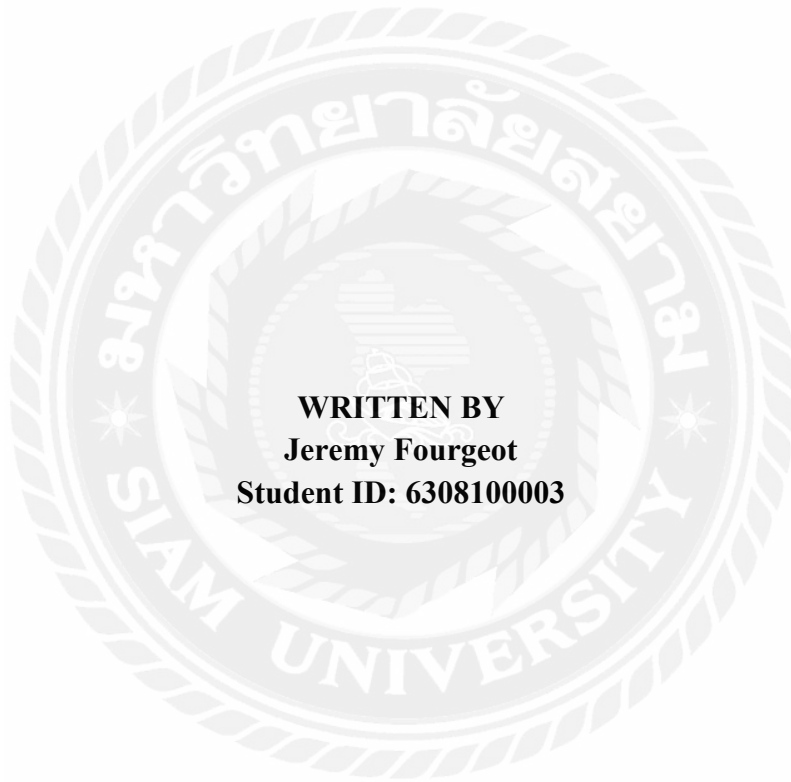




COOPERATIVE EDUCATION REPORT

Front Office Management: Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés



**This report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Cooperative
Education International College Academic Semester 2/2022
Siam University**

Title : Front Office Management: Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés

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We have approved this cooperative report as a partial fulfillment of the cooperative education program semester 2/2022.



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Degree : Bachelor of Business Administration

Major : Hotel and Tourism Management

Faculty : International College

Semester/ Academic year : 2/2022

Abstract:

The report that follows will discuss my experience working as a front desk manager at the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés. High employee turnover was negatively affecting the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés's level of service.

The goal was to build, keep, and develop a team of employees that could consistently provide services that were up to par with the MERCURE brand. The hotel would be able to function with a high sustainable level of service by doing this.

We started with the **recruitment** process because the hospitality sector demands employees who have great **interpersonal skills**. By doing this, we were able to identify the ideal people who could live up to the standards of service quality. An effective hiring procedure was used to choose the best people, and this was followed by a rigorous training approach based on my knowledge gained over the years working in the hospitality sector.

The **hospitality industry** is demanding, and it can be difficult to keep good partners on board. Due to an ineffective hiring procedure and a lack of training, the hotel's staff had to be replaced frequently. I chose the appropriate team members after conducting extensive study, and I personally oversaw their training to impart my vision of the hospitality sector.

This report will examine my various responsibilities as a front office manager and how I was able to stabilize the department's instability and put in place a strong, long-lasting team that is still in charge today. The Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés should put more effort into selecting the proper candidates in the future because the hospitality sector values attitude over technical proficiency. A successful and long-lasting team depends on choosing the right individual for the right task.

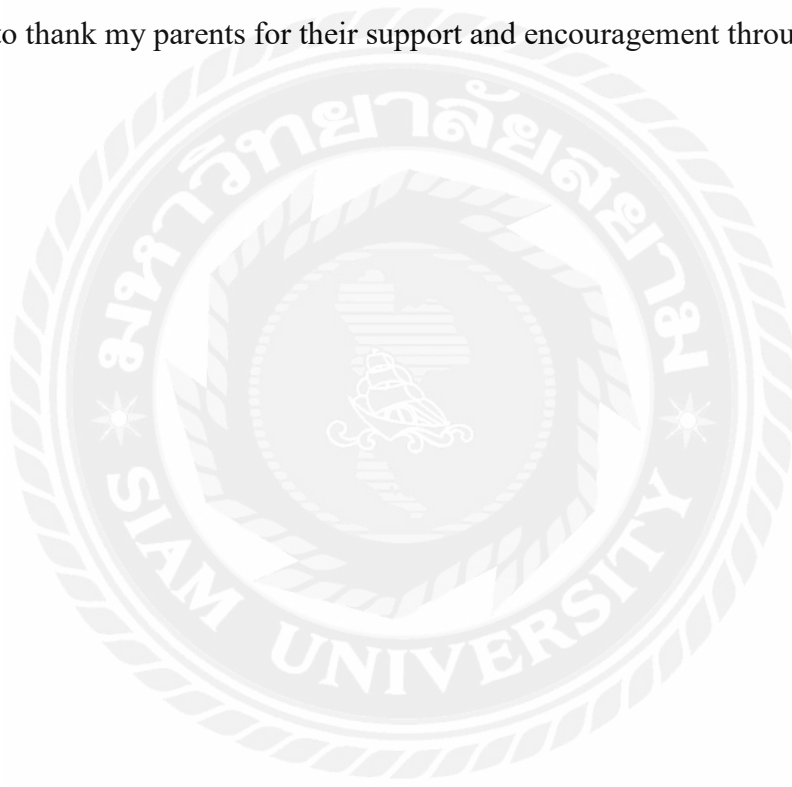
Keywords: recruitment, interpersonal skills, hospitality industry

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I would like to express my deep gratitude to my director Agatha Bryniarska and Patrick Breton, my direct superiors, for their patient guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and useful guidance during my year working alongside them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Company's profile

a. Mission of the Company

The Mercure Paris Saint Germain des Prés is a part of the Accor Group. Accor is a company that promotes audacious management strategy. It tends to embrace innovation and welcome novelty, including diversity, trends, and difficulties.

As the pace of change quickens, Accor constantly refines their vision of hospitality. The company uses a diversified & effective integrated hospitality ecosystem. Accor always seeks industry-leading tools to help them to drive performance and value while fostering steady growth.

The success of Accor Hospitality depends on their valued team members who are called Heartists and greet and care for their customers while providing the best service possible. The company aims to put people first and is wholly devoted to sustainability (*Who We Are | Traditional Hospitality and Beyond.*, n.d.).

b. Vision of the Company

Mercure hotel brand is the midscale brand of Accor hotel group. The Mercure brand chose to concentrate on regional experiences and products since doing so makes one of their weaknesses—our non-standardization—a strength. They aim to please customers who seek some degree of authenticity and enrichment in travel as they want to do, buy, or consume something special so they can remember it and bring it back with them.

They developed an ambitious program dubbed "Explore Local" consisting of first emphasizing on local products throughout the consumer journey, including regional specialties at breakfast, local meals and drinks on the menus, or even a welcome gift from the area.

The second section tries to highlight cultural events that involve collaborations with regional businesses, like food and wine tastings, fashion displays, and parties held inside Mercure Hotels. Mercure properties are creating a formal toolkit and visual identity for the initiative to give the properties consistency and aid in partnering with local businesses (McCarthy, 2019).

c.Strategies of the Company

The group strategy is to develop slowly but surely one of the strongest parks of franchised hotels in France. The Accor aims to open one hotel every 3 days in order to increase their leadership (*Accor Hotels: The Transition of a Hotel Brand to a Hospitality Platform or “Augmented Hospitality” - Digital Innovation and Transformation*, 2018).

They tend to place their hotel (or new acquisitions) in very strategic and touristic areas. as for example the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Pres is located only 200 meters away from the one of the most touristic places of Paris, the Cathedrale Notre Dame. *Accor unveils new-look Mercure hotels as it accelerates brand’s expansion*. (2013, June 25). bighospitality.co.uk.

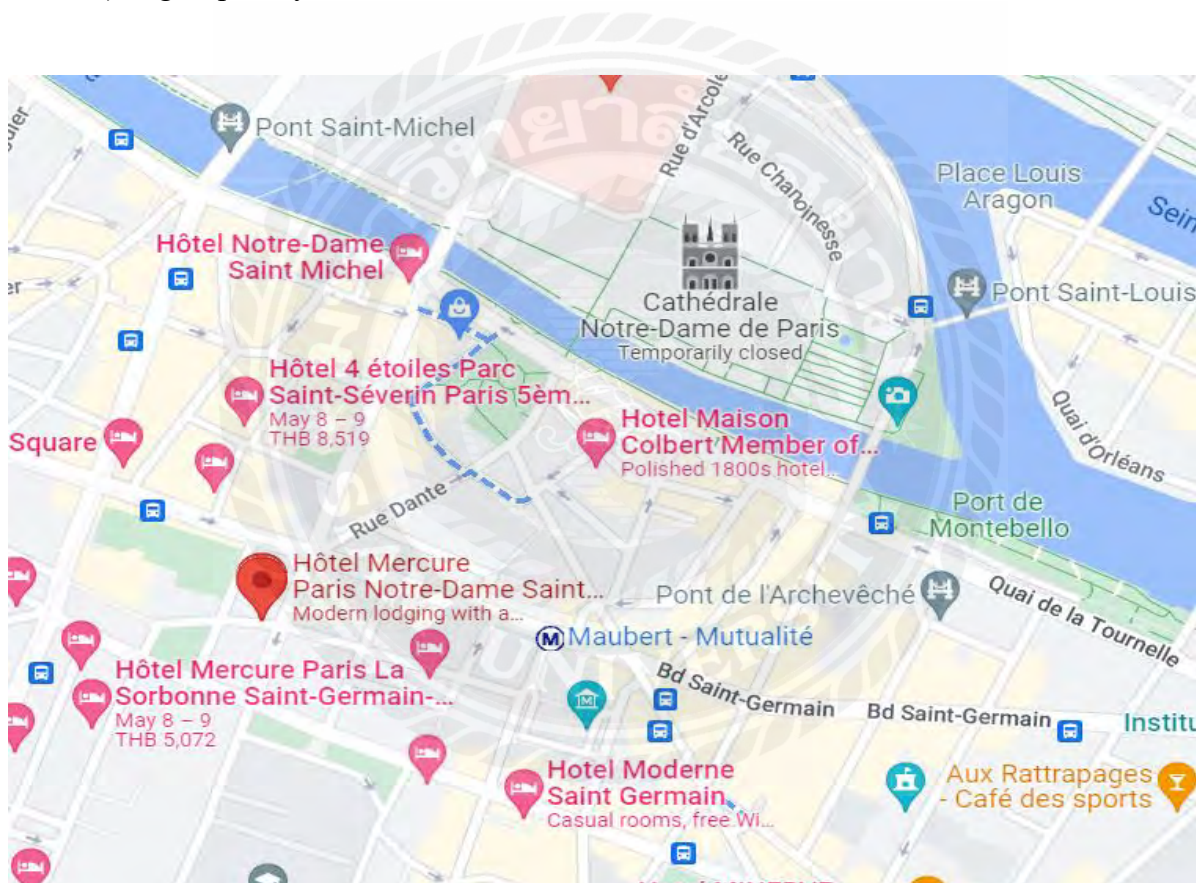


FIG 1: The location is extremely strategic as the district is one of the oldest of Paris and does not offer a lot of hotel options to choose from. The Mercure is the only option for the tourist who wants to stay in the historical neighborhood of Quartiers Latin.

The hotel is extremely praised and holds one of the highest occupancy rates for a Mercure hotel in France (90% yearly) and the highest Average Daily Rate (over 200 euros).

Being an historical building, the size of the rooms can be considered tiny compared to what can be found in Bangkok for instance, with an average size (25 sqm).



FIG 2: The mission of the hotel was there to focus on the service and make sure that the quality delivered would be spotless.

The director's vision was to emphasize on the amazing location of the hotel, in one of the oldest neighborhoods of the France capital and as surrounded by some of the most ancient attractions such as Notre Dame, the quartier latin or the middle age museum of Cluny. Delivering a top notch service and offering the customers a piece of history of this amazing area of Paris was the absolute vision.

1.2 Organizational structure

a. Diagram of the organizational structure

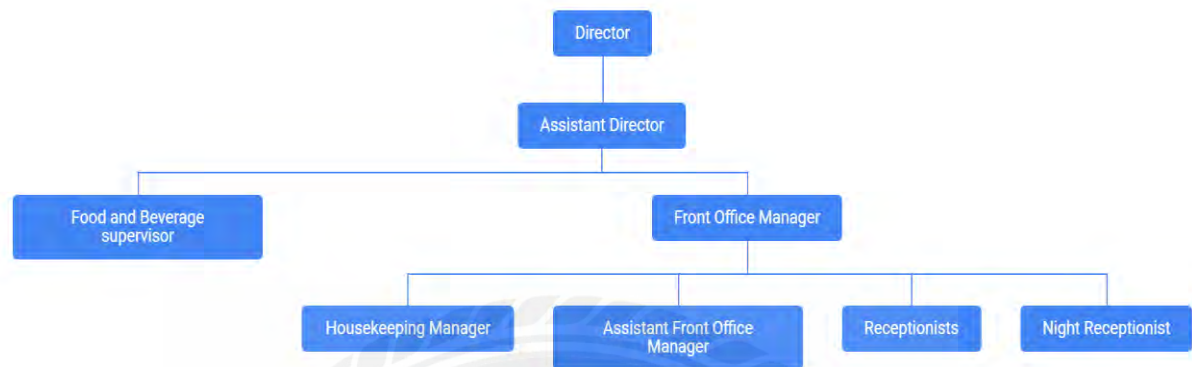


FIG 3: Organizational structure of the Mercure Paris Saint Germain des Prés

b. Job position

I had the title of Front Office Manager while working at the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés.

I was in charge of directly supervising every front desk employee and making sure that all front desk tasks were carried out correctly. oversees and plans the activities of the telephone, front desk, reservations, and guest services departments. Create a budget and monthly reporting for the front office department.

The management of the welcome area is under the Front Office, which is also in charge of overseeing visitor flow. I had to make sure that all the information was conveyed in the quickest and most effective way possible because the reception is frequently referred to as the hotel's nervous system.

c. Job position in the company's organizational structure

I managed the front desk and the housekeeping division as the front office manager. I managed the day-to-day activities associated with the room division directly under the Assistant Director. I had entire autonomy over the Front Office department and immediately reported to the director and assistant director.

1.3 Intention and motivation to choose this company as your CO-OP studies workplace

I was quite impressed with the hotel director Agatha Bryniarska's management style and sense of hospitality during our interview.

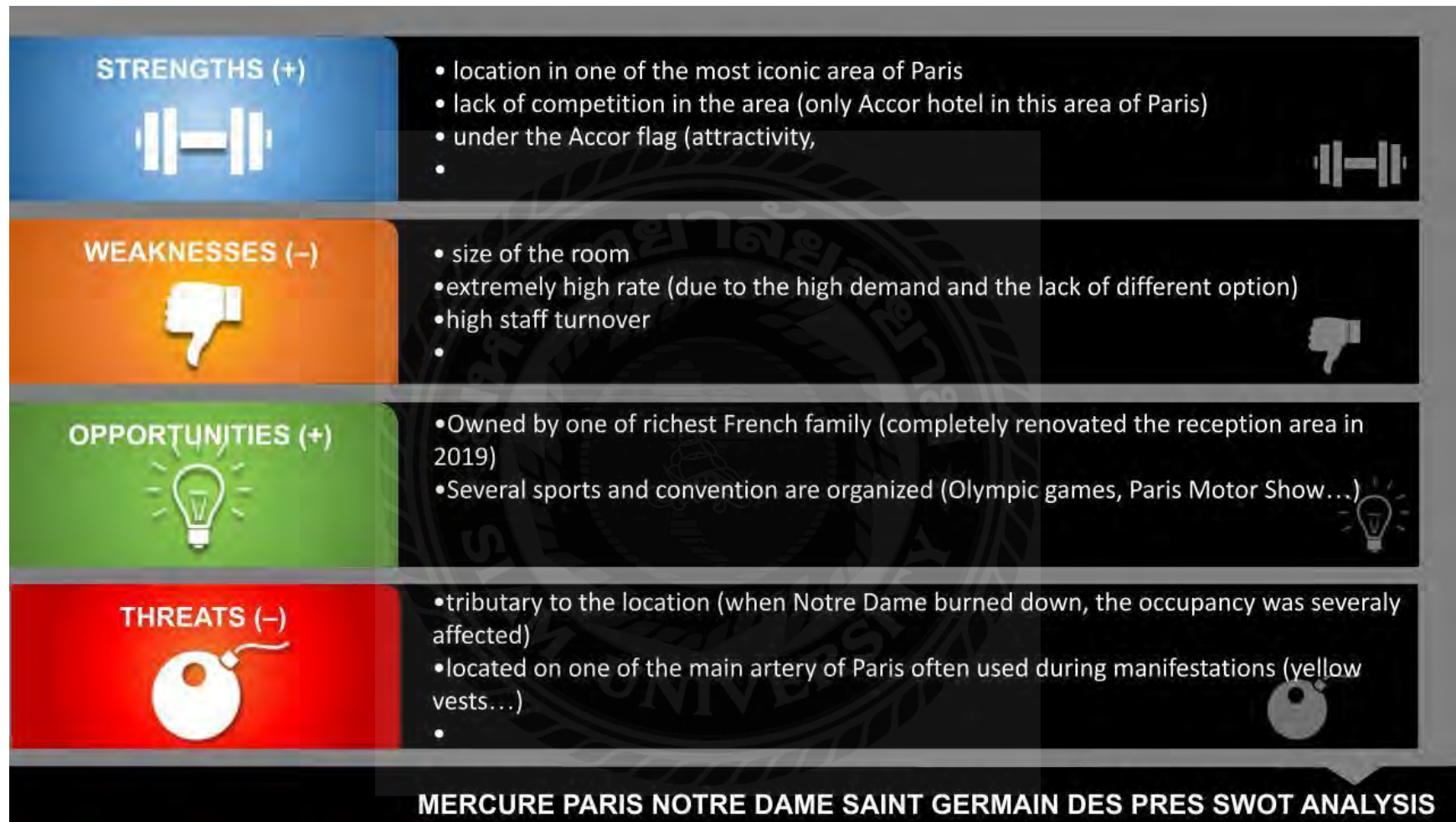
I was moved by how she saw "team spirit" and it had a big impact on my choice to work with her. Ms. Bryniarska, who strongly believes in the importance of teamwork, empowers her employees while also coaching and teaching them to advance their careers. She agreed to assist me in learning about additional operational divisions like FB (cost control) and improving communication with the housekeeping division.

Ms. Bryniarska also offered the possibility to develop my YIELD skill (*Yield management is a pricing strategy used in the hotel industry in order to understand, anticipate and thereby influence consumer behavior with the overall goal of achieving maximum revenue and profit.*)

In order to rebuild the Front Office and ultimately put a stop to the constant churn, the hotel needed experience. Based on my experience, a thorough restructuring of a department proved tough. I felt that with our same goal we could undoubtedly achieve great success and be able to form a long term effective team that could exist after my departure. I would use my expertise to help her train and assemble the most effective team to support our endeavor.

I am confident that the human element had a major role in my decision to select this business or hotel over others.

1.4 Strategic analysis of the Company



CHAPTER 2

CO-OP STUDY ACTIVITIES

2.1 Job descriptions

At the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Pres I held the position of Front Office Manager for 12 months. The Front Office is the head of the Front Office Department and handles every matter related to the room division. I had to ensure that clients and guests were welcomed and well cared for. I was in charge of monitoring personnel schedules, front-office staff training, and basic receipt reconciliation.

As the Front Office manager I had to oversee the front desk staff, plan the front desk, reservations, and guest services activities, and make sure that the property's service standards, regulations, and procedures are consistently followed. In order to maximize room occupancy and departmental revenue, I kept an eye on financial performance.

I took corrective action to guarantee the maximum level of profitability while maintaining the highest level of service. As the manager of the reception I had to keep a close working relationship with various departments to effectively address difficult guest issues and concerns and keep the property in good condition.

I was in charge of hiring, assessing, and developing the team and making sure they not only follow the standards of operating procedures but also the standards of the Mercure Brand. I was in charge of conducting brief daily meetings with the team members of the front office team in order to discuss and share the daily main information and to keep them updated about the financial progress of the hotel, based on budget.

I worked within the department's allotted budget, evaluating and reassessing the credit limit report, log book, and guest feedback forms on a regular basis. Being the Front Office Manager, a big part of the job is also to be the main speaker or point of contact when it came to issues and complaints. I had to ensure that all the complaints were addressed in the promptest manners and were looked after.

2.2 Job responsibilities

I was responsible of overseeing the cleanliness of the front desk and the availability of all required stationery, as well as maintaining control of the stock and budget by observing and ordering based on the requirements of the department.

Since the front desk is the hotel's nerve center and the place where guests interact with the establishment, the front office manager is always ensuring prompt and accurate customer

service. As a manager, I oversaw the scheduling of the shifts for the front-office staff, including the night receptionists and receptionists.

The director and I agreed during my interview that the main focus of my responsibilities was to train and support the Front Office employees. I was responsible for making sure the team members understood the do's and don'ts of the hospitality sector. Dealing with complaints and particular consumer needs on a daily basis put my people skills to good use. Since most communication routes today are digital, it is crucial to monitor and control mail delivery in order to accurately follow our customers' communications.

Last but not least, because hospitality is subject to a number of laws governing health and safety, I was personally responsible for ensuring that the company's rules and security requirements were followed



Response from Agata B, Front Office Manager at Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Pres

Responded 9 Jul 2019

Dear Room05407589717,

We very much appreciate your comments regarding your stay at the Hôtel Mercure Paris Notre-Dame Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

It is always a pleasure to receive positive feedback and that you especially liked our rooms and beddings. I will share your comments with our team. I am sure that this feedback will serve as an encouragement to all of our staff as we strive to continuously improve the quality of our services.

Thank you again for sharing your experience, and we hope your next visit will be as pleasant as the previous one.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Fourgeot
Front Office Manager

FIG 4: Example of customer feedback about the Mercure Paris Saint Germain des Pres wrote on Accor.com

2.3 Activities in coordination with co-workers

As Front Office Manager I had 9 team members under my supervision and reported directly to either the hotel director or assistant director.

The different relations and activities with the co-workers could be divided as following:

Executive:

A daily meeting was organized to quickly analyze the number on a daily basis such as occupancy, average daily rate or guest feedback and see our advancement in order to reach the monthly budget decided with the owners. During the daily meeting we also discussed the bank reconciliation which consists of tracking down payments made by either the agencies or direct customers with the payments received in the bank with the purpose of avoiding payment defaults.

Once a month the director held the daily meeting where we analyzed the numbers of the previous month and tracked down our advancement on the year's budget. We analyzed the guests satisfaction based on the Guest Satisfaction and Hotel Reputation Management tool which tracks down every guest feedback posted on all the online platforms. This software helps to track down where to improve and keep the satisfaction of the guests at the highest.

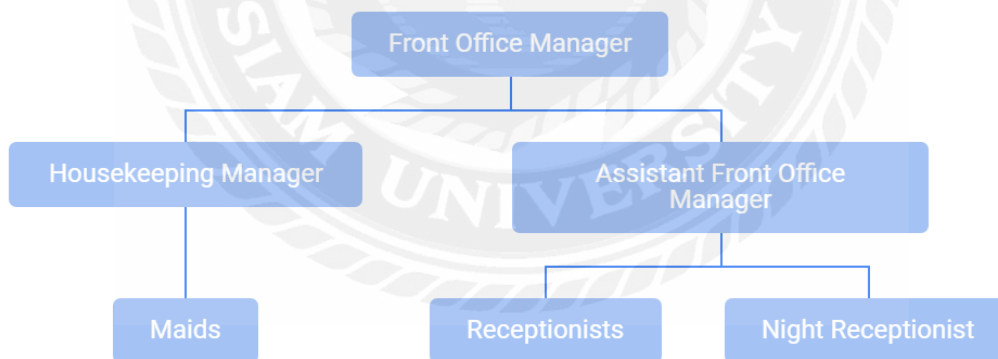


FIG 5: Diagram representing the organizational structure under the management of the Front Office Manager at the Mercure Paris Saint Germain des Pres

Housekeeping:

On a daily basis I was in charge of providing the Housekeeping Manager with the room report which indicates which rooms will be checked out and the one which will host a new guest.

Accor being one of the leaders in the hotel industry, a strong loyalty program allows guests to have certain benefits such as free goodies or early check ins or late check outs. Those information were crucial as those guests are returning guests and loyal guests to the brand and need to be welcomed with extra care. Special requests from the guests were also transmitted on a daily basis to the housekeeping manager who would delegate them to her team members (extra blankets, baby cot....)

The housekeeping manager being the one who was in charge of “checking” the room, which consists of double checking rooms before the guests are allowed to check in, was in permanent contact with me. The real time communication with the Housekeeping Manager allowed us to track down in real time what rooms were available for arrival and smooth operations up.

Front Office Office:

Arriving after a period of turnover I had the opportunity to interview and recruit my direct team members (Assistant Front Office Manager, 1 Receptionist and 1 Night Receptionist). Being the head of the department my first duty was to train the staff members who were directly under my supervision and passing to them my vision of the department. The training was not only technical as most of them already had experience and were available to handle most of the receptionist's duties



2.4 Your job process diagram

FIG 6: Diagram representing the different responsibilities of the Front Office Manager and their frequencies (bottom to top).

CHAPTER 3

LEARNING PROCESS

3.1 Problems/issues of the Company

When I started working for the company, the hotel was dealing with a persistent problem caused by a constant turnover in the front office department, which had a detrimental effect on the level of service.

Like most service sectors, the hotel sector is competitive and needs commitment and at least a modicum of passion to survive. It is a rigorous career that comes with long hours and a great deal of stress.

The director told me during our interview that the hotel was in need of skilled receptionists and that the majority of applicants were either recent graduates or young students looking for odd jobs to make ends meet. In any case, the hotel experienced an extreme turnover that resulted in a total renewal of the department within the first year of my arrival, whether it was due to a lack of experience or a lack of desire.

For the previous six months, the Front Office department operated without a manager, and the majority of the workers had not received the required training and did not understand the fundamentals of the Front Office division. The crew was making frequent errors and had problems that might have been readily avoided in typical circumstances due to a lack of expertise and training. The challenges the personnel faced without sufficient training and a management to guide them led to frequent resignations and the requirement for ongoing training as the roster kept changing.

When I was hired, my first goal was to stabilize the department and reduce the high turnover. By doing this, we would finally have a productive workforce, which would greatly enhance the hotel's level of customer service and increase bookings.

3.2 How to solve the problems

The first step was to reconsider the recruitment and aim to look for candidates with strong interpersonal skills. As is common to say, the Front Office is often called the nerve center of the hotel (*Front Desk Is the Nerve Centre of a Hotel, but Why? - We Are Key*, 2021) and therefore it is crucial to find candidates matching the hotel needs.

After several interview sessions I managed to select the perfect team members to reach our goals. The key is look for attitude not skills (*Why You Should Hire on Attitude, Not Skills | First2Recruit|Attitude Versus Skill*, n.d.).

The second stage was to properly train the newly hired staff by imparting on them the reception's principles. Their everyday routines would be made easier by teaching them the appropriate reflexes and standards procedures, which would aid in their tasks. I began to teach the team members in position the rudiments of the reception after gaining experience in the many hotels I worked for. Along with empowering team members, proper training also boosts their confidence and motivation. Their daily routine will be made easier by training and learning the best and most effective ways to do their jobs.

We ensure that the redundant turnover the hotel was experiencing would diminish by enhancing the team members' knowledge, abilities, and sense of empowerment. The turnover and the ongoing training and development of new staff members were the primary causes of the service backlash the hotel experienced. To achieve the level of client satisfaction the hotel desired, a sustainable workforce was necessary.

3.3 Recommendation for the Company

Accor being one of the biggest hotel chain in the world and being the leader in French industry (*Hospitality Industry in France - Growth, Trends, COVID-19 Impact, and Forecasts (2023 - 2028)*, n.d.), the first suggestion would be to actively encourage employee transfers between hotels by urging them to do so after a set amount of time has passed in the hotel park. This technique would aid in the employee's growth while also maintaining their motivation, which always results in a higher level of service quality.

A tiny structure, especially a midscale hotel, makes it difficult for the hotels to recruit efficient and capable team members. As a result, I would strongly advise putting an emphasis on training. So, putting a focus on training will ensure that they stay with the organization because training is a type of empowerment.

Encouraging self-development and the opportunity of professional advancement within the organization would undoubtedly aid the business in keeping its most talented employees.

3.4 What have you learned during your employment

Multitasking is a vital component of the manager position, especially in Europe. Hotels in Europe tend to be understaffed, which necessitates a lot of multitasking, in contrast to hotels in Asia.

I had the chance to experience this element of the job during my first position as front office manager at the Mercure Paris Opera Faubourg Montmartre because I was frequently interacting with the housekeeping or engineering departments.

I wanted to advance at Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés and fully comprehend the operation side of things. Because the tasks are varied and dispersed throughout the hotel, doing so necessitates having a broader perspective of the business and a higher sense of order.

Burning the candle at both ends is usually the norm when working for a small hotel. I frequently had to run reports while covering the reception, which required that I be able to concentrate on figures while addressing and serving the arriving and departing guests. There were many distractions (phone calls, emails, complains...), therefore I had to significantly improve my organizational abilities.

3.5 Special skills and new knowledge you have learned during your period in the Company

I made it clear during my interview with Ms. Bryniarska, the director, that I was interested in seeing and handling more than just the reception because I firmly believed I could learn more about other departments.

Cost control was one of the key areas I wanted to concentrate on as it is essential to master it in order to have a better understanding of the entire operations department.

Cost control is the "process of identifying and lowering business expenses to increase profits" (Elphick, 2021).

To uncover all of your expenses, you must search through your credit card bills and other places where your spending is tracked. Software with accounting or reporting functionality is used by several hotels. We worked on reducing the cost of the breakfast with the assistance and counsel of my director (the hotel only provided breakfast options).

Finally, when it came to cost containment for the Food and Beverage department, the following areas were of the utmost significance:

1. Purchasing

Always prioritize a trustworthy vendor/provider to guarantee quality of products. To cut delivery fees, it is important to keep the number of different providers at its minimum.

2. Receiving

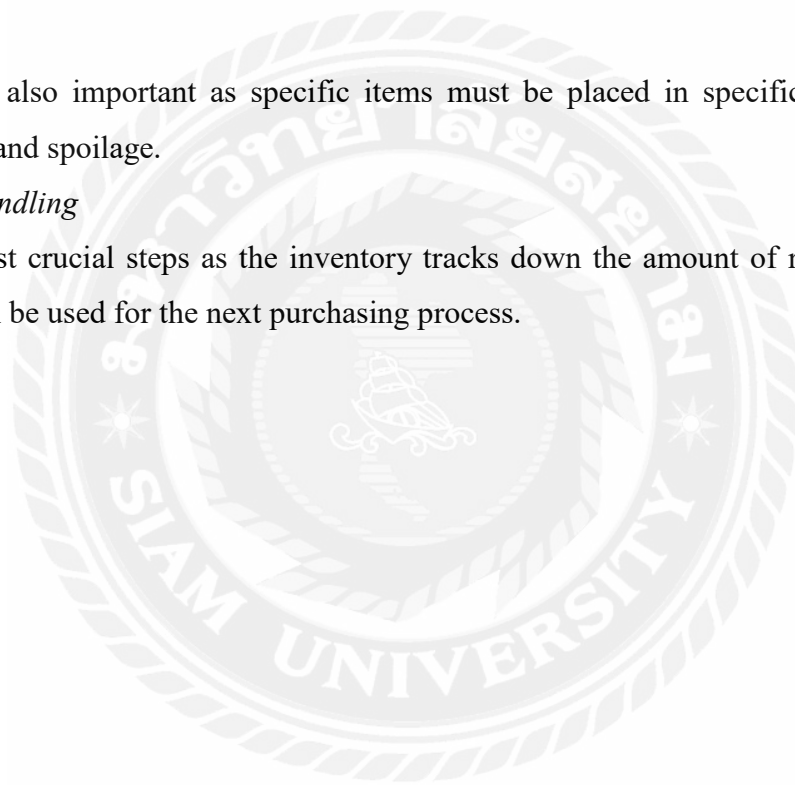
Spoilage can be a reason for cost increase and therefore the products must be received in a prompt way.

3. Storage

The storage is also important as specific items must be placed in specific areas to avoid contamination and spoilage.

4. Inventory handling

One of the most crucial steps as the inventory tracks down the amount of remaining goods which will then be used for the next purchasing process.



CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of the highlights of your Co-Op studies

My final week working for the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Prés was the high point of my tenure there.

It was a great sensation to look back on what we accomplished during the past 12 months. We succeeded in creating a solid, capable workforce that will provide excellent service in the most effective manner.

The fantastic growth we made over the previous few months, in terms of both income and service quality, was greatly aided by the new team members.

When she learned that I was leaving the company, the owner personally came to congratulate me and let me know that the door would always be open if I want to return.

4.2 Evaluation of the work experience

Although it wasn't my first management position, the Mercure Paris Notre Dame Saint Germain des Pres was one of the most rewarding.

We have accomplished a great deal of change in the past year, which has led to a more stable staff and an improvement in service quality.

My years spent working in Asia (Thailand) have somewhat affected my managerial style; now, I prefer to be more in tune with my employees. The director and I created a team that seemed like a small family, which helped to make my time working there among the most enjoyable I've ever experienced.

4.3 Recommendations

As every type of hotel has a different approach to hospitality, I would advise any students who are interested in working in the hospitality sector to try out or sample the many types of hotels.

Tiny hotels, typically with less than 100 rooms, or even boutique hotels, can provide a more intimate and individualized level of service. It usually allows workers to personalize their service and come closer to their guests. On the other side, larger structures will be more clock-like in their emphasis on promptness and efficiency.

It is crucial for them to have experience in a variety of the hotels that are available nowadays in order to increase their understanding and choose what strategy is most effective for them.

Since the hospitality industry, like many others, deals with "people," it needs passion in order to succeed and endure.



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