

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Front Office

# Learning Objective

- ✓ The importance of effective front office operations
- ✓ The organisation structure of front office operations
- ✓ The role and responsibilities of front-of-house departments and staff
- ✓ An overview of the guest cycle – pre-arrival, arrival, occupancy and departure
- ✓ How front-of-house departments liaise and communicate with other departments in the hotel

# Front Office- Scope and Activities

## Front Office



**First  
impression  
is the last  
impression**

- ☐ Guide decisions of Guest for choosing their Hotel
- ☐ Share information about Room rates and availability
- ☐ Provide the information about the services of the Hotel
- ☐ Room Allocation and Room key provision

# Front Office- Scope and Activities

## Front Office



- ☐ Provide porter assistance for luggage
- ☐ Collection / leaving messages, leave & pick keys, problem solving
- ☐ Offer additional facilities
- ☐ Help for onward transport
- ☐ Maintenance of guest reservation file

**First  
impression  
is the last  
impression**

# Various Departments / Function in a Large Hotel

- **Switchboard** – Taking and Routing Calls
- **Reservations** – Bookings
- **Reception** – Welcome and registering of guests
- **Concierge** – Answering visitor's questions, handling car hire, entertainment requirements

# Various Departments / Function in a Large Hotel

- **Billing Office** – Preparation of guest accounts and bills
- **Cashier** – Receiving guest payments and processing other transactions
- **Uniform Staff** – Luggage porters, lift attendants, garage attendants etc.

# Importance of Front Office

- It is the **first point of contact** for the guest / prospective guest
- Serves as assistance to people to make a **choice about the hotel**
- **Halo Effect** - Influences everything else that the guest think about the hotel
- **Service Hub for the Hotel** – Area where most of the guests contact and transactions take place

# Importance of Front Office

- Critical in providing enjoyable relaxing, satisfying **experience for guests**
- Helps hotel to **stand out from competition**
- Helps to secure **positive report / recommendations** from the guest
- Carries special responsibility of dealing with guests and **resolving their problems**



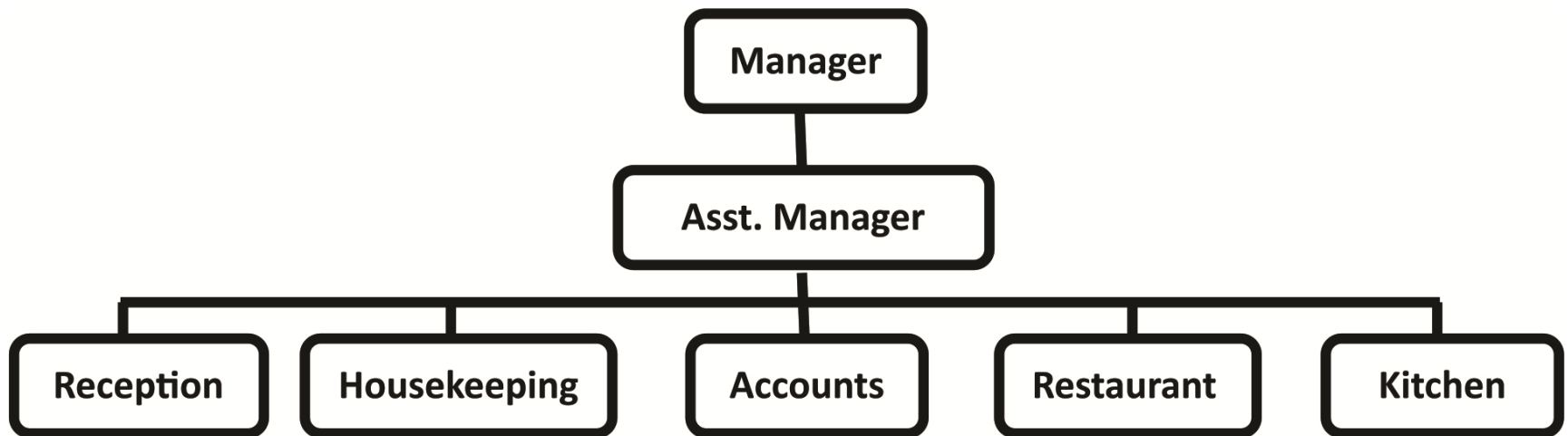
# Importance of Front Office

- **Communications hub** for the hotel – managing information exchange with / between all other departments / functions
- **Administrative hub** for the hotel

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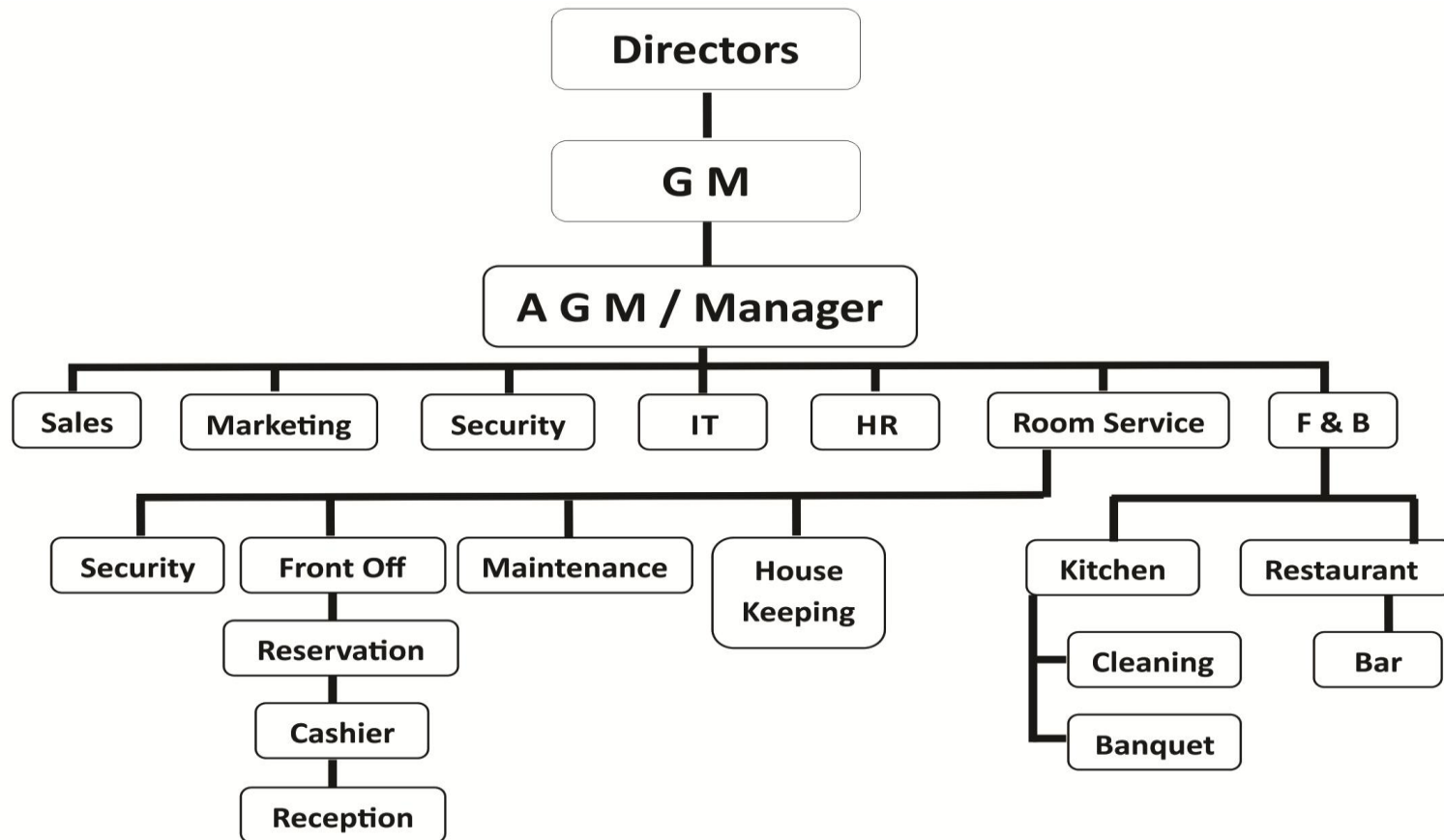
## Organisation Structure – Small hotel

A typical structure for a small hotel offering both accommodation and catering is provided as under



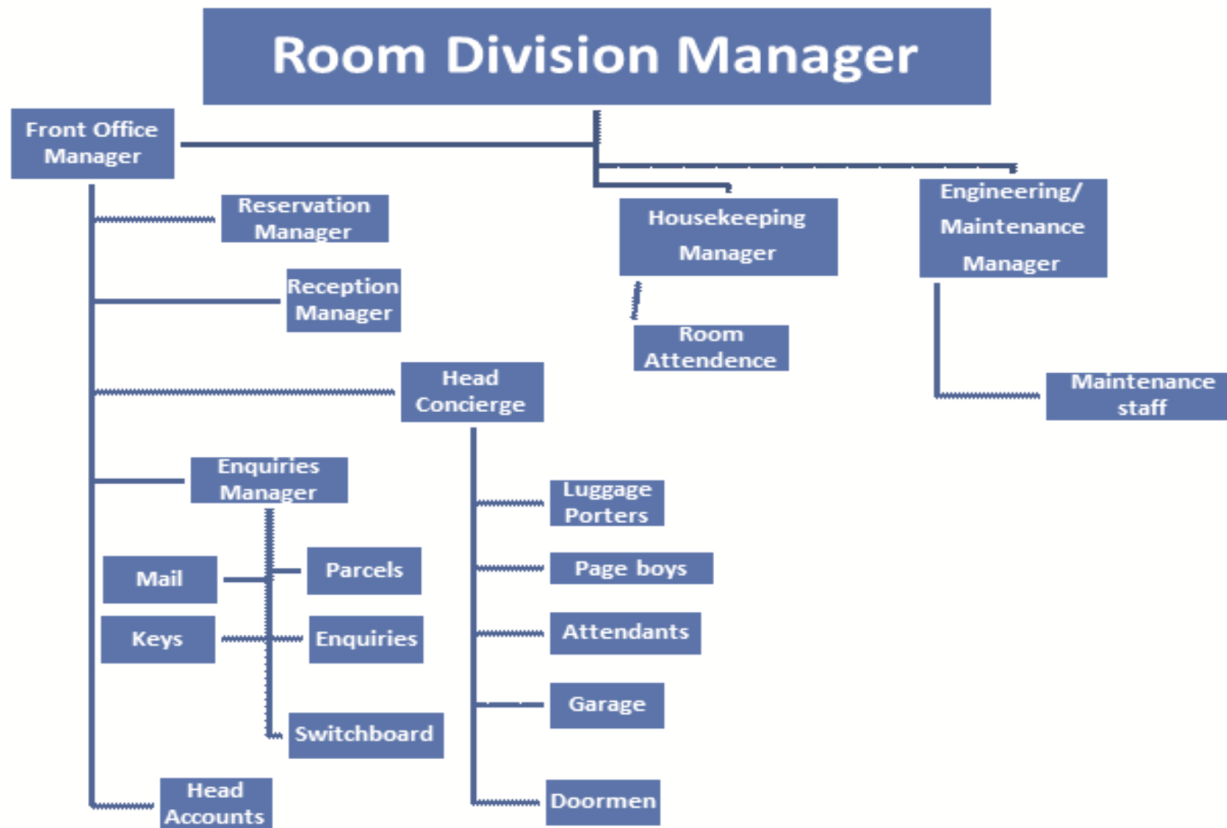
## Organisation Structure – Large Hotel

Compared to a small hotel, a large hotel there will be a general management team responsible for planning and coordinating the business operations. Number of duty managers are deployed to cover a 24 hour roster



## The Rooms Division

The organisation chart for the rooms division in a large hotel is provided as under



# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Reservations

- Taking enquiries from prospective guests
- Obtain necessary information required to make booking
- Record information in the manual or computerised system

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Reservations

- Monitor levels of reservation
- Control of section, organise staff duty rosters
- Handling advanced reservations

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Reception (Front desk)

- Taking enquiries and reservation requests from walk-ins
- Preparing for arrival of guests
- Greeting guests on arrival
- Checking guests in
- Selling the facilities and services of the hotel

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Reception (Front desk)

- Responding to guests problems and queries and referring to other departments
- Providing information about guests to other functions / departments
- Maintaining guest records



# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Guest Accounting and Billing

- Posting of charges and payments of each guests bill
- Recording of charges and payments in relevant accounting records
- Balancing of the records
- Preparation of relevant accounting records
- Preparation of management reports

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Cashiering and Night Audit

- Handling payments, monies and valuables for the ban
- Opening and preparation of the guest accounts
- Accepting and processing payments from the guests
- Handling foreign currency exchanges for guests

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Cashiering and Night Audit

- Accepting and processing takings from other departments
- Providing the cash requirements of other departments
- Administering the safe custody system of guest deposits, valuables

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Switchboard

- Directing incoming calls to appropriate guest rooms
- Directing incoming calls to appropriate departments in the hotel
- Dealing with answer machine messages

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Switchboard

- Some of the hotels switchboard operators may take messages on behalf of guests, make personal wake up calls and also handle incoming and outgoing mail

More sophisticated networks now allow guests to dial out direct from their rooms or receive direct calls.

Where such systems are in place, the role of switchboard operator is much less

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Concierge and uniformed staff

- Responsible for general guest or visit enquiries and directions
- Handing out and accepting guest keys
- Handling and outgoing mail for guests
- Organising taxis or valet parking

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Concierge and uniformed staff

- Handle car hire, flight confirmations, tour bookings and entertainment tickets for guests
- Baggage handling and storage
- Supervising a range of uniformed staff can be additional responsibility the Head of Concierge desk

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## (..contd) Concierge and uniformed staff - What does uniformed staff include

1. Doorpersons – open doors, bring luggage from guests transport to the hotel and call taxis on requests
2. Porters, Bell Staff and/or pages – Carry luggage to and from guests rooms, keep the lobby area clean and tidy and run errands and relay messages
3. Lift attendants, parking attendants and cloakroom attendants



# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Guest Relations Officers (GRO)

- Create personal relationships with guests – human contact
- Make guests feel welcome and provide personalised service by greeting guests
- Attending social gatherings held by the hotel

# Role and Responsibilities of Front office Staff

## Guest Relations Officers (GRO)

- Talking to those who are travelling alone
- Support sales staff or providing guests with information about hotels services
- Providing non-routine guests services when required

# Job description for front office roles

Job descriptions are important to recruitment of staff, both to prepare advertisements, measure skills, characteristics and experience of candidates. A good job description should contain the following-

- Job title, department and place of work
- Short paragraph describing the major function of the job
- Person / position TO whom the job holder is responsible

# Job description for front office roles

- Person / position FOR whom the job holder is responsible
- List of main duties, tasks and responsibilities entailed by the job
- Other departments or roles with which the job holder must regularly liaise, communicate or co-operate

# Working in shifts

Small hotels may work only in one or two shifts, however, large hotels often need to be available for 24 hours to meet guests needs. Some of the important aspects of working in shifts in a hotel is as follows-

- Reservations desk will tend to be concentrated within business hours
- Back office will operate normal or extended office hours
- Billing and cashiering activity in the early morning, middle of the day and in evening
- Reception night audit, porter and switchboards may need to be covered overnight

# Working in shifts

How working in shifts is managed at various hotels

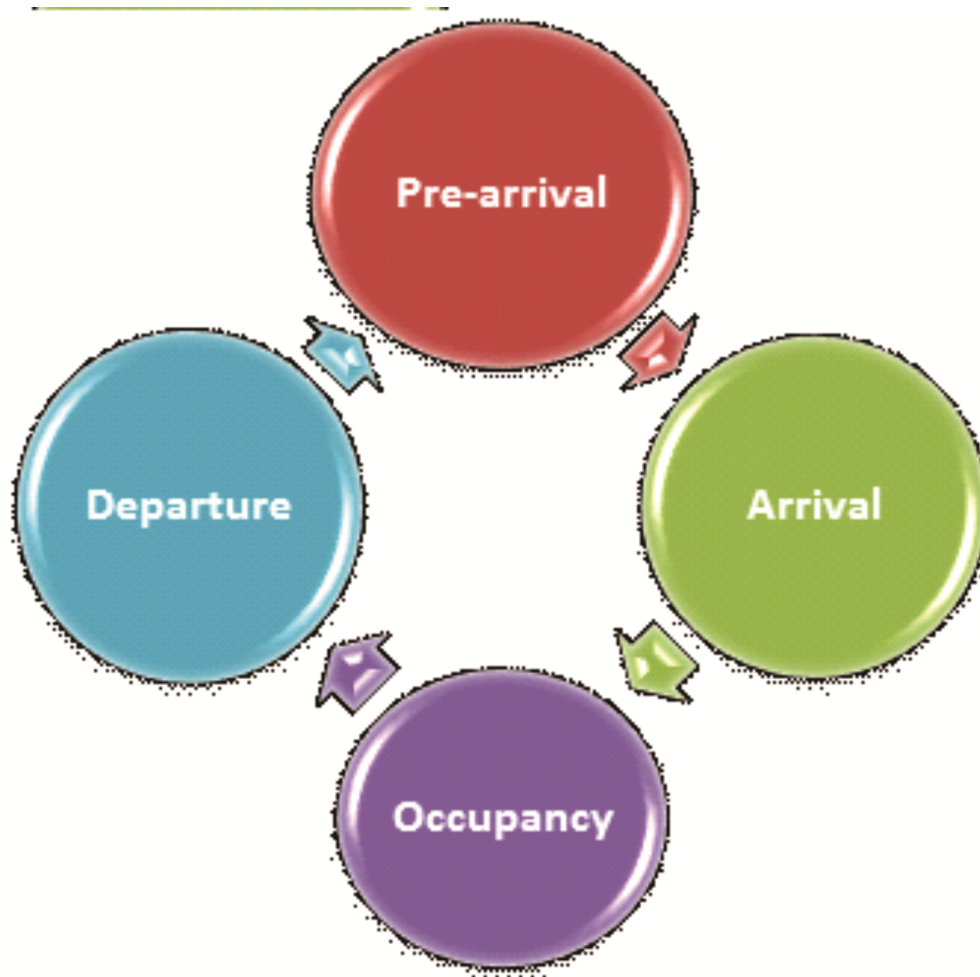
- Work organisation the basis of shift
- Day staff works an early or late shift
- Separate night staff (generally smaller) is employed to cover night shift
- 15-30 minutes of hand-over between shifts

## **Unique challenge for the Front office Manager -**

Drawing up and maintaining shift rosters, ensuring all shifts are adequately covered and also being flexible to the needs of staff members

## The Guest cycle

The guest cycle consists of stages which include Pre-arrival, Arrival, Occupancy and Departure as depicted in the following chart



## (..contd) The Guest cycle

While Hotel segregates the activities into various departments, the point of view of guest is completely different. Some of the aspects to consider are provided below –

- Guest experience the hotel less as a vertical structure than as a horizontal process
- For the guest the experience is chronological, unfolding as a series of events, activities and services received over a time

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## (..contd) The Guest cycle

- Guest should not feel that he / she is having to cross over from one separate department to another at each stage
- In order to create seamless service, it is useful to evaluate the role of front office in terms of guest cycle and not in terms of departmental roles and responsibilities

# Liaising with other departments

Number of departments in a large hotel have individual activities which may include

- Concerned on raising revenue
- earning money for the hotel
- Other activities

# Liaising with other departments

Front office will have to liaise with various other departments in the hotel. The following is list of key departments-

1. Food and Beverage
2. Maintenance
3. Accounts
4. Security
5. Housekeeping
6. Sales and Marketing
7. Human Resources

# Liaising of Front office with Food and Beverage Department

Main responsibilities of F&B are purchasing, preparation and provision of food, drink and catering services to guests.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- F&B needs occupancy forecast to estimate provisions requirements
- F&B needs confirmed arrival / departure information to control guest credit

# Liaising of Front office with Food and Beverage Department

- Front office needs information on food / drinks charges to add to guest bills
- Front office may take or refer restaurant bookings
- F&B takings will be 'paid in' to the cashier for accounting and banking

# Liaising of Front office with Maintenance Department

Main responsibilities of Maintenance function are maintenance and operation of all machinery and equipment.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- Maintenance needs information about repair / replacement requirements

# Liaising of Front office with Maintenance Department

- Front office needs confirmation that guest repair requests have been seen to
- Front office needs up to date information on out of order rooms to update room availability records

# Liaising of Front office with Accounts Department

Main responsibilities of Accounts function are monitoring, recording, checking and reporting of all financial activities of the hotel.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- Accounts needs front office takings paid in, relevant records



# Liaising of Front office with Accounts Department

- Accounts needs guest billing information for credit control, entry in main hotel accounts, revenue reporting etc
- Front office needs clear policies, procedures and authorisations for handling and recording of transactions and lists of credit approved guests

# Liaising of Front office with Security

## Department

Main responsibilities of Security function are ensuring safety and security guests, visitors and employees, patrolling premises, monitoring surveillance equipments, handling security incidents, liaising with police as necessary.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- Security needs to be alerted to suspicious persons or activities, reports of security

# Liaising of Front office with Security Department

- Front needs warnings and incident reports
- Security helps with special needs guests
- May administer first aid
- deals with problems with guests safes, guests locked out of rooms and opening of inter-connecting doors
- Deals with lost property

# Liaising of Front office with Housekeeping Department

Main responsibilities of Housekeeping function include management of guest rooms and cleanliness of all public areas of the hotel, cleaning, making-up and supplying of rooms preparing housekeeping / room status reports.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- Housekeeping needs arrival / departure information to plan its staff rosters and room cleaning schedules

# Liaising of Front office with Housekeeping Department

- Housekeeping needs information about special requests, complaints or urgent room preparation requirements
- Front office needs up to date information on rooms to update room status / availability records, the housekeeper's report

# Liaising of Front office with Sales and Marketing Department

Main responsibilities of Sales and Marketing function include generating new business and increased sales for the hotel, sales of rooms, facilities and services, advertising, promotions, PR and publicity etc.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- Sales needs information on room availability to know what rooms to sell

# Liaising of Front office with Sales and Marketing Department

- sales need information on guest types / origins to develop marketing strategy and target key guest segments
- Sales needs Front office in selling rooms facilities and services
- Front office needs information on special promotions, campaigns etc

# Liaising of Front office with Human resources Department

Main responsibilities Human resources /function include recruitment and selection of staff, staff induction and training, performance appraisal, rewards and career planning, employee relations, compliance with employment law.

The key areas for liaising with front office are as follows-

- HR needs information on Front office job requirements



# Liaising of Front office with Human resources Department

- Front office staff performance and training needs
- Front office staff problems and concerns
- Front office staff needs information on all HR policies and rules
- Training and career opportunities etc.

# Flow of information within a hotel – Front office to other departments

- List of guests currently in residence
- List of anticipated arrivals
- list of amendments
- list of anticipated departures
- list of amendments to the departures list
- list of guests who have left the hotel

# Flow of information within Front Office Sections

- Concierge / enquiries will need arrivals, departures and current guest lists
- Switchboards needs the current guest list and checked-out guest list
- Reception will need all the information collected by the reservation section
- Reservations will need information on returning guests, compiled by reception
- Cashier will needs guests reservation and check-in information

# Summary

- Front office has a very crucial role to play in the hotel management
- It is a centre of all communication within and outside world
- It is the first point of interaction for the guest
- Detailed organisation chart with all branches and sub branches needs to be maintained in a visible place in the organisation to provide a transparent view to the guest

# Summary

- Clear demarcation of responsibilities also helps the staff to perform their responsibilities smoothly and effectively

Front office takes care of the guest, rightly starting from the time of the first interaction with the reception.