in Europe and attracting guests such as the Prince of Wales and much of Victorian high society.

The advent of aviation in the early 1900s suddenly opened up new horizons and provided a faster way to travel. This meant that guests began to venture much farther afield, with travel becoming 'worldwide' for both business and pleasure purposes.

Although hotels around the world were being built at this time to satisfy demand, the real hotel construction boom started in the 1980s and continues to this day. Guests from all walks of life have an appetite for every type of accommodation, not just for luxury hotels. But topmost on the guests' list today is 'hospitality'.



MODULE 3

Hotel
Reservation
Procedures

Hotel Reservation Procedures

INTRODUCTION

A hotel has an organisational structure, where the tasks and duties needed to run operations are allocated to various departments. The individual departments are responsible for performing their (designated) tasks on a daily basis, thus contributing to the successful running of the hotel as a whole.

The number of departments and staff working in them are determined by the size of the hotel (e.g. 200 rooms vs 1,000 rooms), the category of hotel (e.g. 2 star vs 5 star) and the type of clientele (e.g. corporate business, leisure travellers, group business).

However, no department can operate alone. Regardless of how large or small the hotel, the departments are linked together like a chain, without beginning or end. They are interdependent, with the various tasks merging to produce the whole – a fully operational hotel. It is to this fully operational hotel that guests come – be it to stay, attend conferences, have drinks, afternoon tea or dinner. There are also many other reasons for stepping through the front doors of a hotel.

Traditionally, the reservation function in the hotel was carried out by reservation agents, who reported to a reservation manager. This team came under the umbrella of front office/rooms division, with the reservation manager reporting to the front office manager, who in turn would report to the hotel manager and then the general manager. As technology advanced and the demands of customers grew, the tasks that reservations had to perform became increasingly complex and demanding.

This was led in part by the airline industry, which was way ahead of hotels when it came to maximising occupancy and rates. While hotels were still focused on managing rates and occupancy by way of simple forecasting tools, the airline industry was implementing 'demand forecasting'. This resulted in the introduction of revenue management to hotels, as it became clear how the use of revenue management tools would help the hotel increase occupancy and the rates. Both airlines and hotels share a 'perishable product' – airline seats and hotel bedrooms. Once a plane takes off, any empty seats on that flight can no longer be sold. Similarly, once a night is over, any vacant rooms in a hotel can no longer be sold for that night.

At this point, many hotel groups realised that reservations needed to be moved away from front office, as more and more focus was being placed on maximising revenue and occupancy. In order for a hotel to encourage people to choose their hotel, a sales and marketing department is imperative. This team is tasked with promoting the hotel's brand and core

values, thus growing occupancy and revenue. With this in mind and with the advent of revenue management as a specific function, it was felt that reservations and revenue would be better placed in sales and marketing. This is where they were moved to in many hotels and hotel groups. Interestingly, a recent trend has seen reservation teams once again being organisationally relocated to front office. Although, in many hotels, they are now a department in their own right, reporting directly to the general manager and/or owner.

Before the arrival of computers in hotels, the reservation, check-in and check-out processes were handled manually. Indeed, all operational functions were carried out on a manual basis. This was both time-consuming and cumbersome, and made it extremely difficult to maximise occupancy and rates for the hotel. The main methods of recording and tracking occupancy on any given day was either by using a bookings diary or a density or conventional chart. These all had limitations, however, and none of them enabled hotels to maximise their occupancy. The introduction of computers to hotels and especially to the reservation department was welcomed, as it provided a far more sophisticated way of achieving full occupancy and maximum revenue.

As the majority of hotels now use a computer system, the reservation process described in the following pages is based on everything being input directly into a hotel's property management system (PMS). A point worth noting is that both the reservation department and front office need to be able to take a reservation request manually should the PMS be offline.

The actual input procedure for the PMS will not be covered here, however. Given that there are many different PMS software packages on the market – and thus no 'one-size-fits-all' process – specific training is given at property level. Please always follow your hotel's own PMS procedures when taking a reservation. Additionally, there will be its standard operating procedures (SOPs), which should also be used as a reference. Finally, do not forget your manager and the rest of the team, who will always be able to guide you and answer any questions you may have.

REMEMBER – Team work is an integral part of the successful running of a hotel. Communication, collaboration, sharing, constantly learning and working as part of a team will lead to happy and satisfied guests and an enviable reputation for the hotel.

WAYS IN WHICH A RESERVATION MAY BE MADE/RECEIVED

- ◇ There are three main ways in which a reservation request or booking may be received:
 - Verbal – via telephone or in person
 - Written – e-mail
 - Online – hotel website, online travel agency (OTA), social media, mobile apps, central reservation office (CRO), global distribution system (GDS)
- ◇ A reservation that is verbal or written may be either a straightforward enquiry or an actual booking.
- ◇ Whichever it is, they should both be handled in the same way, ensuring that all the relevant information is obtained.



MODULE 5

Front Office Check-in Procedures



Front Office Check-in Procedures

INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality industry, the welcome extended to all guests is an essential part of your job as a hotel receptionist. You should make your guests feel at home, whether they are at the hotel to stay, dine, attend a conference/meeting or just have a look around.



DEFINITION

The verb 'to welcome' is defined as:

"To greet someone or accept something with pleasure or satisfaction."

yourdictionary.com

"To meet and speak to someone in a friendly way when they arrive."

dictionary.cambridge.org

INITIAL WELCOME

- ◇ When a person enters the hotel, you will generally not know the reason they are there.



- ◇ You should never assume they are going to be checking in, checking out, attending a meeting/ conference or just coming in for a meal or a drink.
- ◇ In many instances, the doorman will have greeted the guests as they approach the front entrance, and have called over the bellman to assist with any luggage they may have.



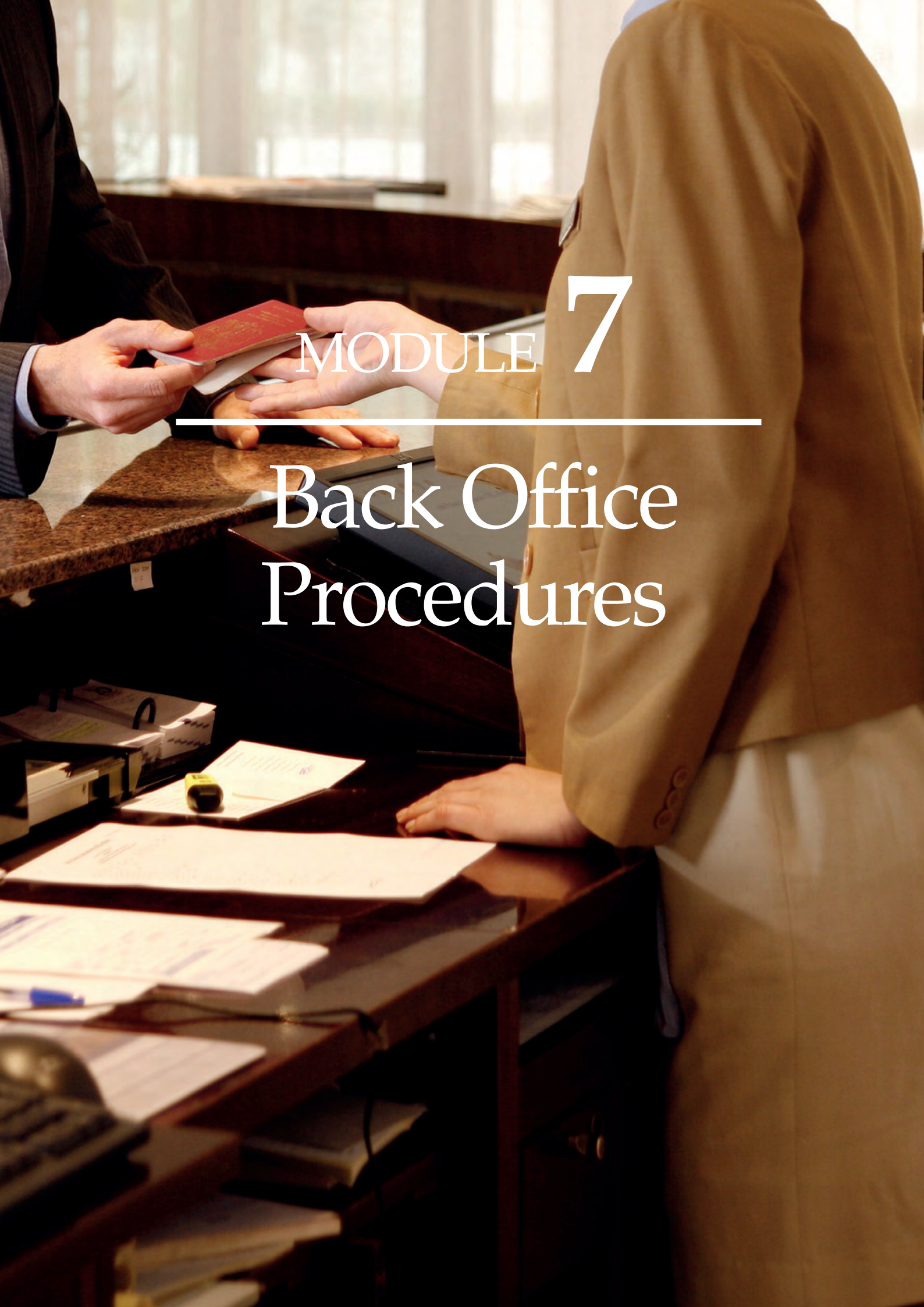
- ◇ The bellman, who will have loaded their luggage onto his trolley, will escort the guests to the desk.
- ◇ The bellman should have ascertained their name and asked if they are checking in to the hotel.

- ◇ He will pass on this information to you so that you can greet and assist the guests accordingly.
- ◇ Nowadays, many guests use luggage with wheels as it is easy to use and move around, thus not needing assistance from a bellman.
- ◇ They may not need escorting to the desk and indeed that may not be something that is part of hotel procedures.
- ◇ Even if the guests do have luggage, do not assume they are staying – they may be running a conference at the hotel. In which case, the luggage they have no doubt contains their conference material.
- ◇ As soon as you see someone approach the desk, you must be ready to welcome them and assist in whatever way you can.
- ◇ Your body language must be positive and you should have a friendly, welcoming smile on your face.



- ◇ Greet your guests with professionalism and graciousness.
- ◇ Speak clearly and at a moderate speed so there are no misunderstandings.
- ◇ Ask how you can be of assistance so that you can then direct the guest to where they need to go in the hotel.

REMEMBER – The guest may not be checking in, but involved in a conference at the hotel.



MODULE 7

Back Office
Procedures

Back Office Procedures

INTRODUCTION

As a hotel receptionist, you will spend most of your working day at the reception desk, with the majority of your duties checking guests in or out. Additionally, there will be a myriad of queries from both guests and colleagues as well as some clerical tasks. These you will be required to carry out in an efficient manner and in accordance with established procedures.

In this workbook, reception has been described as one of the links in the chain made up of all the departments in the hotel, with each one dependent on the other. However, in some hotels, reception is seen as being at the heart of everything, with all other departments coming to it for help.

Part of your job will be handling what may be classed as 'back office' or 'administrative' tasks. These may be carried out in the back office area of reception, which is usually an office area behind the scenes. However, if your hotel does not have a dedicated back office area, then these tasks would be carried out at the reception desk.



What these actual tasks are will depend entirely on your hotel and the organisational structure of the front office team and any specific duties assigned to them. For example, a front desk manager may be tasked with doing the weekly work schedules for the team. Therefore, you need to ensure that you are fully aware of how this area works in your hotel, what the specific duties are and who is responsible for what.



Nowadays, technology plays a big part in the business and operation of a hotel. There will be many documents and standard operating procedures (SOPs) in printed form kept by all the various departments. Human Resources will have a complete set of the SOPs. The majority of this information will also be held electronically on the hotel's internal network. As a receptionist, you will have access to a large amount of information. This will be of help in carrying out your various duties in a confidential and professional manner:

REMEMBER – The information you have access to is confidential and you must ensure that no company or customer information is inappropriately divulged to unauthorised parties.

TYPES OF INFORMATION FOUND IN BACK OFFICE

The amount and types of information handled by hotel reception will be determined by the size of the hotel and the organisation of the reception department. Some of this information is for you to know, practise and follow, such as company policies and procedures, while some of it is for reference purposes only. Being able to carry out administrative tasks in a successful and efficient way enhances the running of the hotel, especially reception, thus providing a positive experience for the guests.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

It is in this area that a copy of the front office's standard operating procedures (SOPs) will be held. These will be available for reference purposes and each department will keep a copy of their own specific departmental SOPs.

