

Reading: Hotel Staff Positions and Responsibilities

Staff positions in a hotel can vary greatly depending on the type of hotel. In general the staff can be placed into three different categories: administration, guest services and support staff. Administration positions range from managers to secretaries. Guest services are the staff that care for the guests directly e.g. maids, waiter/waitress and cooks. Finally, the support staff look after the hotel itself e.g. plumbers, gardeners, and electricians.

Managers have probably the biggest range of duties than that of any other member of staff you will meet. Their roles and responsibilities will depend on the size and type of hotel. Managing Directors tend to deal with the finance and staffing issues surrounding the hotel, while general managers have a more flexible list of duties, which could include working in any area of the hotel. General Managers tend to have job titles which will let you know which area of the hotel is their responsibility. For example, an Executive Housekeeper will be responsible for the smooth running of the guest rooms. Front Office Managers are responsible for guest reservations while the Restaurant Manager would be in charge of the food and drink provided by the hotel. Sometimes in larger hotels a Convention Manager would be employed to coordinate all activities relating to meetings, these will include meeting with the guests to ensure that the required schedule is correctly planned.

In many hotels managers will have a variety of assistants, whose job descriptions will usually depend on the hotel's size and its capacity. Usually it is the role of the Assistant Manager to employ and arrange the training of new staff, supervise staff and organise the running of their department, e.g. the ordering of supplies. In smaller hotels the Assistant Managers could find themselves filling the position of absent workers. For example, they might have to fill in for the valet and spend time running the valet parking while the usual valet is away. Or perhaps they might have to cover for a maid and prepare bedrooms for guests. Both managers and assistant managers could have a personal assistant and/or secretary. Their job will be to type the entire manager's correspondence and operate an organised filing system for any reports and data. This could even include confidential material about the running of the hotel or personal details about the staff.

A very popular form of employment in hotels is in the guest services departments. Unlike the managerial side of the hotel, the guest service workers do not necessarily require a degree or diploma before they start. Therefore guest services positions are often seen as roles ideal for apprentices. Cashiers, doorman and receptionists are just a few of these jobs.

The biggest employers of a hotel are the housekeeping department and the food service department. A worker could be employed by the hotel as an apprentice in the kitchen but after a few years with hard work and perseverance could find themselves as a Chef de Partie, running a section of the kitchen, or even a Head Chef in charge of the complete service of food and drink to the guests.

Any building that is used by the public has to be fit for the purpose, and this includes hotels which have Health and Safety Regulations that they need to adhere to. These regulations tend to come in a form of standards which should be found displayed in the hotel in full view of the public. To keep these standards at a good level then the hotel will need to employ a large variety of support staff; electricians, builders, carpet fitters and plumbers might be amongst the staff. Some smaller hotels, who cannot afford to keep these workers employed all the time, will contract out certain jobs, employing staff from outside of the hotel to complete essential maintenance work.

The quality and quantity of staff employed by each hotel will not only depend on the size and capacity of the hotel but also the prices charged. You would expect first class service if you were paying a high price and would expect all of your needs to be catered for when and where you required. Some hotels will have 24 hour room service and employ concierges, who will pamper to their guests every request. Other hotels will stop breakfast service at 9am and not serve lunch until 12pm. It all depends on how much a guest is willing to pay and/or what the hotel can feasibly provide.

Discussion Questions

What factors need to be taken into account when choosing staff for a hotel?

Discuss reasons why someone might want to be employed as an apprentice in a hotel's restaurant. Do you think it's a good opportunity?

Compare the benefits of having flexible staff (able to work in different departments of the hotel). Why is this important?