

## **MODULE 3: FRONT OFFICE COMMUNICATION**

### **FRONT OFFICE COMMUNICATION PROCESS**

Communication is a process by which people convey information through the transmission of written, verbal, or symbolic messages. The term 'process' refers to an identifiable flow of information through interrelated stages of analysis, directed towards the achievement of an objective. The entire communication process may be divided into various stages of communication such as sender/source, message, encoding, channel, receiver/target, decoding, and feedback.

**Consider an example** in the context of the hotel industry. Anjali Arora, a travel agent, calls up the reservation section of Hotel Crowne International to book a room for two nights for her British clients. The call reaches the reservation agent Anuj. He takes down the required details such as name of the guests (Mrs and Mr Smith), stay dates (10-12 November), arrival and departure details (BA 143 and BA 142) preferred room category (luxury suite) and assigns rate (S.400 per night), confirms the reservation, recaps the reservation details, and provides the booking reference number (HCI-08-LS123) to Anjali.

- 1. Source:** The source or the sender of a message is an individual or a group of people who wish to share the given information, facts, or feelings with another person or group of people (the target audience of the message) and initiate the communication. A good communication primarily depends on the skills of the source (individual or a group of people), who should provide complete information in a proper manner. In the aforementioned example, the source of the message is Anjali Arora, who being a travel agent, is aware of the reservation process and the details required. She is thus an effective source of the communication process, who communicates her message effectively.
- 2. Message:** Message is the subject matter of communication that is passed from the sender to the target audience. It may be views, ideas, feelings, orders, recommendations, facts, data request, etc. In the example, the message is the request for a two nights' room reservation at Hotel Crowne International for a British couple from 10th to 12th November.
- 3. Encoding:** In order to convey the information, the sender must encode or translate the information into messages that the receiver can understand. This encoding could be in the form of a letter, a telephonic message, or an e-mail. In the given example, Anjali uses a

mutually understandable language (English) to provide the details of the reservation request guest names, stay dates, etc..

- 4. Channel:** The medium through which the encoded message passes between the sender and the receiver is known as the channel of communication. It may be in a written form (such as a letter, e-mail, or fax), telephonic conversation, personal contact, etc. The channel of communication depends upon the communication options (such as telephone or e-mail) available between the sender and the receiver. In the aforementioned example, Anjali has called up the hotel. Hence, telephone is the channel of communication between Anjali (representing the travel agency) and Anuj (representing the hotel).
- 5. Target:** The target or the receiver of the message is the individual or a group of people to whom the message is sent by the sender or the source. The extent to which the receiver comprehends the message will depend on a number of factors: the receiver's knowledge about the topic, their receptivity to the message, the relationship and the trust between the sender and the receiver. In the example, Anuj (representing the hotel) is the target or receiver of the message and he comprehends the message properly as he is aware of the reservation process.
- 6. Decoding:** Once the message reaches the receiver, the latter tries to interpret it. This process of interpretation constitutes decoding. A communication is successful if the receiver correctly interprets the sender's message. In the example, Anuj decodes the details provided by Anjali, such as guest names (Mrs and Mr A.J. Smith) and stay dates (10-12 November).
- 7. Feedback:** Feedback is the final link in the chain of the communication process. After receiving a message, the receiver responds in some way and signals that response to the sender. In this particular situation, the booking reference number is the feedback that Anjali receives from Anuj. It indicates that proper communication has taken place and the reservation has been booked in a luxury suite at Hotel Crowne International from 10th to 12th November in the name of Mrs and Mr A.J. Smith at a rate of \$400 per suite per night.

## **Guest Communication**

While communicating with the guest, front office personnel follows the following ways:

### **1. Oral communication:**

Of all the language actions, listening and speaking are very important and are most often used in organizations, classrooms, or in a community. Speaking skills are universally recognized as a primary indicator of a person's knowledge, proficiency, and credibility. In any situation, be it a face-to-face talk, a telephonic conversation, or a videoconference, good listening and speaking skills are essential for sending, receiving, and understanding messages. To understand the messages communicated by others, you should be able to listen carefully, taking special care to clarify what you have not understood.

### **2. Written Communication**

This communication is by means of written symbols (either printed or handwritten). It may be in the form of letters, e-mails, reservation confirmations, hotel circulars, memos, reports, notes, manuals, in-house hotel magazines, etc.

**Through Non Verbal Communication such as:**

### **3. Personal Appearance**

Personal appearance plays a very important role in the hotel industry. Guests see you before they hear you. They assess you on the basis of your clothes, hair, jewellery, and cosmetics. In today's society, the purpose of clothing has altered from fulfilling a basic need to making a statement about oneself. Clothes accent the body's movements. Even before the front office employee utters his first syllable, the guest forms an opinion about her. Her appearance may put the guest in a resistant or receptive mood. As the front office staff has to interact with guests throughout the day, they should be clean and well groomed, conforming to the hotel standards.

### **4. Posture**

The way that we stand or sit provides information about how we are feeling. Get your posture right and you will automatically start feeling better, as it makes you feel good almost instantly. A front office agent sitting slumped in a chair with arms firmly crossed and head turned away can

give a negative message. This would be a barrier to communication. To feel confident and self-assured, you should hold your head high at all times.

### **5. Facial Expressions**

Our faces can display a myriad of expressions and feelings. As the receiver of a message, you can rely heavily on the facial expressions of the sender because their expressions are a better indicator of the meaning behind the message than their words. For example, The FOM's smile makes you feel happy, whereas his/her frown leaves you discomfited; your subordinate's confused expression indicates the need to continue with an explanation; your guest's smile and nod signals the time to close a sale.

### **6. Gesture**

Gesture is the use of actions to communicate something. By moving the parts of your body, you can express both specific and general messages, some voluntary and some spontaneous. Many gestures have a specific and intentional meaning; a wave of the hand, for example, means hello or goodbye.

### **7. Eye Contact**

Eye contact is a direct and powerful form of non-verbal communication. It can convey a wide range of emotions, signal messages, and indicate interest or boredom. During staff meetings, the superior generally maintains eye contact longer than the subordinates. The direct eye contact of the sender of a message conveys candour, openness, and elicits a feeling of trust

### **8. Voice**

The tone of a person's voice can communicate many important messages. Words can mean many different things, depending on the way they are said. We are able to tell if a guest is angry, happy, or nervous by their tone. Paralinguistic features are non-verbal vocal cues that help you give urgency to your voice.

## **VARIOUS GUEST SERVICES**

During a guest's stay in a hotel, the front office staff provides various kinds of guest services. These services may vary depending on the hotel and the guest. Some guests expect the hotel to attend their messages, mails, telephone calls, and visitors when they are not present in the hotel. They may also wish to keep their valuables and the important documents in the safety lockers. In addition, they might require wake-up calls and be reminded of certain tasks and meetings, that is, reminder services. Depending on the guest's requirements, the front office takes care of the guest's mails, messages, keys, and left luggage. It also handles guest paging and guest complaints, as well as arranges safety deposit lockers, guest room changes, and wake-up calls.