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ABSTRACT

This manual is concerned with the tasks and training needs of front office personnel in hotels. After discussion of selection and qualifications of such personnel, the perfect receptionist is described in terms of personality, appearance, and deportment. Then follows a detailed listing of tasks--basic tasks, such as reception, bookkeeping, cash, enquiries, and communications; and certain supplementary tasks such as the use of foreign languages. Available courses for those wishing to make a career in hotel reception are described; types of job training are suggested as well as useful training aids. (DM)

Training for tomorrow's skills

Number 5

AC008030

Front Office and Reception

An approach to Front Office and Reception training

Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board

ED039473

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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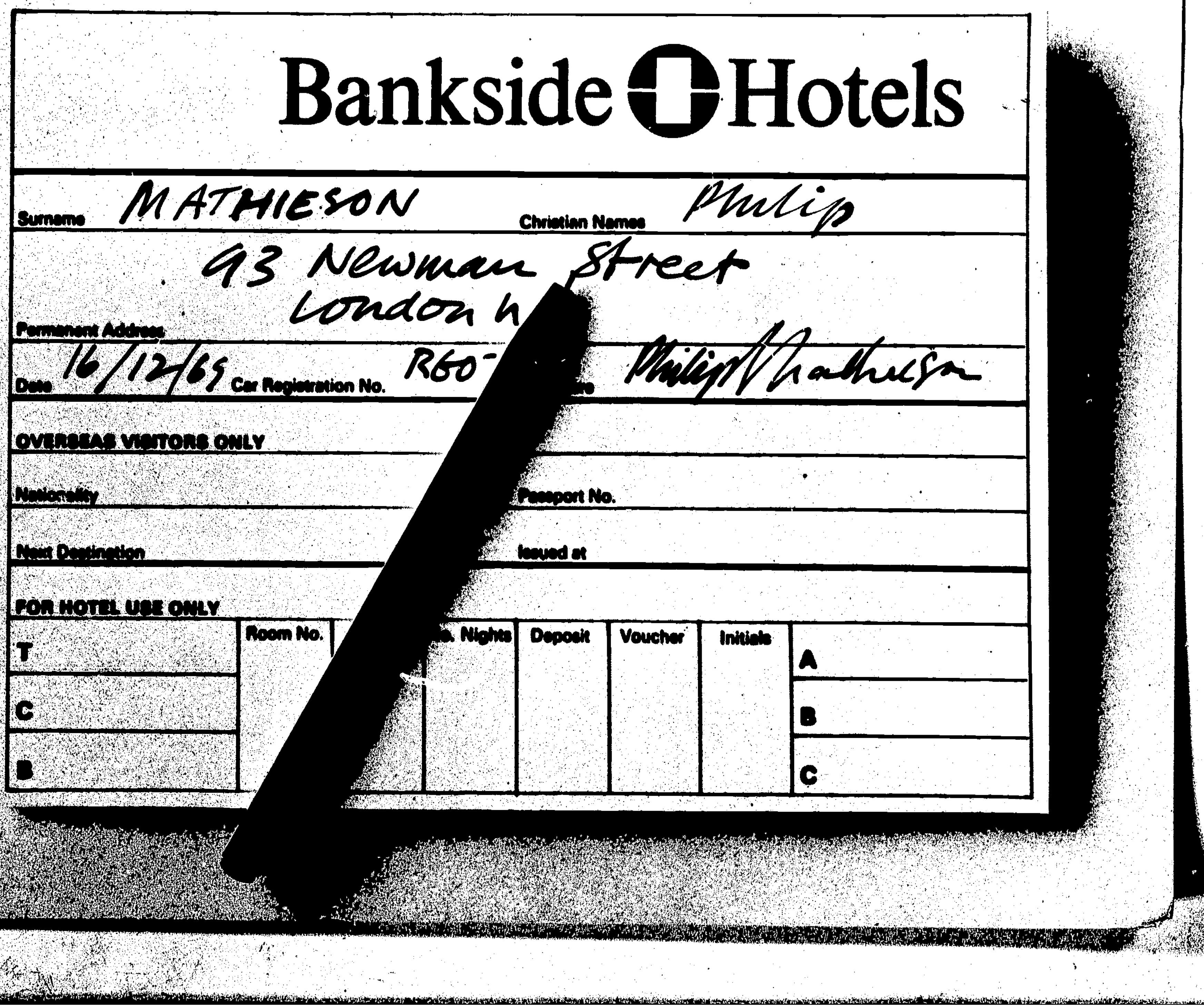

Bankside Hotels

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London

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Introduction

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The building of new hotels and the modernisation of old ones has proceeded at an unprecedented rate during the last few years and the pace shows no sign of slackening. Hotel Keeping is big business and success depends on careful market research, planning and control. Nevertheless, it must never be forgotten that the hotel and catering industry is a service industry and however well designed, comfortable and mechanically efficient the accommodation may be, most guests will have a sense of dissatisfaction if they are not made to feel welcome and if their personal needs, which may seem trifling in themselves, are not adequately catered for.

Changes in the structure of society have brought with them changes in attitudes. It is only in a limited number of establishments that the customer is able or willing to pay for the attentions of carriage attendants (linkmen), personal valets or scurrying pages. In motor hotels, perhaps the pattern of much of the future hotel accommodation, the visitor has little contact with the staff. Rooms are cleaned, linen is changed, services are provided anonymously and without fuss; many of the visitor's needs are provided by vending machines or answering services but there remains a need for human contact and the receptionist may be the personification of the hotel, sympathetic, understanding and anxious to please.

In the largest and most modern hotels much of the work of making reservations, allocating rooms and book-keeping has been mechanised and incorporated into a system but this has not meant the end of the receptionist's role as a human contact. On the contrary, the receptionist is released from routine chores to devote more time and attention to his or her true role – receiving guests.

At the same time it should never be forgotten that huge, modern multi-storey hotels and well laid-out motor hotels are not typical of the British scene. The vast majority of hotels are small and most of the accommodation available is in establishments of fewer than forty bedrooms. In these, the receptionist may be much more than a reservation clerk and a book-keeper. He or she is an important part of the management with considerable discretion. It is a job which requires tact, discrimination, and understanding of human nature and the ability to make instant decisions or adjustments.

In hotels both large and small the receptionist's job is an important and rewarding one. It is not a job which can be performed by instinct. Learning by exposure and by profiting from mistakes may be a painful process for both the employee and the customer.

With these considerations in mind, the HCITB, in conjunction with Working Parties representing the British Hotels and Restaurants Association, Caterers Association and Catering Teachers' Association, has examined the training needs for the Front Office, and this booklet sets out the manner in which the training need has been approached. It is not a final dictum on the subject, it is an approach, and the comments and constructive suggestions of those in the industry – proprietors, managers and receptionists themselves – will be welcomed.

John Lanning

John Lanning
Chief Training Development Officer.

reception
MESSAGES

Definition

In the Hotel and Catering Industry terms are often difficult to define since systems and procedures, and even job titles, vary greatly from one establishment to another. The Hotel and Catering Institute Training Committee defined Front Office personnel as:

> "those staff within any residential unit who are concerned in the operation of the Front Office, including reception, book-keeping, enquiry clerk, cash and general office duties"

Even this definition might be disputed in some organisations where Front Office duties are more limited in scope and the Bill Office and General Office are quite separate.

In some areas of the Board's work it has been possible to make a clear distinction between training for a job and training for a career. In reception this distinction is not easily made since most of those employed are in the career stream and have multifarious duties. However, there will be some (e.g. telephone operators, restaurant cashiers) whose training needs may be confined to the particular aspect of the total job with which they are concerned.

The HCITB embraces both large and small establishments and it has been necessary to take into account all the tasks which those with the designation "receptionist" might have to perform. It does not follow that all the tasks identified are ever performed by any one receptionist.

The term "receptionist" is taken to include hotel book-keepers and book-keeper-receptionists. An examination of advertisements of situations vacant indicates that most employers use the word "receptionist" in a general sense and expect that those applying will have, or seek, experience in many activities apart from those solely concerned with receiving guests. To this extent the job of hotel receptionist can clearly be distinguished from receptionist in other fields (e.g. dental receptionists) though there might be some aspects of the job which they have in common.

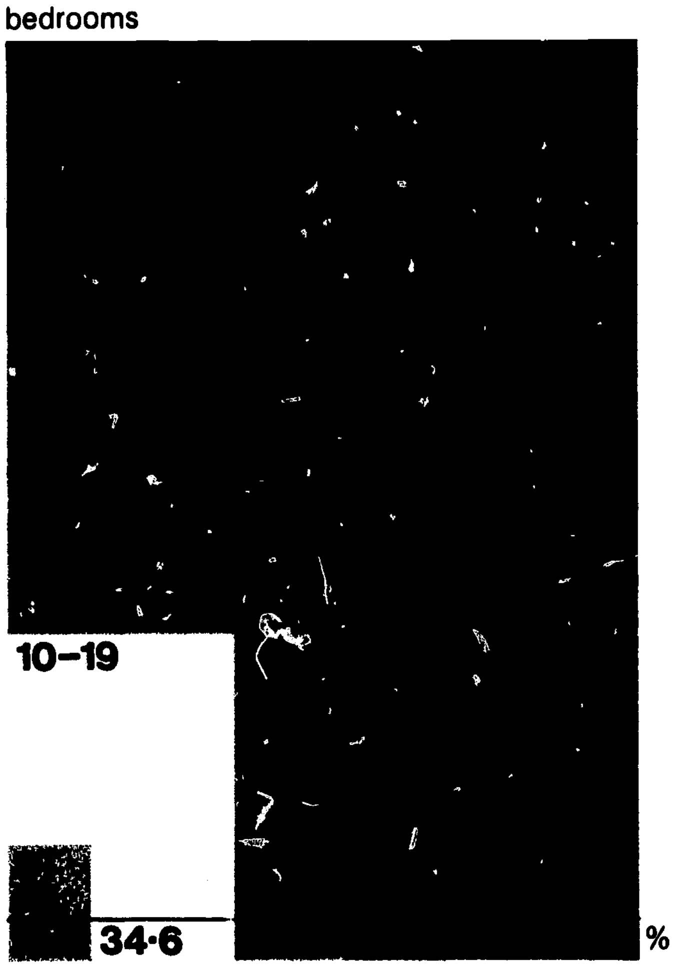
The training needs of the Uniformed Staff have been considered separately but in some hotels it will be found that many of the tasks listed as appertaining to the Front Office (especially in the field of Enquiries and Communications) are performed by the Uniformed Staff while in others some tasks which would normally be regarded as belonging to that body are performed by Front Office personnel. The increasing versatility of staff which has been widely recommended as a means of improving working conditions as well as increasing productivity, makes it necessary that training should not be too narrowly confined.

The Size of the Problem

There is a chronic lack of statistical information regarding the number and size of residential hotels in the United Kingdom. The Consumer Council has estimated that there are 16,000 British hotels. The 6,000 whose names appear in one or other of the 17 Guides published, account for a very large part of the total turnover. In many of the smaller establishments the duties which would elsewhere be performed by receptionists are carried out by the Manager or Proprietor or by his wife.

An analysis of hotels listed in Guide Books indicates that the proportions by size are approximately as follows:

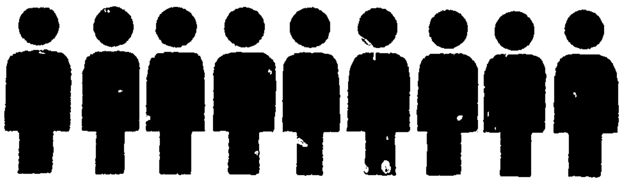
Fewer than 10 bedrooms	11.6%
10–19 bedrooms	34.6%
20–39 bedrooms	27.6%
40–59 bedrooms	11.5%
60–99 bedrooms	8.7%
100–299 bedrooms	5.3%
300 or more bedrooms	0.7%



It is evident from this breakdown that nearly three quarters of the hotels listed have fewer than 40 bedrooms, and the proportion would be even greater if the establishments not listed, including residential guest houses, had been included.

Where do they come from?

Although the present arrangements exclude establishments with a payroll of less than £4,000 per annum from the obligation to pay levy to the HCITB, it seems likely that most establishments with 10 bedrooms or more would have an annual payroll exceeding this figure



Numbers Employed

There is no reliable information as to the number of Front Office personnel employed in the industry. The 1961 census indicated that there were 31,000 people described as "clerical and office workers" in the hotel and catering industry as a whole. That number has doubtless increased considerably during the last 9 years. Sample surveys indicate that hotels employ at least one receptionist or similar employee per 20 bedrooms. On this basis it seems likely that the 6,000 establishments referred to above, which account for the major part of the total turnover employ about 15,000 Front Office personnel. Nearly half of these work alone or in groups of 2 or 3. Where a Front Office is operating for between 12 and 16 hours per day, 7 days per week, it is evident that nearly all of those employed in the small and medium-sized establishments are on their own at times and must often deal with enquiries and emergencies unaided.

Apart from a few large hotels, mainly in London, a substantial proportion of the personnel employed in the Front Office are female. Some of the reasons for this are discussed later under the heading "The Perfect Receptionist" (Section 5).

Staff Turnover

For a number of reasons the working life of receptionists in hotels is not very long on average. Few, apart from those making a lifetime career in the job, remain more than 4 or 5 years. If the average time spent in the job, in one establishment or another, were 5 years it would seem that some 3,000 employees in this category joined the industry every year. About 10% of this number would have been successful in the Book-Keeper-receptionist examination in the past. The remainder would, in most cases, have had no formal training.

Well organised training will not only add to productivity; it will also impart more interest and satisfaction to the job and might result in a reduction of the high rate of turnover of employees.

There are three main sources from which receptionists can be recruited to the industry:

1. School leavers and those who have just completed a course of further education, leading to Book-keeper/Receptionist qualifications.
2. Those who have worked elsewhere since finishing full-time education, e.g. secretaries and other types of receptionists.
3. Those who have previously worked in the hotel and catering industry, but left it, perhaps for marriage, and are now returning.

The first of these categories is probably the largest source of supply. For the school leaver the job of a hotel receptionist may seem glamorous and probably enjoys a fairly high social status. Apart from the possible need to live away from home and the fact that the job may entail working at inconvenient hours and on Sundays and Bank Holidays, the choice of hotel reception as a career is unlikely to receive much opposition from parents.

Those interested in this type of work may come from the higher streams of Secondary Modern Schools, from Grammar and Independent Schools and, nowadays from Comprehensive Schools.

'O'A

Academic Qualifications

For its examinations for Book-Keeper-receptionists the Hotel and Catering Institute has always required that candidates should have three 'O' Levels and this has naturally limited the selection of entrants for courses leading to the Certificate.

While it is recognised that the possession of three or more 'O' Levels is evidence of ability to learn and, in some cases, evidence of acquaintance with relevant subjects (e.g. English, Mathematics, Foreign languages) it is not universally agreed that this qualification should be insisted upon. To demand three (or any other number of) 'O' Levels before candidates can be admitted to a receptionist course, may result in the exclusion of many who are capable of being trained and could perform the job effectively. The section of the school leaving population containing those without 'A' Levels, but with three, four or five 'O' Levels is in great demand for courses of various kinds and for direct entry into a number of occupations.

Nevertheless, it is clearly necessary, if only in the interests of other trainees, that there should be some minimum qualification. The Armed Services and the Civil Service Commission have developed aptitude tests for those without the academic qualifications which would normally be required in certain grades and it may be that tests of this nature, which might include some measure of the personal attributes of the candidate, could be developed. For this it would first be desirable to identify receptionists who are now doing the job to the satisfaction of their employers and analyse the qualities they possess in order to arrive at the common essential factors.

As far as individual employers are concerned, personnel will normally be engaged as a result of interviews which may be scientifically conducted or may be much more subjective. Most employers would apply simple tests if they were in doubt as to a candidate's literacy and numeracy.

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Grading of Courses

A difficulty likely to arise if requirements of 'O' Levels are abandoned is that courses not requiring these qualifications might be regarded as lower in status and justifying less expert, or less well paid, staffing, especially in colleges. This is a matter beyond the control of the Training Board whose aim must always be to recommend the most effective training to enable those employed for a job to perform it efficiently. Nevertheless, the Board is aware that regardless of entry qualifications for examinations, recruiting must continue in order to fill vacancies. The danger is that if the academic requirements for courses are pitched too high there will be a tendency to recruit directly into the industry those without such qualifications, and to offer them no training at all apart from exposure in the work situation.

Previous Secretarial Experience

Those who have worked elsewhere may already possess some of the skills required. They may be able to type or use a switchboard. They may have a knowledge of double entry book-keeping or of wages and PAYE calculations. If their ability in such matters were of the standard required it might seem wasteful to spend time and money on teaching what they already knew but it might be found uneconomic to organise courses tailored to each individual's needs. Where the employer is able to insist, without limiting his choice unduly, on some qualification (e.g. ability to type at a certain speed) for all applicants it will be possible to take this into account in preparing courses for them, but where courses are arranged for a number of different employers there must inevitably be some trainees who do not need training in all parts of the syllabus. Front Office training is not alone in this and it is a matter of balancing the advantage of bespoke training against the reduced cost of more standardised instruction.

The job, despite its drawbacks, may appeal to those who have followed routine occupations with little scope for even minor decision making and it may be that some of those coming in after experience elsewhere will be more highly motivated than those who have had no such experience. In some cases the previous experience may have provided some insight into the exercise of social skills.

Marriage

One of the most common reasons for leaving the industry is marriage. Much of the work of a receptionist is concerned with the arrival and departure of guests and, in city hotels especially, these are usually concentrated into the early evening and the early morning respectively. To be on duty between 6 pm and 9 pm and between 7 am and 10 am may not be practicable for a married woman, especially one with a young family. Later it may be found possible to combine marriage with a job, perhaps part-time.

Re-Entrants

There are others who have worked in the industry, but found when they were young, that the hours at which they were required to work placed an intolerable burden on their social life. After working for a time elsewhere, perhaps in a less satisfying job, they may wish to return.

For such re-entrants as these the training needs will be more limited and apart from up-dating their knowledge of procedures and systems only a brief refresher training may be sufficient to enable them to achieve the standard of efficiency desired. As with those who had worked elsewhere before coming into hotels, their social skills may be better developed than those without such experience.

It may be that many of the failings somwhere discerned in older receptionists are attributable to the fact that they have spent a lifetime in hotels and have had insufficient acquaintance with the world outside.

The Perfect Receptionist

Most employers if asked what quality they seek in applicants for employment as receptionists would say "pleasant personality" or the equivalent. Certain other qualities, such as being able to read and write and to add figures, or work an adding machine, are also essential, but the one failing which would damn any applicant is a lack of the elusive quality—personality.

Personality itself is an amalgam of inherited and acquired traits. It is not unalterable though less easy to change voluntarily in older workers. Numerous attempts have been made to measure personality but most have foundered because it is found to be impossible for a number of people to reach agreement on the outward evidence of various characteristics. To one observer, what others find cheerful and friendly might seem flippant and insubordinate. To some, a person might appear dignified, while to others the same person's behaviour might seem distant and unengaging.

Extrovert or Introvert

There are two facets of personality on which some agreement has been reached among psychologists. These are extroversion and introversion. But even if these can be measured in relation to the norm it is by no means certain how they fit in with the job.

The typical book-keeper receptionist should be an extrovert, outgoing and sociable, when being a receptionist, and introvert, withdrawn and reserved, when dealing with book-keeping. In a job which can be harassing, excessive emotion might be inappropriate, but too high a degree of stability might result in a cold and unfriendly attitude.

Even assuming that tests of personality were reliable, therefore, one could not say unequivocally what score or profile would be desirable. The requirements of two different types of hotel might not be the same. The characteristics required in a receptionist for a luxury hotel in a city might not be the same as for a smaller country inn. There are, of course, some clearly undesirable traits, such as excessive timidity or excessive aggressiveness. These would be difficult to eradicate in training, and if such qualities were strongly apparent, it would be unwise to try.

Many people are adaptable, and provided management can make it clear in the course of training what kind of image it is desired to project, their behaviour can be changed accordingly. The quality of personality most sought is adaptability, and because this is the case, even inexpert and highly subjective interviewers may be successful in their choice. If they select the candidate who makes them feel at ease they are likely to have an employee who can achieve a similar effect with the hotel's guests and with other employees of equal, higher or lower status.

Appearance and Deportment

Apart from a pleasing or adaptable personality a quality much sought after is "good appearance and deportment". It has already been seen that, while some people have such defects of personality as to make them virtually untrainable, most are capable of being trained to produce a desired effect; in much the same way, unless an employee or candidate for employment suffers from severe physical defects, it is possible, given willingness to comply, to effect considerable improvements in appearance through training. It need hardly be said that here again there is no universal agreement as to the kind of appearance most desirable in a receptionist, but a natural and healthy impression and a neat and businesslike exterior are likely to be generally acceptable, such artifices as are used being unobtrusive and barely perceptible.

Male Receptionists

What has been stated here is applicable to male receptionists as well as to females. In some establishments, the higher-priced London West-End hotels for example, it is often considered that male receptionists give a more favourable impression to visitors than females. In such cases they are usually engaged mainly on duties involving direct relationship with visitors. Elsewhere men are rarely found in reception offices except in the course of job-rotation on the way to a more responsible position.

One reason for this may be that the job does not have a satisfactory career structure with prospects of advancement, except in very large hotels where to become a Reception Manager or Chef de Reception is a worthwhile goal.

Training plans are for the most part designed for women, but provision should always be made in them for the possibility that the trainees may be of the opposite sex.

The Task Approach

The list which follows is no more than it purports to be—a list of tasks which may at some time and in some places be performed by Front Office personnel. It does not attempt to identify the manner in which the task is performed, nor what training is required to achieve satisfactory performance.

Task No. 4 :5 :3 for example :
"Use of booking chart/bedroom book" may be performed in a number of different ways according to the system employed. An individual employer requires acquaintance only with the system in use, unless a change is contemplated. The all-purpose trained receptionist will be acquainted with the most common systems. The principles by which occupancy is maximised can be taught by practice with any system. Known late arrivals can be coupled with late departures from the previous night ; a double room might be let to one occupant when it is unlikely that it can be let to two—half a loaf being better than no bread.

The exercise of discretion in such matters may be left to each receptionist, regardless of rank ; it may be the prerogative of the head, or a senior, receptionist ; or it may be governed by clearly defined rules laid down by the management.

A task can be broken down into four dimensions (See Page 15). Not all tasks contain these dimensions—Skill, Knowledge, Social Skill and Experience.

Task No. 4 :1 :1 for example :
"Telephone enquiries relating to bookings, terms, facilities, etc." Requires for its performance :

a ability to apply telephone technique including clear diction
b the exercise of social skill
c a knowledge of the subject of the enquiry or of sources of information
d ability to record the enquiry if necessary
e decision-making if the enquiry seems to be frivolous or time-wasting

Most of these activities would come within the Knowledge dimension, but in operating a telephone or switchboard Technical Skills are required. Social Skills are required in nearly every reception task, and Experience in the working situation will develop these other three dimensions.

The identification of a task does not always imply a training need. If some procedures (e.g., completion of forms) are self-explanatory, training may be limited to imparting an awareness of the relevant procedure.

The Groupings of Tasks
The tasks have been grouped together under the following headings :

Assumed Knowledge and Skill
The suggested criteria for selection and recruitment of hotel receptionists.

Induction
Those points and procedures which should be made known to all newcomers to an organisation.

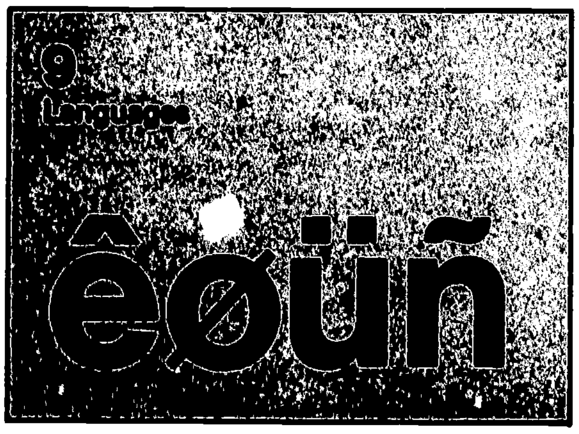
Basic Tasks
The tasks which are performed by nearly all employees who work in the reception department of an hotel, large or small.

Variable Tasks
Those tasks which could be performed by Receptionists but may vary from one employer to another.

Supplementary Tasks
Tasks which are less frequently performed by Book-keeper Receptionists but are known to be required by some employers.

The Task Chart

Supplementary Tasks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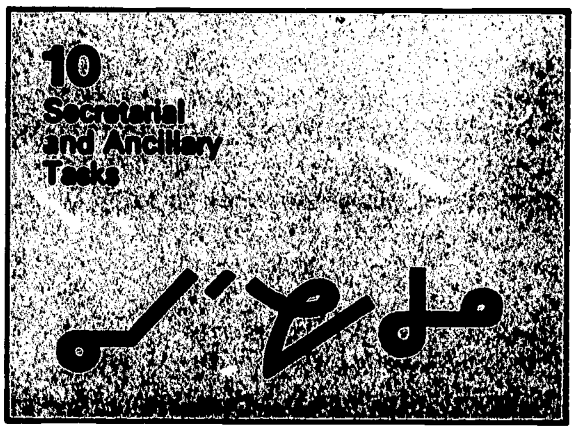
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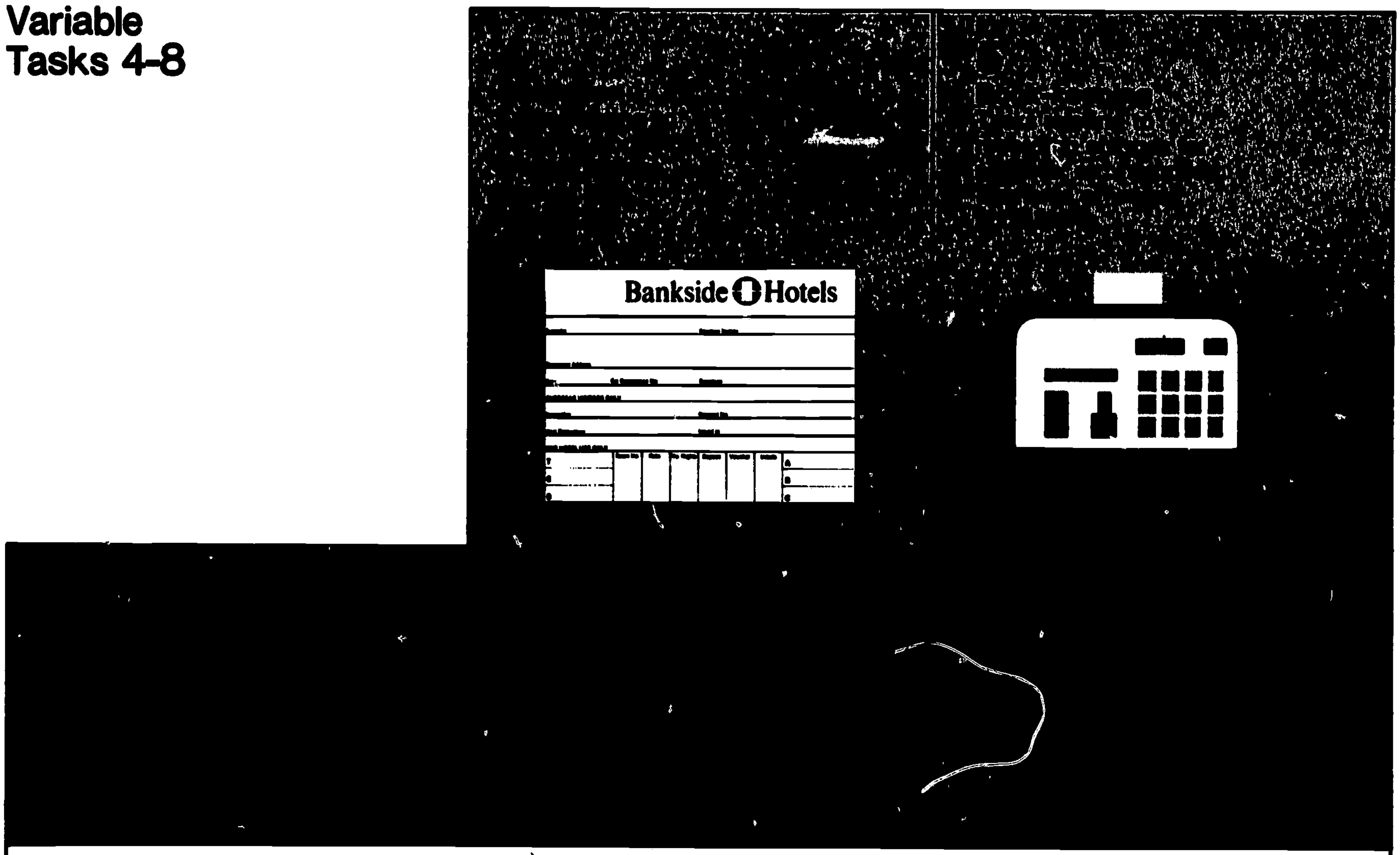
Secretarial and Ancillary Tasks

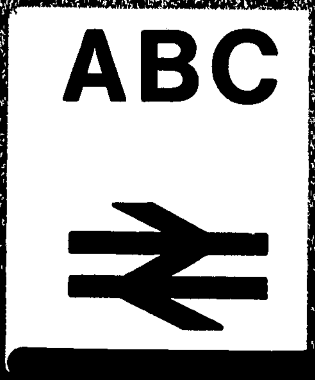
Variable Tasks 4-8


Bankside Hotels

2
Induction

1
Assumed Knowledge And Skill

(Suggested minimum entry qualifications)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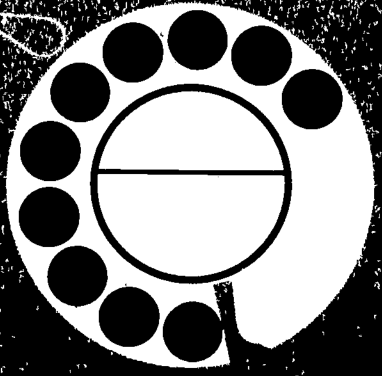


Task Lists

1. Assumed Knowledge and Skill

(*i.e. Qualifications for entrants*)

1.1 It is assumed that book-keeper/receptionists, whether recruited directly into the job or accepted for training on courses will be literate in English and numerate.

1.2 Their knowledge of English will not necessarily include ability to deal with commercial correspondence and their arithmetical ability may not include any knowledge of book-keeping principles. They should, however, be able to add, subtract and multiply sterling amounts and to write neat and legible figures.

1.3 It is not universally agreed that any particular standard of academic ability (e.g. 3 "O" levels) is a necessary pre-requisite but some evidence of proficiency in English and Arithmetic is desirable.

1.4 A number of standardised tests are available, e.g. the Manchester General Ability Tests, the Manchester Reading Comprehension Test and the Graded Arithmetic/Mathematics Test. These tests are designed mainly for 14-15 year old school children but may be found useful in assessing general ability.

1.5 Personality questionnaires, such as the Eysenck Personality Inventory, may also be found useful but the relevance of the characteristics revealed therefrom has not been firmly established.

2 Induction

N.B. The induction will normally take place on the first day of employment, or as soon thereafter as possible, but some parts of it may have been covered at the engagement interview.

2.1 History and objectives of employer.

2.2 Company rules; conditions of employment. System of gratuities, service charge, etc.

2.3 Domestic details; changing rooms, toilets, meal arrangements, etc.

2.4 Layout of building; scheme of room numbering, names of public rooms.

2.5 Organisation of the front office; referring queries to supervisors, etc.

2.6 Organisation of departments; the function of the Front Office within the general organisation.

2.7 The role of the book-keeper/receptionist.

2.8 Elements of oral communication.

2.9 Modes of address (nobility, clergy, etc.).

2.10 Action to be taken in case of fire and other emergencies.

3 Basic Tasks

3.1 General Tasks

In almost any establishment a front office employee will not be able to become an effective member of the team until she can:-

3.1.1 Type accurately and neatly but not necessarily at speed (see 10.2).

3.1.2 Use duplicators/copying machines.

3.1.3 Know the function of the various departments within the organisation (see 2.2) and recognise heads of departments.

3.1.4 Exercise discretion in referring matters to higher authority when necessary (see 2.4).

3.1.5 Express herself unambiguously and write simple factual reports.

3.1.6 Use a telephone efficiently.

3.2 Reception Tasks

3.2.1 A knowledge of the accommodation available in the establishment in which she is working and familiarity with the different types of room and service available.

3.2.2 An understanding of the need for positive selling and a knowledge of elementary sales techniques.

3.3 Book-keeping Tasks

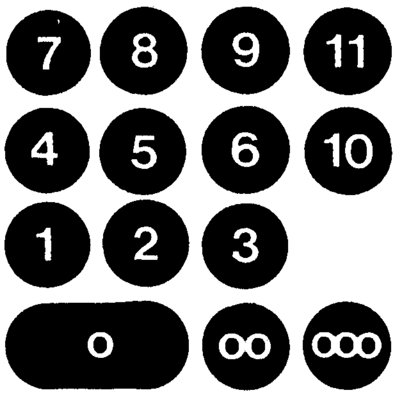
Book-keepers will require (in addition to the tasks outlined in 3.1):-

3.3.1 An understanding of the purposes and principles of book-keeping.

3.3.2 Knowledge of the check system used in the establishment.

3.3.3 Knowledge of rates and prices charged or acquaintance with sources of information.

3.3.4 Ability to add, subtract and multiply in sterling rapidly and accurately. (see 1.2).



3.3.5 Ability to understand and calculate percentages.

3.3.6 Ability to use ready-reckoners, adding machines, etc., as available.

3.4 Cashiering Tasks

3.4.1 Handling and counting cash.

3.4.2 Giving correct change.

3.4.3 Knowledge of the basic criteria for accepting cheques.

3.4.4 Company rules for accepting cheques.

3.4.5 Knowledge of the basic criteria for accepting travellers' cheques.

3.4.6 Company rules for accepting travellers' cheques (see 6.6 – Foreign Exchange).

3.4.7 Knowledge of the basic criteria for accepting credit cards.

3.4.8 Company rules regarding credit cards.

3.5 Enquiry Tasks

3.5.1 Simple methods of identification (dress, physical characteristics, etc.).

3.5.2 Identifying management and heads of departments.

3.5.3 Identifying tradesmen, couriers, taxi drivers, etc.

3.5.4 Identifying V.I.P.'s, directors, local notables, etc.

3.5.5 Dealing with solicitors, police, newspaper reporters. Limits of discretion.

3.6 Communications Tasks

3.6.1 Types of communication media.

3.6.2 Organisation of communication within the establishment (telephone operators, pages, bleeps, etc.).

3.6.3 Ability to locate and use appropriate telephone directories. (see 8.3.).

4 Variable Tasks for Receptionists

4.1 Telephone Enquiries

4.1.1 Relating to bookings, terms facilities, etc., but not specific.

4.1.2 Relating to accommodation required on specified dates (see 4.5).

4.1.3 Relating to guests staying, having stayed, or due to arrive. Use of telephone message forms.

4.1.4 Relating to non-reception matters (e.g. restaurant bookings, banqueting, lost property, etc.) (see 7).

4.2 Verbal Enquiries

4.2.1 Relating to bookings, terms, etc., but not specific.

4.2.2 Relating to accommodation required on specific dates (see 4.5). Use of standard confirmation letters.

4.2.3 Relating to guests staying, having stayed, or due to arrive. Limits of discretion.

4.2.4 Relating to non-reception matters (see 7).

4.2.5 Showing bedrooms and other facilities to enquirers.

4.3 Postal Enquiries *(See 11)*

4.3.1 Relating to bookings, terms, etc., but not specific. Use of standard forms of letters. Correct use of titles.

4.3.2 Relating to accommodation required on specific dates. Use of standard forms of letters. Procedure for dealing with agents' two-or-three part booking forms and vouchers.

4.3.3 Relating to guests staying, having stayed, or due to arrive.

4.3.4 Relating to non-reception matters. (For postal procedures and postal rates see 8.11).

4.4 Telegrams

4.4.1 Action to be taken on receipt of telegrams. International code.

4.4.2 Action to be taken on receipt of reply-paid telegrams.

4.4.3 Despatching telegrams by telephone.

4.4.4 Telex enquiries.

4.5 Recording Bookings

4.5.1 Use of reception diary. Action on unconfirmed bookings.

4.5.2 Special instructions, e.g. flowers, cold suppers, etc.

4.5.3 Use of booking chart/bedroom book.

4.5.4 Procedure for provisional/block bookings.

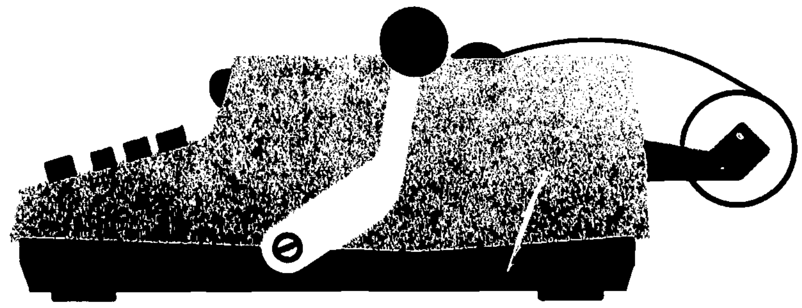
4.5.5 Register of V.I.P.'s. Black book for undesirables.

4.5.6 Use of slotted board.

4.5.7 Dealing with cancellations, alterations, curtailments, extensions.

4.5.8 Dealing with deposits (see 6.1.4).

4.5.9 Filing correspondence. Bringing forward correspondence. (see 10.3).



4.5.10 Preparation of arrival/departure lists.
4.5.11 Preparation of list of expected arrivals and rooms available for letting for night porter's use.

4.6 Dealing with arrivals *(routine)*

4.6.1 Receiving guests with bookings confirming length of stay. arrangements regarding account. etc.
4.6.2 Receiving guests without bookings.
4.6.3 Use of Register/Registration forms, Legal requirements regarding aliens.
4.6.4 Dealing with arrivals received by night porter or night manager.
4.6.5 Procedure regarding luggage.
4.6.6 Custody of bedroom keys. Use of pass keys.
4.6.7 Visitors' mail/messages, including registered mail. (see 7.3).
4.6.8 Booking newspapers, calls, early morning teas, etc.
4.6.9 Receiving articles for safe custody. Issuing articles from safe custody.
4.6.10 Showing guests to rooms.

4.7 Dealing with Arrivals *(non-routine)*

4.7.1 Dealing with V.I.P's,
4.7.2 Detecting fraudulent or suspect guests.
4.7.3 Action to be taken regarding drunks, prostitutes, young persons, etc. Limits of discretion.
4.7.4 Dealing with invalids/disabled persons.
4.7.5 Accommodation for chauffeurs, nannies, etc.
4.7.6 Booking out at other hotels.

4.8 Recording Arrivals

4.8.1 Use of slotted board.
4.8.2 Use of bedroom book.
4.8.3 Alphabetical registers, etc.
4.8.4 Informing other departments.
4.8.5 Procedure for opening accounts.

4.9 Reports and Statistics

4.9.1 Checking housekeeper's occupancy state and procedure regarding discrepancies discovered.
4.9.2 Recording occupancy, vacancies, refusals.
4.9.3 Recording overseas visitors.
4.9.4 Procedure on bookings not taken up.
4.9.5 Other records and statistics as required by management.

5 Specific Tasks for Book keepers

5.1 Tabular Ledger

5.1.1 Entering arrivals.
5.1.2 Entering change of room/rates.
5.1.3 Posting checks to Accounts.
5.1.4 Filing checks.
5.1.5 Cashing off.
5.1.6 Transfers to ledger, including knowledge of authorisation required and/or assessment of credit-worthiness of debtor.
5.1.7 Allowances, including authority required. Limits of discretion.
5.1.8 Balancing tab
5.1.9 Carrying forward.
5.1.10 Entering summary book/weekly return.

5.2 Mechanical Bookkeeping

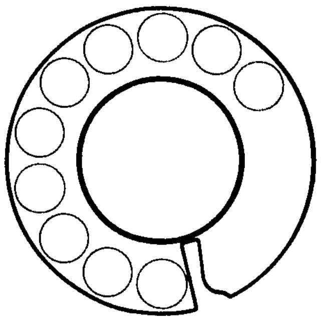
5.2.1 Making out bills for arrivals.
5.2.2 Change of room/rates.
5.2.3 Posting checks to Accounts.
5.2.4 Filing checks.
5.2.5 Trial balance.
5.2.6 Cashing off.
5.2.7 Transfers to ledger, including knowledge of authorisation required and/or assessment of credit-worthiness of debtor.
5.2.8 Allowances and credits. Limits of discretion.
5.2.9 Location and correction of errors.
5.2.10 Summary of sundries.
5.2.11 Final balance.
5.2.12 Entering summary book/weekly return.

5.3 Personal Ledger *(Debtors Ledger)*

5.3.1 Making entries from tab or machine transfer card.
5.3.2 Preparing statements.
5.3.3 Cashing off.
5.3.4 Allowances and commissions. Limits of discretion.
5.3.5 Balancing ledger.
5.3.6 Credit control.

5.4 Wages

A knowledge of the elements of wages accounting and ability to use sources of information available (e.g. Wages Council Orders, Employer's Guide to PAYE) (see 11).



6 Tasks of Cashiers

6.1 Visitors Accounts

6.1.1 Receiving payments for visitors' accounts.

6.1.2 Receiving payment for ledger accounts.

6.1.3 Procedure for dealing with travel agents' vouchers (see also 4.3.2).

6.1.4 Dealing with deposits, including refunds where necessary.

6.2 Internal Accounts

6.2.1 Receiving payment from bars, etc.

6.2.2 Reading and clearing tills.

6.2.3 Procedure for clearing telephone boxes, automatic machines, etc., and accounting for cash. (see 10.5.2).

6.2.4 Accounting for numbered stationery (see 10.5.4 and 10.5.5).

6.3 Restaurant Accounts

6.3.1 Preparing restaurant bills from waiters' checks.

6.3.2 Totalling bills, including service charge where applicable.

6.3.3 Use of analytical billing machine.

6.3.4 Receiving cash; giving change (see 3.4.1 and 3.4.2).

6.3.5 Entering bill summary.

6.3.6 Totalling and balancing summary.

6.4 Payments

6.4.1 Petty cash payments, including knowledge of authorisation necessary.

6.4.2 Visitors' paid-outs.

6.4.3 Other disbursements, including casual wages.

6.5 Disposal of Cash

6.5.1 Bundling and bagging cash.

6.5.2 Security rules.

6.5.3 Banking lodgements.

6.6 Foreign Exchange

6.6.1 Company rules regarding foreign exchange.

6.6.2 Knowledge of the most common currencies.

6.6.3 Recognition of foreign notes.

6.6.4 Ability to calculate conversions.

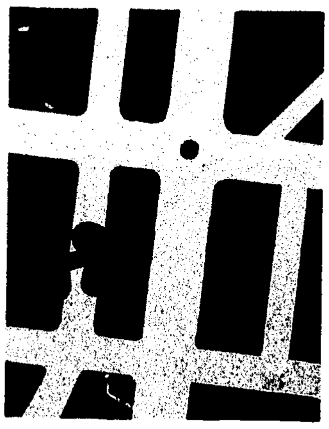
7 General Enquiries

N.B. The extent to which dealing with general enquiries will be a part of reception duties will depend on the employment of enquiry clerks and/or hall porters and the duties allocated to them.

7.1 Knowledge of immediate locality

7.1.1 Post office, banks, main shops.

7.1.2 Railway and bus stations, air terminals, bus stops, taxi ranks.



7.2 Information

7.2.1 Use of reference books and guides.

7.2.2 Modes of address (nobility, clergy, etc.).

7.2.3 Local amenities, sightseeing, entertainments, map reading etc.

7.3 Mail

7.3.1 Sorting mail—visitors, staff, management.

7.3.2 Procedure regarding visitors' mail.

7.3.3 Messages and telegrams for visitors (see 8).

8 Communications

8.1 Oral communication and use of telephone (advanced level).

8.2 Message forms; report writing.

8.3 Use of telephone directories (see 3.6.3).

8.4
- a Operation of switchboard (basic)
- b Operation of switchboard (advanced).

8.5 Direct lines.

8.6 Internal telephones: intercom.

8.7 Bleeps.

8.8 Telex.

8.9 Public address equipment.

8.10 Paging procedure.

8.11 Knowledge of postal services.

8.12 Knowledge of cable procedures.

Supplementary Tasks

9 Languages

9.1 French

9.1.1 Basic vocabulary.
9.1.2 Basic conversation; use of common phrases and idioms.
9.1.3 Rules of grammar and syntax.
9.1.4 Conversation (intermediate).
9.1.5 Translating commercial correspondence into English.
9.1.6 Elementary composition.
9.1.7 Composition and conversation (advanced).

, 2 German As for French.

9.3 Spanish As for French.

9.4 Italian As for French.

9.5 Other languages as appropriate. As for French.

10 Secretarial and Ancillary Tasks

10.1 Receiving Dictation

10.1.1 Shorthand
  a Elementary
  b Intermediate
  c Advanced
10.1.2 Audio typing.

10.2 Typing *(see 3.1.1)*

10.2.1 Typing
  a Intermediate
  b Advanced
10.2.2 Typing stencils.
10.2.3 Typing menus, including spacing and use of culinary terms.

10.3 Filing

10.3.1 Knowledge of filing systems.
10.3.2 Method study applied to office procedures.

10.4 Postage *(see 8.11)*

10.4.1 Postal services.
10.4.2 Postal charges.
10.4.3 Use of address codes.
10.4.4 Use of franking machines.
10.4.5 Recording postages.

10.5 Ancillary Tasks

10.5.1 Miscellaneous sales – chocolates, postcards, etc.
10.5.2 Collecting cash from and re-charging vending machines (cigarettes, stamps, etc.).
10.5.3 Changing till rolls.
10.5.4 Ordering, storing and issuing stationery.
10.5.5 Refilling continuous stationery machines.

11 Wages Procedure

11.1 General

11.1.1 Knowledge of system of wages.
11.1.2 Knowledge of PAYE system.
11.1.3 Knowledge of arrangements for other deductions.

11.2 Specific Tasks

11.2.1 Dealing with new employees.
11.2.2 Calculating overtime/bonuses.
11.2.3 Distribution of service charge.
11.2.4 PAYE.
11.2.5 S.E.T.
11.2.6 National Insurance.
11.2.7 Graduated pensions.
11.2.8 Stamping Insurance cards/franking/payment by cheque.
11.2.9 Custody of Insurance cards.
11.2.10 Renewing Insurance cards.
11.2.11 Calculating cash breakdown for wages.
11.2.12 Inserting wages in packets.
11.2.13 Paying out wages.
11.2.14 Bank transfers/P.O. Giro.
11.2.15 Dealing with departing employees, including accrued holiday pay.
11.2.16 Annual income tax returns.
11.2.17 Payment of casual workers.

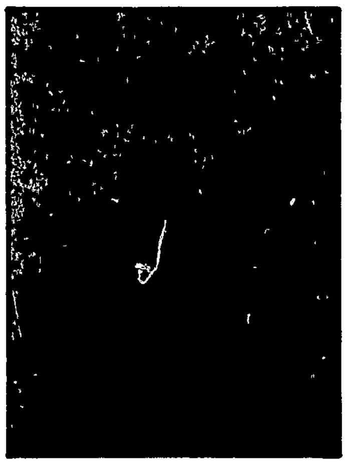
12 Ancillary Accounting Tasks

12.1 Control

12.1.1 Marrying original and duplicate checks.
12.1.2 Controlling entries from checks.
12.1.3 Controlling prices and extensions.
12.1.4 Controlling cash received and banking.
12.1.5 Controlling transfers to ledger.
12.1.6 Controlling allowances and credits.
12.1.7 Controlling visitors' paid-outs.
12.1.8 Controlling Petty Cash disbursements.
12.1.9 Checking cash floats.
12.1.10 Controlling occupancy.
12.1.11 Controlling telephone accounts.
12.1.12 Controlling numbered stationery.
12.1.13 Other control duties.

12.2 Other Accounting Tasks

12.2.1 Entering goods inwards.
12.2.2 Entering receipts and issues in cellar stock book.
12.2.3 Passing tradesmen's bills for payment.
12.2.4 Maintaining kitchen account.
12.2.5 Maintaining equipment inventories.



The Four Dimensions

Those who are familiar with the Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board's approach to training in Food Service (Training for Tomorrow's Skills No. 1) will be acquainted with the concept of four dimensions of training. These are:

- Technical Skill
- Technical Knowledge
- Social Skill
- Experience

In Food Service there are a number of manipulative activities which need to be performed dexterously, and without a mastery of them a waiter cannot provide efficient service, however well motivated he may be. In the Front Office skills of this nature constitute a less important part of the job. Such technical skill as required is usually incidental to a task and perhaps to more than one – counting bank notes, for example.

Technical Skill

Technical skill includes mental skills as well as manual skills and the ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide, with or without mechanical aids or ready-reckoners, is included in this category. The ability to plan work and the ability to make decisions in the light of data presented against background knowledge (e.g., of law) can also be regarded as requiring technical skill.

Technical Knowledge

Technical knowledge provides the foundation on which procedures or decisions are based. The knowledge element forms a large part of the general training of hotel receptionists. There is danger here for the over-enthusiastic teacher. In his anxiety to stimulate interest by incorporating "could know" matters as well as "should know" and "must know", he may not only baffle or bore the students but also alienate employers who examine the syllabus in a cursory manner.

Social Skills

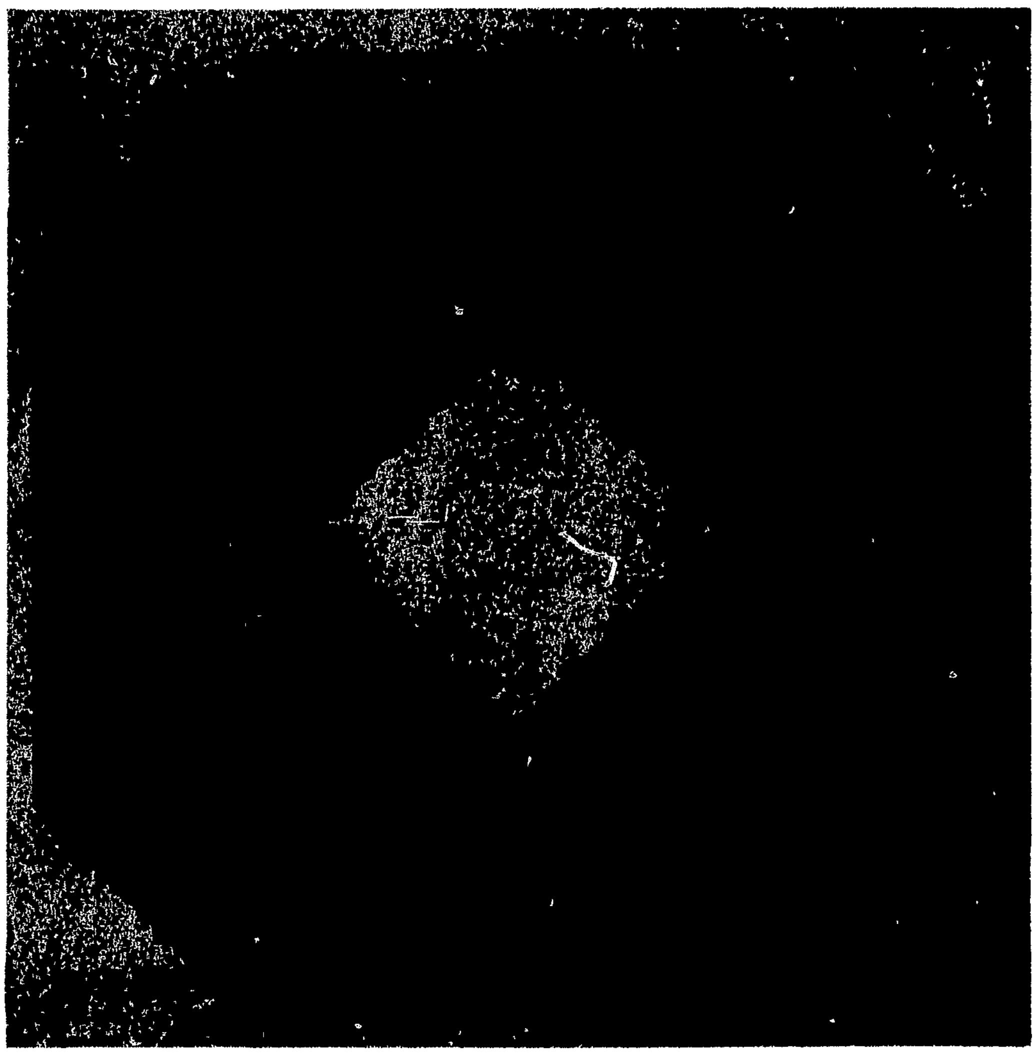
The social skills are concerned with interpersonal behaviour. Trainees can, and should, be taught how to identify the needs of those with whom they are dealing, whether as customers, agents, suppliers or other members of the staff, and adjust their own behaviour so as to meet, or appear to meet, their requirements. The object of exercising social skill is to cause the other party to behave in the desired manner. This is equally applicable to making a sale and dealing with a complaint.

Experience

Experience, if properly planned, provides opportunities for applying and reinforcing these skills and knowledge required in training. Unplanned experience may be painful and inhibiting. Some may learn to swim by being thrown in at the deep end; others may acquire from such treatment an unconquerable fear of water.

There are few tasks which require the exercise of only one of the four dimensions. Operating a switchboard, for example, requires the exercise of manipulative skill and social skill and often also the use of technical knowledge. Entering and balancing the tabular ledger require technical skill and knowledge. Both are made easier by guided experience.

To analyse every task or group of tasks into four dimensions is more than an academic exercise, since the method of training for each will vary. The technique of instruction for the acquisition of knowledge is quite different from that employed in developing social skill.



A Career in Reception

The fact that hotels vary greatly in size and in internal organisation makes it impossible to generalise as to the likely progress of anyone entering the front office for a career. For some, beginning as a junior receptionist in a large hotel may lead to a senior post in the same, or a similar establishment. For others, a change to a single-handed position in a smaller hotel might be attractive. In the small organisation the job will have many facets and the receptionist very often deputises for the Manager or Proprietor. Others may choose to specialise in control and accounts, perhaps later acquiring accountancy qualifications.

Those who begin in smaller hotels may have less organised training and a less clear road to higher salary and status but may be given greater responsibility at an early age.

There have been cases of receptionists who have become manageresses but on the whole this method of entry to management is rare, though most management trainees, both male and female, spend some months in the front office as an essential part of an all-round experience. It quite frequently happens that receptionists who marry other members of the hotel staff later take up joint management. Their training in the front office suits them admirably for the responsibilities in accounting, storekeeping and control which often fall to the lot of the female member of a man and wife team.

We envisage that new entrants to the industry wishing to make a career in hotel reception could pursue the following courses:

A Young People
A 1-year full-time college-based course similar to those already being held for the HCI Book-keeper-Receptionist Certificate. Students on such courses would sit for the City & Guilds Examination which will replace the HCI examination. Every effort should be made to incorporate working experience into such a course, possibly during college vacations.

B Mature Students
A 6-month industry-based course for more mature students, also aiming for the City & Guilds Certificate. This course would include 18 weeks in a technical college, the remainder of the time being guided experience on the job. In order to avoid rigidity it is recommended that the length and sequencing of the periods in college and on-the-job should not be specified, though it is recognised that there should be at least one period of working experience before the completion of the college part of the course.

Pilot Courses
Two pilot courses, based on the 6-months block release scheme, have been carried out with the co-operation of industry and the Hastings College of Further Education. These courses have been successful and have helped considerably in arriving at a suitable syllabus.

Syllabus
A course of further education and training has been developed from our task approach concept. Syllabuses are available on request.

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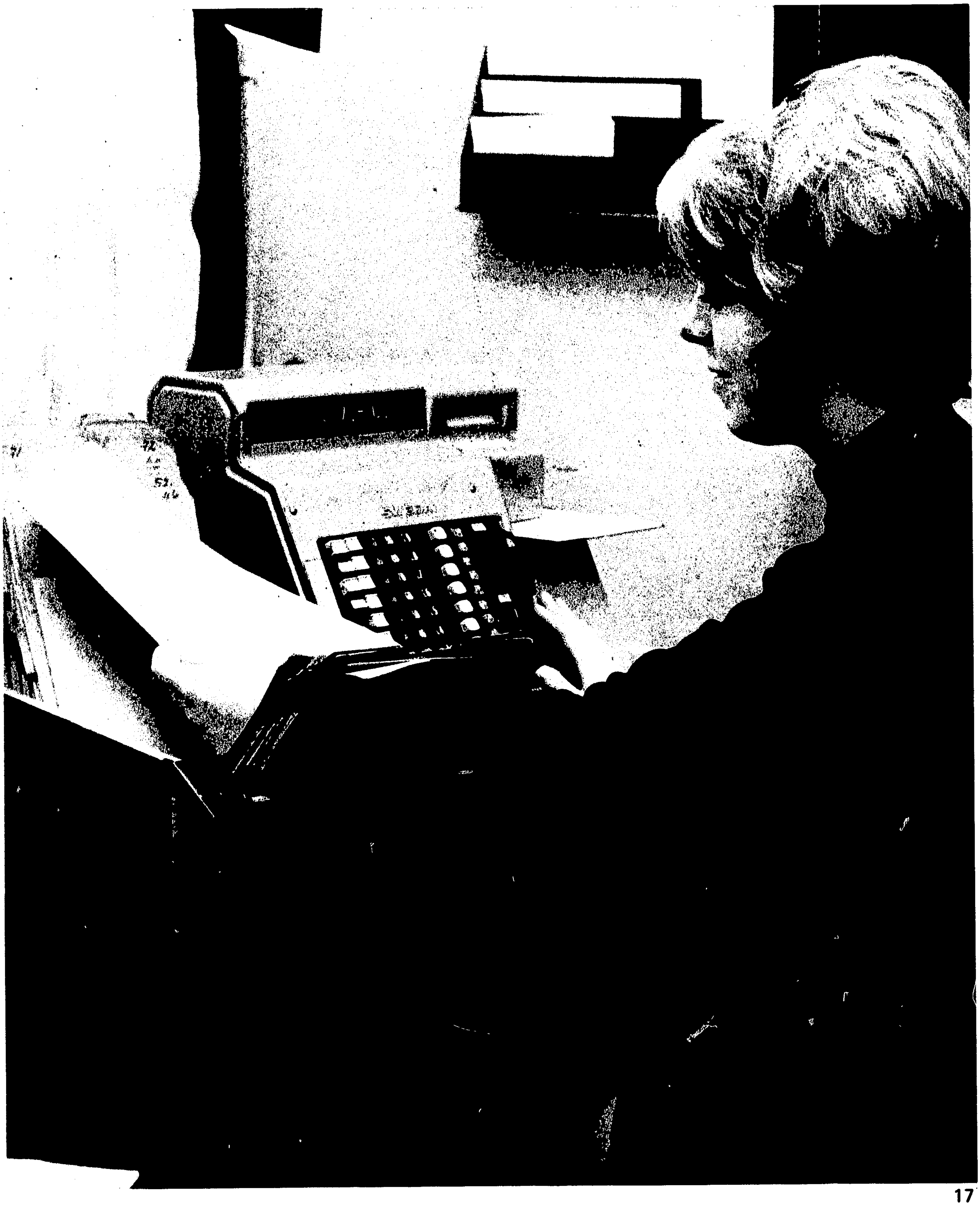


Job Training

It has already been made clear that the tasks required to be performed by front office personnel vary greatly from one establishment to another. It may happen, therefore, that even when fully trained receptionists are employed there are some aspects of the job with which they are unfamiliar. For these some short job-training is called for.

There will also be some employees, perhaps part-time or temporary, who are engaged for specific aspects of the job and who require training only sufficient to enable them to perform a limited number of tasks.

Such "job training" will be of three types:

a training for tasks, (e.g. those listed as Supplementary Tasks) where there is little or no previous acquaintance with the knowledge and skills required.

b re-inforcement of previous training and its adaptation to the immediate situation.

c training to meet changes in law or procedures.

a An example of the first type of training would be for a restaurant cashier engaged to work, perhaps, at lunch time only. The job cycle commences with the correction and checking of the float and ends with the paying in of cash received, supported by a summarised account. Even for such a straightforward and limited job, training would be desirable beyond a simple introduction to the checking and billing system. If, for example, credit is given, in some circumstances it would be necessary to know who is entitled to sign bills or who is authorised to authenticate credit transactions. If credit cards of one sort or another are in use, the criteria for accepting them and detecting fraud must be known. If cheques are accepted, it will be necessary to identify incorrectly written or incomplete cheques and to have a knowledge of Bankers Cards and other evidences of credit-worthiness. The extent of responsibility must be clearly defined. Can the cashier act on the prices shown on waiter's checks or is she responsible for verifying them against menus or wine lists? Whose authority is required for the reduction or cancellation of an account due in case of dissatisfaction? If an adding machine is available training may be necessary in its use. The source of supply and arrangement for custody of numbered bills and receipts must be known. A short course of training to cover all such matters, based on a job specification, might last only a few hours but would almost certainly prove to be worthwhile. It might not be inappropriate to include some training in social skills and even a basic knowledge of a foreign language if unnecessary conflict with waiters is to be avoided.

b The second type of training is concerned mainly with procedures and sources of information. A receptionist trained in the use of one type of book-keeping machine might require a short training in the use of a different machine. The elements of wages and P.A.Y.E. are covered in the receptionist's training, but a number of different systems exist for calculating and recording wages, and these cannot all be covered in a general course. If this is to be a receptionist's responsibility, some additional training might be required.

c The third type of training referred to might deal with new taxes or changes in the law. In the case of a take-over of one company by another it may be desired to change procedures and systems. In such cases there may be a need for systematic training to amplify and reinforce the contents of administrative circulars and instruction manuals.

Training for specific jobs or to adapt to systems may often be on an individual basis, and if the supervisor has been trained as an instructor it will not be difficult to devise suitable training at convenient times. Training for changes affecting all those employed may be more effective if it can be conducted on a group basis, perhaps including members of other departments also. An example of grouped training is that needed for the introduction of decimal currency.

Some employers may feel that job training of this type, because it has often been neglected in the past, is unnecessary. It is true that some people are capable of learning by trial and error but mistakes made in the process may be costly. It should also be realised that workers, especially young workers, obtain most satisfaction from a job which they feel themselves fully competent to perform. To be cast untrained into an unfamiliar situation may for some be a stimulating challenge but for most it will have the effect of undermining confidence. Brief, well-planned training is not expensive to organise and is an investment which can show substantial dividends.

Training Aids

Training Techniques

Full time courses and such in-company training as has taken place in the past have usually utilised conventional teaching techniques. Educational technology is not static and understanding of how learning takes place and the processes of mental storage and recall of information has enlivened and made more effective the "chalk and talk" of the more distant past.

Programmed Instruction

One development which has been little utilised in the Hotel and Catering Industry, despite successes claimed elsewhere, is programmed instruction. Not all the experts are agreed as to what can and what cannot be included in this category but it seems to be generally agreed that for instruction to be described as programmed it must have these essential features:

a There is a clear cut statement of objectives.

b The material to be learned has been itemised and presented serially in identifiable steps or "frames".

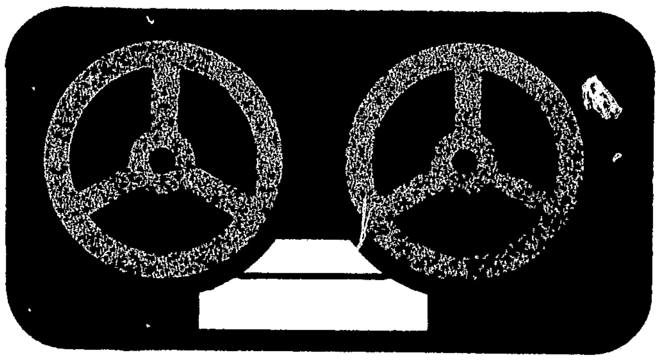
c The actual sequence of frames which any student encounters is controlled according to rules derived from the programming technique employed.

d Frequent and unambiguous responses from every student are required throughout the whole sequence.

e Feed-back of information about the correctness or otherwise of responses is given to the student before the next frame is presented.

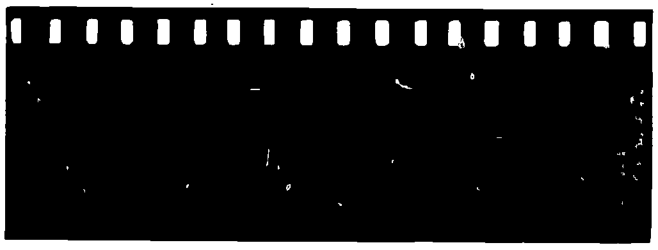
Programmed instruction can be presented either in the form of a text or through the medium of a teaching machine of which a number of different types exist. There is no evidence that instruction given through teaching machines is invariably more effective than that given through texts. Machines have some advantages but they are not cheap, though they vary greatly in price, and the number of machines available limits the number of trainees who can be taught at any one time. Programmed instruction was at one time thought to be essentially a solitary method of learning but experiments of administering programmed instruction in pairs or larger groups suggest that the advantages of mutual help and stimulation may over-ride those gained by self-pacing.

Programmed instruction may be very useful, especially for teaching procedures, but it can never entirely replace face-to-face training, especially in the social skills. Programme writing is a specialised skill and programmes prepared by inexpert writers may prove to be a wasteful use of the time, both of the writer and of the trainees.



Tape Recordings

For training in social skills and in some other areas the use of recorded case studies has been found very valuable as a stimulus to discussion. This may be found more useful than role playing, the effectiveness of which is limited by the difficulty of creating and controlling credible situations. In making recordings, care should be taken to illustrate only one or two points at one time and to limit the technical matters illustrated to the minimum required for understanding the relationship between the various parties. It need hardly be said that recorded situations of this type are almost valueless in isolation and are most effective when used in a group with a discussion leader who is capable of stimulating thoughtful comment and guiding it on the desired lines.



Films and Film Strips

Some of the larger organisations make use of films or film strips for induction training, especially with a view to inducing the desired attitudes and to imparting the Company image.

Some films of a more general nature are also available. It cannot be too strongly pressed that films, like tape recordings and other prepared instructional aids, are of little value without active participation on the part of trainees.

What happens tomorrow?

Algorithms
It has already been said that for some procedures it may be possible to design the job and the stationery used in such a way, that elaborate training is unnecessary. Job aids of various kinds can be devised and provided they are readily assessable and well indexed, they can be useful. The algorithmic or branching design is especially suitable for procedures and for fault diagnosis. The danger of such job aids is that they may create a state of dependence which causes the worker to refer to them constantly rather than attempting to learn the essential principles.

Sensitivity Training
Methods of sensitivity training are not without value in areas like the Front Office where contact with customers calls for empathy on the part of the worker, and an appreciation of the impression which he makes on other people. It should be noted, however, that this type of training should only be carried out by expert trainers and in the hands of others it may be not only ineffective, but also dangerous, inasmuch as it can lead to emotional disturbance in some trainees.

This booklet has been prepared by the Board's Development Department in consultation with industry. Although there is further work to be done, both by the Board and by the industry, the booklet provides a basis for discussion and action. The question that you will now be asking is what use can you make of the booklet and of the opportunities outlined in it. There are a number of points you can consider:

1 You can use the task lists (pages 10–14) to identify the tasks which your own staff undertake (additional copies of these lists will be available from the Board's Information Officer).

2 Based on these tasks, you can introduce training programmes for your staff which you can organise yourself. If you require help in this you can contact your Regional Training Adviser (his address is on the inside back cover of this booklet).

3 You can discover what training in Reception is being carried out in your local technical college. If there are no existing training courses it may be possible for the college to put on courses for you and other employers in the area based on the appropriate tasks which you have identified on pages 10–14. Again, your Regional Training Adviser will be able to help.

4 Much of the benefit of this booklet will lie in the discussions it stimulates between catering and training personnel in the industry and college lecturers. We feel sure that the close examination that senior company personnel can give to the approach outlined in the booklet will be helpful in implementing the proposals which are outlined in it.

We believe that the booklet will be of value, not only in helping you to understand our approach to training in general and Hotel Reception in particular, but in helping you to organise training based on the task approach. The Board's staff, both in the regions and at Wembley, are available to make sure that no opportunity is lost for employers to introduce and develop training programmes. If you need help and guidance please contact either the Principal Development Officer or your Regional Training Adviser.

Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board
PO Box 18 Ramsey House Central Square Wembley Middlesex
Telephone 01-902 8865

ERIC Clearinghouse
JUN 6 1970
on Adult Education