

Comprehensive Framework for Training and Development of **Front-Office** Employees in Selected Soft Skills

Norbert Beták - Viktória Bíziková - Hana Bielíková

2022



Co-funded by
the European Union

This publication has been produced in the framework of the Erasmus+ project 2021-2-CZ01-KA210-VET-000049509 "The Framework for FrontOffice Employees Development".

The publication has not undergone language editing.

© Norbert Beták, Viktória Bíziková, Hana Bielíková



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
Professional competences and soft skills of a receptionist	6
Framework plan for training front office staff in selected soft skills	9
Forms, methods and organisation of training	14
Chapter: Time management	16
Effective definition of objectives - "SMART" objectives	21
Effective activity planning - (Time Management Matrix)	27
Activities to practise and develop skills (practical part):.....	34
Questions to test knowledge	39
Chapter: Stress Management	43
Stress and stress management.....	44
Brain and stress	45
Manifestations of stress.....	46
Stressors	48
Stressors at work in the front office.....	49
Questions to test knowledge	55
Skills development activities	58
Recommended reading:.....	70
Chapter: Communication Skills	71
Summary	91
Literature used:	92
Questions to test knowledge	93
Skills development activities	93

Recommended literature 94

INTRODUCTION

The front office can be seen as the first and therefore very important point of contact between the customer and the hotel employee - the receptionist. However, from the point of view of the functioning of real professional practice, this first meeting may be preceded by situations where communication between the parties involved may have already been established and thus there will be a mutual interaction between the potential customer and the hotel employee (e.g. via email communication, hotel website, online advertising, etc.). However, we have to remember that the first face-to-face contact with the front office employee undoubtedly plays an important role. It is even possible to look at the front office as the very 'voice and face' of the hotel, as it communicates the information towards the customer that may be most relevant to the customer at that moment in time in relation to their accommodation. On the other hand, however, it is also about presenting and communicating a kind of "business card" of the hotel, since the hotel employee is also responsible for creating a first impression with the customer through his behaviour and appearance - and this cannot be changed later. The front office department of a hotel or other accommodation facility may have a different structure in different specific cases and therefore its importance and tasks may vary considerably. In addition, we know that the front office department has a variety of different jobs and work activities, but the idea of its activities (especially for the general public) is often narrowed down to the reception area and the work that is carried out by reception staff. There is no doubt that the receptionist occupies a key position in this work hierarchy and therefore our primary focus in this publication will be on this area.

The present publication, *A Comprehensive Framework for Training and Development of Front Office Employees in Selected Soft Skills*, aims to contribute to the development of the professional readiness of current, but especially future front office staff, especially receptionists. It mainly focuses on a brief description of the activities and responsibilities of a front office worker with

a high emphasis on building and developing soft skills that are inherent in the professional performance of front office work. It presents selected soft skills in more detail, describing their importance in the context of the receptionist's job description and activities, while also highlighting basic techniques and methodologies for their development. The individual chapters include questions to answer and exercises to practice, which the authors seek to further contribute to the acquisition and deepening of the content.

Thus, as it has already been indicated above, the authors' aim was to get into the hands of the - mainly lay - reader a simple, yet comprehensive material, which will not only create a realistic idea of soft skills and their importance in the work of a receptionist, but will also help to develop and build them. Future receptionists with no previous professional experience in the same or similar job roles have been defined as the primary reading target group. Nevertheless, the authors are convinced that the present publication will also provide useful information for current front office staff, for whom it has the potential to contribute in particular to systematizing and perhaps even expanding their own knowledge and skills.

The receptionist, as mentioned here, comes into direct contact and interaction with the potential or existing customer. It is evident that the expertise of the employee - including his/her personal and professional competences - determines and/or adds to the quality of the services provided by the hotel and can therefore also significantly predict the final customer satisfaction and thus contribute to the satisfaction with the hotel. In the interaction between the receptionist and the customer, it is mainly the oral expression that is important, which is demonstrated in work situations, such as welcoming the guest, dealing with their requests and providing the necessary information, but the written form of communication is particularly important, as it is often used especially when dealing with e-mails, or when creating various documents, responding to comments and reviews, etc. In addition to the examples mentioned above, a number of other prerequisites and competences are also important - some of which we will deal with in more detail.

Professional competences and soft skills of a receptionist

Professional competences are very important, even essential, in the workplace. A jobseeker comes across the term competence when studying the required personal and professional qualities of a successful candidate for a given job. We can say that the required skills and competences actually refer to the ability of an individual - a future employee - to effectively perform the tasks and solve the problems that arise from his or her job description. There is no doubt, therefore, that the building and development of skills and competences must be at the centre of attention already in the process of preparing an individual for the labour market. Educational institutions - especially vocational ones - prepare graduates for future careers, but as the qualifications required for employment are constantly being added to and changed, continuous training and development are necessary. Nowadays, lifelong learning is already regarded as a necessity for successful functioning in society. It is therefore necessary to deal with skills development and competence building even after leaving institutional schooling - whether in the form of self-education or active participation in workshops or other learning activities. There are areas and sectors where it is desirable for employees to further develop their skills and to be prepared to deal successfully with newly arising problems and situations. This is also the case in the hotel industry - specifically in the front office - where there is constant development and relatively rapid change in various areas - just think, among other things, of the approval of new legislation or the rapid speed of technological and digital progress. In addition to the above, changes are also visible in the customers themselves - in their behaviour, communication, etc. The receptionist must also prepare for these changes, because customer behaviour, for example, greatly influences and determines his work. Continuous training is part of the effective performance of a receptionist's job and

requires a lot of special knowledge, skills and abilities that need to be constantly renewed, developed and supplemented.

The basic responsibilities of a receptionist can generally be defined and a basic idea of the necessary skills and competences can be established on this basis. In particular:

- ✓ interacting with the customer in relation to their accommodation
- ✓ monitoring hotel capacity and allocating rooms to customers
- ✓ collection and processing of customer information
- ✓ creating a customer profile and its subsequent processing in the relevant digital systems
- ✓ sale of services
- ✓ handling requests and complaints
- ✓ pre-preparation or assistance in the preparation of billing and payment documents
- ✓ ensuring customer satisfaction.

Nowadays, the internet and specifically websites that bring together current job offers from different fields in one place are often used to find a new job. Among the most well-known websites in Slovakia is www.profesia.sk. We decided to take a look at the job ads

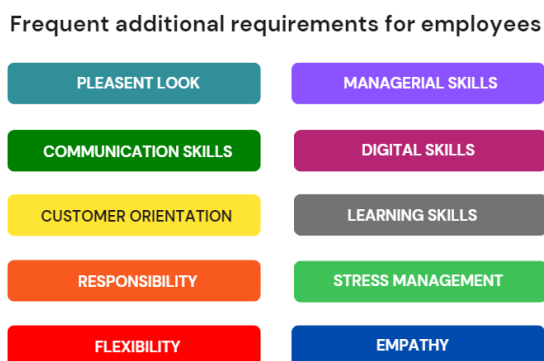


Figure 1. Requirements of the receptionist employee

(Own elaboration)

employers offering employment as a receptionist in a hotel or accommodation establishment. To do this, we visited the aforementioned website and entered our main search criteria, which was a hotel receptionist job. We narrowed down our search to offers from Slovakia and took a closer look at the first 15 relevant job offers. For each job offer we found, we noticed that the employer expects additional requirements to be met in addition to the standard requirements (mainly relevant education, experience, etc.). It is the prerequisites that complete the employee's profile, are extremely important in terms of mastering the profession and thus form a consistent part of the requirements for the employee. Additional requirements for receptionists very often include competences and skills that fall into the category of interpersonal skills or soft skills. We list those that have appeared more than once.

The personal qualities of a good manager or person responsible for the front office include the ability to set priorities, the ability to delegate tasks, the ability to lead people so that tasks can be delegated, to have an overview of planned activities, to use time effectively for different types of work activities.

Framework plan for training front office staff in selected soft skills

In this section, we will present a plan for training front office staff in selected soft skills. Our aim is to provide a training framework primarily for prospective front desk staff who are preparing for the profession and are committed to developing their soft skills that are essential to the position of a hotel front desk worker. We would like to point out that, in addition to developing soft skills, the so-called 'hard skills' are also very important, as is the actual acquisition of the required qualifications in the hotel and/or tourism industry. By creating a base of professional and soft skills and then developing them continuously, it is possible to achieve the required quality of work performance in the profession in general, and this is especially true in the field of jobs requiring contact and cooperation with people - including hotel receptionists.

The training framework introduced and described below fulfils a twofold objective. Firstly, it has been designed to be helpful in self-education and 'self preparation' for the hotel receptionist profession. On the other hand, it can serve as an outline and support material for training and educational institutions preparing future front office staff in the field of soft skills.

The effectiveness of training and coaching of employees - and future employees - can be achieved by meeting various prerequisites. Among the first are, for example, the choice of the right didactic approaches and forms of training, the use of adequate learning materials, and respect for the uniqueness and predispositions of the trainees (e.g. preferred learning style, prior knowledge, etc.). Nowadays, the need to create a learning environment oriented to the learner-trainee him/herself is often emphasized. In such a cooperative environment, it is good to develop soft skills as well, since mutual cooperation and communication with other trainees is not only necessary but also beneficial - for example, they can

inspire each other or "check" their level of mastery of different competences and skills with the help of others, etc.

In developing soft skills - but also other important competences - presentations of simulation cases and the presentation of possible scenarios of communication with the hotel customer, which are tested in simulated situations during the training, can often prove useful. It is therefore likely that a more lasting and thorough build-up of the selected skills will occur. In such cases, however, it is necessary to reach into the depth of real practice and reflect this in the form of simulation scenarios.

In preparation for a profession where human interaction plays an important role, it is particularly beneficial when learning takes place in groups. For this reason, we also prefer group and face-to-face learning in the training framework we have designed.

TARGET GROUP

The target group of the training is mainly those interested in working at the hotel reception without previous adequate experience or without proper experience in the field. The target group of trainees includes mainly those who have plans for further development in relevant areas and soft skills and competences.

THEMATIC SCOPE

The thematic scope is primarily narrowed down to three selected soft skills and competences that are closely related to the job description of a hotel receptionist. These three areas are:

- ✓ **Time management**
- ✓ **Stress management**
- ✓ **Communication skills.**

These areas represent the main topics of the training modules, the framework of which we will present in this part of the publication. The individual modules have unique content and specific learning objectives. In the following section, we will present the draft thematic units for each training module.

TIME MANAGEMENT

- 1) Introduction to time management
 - a) Familiarisation with time management issues
 - b) The impact of time management on work and personal life
 - c) Planning, consistency and discipline
 - d) Analysis of own work and personal time
- 2) What are the options for managing working time
 - a) Defining objectives and managing to them
 - b) Prioritisation
 - c) Delegation of tasks and responsibilities
- 3) Adverse factors and their elimination in working time
 - a) Time "thieves" and their elimination
 - b) Managing time pressures, deadlines.

Upon completion of the training, the participant will be familiar with the standards of common practice in the field of time management. He/she will also be familiar with the possibilities that can be useful for the practice, both in organizing work tasks and in achieving goals in a more efficient way.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

- 1) Introduction to stress management
 - a) What is stress, stressors?
 - b) Productivity and stress
 - c) Useful and negative stress
- 2) Stressors and its improvements
 - a) How to combat stress?
 - b) Recognition of stressors
- 3) Exercises and techniques

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- 1) Communication and its importance at work
 - a) Communication skills
 - b) Verbal and non-verbal communication and their practical use
 - c) Argumentation and persuasion and their effective use
- 2) Effective communication methods
 - a) Identifying communication strengths and weaknesses
 - b) Empathy in communication
 - c) Telephone communication
- 3) Managing conflict situations
 - a) Communication with problem customers
 - b) Responding to offensive behaviour and criticism
 - c) Communication in conflict situations

Forms, methods and organisation of training

The framework training plan assumes the use of innovative methods of education and group forms of training, in which a great emphasis is placed mainly on the active approach of the trainees and on the development of practical skills corresponding to the expectations and needs of practice. It is recommended that the practical nature of the training be respected, with the percentage of the theoretical part being no more than 30% of the total hourly allocation for training. For the individual training modules we have set an hourly allocation of 15 hours/module, of which 10 hours/module are for face-to-face training and 5 hours/module are for distance learning. The training should be delivered with the support of digital platforms and technologies designed for educational purposes. Primarily, we recommend the use of a digital platform for file sharing and educational portfolio creation, a video conferencing system, projection technology, and hardware or software student voting systems for answering questions.

module name:				
date:				
Time	Topic	Learning objectives	Method	Notes
09:00-10:30				
10:30-11:00	break			
11:00-12:30				
12:30-13:30	lunch			
13:30-15:00				
15:00-15:30	break			
15:30-17:00				

Figure 2. Design of the training organisation

EVALUATION OF ACQUIRED COMPETENCES

The evaluation of the acquired competences will be carried out at two levels:

✓ **Level 1 - basic knowledge of individual modules**

Verification of knowledge will be done by completing outcome tests after completing the individual training modules.

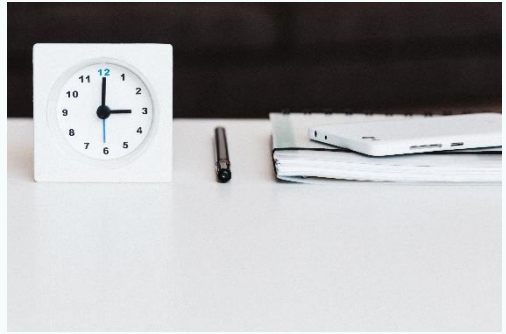
✓ **Level 2 - acquired competences from individual modules**

Measurement of competencies in relevant areas according to the specifications of the individual training modules.

After the training, a questionnaire will be distributed to participants to measure participant satisfaction. The results will be duly analysed and the identified shortcomings, comments and experiences will be taken into account in order to improve the quality of the training.

Chapter 1: Time management

Proper, purposeful and efficient allocation of your time - as well as the time of others in a supervisory position - as well as time management in general is extremely important not only in front-office positions, but also in various other areas. Indeed, we can even say that Time Management is not only important in terms of one's professional life, but also in the private life of an individual it is good if time - as a scarce "service" is handled with sufficient consideration. Time management at a high level is an essential prerequisite for achieving professional success as well as a basic criterion for fulfilling one's professional obligations.



Educational Objectives:

- understand the need for effective time management
- know how to define Time management correctly
- identify and describe the main factors influencing Time management
- be able to independently set SMART goals
- apply the so-called time management matrices when solving specific work tasks
- delegating...

The importance and relevance of a given skill in the work of a receptionist :

- scheduling appointments and meetings
- carrying out daily work tasks at the FO
- systematic and timely implementation of work activities

The English name **Time management** literally translates as time management or time management. In reality, however, by time management it mainly means the effective planning and use of the available time potential. Time management offers a wide range of different techniques, procedures and recommendations to achieve the desired high efficiency in the use of both work- and leisure time. Furthermore, we can say that it is also a strategy that contributes to the process of allocating- and properly delegating tasks. Time management thus plays an important role in the personal and professional life of an individual - we are all managers of our time and therefore we cannot be indifferent in dealing with the available time potential, the amount of which is usually insufficient.

Proper time management is a key prerequisite for successful work even in Front-Office (FO) positions. It is well known that FO activities are characterised by the fact that, on the one hand, certain work procedures and activities that must be performed within the given working time are precisely defined and defined and, on the other hand, they are also characterised by the fact that they include (in a considerable amount) also so-called *unpredictable tasks and activities* - FO employees must always deal with new and newer situations and cases. It is this dynamic, which is created by the aforementioned emergence of new challenges and responsibilities in the work of the FO employee, which thus creates an environment of an interesting and non-monotonous workplace. However, such a workplace calls above all for flexible and active employees who possess a range of other professional skills and meet various specific personality requirements.

There are various factors that greatly influence the success of Time Management implementation. Among the most important are:

- **Goal** - can be understood as a state to which we want to reach by certain actions. The ability and skill to set adequate goals are among the elementary prerequisites for the success of our activities. Without the right goals, we can hardly achieve what we really want to achieve. Goals can be *main goals*, but they can be subdivided into *sub-goals*. *It is certainly advisable to look at a goal*

as a problem to be solved, and it is therefore often a good idea to focus on this emerging (or emerging) problem and to specify and formulate a goal on the basis of it.

- **Plan** - means that we will refine our predetermined goals and the resulting tasks to be solved into a concrete and consistent plan. When planning, we must in particular specify precisely the timetable and the procedure for carrying out the tasks, but we must not forget to set important milestones for control or sustainability, or to define competences and responsibilities. Particularly for complex tasks, it is desirable to draw up a detailed plan, whereas for routine activities it is often sufficient to specify only the range of activities to be dealt with, with deadlines. Systematic planning also contributes to building time experience, giving the individual an overview of the duration of the different activities, thus giving him/her a clearer picture of which activity will actually take how much time. It will certainly be good to devote the time and attention to the planning process, because this effort will then be demonstrated in the quality of the work done or the implementation of the various activities.
- **Delegation** - means that the performance of certain tasks and activities is redistributed among other employees, or the solution of a task is handed over to another competent person for implementation. Prior analysis and planning is also important in this activity, because the performance of the whole or even only part of a task can only be assigned to a person who will actually be able to perform it in the required quality and quantity. By delegating, we contribute to 'unburdening' ourselves from tasks that can be carried out in whole or in part by others. Delegation of a task brings a very significant benefit for the manager or the person responsible for delegating the task/task, which is mainly time saving, which is also associated with the creation of the possibility to devote time to other activities. It is important to note that delegation is closely related to the organisational structure of the workplace and is also dependent on the nature and competences of the employee in the relevant FO position. Among other things, this means in particular that it is necessary to

be considerate when delegating activities, i.e. to whom and what activities can be delegated (both in terms of his/her job position and in terms of his/her abilities and capabilities). However, the delegation of tasks/tasks may be responsible for the creation of additional benefits. In fact, it may give the delegated employee the impression of increased confidence on the part of the supervisor, and even the act of delegating an important task to an employee may be presented and understood as a form of recognition of the employee's work. However, it should not be forgotten that the manager or the employee responsible for delegating the task also bears some responsibility for the quality of the solution of the delegated task, as it also depends on his professional approach to the selection of a suitable employee for the performance of a particular work activity.

Very closely related to the above is the ability to be able to separate the essentials from the non-essentials. Whether we can properly prioritise our tasks and activities will affect the process and outcome of our activities. In fact, if we start focusing on tasks that are seemingly important, but in reality are not so essential, it leads to a loss of our precious time, which can eventually lead to missing deadlines and thus cause stress or exhaustion of the employee. It can be said that the ability to separate the essential from the non-essential plays an elementary role in successful Time Management, and without it, neither goal setting nor task delegation can be effective, but planning will also be considerably more difficult and less effective when the ordering of steps and tasks is not in line with their importance and priority.

In the following section, we will therefore discuss this issue more extensively and mention some basic techniques and strategies to improve the ability to separate essentials from non-essentials. We will proceed to offer a technique or strategy to the reader in three main areas (**Goal - Planning - Delegation**). We attach special importance to these three areas from the perspective of Time Management and

that is why we have also identified them in the preceding, as the main factors influencing the effectiveness of Time Management.

Effective definition of objectives - "SMART" objectives

How to use effective SMART goal setting? What is actually hidden under SMART goals and how can we apply them in the work of an FO employee? The answers to these questions can be found in the following text.

The phenomenon of SMART goals dates back to the last century, and its use continues to this day. In general, SMART objectives provide a framework that contributes to the correct definition of objectives, helps the planning process and contributes to the achievement of results of the desired quality and quantity. SMART is an acronym that consists of five terms:

- **Specific**
- Measurable
- **Acceptable** (Achievable)
- **Relevant** (Realistic)
- Time-bound

S (Specific)	M (Measurable)	A (Achievable)	R (Relevant)	T (Time-Bound)
Define goals clearly and comprehensibly!	See how measurable the goals are!	Set goals that are achievable!	Set objectives that are related to the problem to be solved and to the given skills!	Set a deadline to reach your goal!

*Figure 3. SMART goals (
Own elaboration)*

Let's go through the elements one by one, learn what they actually mean, and use a concrete example to demonstrate their essence.

S - Specific

Everyday tasks that we perform routinely and relatively frequently have the potential to become routine activities that are not preceded by extensive and long-term planning. However, in professional life we also encounter cases which, due to their nature, are better to be subjected to proper planning, specification and then to start with the actual implementation. Sometimes it also happens that due to the time pressure and urgency of a given task/activity we do not have enough space to "make" a detailed plan for the implementation of the tasks, but even in such a case there will certainly be a reflection on the circumstances and requirements (sub-tasks, objectives, desired end state, implementation procedure, responsibilities, etc.), which is also a form of planning, but it can be most effective when the individual already has enough experience - professional and/or personal.

Planning should be based primarily on the stated goal - as an output state and/or product that we want to achieve. The objective must therefore be correctly identified, it must be sufficiently understood and it must be sufficiently meaningful. If we are not quite clear what is actually to be achieved, what is the main objective of our work, we will hardly achieve what is really to be achieved. We, as implementers of work activities and various work tasks, must therefore have sufficient information to realise the objective - if this is not the case, then awareness must be raised (e.g. by obtaining additional information from a supervisor, etc.).

It follows from the above that to specify the objective, it is advisable to think properly and in depth about the objective(s) of the task itself. Further, it is true that a prerequisite for defining the correct procedures for solving specific tasks is the prior analysis and specification of the objectives to be achieved. In terms of the nature of the objective, it is possible to proceed to their *general* - , or to their *specific* definition. Of course, both formulations may have their merits, but in terms of establishing the specific procedure and steps for solving the objective, their specific

definition is more important. General goals are always more "big picture" and look at the problem to be solved from a broader perspective - sometimes even an overview. Specific objectives often reflect the general objectives and represent a more precise and detailed formulation - one that can more accurately relate to the actual fulfilment, i.e. give a concrete and specific formulation of the achievable state.

Let's take a closer look at the nature and meaning of the specific objective. A goal that is specific answers the questions:

- *What exactly do we want to achieve?*
- *What steps are needed to achieve the set goals?*
- *Who is responsible for taking these steps?*

When the reader reflects on the above questions, he or she will find that answering them not only articulates a specific goal, but also identifies the means of implementation and the accountability for achieving them.

M - Measurable

There is no doubt that control plays an important role in management - and it is also very important for objectives, the achievement of which must be checked on an ongoing basis. In particular, when we want to ascertain the extent to which predetermined tasks have been achieved, we clearly need to reach for the objectives and then check, analyse and evaluate them. After all, how else can we be sure that the objectives we have set ourselves have actually been achieved to the extent required? So we have to deal with the measurement of objectives, which can only be done when the objectives are measurable. Measuring goals means that we evaluate whether-and to what extent-we have succeeded in contributing to the actual achievement of the goal. The simplest way to ensure that objectives are measurable is to assign them an adequate numerical value, which then becomes easier to measure. This can be, for example, percentage values (e.g. I increase sales by 10%, or I reduce complaint handling time by 24 hours, etc.), or it can be

numbers, aggregated results expressed as figures, etc. Obviously, this numerical value - which we will consider as a target value - should not be set by guesswork, but should reflect real possibilities, and it is often effective to look at past results and experience when setting them. Indeed, a target must be achievable as well as measurable, and it is this that the following element addresses.

A - Achievable

When setting objectives, we must also have in front of us the realistic and available options for achieving them, because there is no point in setting an objective that is not achievable or is extremely difficult to achieve. When our goal is clear and measurable, but essentially impossible to achieve (whether for objective or subjective reasons), we find ourselves in an undesirable situation of disappointment, stress and failure. In order to avoid this, it is necessary to carefully map out the achievability of the goals and rather start by setting more achievable goals, which may be reassessed and made 'more stringent' in the future. In terms of achievability, it is desirable to consider the following questions:

- *Can we meet the target?*
- *Do we have sufficient resources (human, financial, etc.) to achieve our goals?*

R - Relevant / Relevant

For relevance (but also for the previous ones) it is always necessary to separate personal from professional goals. Although in many cases it is possible to find a broad cross-section between the two, and often the different types of objectives overlap, the correct identification and categorisation is inherent in their achievement. For example, when one wants to improve in an area, but primarily for the sake of one's own personal growth, the goal is more likely to be personal, even though such a goal has the potential to have a significant positive impact on the individual's work activities. Learning and personal development are areas of extreme importance in today's world and should not be underestimated even in FO

positions, where continuous personal growth can guarantee workforce readiness and effectiveness. When we look at relevance from another perspective, we find that we need to be aware of the priorities and requirements of the job or FO position in question, for it is these that must be considered first and foremost when setting goals. We recommend that when developing objectives we ask questions such as:

- *Does the goal relate more to the prosperity of my job or also to my personal growth?*
- *How will achieving the goal affect the prosperity of trade, business?*

T - Time-based

Time is an important factor in the implementation of work tasks, because it can sometimes complicate the course of implementation - it can be, among others, a criterion for the choice of a given procedure for the implementation of tasks, but also decide on the need to delegate tasks, etc. Good objectives are time-bound, which means that they have a specified period for the execution of tasks, or a deadline for their completion. Work deadlines must be respected, firstly because we may not know whether there is no further processing/use of the work we have done after the deadline, but also due to customer behaviour it is necessary to always proceed in such a way that the prescribed deadlines are met, or a certain request is processed or a certain task is solved in the shortest possible time. While it is possible to push back deadlines in some cases, the possible consequences must be taken into account and must certainly be based on the internal rules of the job. The time that is set for carrying out an activity must be correctly and carefully chosen, namely it must be a period or a deadline that is realistically achievable and on the other hand satisfactory and acceptable also in terms of the quality of the objective to be achieved. If the time frame for the implementation of a given objective is incorrect, this may lead to undesirable effects. Among other things, it can happen that allowing too much time to meet the objective and perform the task may not always lead to quality and efficiency and, conversely, when an employee

is in a time crunch, it can also lead to poor quality work. Therefore, the important thing is to find the answer to the question:

- *In what period of time, or by what deadline, is the task to be accomplished, the goal to be met?*
- *Will I be able to achieve the given goal within the given time interval?*

Effective activity planning - (Time Management Matrix)

Time Management Matrix

The time management matrix is a tool used to identify the priority of activities according to their urgency. It is a system whereby work activities as well as various other activities are categorised into their respective areas, thus helping to clarify and determine their importance and urgency. It is clear that a basic prerequisite for the integration of work activities into the relevant areas is that they are properly defined and formulated - preferably, for example, in line with the SMART objectives strategy. In-depth analysis and reflection on objectives and plans is also an essential and indispensable step in this case, because only with these in mind can it be possible to arrive at adequate and realistic ideas about their importance and priority. It is not at all unusual - indeed, it is natural - to have a large number of objectives or work responsibilities at once, the inclusion of which in the time management matrix will specify which must be addressed first or which can be delegated to another person or postponed.

The time management matrix is also known by the abbreviated name "Time-matrix". An example of a time matrix is shown in the figure below , which shows that it is a simple table consisting of four areas - the so-called quadrants. The meaning of these quadrants is very important and therefore it is good to understand them thoroughly, because these are the areas to which the individual's activities, actions and goals are assigned, according to their importance and urgency. Urgency in the above system means that urgent, urgent action is required and therefore an immediate solution to the associated activity or goal is required, while importance signifies a high level of value - i.e. it draws attention to the fact that it is not possible to neglect the associated activity or goal. The division of the quadrants is the result of combinations such as Urgent/Urgent and Important/Important, as follows:

1. Quadrant: Urgent and *important*

Quadrant 2: Not urgent but *important*

3. Quadrant: Urgent but not *important*

Quadrant 4: No urgent and *not important*

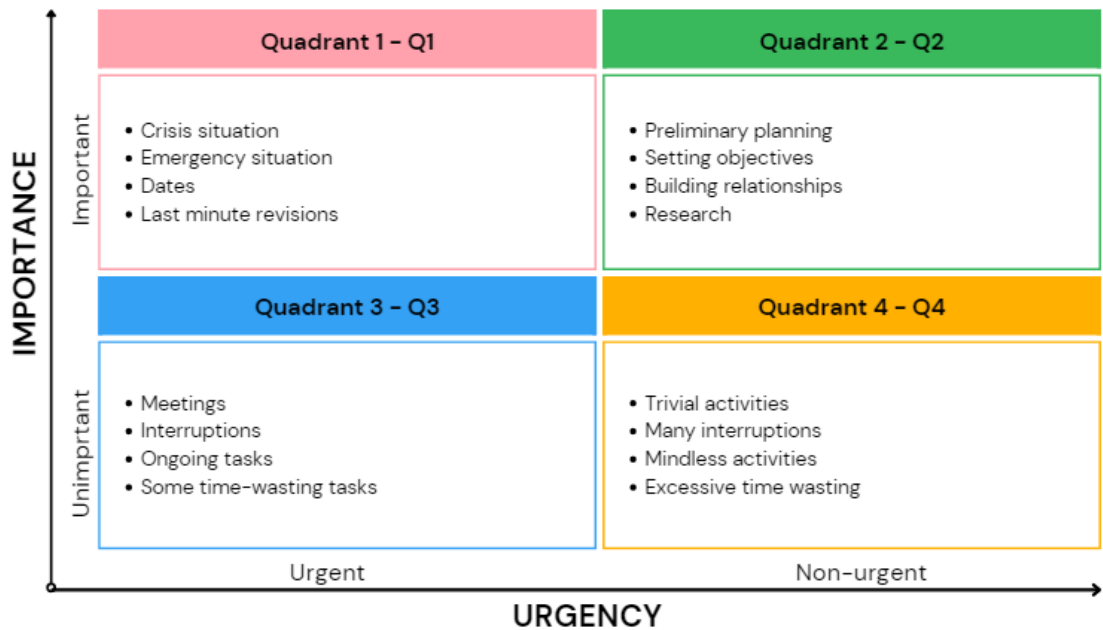


Figure 4 Time Management Matrix (Own elaboration by Synthia Satkun)

In the following section, we briefly describe each quadrant to make it more easily applicable in common practice. It is important to understand the nature and meaning of each quadrant.

Urgent and important

The first quadrant includes activities that are urgent and require immediate implementation. It is not advisable to postpone these activities, as we may be delayed and thus, for example, miss other opportunities or lead to other undesirable consequences. When working with the time matrix, it must be borne in mind that when assigning activities to the first quadrant, it is also necessary to

make every effort to ensure that the activities are implemented as soon as possible and, at the same time, that the quality of implementation is not neglected. It is not permissible to do poor quality work in order to solve the task as soon as possible. Activities falling in the first quadrant have priority over others, which means that even if an activity in this quadrant suddenly appears on the fly (i.e. when another activity is currently being solved, for example), we have to postpone the other activity and deal with the activity in the first quadrant first.

Not urgent but important

The activities that fall into the 2nd quadrant are important, but they are not urgent and pressing. This means that, although they cannot be neglected because they are given importance, they do not need to be addressed immediately and without delay. It is also possible to start working on these activities at a later time, or even in smaller chunks, when, for example, we have some time to spare for/after other, more urgent tasks. Often these are activities that are, for example, linked to the strategic goals of the business/employer, to further training, or to the streamlining of important work processes.

Urgent but not important

Activities falling into the third quadrant are characterised by the fact that, although they need to be addressed quickly and without delay, they are not, on the other hand, so important and significant. Often these are work activities that need to be done quickly but can easily be automated or delegated to another person. It is also possible to proceed with these activities by first collecting the tasks in question and then solving them at the same time, or by redistributing the individual sub-tasks so that, on the one hand, they are solved quickly, but on the other hand, more important tasks are dealt with on an ongoing or parallel basis. It is advisable to keep these activities to a minimum and tackle them as quickly as possible.

Not urgent and not important

The fourth quadrant belongs to activities that are neither urgent nor important. Therefore, it can be said that these are activities that are recommended to be attended to as little and as rarely as possible. These tasks or activities are usually not directly related to the job, but can nevertheless have a positive impact on the employee's job performance and efficiency. For example, attending work meetings that are not relevant to the job, but also flicking through old, unnecessary emails or following up on new social media posts can be included in this group.

Effective delegation of tasks

The skill of delegation is one of the most important in terms of effective time management and its proper implementation can provide many benefits to both the delegator and the employee performing the delegated task. The term delegation is generally understood as the transfer of certain competencies - tasks and/or activities to a subordinate employee. Delegation can also be seen as a means of facilitating one's own workload and at the same time increasing the interest of employees to perform better. Among others, delegation brings the following main benefits:

- getting rid of a particular agenda (a specific task, activity) and thus gaining time to deal with another important task
- using the expertise and experience of subordinate staff
- developing the professional skills and personal competences of subordinate staff
- positive impact on the performance and work commitment of subordinate employees

The concept of delegation is sometimes - mistakenly - replaced by the concept of task allocation. However, the important difference between the two is that delegation is a task that is part of the manager's job description or for the performance of which he or she is personally responsible. On the other hand, task allocation/assignment means that a subordinate employee is entrusted with the implementation of a task which is within his/her competence and which should be carried out by him/her. As an example, a case from the Front-Office environment, where the Head of Reception assigns a task to a subordinate receptionist to book a conference room according to a previously received request - this is not a delegation, because the task in question belongs to the receptionist's job description, but it may happen that the request (order) has been received by the Head of Reception, who has therefore asked his subordinate to carry out the task.

Where a senior member of staff delegates a receptionist to produce a monthly overnight stay report and present it at a staff meeting, this is a delegation of the task because the task is not part of the staff member's job description but the skills and abilities of the staff member are nevertheless sufficient for the performance of the job.

The tasks associated with delegation are generally the responsibility of the FO manager, who should have some overview of the tasks and activities to be dealt with by the FO and, assuming this, be able to allocate and delegate tasks among other FO staff.

When delegating, we need to answer the following questions in particular:

- What do I want to delegate? *(A proper analysis of the task is needed!)*
- Who do we want to delegate to? *(A proper analysis of the skills and abilities of the employee to whom we plan to delegate the task is necessary!)*
- How do we want to delegate? *(A proper definition of the task solving process as well as the expected outcomes is needed!)*

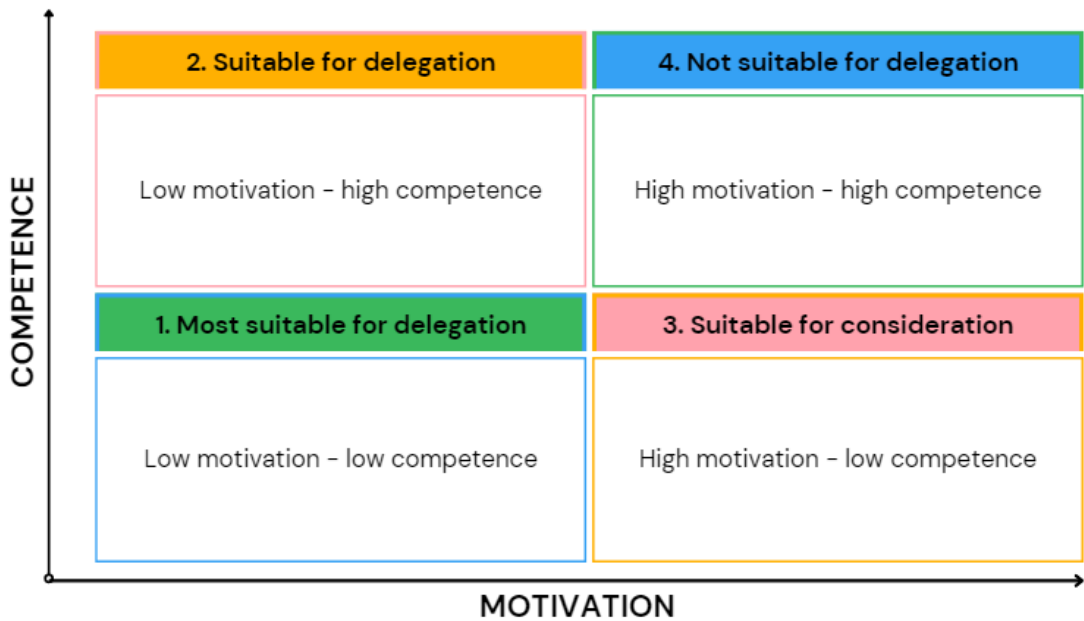


Figure 5. Delegation matrix (own elaboration according to Learning and Development)

According to the illustration, competence and motivation are the main factors to be taken into account when delegating. *Competences* are mainly the knowledge, skills and abilities that an individual uses to master a given task and achieve a set goal. *Motivation* in this sense means the level of commitment and commitment to the task or goal. According to the delegation matrix, priority in delegation is given to activities falling into the first quadrant (1. Most suitable for delegation), which no longer motivate the managerial employee, or by frequent solving of similar tasks their performance has become a routine matter, or on the contrary, it is obvious that the colleague has better conditions (in the field of competencies) to solve them. Activities not suitable for delegation at all belong to quadrant 4 and represent mainly high value-added activities that the manager does not want to delegate because of bias and optimal competencies.

Activities to practise and develop skills (practical part):

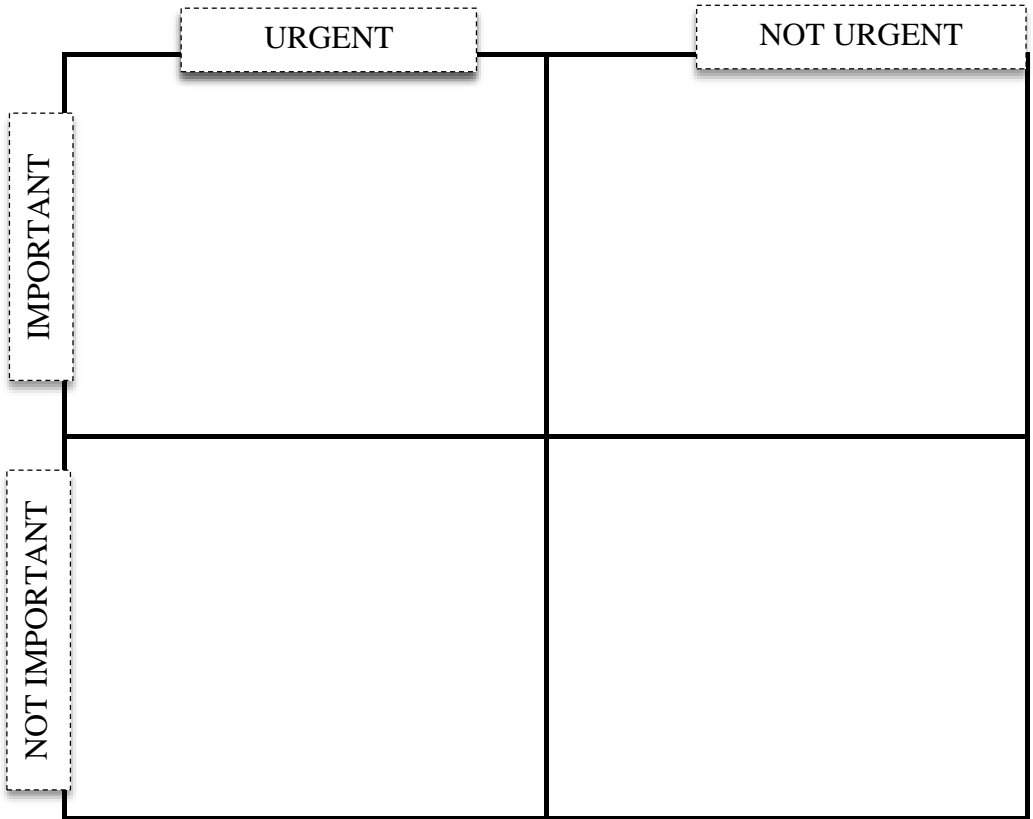
1. Formulate SMART goals according to the following:

- a. Aim to develop a specific skill that may also be needed when performing work on the FO:

- b. Aim to increase the prosperity of the hotel, or the efficiency of the front desk:

2. Place the following activities in the correct quadrants of the time management matrix!

- a. Providing the requested information on available capacities to the potential guest who requests it in person at the reception
- b. Handling an e-mail request to forward an electronic invoice for accommodation
- c. Confirmation of the reservation for the group of guests who requested it on the morning of the current day, electronically
- d. Handling an electronic complaint from a guest regarding dissatisfaction with accommodation
- e. Reaction to negative criticism that appeared on the relevant online platform
- f. Arranging a taxi for a guest leaving the hotel in two days
- g. Check-out of a guest who is currently waiting at the reception
- h. Preparation of the necessary statement for Sales
- i. Updating the reception inventory list
- j. Checking the settlement of the account of a guest leaving in 2 hours
- k. Handling a phone call regarding changes to rooms that are booked 10 days out



3. What other activities would you include in each quadrant? Please list at least 2 for each quadrant!

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT		
NOT IMPORTANT		

4. Collect at least four specific Front-Office work activities that can be delegated!

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Create a characteristic of the FO employee to whom you would most confidently be able to delegate tasks!

.....

.....

.....

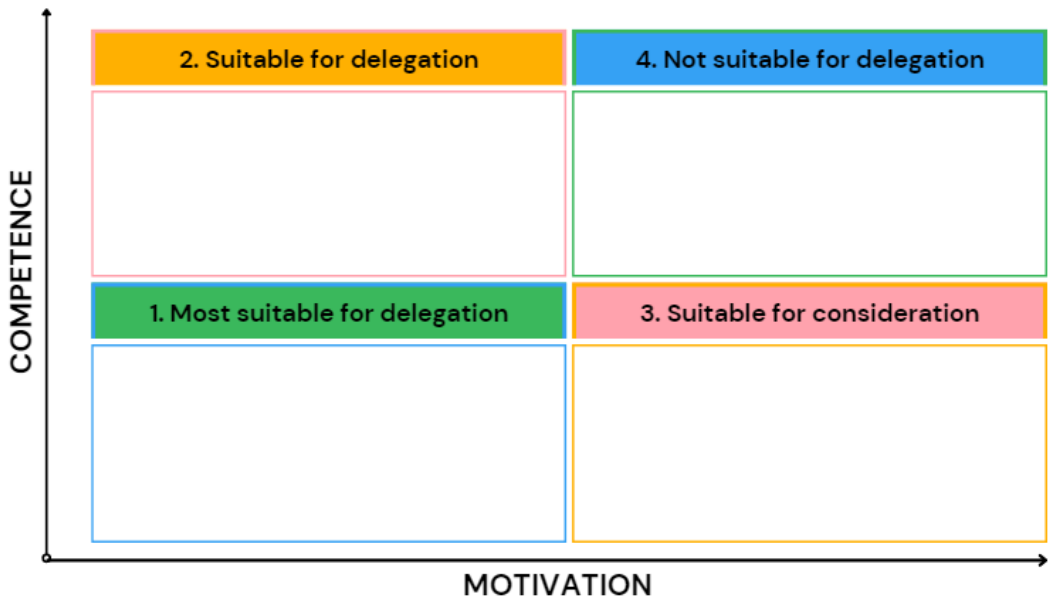
.....

.....

.....

6. Enter the work activities listed in Task 4 in the delegation matrix, as follows:

- Write one activity in each quadrant!
- In the quadrant, indicate what skills the worker should have to perform the task!



Questions to test knowledge

1. What do the letters S M A R T in the SMART Goals strategy mean?

S ...

M ...

A ...

R ...

T ...

2. The processing of the daily deadline is:

- a) short-term objective
- b) long-term objective
- c) neither of these

3. Successful completion of Time Management training and incorporation of the acquired skills into daily practice

- a) short-term objective
- b) long-term objective
- c) neither of these

4. We all have our weaknesses and therefore, when creating goals, we need to set goals that do not exceed our capabilities.

- a) S
- b) M
- c) A
- d) R

- e) T
- f) neither of these

5. Especially for long-term and complex goals, it is a good idea to identify the step-by-step activities that need to be addressed

- a) S
- b) M
- c) A
- d) R
- e) T
- f) neither of these

6. Increasing the number of nights in the hotel from one night to two.

- a) S
- b) M
- c) A
- d) R
- e) T
- f) neither of these

7. In which quadrant of the time management matrix would you place the following activity:

Personal development - participation in training to increase professional competencies.

- 1. Quadrant
- 2. Quadrant
- 3. Quadrant
- 4. Quadrant

8. In which quadrant of the time management matrix would you place the following activity:

Last-minute preparation for a business meeting.

1. Quadrant
2. Quadrant
3. Quadrant
4. Quadrant

9. Which issues need to be considered when deciding on delegation of tasks?

10. If you have to deal with an activity that requires the full deployment of your special skills, but you do not like to be involved in the activity

- (a) it is appropriate to delegate the activity
- (b) it is not appropriate to delegate the activity
- (c) it is most appropriate to delegate the activity

(d) it is advisable to consider well

Recommended literature

1. Kevin Kruse: Modern time management, Grada, 2019. ISBN 9788027124527
2. Stephen R. Covey: 7 habits of truly effective people. THE 7 COVEYS OF COVEY: THE 7 STEPS TO SUCCESS - THE 7 COVEYS OF COVEY

3. Brian Tracy: Eat the frog first. Eastone Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-80-89090-24-0

Chapter: Stress Management

Stress is a ubiquitous phenomenon in today's society and in the lives of individuals. Every person is confronted with various stressors on a daily basis. It is a state of psychological stress. It arises as a defensive reaction of the organism to



an imminent danger, disturbs the emotional balance and causes health problems. It prevents clear thinking and goal achievement.

Educational Objectives:

- ✓ explain what stress is and what it means, what happens in the body when we face stress
- ✓ describe the symptoms of stress in physical and psychological terms, understand the nature of stressful situations and identify the sources of stress
- ✓ clarify the difference between positive and negative stress in the workplace and its consequences on work performance
- ✓ learn relaxation techniques and methods to manage stressful situations in the FO, restore energy and "recharge the batteries"

The importance and relevance of the skill in the work of a receptionist (give specific examples of its use in practice in the FO):

- ✓ The receptionist, as a first-contact employee, performs various work activities in the front office. The first impression and overall satisfaction of hotel guests depends on his ability to handle the tasks efficiently. Stress management helps the receptionist to work in a productive, rational manner with respect to meeting work goals.

- ✓ Successful stress management requires prioritization and proper time management in FO work.
- ✓ It is necessary to accept a certain amount of stress in its natural form, which helps to deal with various situations in the FO in relation to guests, colleagues, management, external co-workers, etc., it can also stimulate to better work performance.
- ✓ The ability to relieve stress leads to a sustainable lifestyle and work-life balance.
- ✓ Managing stress in the workplace acts as a preventive measure against burnout syndrome, which often affects employees in the FO.
- ✓ The practical benefit of the learned skill of "getting rid" of stress helps health. Stress is a trigger for many chronic diseases.

Stress and stress management

Working in the tourism industry is diverse, creative, dynamic, provides many opportunities, career advancement, requires the ability to work with people and collaborate with colleagues, be in the right place at the right time, etc. All of these aspects of tourism work are what employees enjoy most, but they can also be sources and causes of stress.

Stress is considered a killer and a major cause of work disability. Tourism businesses fear stress because it reduces performance; individuals may find that stress destroys their health and happiness. Stress is a complex complex of different phenomena and above all very individual. Everyone experiences it from a different degree of stress. What one perceives as an overload, another finds an exciting and stimulating challenge. However, we all need some degree of stress. The role of stress is important. It represents the driving force necessary for employees to achieve their goals. Both a total lack of it and an excess of it are damaging.

Stress is a state or feeling induced by excessive demands or demands on a person that do not match his or her capabilities.

The word stress comes from the French term "estecier", which means "to be subjected to external pressure". Stress causes and reacts to pressure from outside, it can cause both low and high pressure for a person. The best way to relieve stress is to maintain an average pressure that can positively motivate. This motivation can be considered not only the abilities and capabilities of the FO employee, but also the level of control he or she has (e.g. at work) and the level of support needed from others (e.g. colleagues, family).

We emphasize that the goal of stress management is not to eliminate stress altogether, but to minimize it and to offer a set of anti-stress techniques to cope with stress and keep it at an acceptable level. In order to reduce stress levels in a sustainable and targeted manner, an accurate analysis and assessment of stress is required. To this end, individual activities and exercises to practice stress management skills are included at the end of the chapter.

Brain and stress

Living and working without stress is simply not possible. When the brain feels increased demands on its activity, it signals this by releasing various hormones from glands located throughout the body. These activators, such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisone, prepare the body for the activity. Muscles tense, the heart beats faster, breathing is quicker, blood supply is concentrated to the necessary places and withdrawn from "low demand" areas such as the digestive system and skin. Everything is designed to give the body a surge of energy that allows it to respond appropriately to the cause of stress:



fight or flight away. Simply to survive. One-off incidents of stress pose no serious problem. The real damage can be caused by long-term intense accumulation of stress, which our bodies are not built for. Unless one finds a way out, there is an increased risk of health complications.

Chronic stress can cause the following health and other problems:

- ✓ Diseases of the cardiovascular system (e.g. heart attack)
- ✓ Digestive diseases (e.g. type 2 diabetes)
- ✓ Diseases of the musculoskeletal and nervous systems
- ✓ Weakening of the immune system
- ✓ Deterioration of libido, complications in the reproductive system
- ✓ Overeating or skipping meals,
- ✓ sleep disorders
- ✓ Alcohol, drug abuse
- ✓ Psychological problems (anxiety, depression)
- ✓ Social isolation

Manifestations of stress

When we experience stress we can observe various changes in the body.

Physical manifestations of stress include the following symptoms:

Accelerated breathing

- ✓ Dry mouth
- ✓ Nausea, abdominal pain
- ✓ Pressure on the chest
- ✓ Headache to migraine
- ✓ Hair loss

- ✓ Rashes, acne
- ✓ Stiff muscles
- ✓ Shaking hands, sweating hands
- ✓ Tremor, voice trembling

Psychological manifestations of stress:

Mostly every person experiences nervousness, irritability, less concentration, total or partial inability to perform tasks during stress. A person may go into such a state that his body is in a complete state of depression, disoriented, causing stress in which the organism can no longer defend itself or react to the situation. The psychological manifestation of stress produces signals of changes in tension or changes in behaviour.

- ✓ Nervousness
- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Less concentration
- ✓ Change of moods
- ✓ Memory lapses
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Disorientation
- ✓ Behavioural changes

If an individual cannot cope with stress or feels anxiety or depression alongside it, professional medical help should be sought as soon as possible.

Stressors

Stressors can be defined as stimuli from the external or internal environment that disturb the balance in the body and lead to the activation of the stress response.



Source: own elaboration according to Ritter, B., 2022, 34 p.

External stressors

External stressors include stimuli that **do not come directly from our body, but come from our environment** and force us to react to them in some way. Examples of the most common external stressors are: traffic jams on the way to work, grumpy colleagues at work, irritated conflicting customers, holidays, holidays, moving, financial problems, work shift, work overload, nervous manager, draughts, cold, heat, e.g. at the reception, various unpredictable events, etc.

Internal stressors

Part of the negative stress comes from our internal environment. In principle, stress is not only caused by the phenomena that happen around a person, but also by what he or she deals with in his or her own head. So the mind itself can be the product of a lot of stress. Examples of the most common internal stressors

include fears, phobias, insecurities, lack of control, one's own opinions, expectations, beliefs, emotional turmoil, disordered relationships, loneliness, improper time management (if one manages to keep time under control - it is good stress management).

Psychological stressors (lack of sleep, feelings of fear, hopelessness), social stressors (unemployment, disrupted working relationships) and cultural stressors (the behaviour of foreigners) are particularly characteristic of contemporary modern society.

Stressors at work in the front office

Stressors at work can be literally anything - **work environment, demands and workload, colleagues, clients, business partners, technology, technology, operational and operational records, administration, hotel management, etc.** Ignoring long-term stress at work can also end in **Burnout Syndrome**.

On a normal day, stressful conditions can also be self-inflicted by a FO worker's negative approach to work duties. Examples:

- A. A front office employee admits that stress is part and parcel of the job by repeating statements such as *"it's always crazy here"* or *"we're not catching up again"*, even though the hotel lobby is quiet and hotel guests are dealt with continuously at the front desk.
- B. An employee often uses the phrase, *"There's more than I can handle."* In reality, however, he cannot list or remember the specific duties and tasks that he cannot realistically manage.
- C. The employee internalizes and accepts the fact that stress is a standard part of any job.

Is this attitude obvious? In identifying what is really stressful, it is also important to look at how often an employee puts themselves in this state even when there is no reason to do so. It is advisable to observe how often similar phrases are said and learn to change them or remove them altogether.

It is clear that contact staff in FOs are constantly exposed to the stress of customer contact, which constantly demands their attention, professionalism and courtesy. If this already demanding task is compounded by the presence of an unprepared customer who is uncooperative and nervous because they are unable to perform the activity correctly or because the previous customer was too slow, the contact staff may become rude and arrogant under the pressure of stress, e.g. the receptionist becomes rude and arrogant. Such a situation can be observed when there is extreme personal pressure at the reception desk, concierge desk, etc. The mutual relationship between the customer and the staff can also have a positive effect and contribute to reducing stress in the workplace as well as to increasing the degree of satisfaction of the staff. This is the case when the staff and the customer know each other or when the customer expresses their satisfaction with the service, performance and care provided.

Types of stress

Types of psychological stress were described by Hans Selye as early as 1975. We distinguish between positive and negative stress.

- ✓ **Eustress** - positive stress, is in a reasonable degree necessary for life. It stimulates to higher performance, motivates and helps to overcome obstacles. One can actively seek out these stressful situations oneself, e.g. adrenaline sports, physical training. Mild, brief and controllable periods of eustress can be experienced as positive stimuli and can serve for emotional and intellectual growth and development.

- ✓ **Distress** - negative excessive stress, which is perceived by a person as unpleasant, can harm health. The intensity and duration of its effects are usually beyond a person's control. The [WHO](#) (World Health Organization) even considers it one of the most serious health risks.



When we are exposed to a positive type of stress, eustress, we step out of our comfort zone and are able to perform better. This positive stress is very familiar to managers, athletes and artists, for example, for whom stress often helps to mobilize the necessary forces. **The problem arises, however, when stress affects us in the long term.** Whether it is a protracted problem at work or in private life, the stress that these situations cause can be devastating to our health.

How to manage stress

First of all, it is important to think and find out what are the most pressing stressors at work or in life that need to be eliminated. The most difficult step is often to clearly identify the stressors. In identifying the real cause, it is necessary to look at habits, attitudes and even excuses. Equally important is deciding to take steps to minimize them.

The following are some of the proven tips to manage stress:

- ✓ try to maintain healthy eating habits;
- ✓ do not forget to drink;
- ✓ get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night;
- ✓ play sports, exercise, move regularly;

- ✓ minimize the use of caffeine and alcohol;
- ✓ do not detach from friends, family, acquaintances - they can provide support, encouragement;
- ✓ separate private and professional life;
- ✓ take time to rest and relax or take care of yourself;
- ✓ learn meditation techniques, especially deep breathing;
- ✓ Prioritise your day;
- ✓ Know how to say NO;
- ✓ Learning to plan and organise;
- ✓ Learn proper time management;
- ✓ Accept things that are out of our control as they are. Not to worry unnecessarily about matters that we cannot change.

Summary:

Working in the tourism industry is demanding and can be stressful. It is a state of psychological stress that manifests itself in very individual ways. It arises when the demands placed on a person are not in line with his or her capabilities. The most common physical symptoms of stress include upset stomach, palpitations, rapid breathing and stiff muscles. These symptoms are also accompanied by psychological symptoms such as nervousness, memory lapses, behavioural changes, etc. Long-term stress can be a trigger for various chronic and civilisational diseases. Stress is triggered by stimuli from a person's external and internal environment, which we refer to as stressors. Stress performs a defensive function and is very important in a person's life in a proportionate degree. A distinction is made between positive and negative types of stress. Positive stress activates a person to perform better. Negative stress acts as a killer, hinders effective work and causes incapacity. An effective tool for managing stress is stress management (stress management). Its importance

lies in the analysis of stress, measurement of stress and reduction of stress of an individual through procedures and techniques to control and reduce stress.

Literature used:

1. FOUNTAIN, D. 2016. Stress in work and life. Prague : Portal. 2016, 184 p. ISBN 978-80-262-1033-7
2. CLEGG, B. 2005. Stress management. Brno : CP Books. 2005, 111 p. ISBN 80-251-0617-9
3. MRAVEC, B. 2011. Stress and adaptation. Bratislava : SAP. 2011, 332 p. ISBN 978-80-80-8095-067-5
4. RITTER, F. 2022. How to manage stress. Bratislava : Ikar, 2022, 269 p. ISBN 978-80-551-8061-8
5. What is stress and how to overcome it? [online]. 2022. Available online: <<https://www.union.sk/dlhodoby-stres-a-jeho-dosledky-ako-sa-zbavit-stresu/>>

Figure 1

<https://ndpsych.com.au/what-are-your-plans-for-national-stress-awareness-month/>

Figure 2

<https://www.benulekaren.sk/ako-sa-zbavit-stresu>

Figure 3

What to do in times of stress. Illustrated guide.

<https://www.health.gov.sk/>

Figure 4

What to do in times of stress. Illustrated guide.

<https://www.health.gov.sk/>

Figure 5

<https://zdravopedia.sk/choroby/stres>

Questions to test your knowledge



1. The reaction triggered by unreasonable work demands on a person that do not match his or her capabilities is:
 - a) Metabolism
 - b) Stress
 - c) Theme
2. Stimuli from the external and internal environment that lead to the activation of the stress response are called:
 - a) Stressors
 - b) Symptoms
 - c) Diseases
3. Nausea, rapid breathing, stiff muscles are among the symptoms of stress:
 - a) Emotional
 - b) Psychological
 - c) Physical
4. Give examples of at least 3 major diseases of civilisation that can be caused by long-term stress:

5. Stress is important and fulfils the body's defence function
 - a) I agree
 - b) I disagree
6. Stress that helps achieve goals and improves performance is:

- a) Neutral
- b) Positive
- c) Negative



7. Explain the importance and benefits of stress management:

8. Give at least 4 recommendations on how to manage stress:

Correct answers:

1b, 2a, 3c, 4. type 2 diabetes, sleep disorders, migraine, heart attack, 5a, 6b, 7 stress management has relevance and benefit in stress analysis, stress measurement, and stress reduction of the individual through stress management and stress reduction practices and techniques, 8 healthy diet, sports, meditation, good time management, adequate sleep.

Skills development activities

Don't let stress take over. Learn to manage it with stress management. The individual activities are designed to map out stress in two stages in a simple and practical way. We apply the Ritter, F. approach referred to as the SMR method; S - recognition, M - measurement, R - reduction. In the first phase, one's own stress needs to be analyzed and measured. It is necessary to record even trivial stress not exclusively stress of severe magnitude. In the second phase, activities are focused on skills related to stress reduction.

I. PHASE

Skills training to recognise and measure stress

Activity 1

There are a number of work situations in the FO that can be stressful. What stimuli stress you out? Think and write down the stressors during a normal working day (even the trivial ones, not just the serious ones) on the blank lines. Similarly, pay attention to your personal life.

WORK	THE COMPANY

Reflect on each of the above actions. To what extent do you have full control over them? Rate your level of control over these activities with the letters V (high), S (medium), N (low). Be guided by your impression and feeling.

Auxiliary questions for the "work" column:

- a) Do you work according to your own assignment or according to someone else's model?
- b) Do you follow the rules, interpret the rules, or make the rules?
- c) Do you set deadlines for finalizing tasks or are they given to you?
- d) Are you getting last minute deadlines?
- e) Do you deal with conflict situations? How often?

Focus on activities with a low level of control. Are there any of them where your level of control could be increased?

Remark.

Sufficient time should be set aside to make the list. The list is the first step that will strengthen your perception. Change begins with perception and awareness.

Activity 2

Big events in your life, whether they are positive or negative, are very stressful. The activity deals with what you have been through in the last year or so and what is likely to be in store for you in the coming year. Try to think about which events fall into these four categories.

maximally stressful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •death of a loved one, divorce, separation, •imprisonment, serious accident,
very stressful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •getting married, losing a job, retiring, •serious illness, pregnancy, birth of a child, death of a friend, financial problems, sexual problems
medium stressful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High credit, debt, change in job duties at work, •child leaving home, family disagreements, change in home conditions
low stressful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •holidays, holidays •parking fine •other major stressors

If you find that you are in a life phase with a high number of significant stressors, this can help you decide whether to focus primarily on defence - which really only works against small stressors - or on control.

Note: This scale is a very simplified version of the Holmes and Rahe Life Stress Inventory. Each stressful situation is assigned a score in this method. In our case, this is just an attempt to give you an idea and to think about what stage of life you are in in terms of major stressors.

Activity 3

Each individual reacts to stress individually. According to Meyer Friedman's theory, we distinguish people according to Type A and Type B behaviour. Think and decide which characteristic your typical reactions correspond to.

Type A	Type B
Other people get in your way	You like working with other people
You are very nervous	You're usually carefree
You often explode angrily	You perceive things calmly
You consider failure to be a significant problem	Failure is quickly forgotten
You suppress emotions	You don't resist emotions
Always trying to achieve even more	Are you happy with the way things are
You think life is a constant struggle	You think life is easy
You like to work with deadlines	Happy to work without deadlines

If you become aware of your position, try to gradually create a healthy appropriate balance between Type A and Type B in your behaviour.

Note: It is likely that for a person with Type A behaviour, stress will cause health problems. On the other hand, this group of people will make it further in their profession. If you tend to be Type A, moving to Type B is challenging because reactions are difficult to change, but with stress management techniques it is possible.

Activity 4

Think about how much stress you are currently experiencing at this stage of life based on a physical exam. Do you observe any of the following physical symptoms on yourself? Put a cross.

TAGS	YES	NO
Regular indigestion		
Poor quality sleep		
Pains that can be relieved by massage		
Eczema, rashes, other skin problems		
Early headaches		
Recurrent minor infections		
Cold sweat dressing		
Feelings of dizziness and shivering		
Breathing problems		
Tingling and itching of the palms of the hands		

The exercise helps to become aware of the state of chronic stress when the number of "yes" crosses prevails and forms a useful starting point for stress management.

Note: If these symptoms caused by stress persist for a long time, it is necessary to see a general practitioner.

Activity 5

Stress reactions are not limited to physical manifestations. What effect does stress have on your emotions, mind and soul? Do you observe any of the above psychological symptoms in yourself? Think about it and mark with a cross.

TAGS	YES	NO
You forget a lot		
You have difficulty making decisions		
Your ability to drive deteriorates		
You feel very restless		
Other people make you nervous		
Feeling unusual impatience		
You have frequent mood swings		
You suffer from lack of concentration		
Everything seems to be in vain		
Failing to keep things under control		
You feel like you're on the defensive		

Screening for psychological symptoms will help determine to what extent your stress is at a chronic stage. It provides a useful background for developing a stress management plan.

Note: It is true that these psychological symptoms can be triggered not only by significant stress, but also by another illness. If this is unavoidable, do not hesitate to seek medical help.

II. PHASE

Training skills to manage and minimise stress

Activity 6

A healthy lifestyle is a positive factor in stress management. Proper diet contributes to stress reduction. In this activity, we recommend applying the recommendations for a rational diet, which emphasise, for example, increased intake of fruit, vegetables, fish, lean meat, low-fat dairy products and fibre, and reduced intake of salt and cholesterol. Regular drinking is important. Think about the quality of your diet, whether you have a regular intake throughout the day and the composition of your diet.

Current diet	My dietary changes

Note : It is essential to follow your doctor's instructions if he/she has prescribed a diet for medical reasons.

Activity 7

The exercise is aimed at practicing self-esteem and mastering learned optimism. Lack of self-esteem contributes to stress. One factor that undermines self-esteem is the so-called "downward spiral." It is the inculcation of negative

thoughts, such as "I am not good at anything", "I will never amount to anything", etc. Based on this, one gets a bad feeling that one is not achieving adequate results at work.

Take a few minutes a day to write down the small accomplishments you've made throughout the day. Even if a work day is downright bad, you should be able to list the positive moments you experienced with the greatest self-respect. NOTHING is the answer. You need to underwrite all the small successes and focus on stress relief. None of us achieve huge successes on a daily basis, but accumulating a series of small successes builds self-esteem, self-confidence, positive thinking and contributes greatly to stress management.

My achievements today:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
-

Activity 8

The exercise is focused on assertiveness and conflict resolution. Front office employees are the first contact with hotel guests. In practice, they encounter a diverse typology of customers. A guest does not like to return to a hotel where they are not treated in a friendly manner. Reluctance, arrogance, hectic behaviour and a tense atmosphere contribute to creating an unfriendly atmosphere which the guest perceives negatively. Conversely, a positive atmosphere in the hotel creates favourable conditions for cultivating relationships with guests and for establishing mutual trust. Calm reactions

need to be trained and the ability to mute conflict is a good defence against stress.

Write down your reactions and reasoning in the following case study.

You work as a receptionist in the High Tatras in the XYZ hotel. It is one of the first dog-friendly hotels in our country. Imagine a situation when an angry guest who is visiting the hotel with his family for the first time shows up at the reception. However, his family member is not a pet. In a more aggressive voice, he complains about several problems at the same time, which make his stay in the hotel more difficult and spoil the impression of his dream holiday. These issues are: the smell in the room, noisy neighbours in the next room and a barking dog from an upper floor that makes it impossible for the guest to fall asleep.

Note: some recommendations on how to do this:

- ✓ We don't ask the guest to calm down (it has the opposite effect),
- ✓ Don't be tense,
- ✓ Avoid movements that convey tension (crossed arms, arms out to the side),

- ✓ The first words should express agreement,

Propose solutions, offer, **trade**

Activity 9

Regular physical exercise is not only good for your health, it is an essential part of a stress relief programme. It is important to plan this activity, because many people decide to take up sport but do not stick with it for long. Try this three-point plan:

1. Self-motivation. Find your own reason for exercising, which will be a driving force for you (e.g. fitness, weight loss, body shaping).
2. Choose an exercise that you really enjoy (not one that is trendy).
3. Add another value to it, e.g. social. Reach out to friends for joint sports activities. Alternatively, choose a sport where you can listen to your favourite music, radio, record a book, learn a foreign language, etc.

My workout plan:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Note: Physical exercise reduces physical tension and lowers the level of chemical stress elements in the blood, strengthens the body, helps overall fitness and the ability to cope with the stressful situation. Physical stress

control is the cornerstone upon which everything else is built. This activity cannot be ignored if you want to achieve results in stress management.

Activity 10

Most employees spend 40 or more hours a week at work. That's quite a long time compared to the time we spend at home in our own living rooms, for example. The conditions you work in affect your stress levels, both positively and negatively. Consider the effort you put into making your home environment more pleasant and compare this to the amount of effort you put into making your work environment more pleasant.

Organise a brainstorming session together in your work team on how to support changes in the work environment. Write down all the little things and essential issues in the working environment that you perceive as "unpleasant" and on a second list write down those that you think could improve the FO. Combine these lists and select the key ideas. Develop a proposal for a pleasant and stimulating front office and a timetable for working on the changes. This is, of course, also a finance issue. Think also about how the change will be funded. If you work alone, work out the proposal individually.

What I don't like	How to beautify the working environment

Note: The implementation of this plan may run into the problem of bureaucracy in the enterprise, or the necessity of standardized design in FOs in networked companies that do not allow individual customization. In independent companies, small and medium-sized enterprises, this obstacle should not occur.

Recommended reading:

1. <https://blog.profesia.sk/da-sa-porazit-stres-kedy-je-potrebne-naozaj-vypnut-podcast/>
2. <https://fitastyl.sk/clanky/psychologia-a-vztahy/co-je-to-vlastne-stres-ako-vznika-a-akemu-stresu-ste-neustale-vystavovani>
3. <https://istres.sk/blog/>
4. <https://istres.sk/metody-proti-stresu-14-ktore-musite-vyskusat/>
5. <https://positivepsychology.com/blog/>
6. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331901/9789240003910-slo.pdf>
7. www.psycom.net/too-much-stress
8. <https://www.zdravysvet.sk/blog/co-je-to-stres-priznaky-priciny>
9. <https://stressfix.sk>
10. <https://healwithnature.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Holmes-Rahe-Life-Stress-Inventory.pdf>
11. <https://www.paneurouni.com/blog/co-je-stres-a-ako-ho-prekonat/>
12. <https://www.narayanahealth.org/blog/stress-management/>

Chapter: Communication Skills

Communication is important in every working field, especially in the hotel industry. As a receptionist, you become the first point of contact with the guest, which means it's up to you what first impression the customer gets of the hotel. That's why it's important to know the principles of good communication and to further develop these skills.

Educational Objectives:

- ✓ Learn what verbal/non-verbal communication is
- ✓ They will learn what are the correct principles of communication with the guest in the various activities of work at the reception
- ✓ Learn how to respond to positive or negative reviews
- ✓ Learn what is most important in verbal, non-verbal or written communication

The importance and relevance of a given skill in the work of a receptionist:

- ✓ Stand out as an applicant for your dream job in the hotel industry.
- ✓ You'll be able to build strong relationships with guests and earn their repeat orders.
- ✓ You will be better prepared to deal with difficult situations and guest complaints.
- ✓ You will better understand the needs of your colleagues.
- ✓ You can create a positive work environment and build morale in your team.
- ✓ You can better promote your business and attract more customers.

What do you think should be the most important characteristic of a hotel employee? If someone were to ask me, I would say it is the ability to communicate effectively with guests or colleagues. In this new age of electronic communication, it should not be forgotten that in the hotel industry, we should place emphasis on effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and these skills should then be properly executed.

Persuasive communication skills are important in a hotel, regardless of whether or not employees come into direct contact with guests. Of course, if the employee does come into contact with guests, these skills are even more important. Many hotels spend considerable resources on training their staff to interact with guests. Good communication skills are a learned art and not a natural ability, so training to improve employee skills should be considered. Excellent communication skills enhance the guest experience because they show that you are listening to your guests, value their feedback, and convey clear messages. Good communication skills will impress your guests, which will further benefit every department of the hotel and, of course, the hotel itself.

Communication is a concept that has a very broad application. The word communication is of Latin origin and means "to bring something together". In the hotel industry, it connects not only hotel staff with hotel guests, but also staff with each other, or staff with their supervisors.

Communication has many characteristics, but the most important ones can be summarised in a few basic points:

-communication is necessary for effective self-expression;

-communication is the transmission and exchange of information in spoken, written, pictorial, or active form that takes place between people, which manifests itself in some effect;

-communication is the exchange of meanings between people using a common system of symbols.

Effective communication performs certain functions that are very evident in the hotel industry. These functions are:

-Informative function - through communication you sell your guests, colleagues, superiors or subordinates certain information, facts, data.

-Instructive function - this function is also informative, but with this function you sell to your customers or subordinates further explanations of meanings, descriptions, procedures, organization, instructions on how to do something, how to achieve something. For example, when you explain to guests e.g. "from what time and where breakfast is served in the hotel, how to get to the breakfast room", this communication fulfils not only an informative but also an instructional role. You are selling them verbal instructions on how to get to breakfast.

-The persuasive function - this function is about influencing another person with the intention of changing their opinion, attitude, evaluation or way of acting. Rationally, you are trying to persuade the one you are communicating with by using arguments, by using logic; you can even persuade emotionally by appealing to feelings. Persuasion by appealing to feelings is best avoided in reception work. However, you will use the persuasive function of communication often. We know that a hotel, like any business, needs to increase profits. The hotel can also increase profits through you, by using appropriate persuasion techniques. You can try to persuade guests to buy a massage at the hotel, to use the hotel bar, or to buy an optional excursion, for example.

-The reinforcing and motivating function - belongs in a way to the function of persuasion. It is actually about reinforcing certain feelings of self-

esteem, of one's own neediness, of strengthening one's relationship to something. The empowering and motivating function in the hotel industry is mainly used towards colleagues, superiors or subordinates. Everyone experiences a period at work when they are doing more or less well, and then it is the role of good colleagues, to encourage them in their work, to assure them that it will be better.

-Entertainment function - it's about being able to entertain, to make people laugh, to fill the time with communication that creates a sense of agreement and satisfaction. The front desk and receptionist(s) are often the customer's first contact with the guest. Therefore, try to make the customer feel that they are welcome, that you are looking forward to seeing them and try to entertain them, make them laugh with a kind word. In the same way, when your guests are waiting for something at the reception, try to speak to them, fill their waiting time with a short, nice conversation. For example, you can ask them how they like the hotel so far, how they like the surroundings of the hotel, if they have experienced something on their holiday / business trip, seen something.

-Educational and educational function - this function is specifically exercised mainly through institutions. However, as a receptionist you can also inform/educate your customers e.g. about the surroundings in which the hotel is located. You can tell them interesting information about the surroundings, about the hotel, about famous guests who have visited your hotel. You simply broaden the horizons of your customers.

-Socialising and socially integrating function - in this case it is about creating relationships. Between people, bringing them closer together, establishing contacts, strengthening the sense of interdependence and interdependence.

Communication also depends on our social level, at the reception especially on the social level of your guests, what social segments we are in, what segments we want to belong to. Each social stratum has a different way of communication, and by that we don't just mean a division based on wealth, social status and education, but also based on age or the level of maturity of a person. For example, you have to choose a different way of communication when you communicate with a senior citizen, you have to choose a different way of communication when you talk to a teenager. Of course, in both cases we are talking about polite and courteous communication.

-Function of entrusting - it serves to get rid of inner tension, to overcome difficulties, to entrust confidential information, usually with the expectation of support and help. The sharing of feelings, the opportunity to work through the thoughts that trouble a person, is a great support for each individual. You, as reception staff, will often fulfil the role of a psychologist. Guests often come to the hotel to relax, recharge their batteries and often take the opportunity to confide their problems to an unbiased third party. In this case, it is advisable to listen to the customer, to show him support. In this way, you can also show your customers that you care about them.

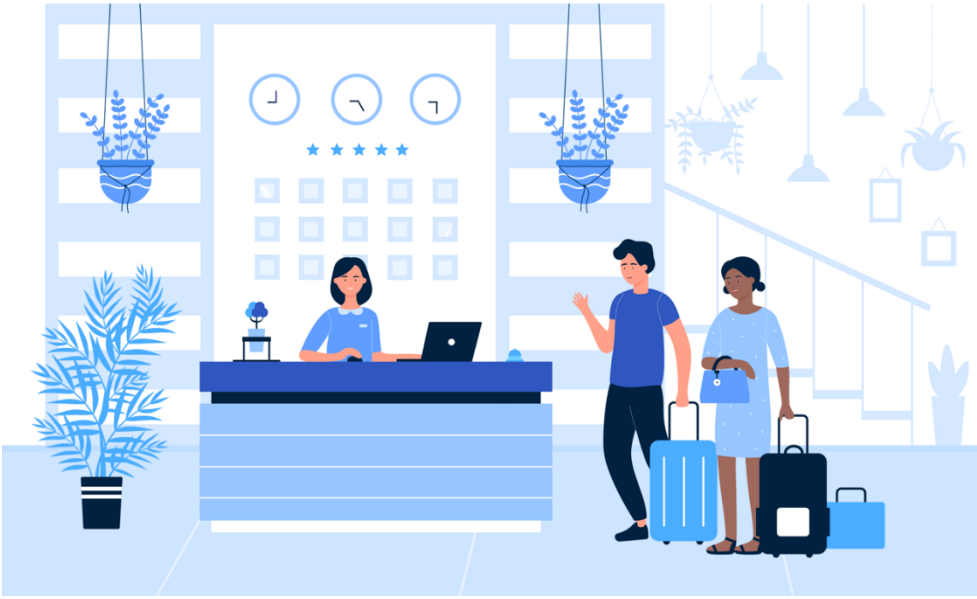


Image 1: Reception as the first point of contact with the customer. The receptionist is often the first point of contact with the customer. It is therefore important that the person concerned is familiar with the various functions of communication.

As a receptionist, you will not only use verbal (spoken) communication. The communication process can be broadly divided into verbal and non-verbal communication. As the word itself implies, verbal communication means communicating using words. It includes both written and spoken communication. Spoken conversations or dialogues are often influenced by tone of voice, pitch of voice, volume, or even the speed and clarity of speech. Non-verbal communication is warmed up by body language, facial expressions, signals, and visual schemas or pictures. There are several different ways we exchange information with each other.

There are four basic categories, or communication styles: verbal, non-verbal, written and visual. Let's take a closer look at the three that you'll use the most when working in reception:

As mentioned earlier, verbal communication is the use of language to convey information through spoken , or sign language. It is one of the most common types, not only in the hotel industry, used most often.

Here are some general steps you can take to develop your verbal communication skills. These communication skills will not only be used when you work at the reception desk.

-Use a strong and confident voice. Especially when giving information to several guests or a group of people, be sure to use a strong voice so that everyone can hear you. Be careful, however, that your voice does not sound very insistent. When speaking, be confident so that your ideas are clear and easy for all to understand.

-Use active listening. The second, very important aspect of verbal communication in the hotel industry is listening carefully and listening to what others are saying to you. Active listening skills are crucial when dealing with problems that may arise, when conducting a meeting with colleagues, when presenting to supervisors, and when participating in an individual conversation with anyone.

-Avoid so-called filler words. When communicating not only with customers, try to avoid words such as "um", "so", "yes". Although it may seem natural after you finish a sentence or pause to collect your thoughts, it can be distracting to your audience. So try to practice customer communication at home. Say out loud to yourself how a sample conversation with a customer would go. Concentrate on whether you use similar filler words. If you do use them, try saying the sample conversation with the customer again so that you don't use the filler words. For example, you can replace them by taking a breath whenever you are tempted to use them.

Non-verbal communication is the use of body language, gestures or facial expressions to convey information to others. It can be used intentionally or unintentionally. For example, you may smile unintentionally when you hear a pleasant or comforting thought or message. Non-verbal communication is especially useful when you are trying to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. If they show "closed" body language, such as crossed arms or legs, or hunched shoulders, they may feel worried, angry, or nervous. If they exhibit "open" body language with both feet on the ground and their hands next to each other or on the table, they are likely to feel positive and open to information. Of non-verbal communication, smiling is very important in the hotel industry. A gentle, unforced smile makes the customer feel welcome, that you were looking forward to his arrival and in this case he is more willing to address even possible shortcomings in a more calm manner.



Image 2: A pleasant smile is an important element of a receptionist's non-verbal communication towards the customer.

Here are some steps you can take to develop your non-verbal communication skills:

- *Notice how you feel physically.* During the day, as you experience different emotions (from energy, boredom, happiness or frustration), try to identify where in your body you feel that emotion. For example, if you feel anxious, you may notice that your stomach is clenched. Developing self-awareness in relation to how your emotions affect your body can allow you to better control your outward presentation.
- *Be intentional about non-verbal communication.* Try to display positive body language when you feel alert, open and positive about your surroundings. You can also use body language to support verbal communication if you feel confused or anxious about information, for example by using a furrowed brow. Use body language alongside verbal communication, for example by asking follow-up questions.
- *Imitate the non-verbal communication you find effective.* If you find certain facial expressions or body language beneficial in a particular setting, use them as a guide to improve your own non-verbal communication. For example, if you see that when someone nods their head, it effectively conveys approval and positive feedback, use this in your next customer contact. Again, we stress, don't forget to smile!

Written communication is the act of writing or printing symbols, such as letters and numbers, to convey information. It is useful because it provides a record of information that can be used. Written form is commonly used to share information through books, pamphlets, blogs, letters, notes, and more. Emails and chats are common forms of written communication in the workplace.

Here are some steps you can take to develop your written communication skills:

- *Strive for simplicity.* Written communication should be as simple and clear as possible. While it can be helpful to include a lot of detail in instructional communications, for example, you should look for areas where you can write as clearly as possible for your audience.
- *Don't rely on tone.* Since you don't have the nuances of verbal and non-verbal communication, be careful when trying to convey a certain tone when writing. For example, an attempt to communicate a joke, sarcasm, or excitement may translate differently depending on the audience. However, this type of communication towards the customer is not appropriate. Instead, try to keep your writing as simple and straightforward as possible and follow it up with verbal communication in which you can add more personality.
- *Take the time to review your written communication.* Setting aside time to re-read emails, letters or notes can help you identify mistakes or opportunities to say something differently. For important communications or communications that will be sent to a large number of people, it can be helpful to have a trusted colleague review them as well. It is the checking by a more experienced colleague or supervisor that can be a very effective way of improving your written communication.
- *Keep a file of written speeches that you find effective or enjoyable.* If you receive a particular brochure, email or memo that you find particularly useful or interesting for your work, save it for use in writing your own communications. Incorporating methods or styles that you like can help you improve over time.

	Verbal communication	Written communication	Non-verbal communication
1	Strong and confident voice	Simplicity	Notice the feelings
2	Active listening	Not relying on tone	Pay attention to non-verbal communication
3	Not using "filler words"	Examination and preservation of written communication	Emulate

Table 1: Types to improve communication

The service provided by the hotel and the work of the receptionist are part of the customer experience. If something goes wrong in the customer service process, it can result in a loss of customer loyalty. Therefore, constant communication within the organisation is essential.

There are general principles of communication with the customer that are particularly useful for the receptionist to follow:

- *There is always something extra for the customer.* In order for a receptionist to be able to provide quality service to the customer, it is important that he or she has a thorough understanding of his or her duties, the responsibilities of the team in which he or she works and, of course, the processes in the organisation. Because if there is a mistake in the service delivery process, if someone does not follow the workflow and provide a quality service, the customer will feel it and may complain, and his complaint will have to be addressed by more employees involved in the situation. Most often it is the receptionist who receives the most

complaints from guests, so it must be the receptionist's endeavour to resolve the customer's problems in a simple and hassle-free way first time. Quality service means that you will help the customer even if the problem goes beyond the scope of your job duties. Lending a helping hand to the customer is better than referring the customer to others. You need to show the customer you are willing to go the extra mile, go above and beyond the call of duty, and help solve their problem.

- *The details make the service exceptional.* The customer notices the details. If you, as an employee, pay attention to the childaly, you are sending a signal to the customer that this is important to the organisation. These are small attentions that can be put into a customer encounter. For example, what you look like, what your work environment looks like, how a phone call with you goes, how long it takes for a customer to get an email response, how you respond to customer issues, etc.
- *Advice on buying a service.* When buying a service at reception, such as a tour, there are various alternatives. Therefore, you must provide the customer with qualified information about the services and products on offer. If the customer has not specified a price limit, the offer starts with the highest price that can be discounted. Currently, a large proportion of price-sensitive customers respond to so-called promotional or last-minute prices without realising that the quality of such products may not match the customer's expectations. When communicating, the customer needs to be made aware of quality and all the facts that may affect it. Sales and service are inseparable.
- *Communication through the media.* In addition to face-to-face contact, customers often use a variety of communication media, most commonly telephone and email. The telephone provides an opportunity to make contact with the customer, allows an immediate response to the

stimulus, but also transmits the tone of voice, pauses or silence. After a face-to-face meeting, a phone call is an excellent opportunity to make a good impression, to react more promptly to ambiguities and to recognise the customer's needs.

Always answer and thank. Communicating through communication media has the same goal as communicating offline. The customer not only wants to be informed, but also wants to receive a quick and clear response. Therefore, it is essential to respond positively, calmly, professionally, respectfully and with dignity even to a negative message. It doesn't matter whether it's in the written word, on the phone or in person. The written message should be personalised, directed directly to the customer, not computer-generated. A personal response should inspire the customer's confidence and leave a positive impression. A prompt response that lets the customer know that you are interested in them and want to help them meet their needs is important. In personal contact, you need to use your best empathy, questioning and problem-solving skills. When dealing with problems, it is important to apologise sincerely, look for ways to defuse the situation and remedy the deficiency so that the situation does not recur. Above all, listen to the customer and remain calm. Every positive and negative expression of the customer should be thanked.

When to thank the customer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- having opted for your services- when complimenting you or your hotel- when it comes with comments or suggestions- when they try a new service, they buy a new product- when they recommend your hotel to friends- when he had to wait longer

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- when it helps you to serve him better- when he complains to you because he's giving you a chance to win his trust back- when it makes you laugh- when you say goodbye to him when you leave |
|--|

Table 2: When to thank the customer

There are several ways to thank the customer. Verbal thanks should be cordial and personal. A written thank you can be an email, but not an automated but personalised reply.

Model situations

Communication with the customer at the reception desk will vary depending on the activity you are doing. The receptionist's communication with the customer often starts over the phone when booking accommodation. Advice on how to achieve a successful booking:

- Emphasise quality - it is useful to compare the offer with something
- Preliminary price - start with a higher price, then reduce it if possible, the customer will feel that he has made a good bargain
- Convince - agree with the customer, but convince him
- Sandwich - talk about benefits, price, advantages
- Evaluate the price - list what the guest can get for the price
- Know 100% the product you offer

- Conduct the conversation in a positive spirit, positive tone of speech - it is a good idea to smile before picking up the phone, this will create a pleasant tone of speech
- Listen, listen, listen, listen
- Try to find out the customer's needs and requirements
- Know your competition and focus on what you know they don't offer

Table 3: Advice on how to achieve a successful booking

In case the guest/guests have just arrived, they have come to check in, we indicate the correct communication of the receptionist during the check-in process at the hotel:

- Smile!
- Stand upright.
- Say hello: *"Hello / Good evening"*.
- *"Do you have a reservation with us, please?"*
- *"Welcome to our Hotel, Sir/Madam/Madam ..."*
- *"What was your journey?"*
- Booking summary (number of nights, room type, bed configuration, view, all rooms are non-smoking, ...)
- You are still smiling!
- *"Can I still offer you, sir/madam , or , please? (an attempt at upselling - selling something extra).*
- *"Mr./Ms., may I please ask for your identification? Thank you."*
- *"At the same time, I would also like to ask you for a credit card (as a guarantee for the stay/prepayment). Thank you."*
- *"Sir/Madam, your room number is (don't say, show), your room is located on thefloor, breakfast is served from 7:00am to 10:00am in the restaurant on the ground floor".*
- *"Have a pleasant stay!"*
- You are still smiling!

Table 4: Example of proper communication by a receptionist during the check-in process

Examples of how to offer extra services (how to achieve upselling):

- The suite has a work area with internet access, and the room has a separate bedroom from the study.
- By purchasing a suite instead of a standard room, you'll save time and money because you can handle appointments right in your room, and you'll have the convenience of doing your paperwork in the evening while still maintaining your privacy in the other room.
- The room has a separate study room where you can undisturbed handle your business meetings and for an extra charge of only 20 euros extra, so you also have a comfortable desk and internet connection, so you can calmly handle your administration whenever you wish.

Table 5: Advice on how to achieve uspelling/selling an extra service

Unfortunately, you will also encounter negative situations, such as complaints, when working at the reception desk. There are a few principles to follow when dealing with negative situations:

- Keep calm, behave politely, don't raise your voice
- Take the customer to a quiet place
- Eye contact, positive body language
- Listen to the customer without interruption
- Don't judge the customer and don't argue with them
- Express sincere regret for the situation
- Ask questions to find out the causes of the complaint
- Assure the customer of the solution
- Explain the further procedure
- Ask the customer what you can do to make them happy
- Don't promise what you can't deliver
- Summarise the information and ensure correct understanding
- Thank you for complaining

Table 6: Principles for dealing with negative situations

Part of a receptionist's job is to respond to reviews, and not just negative ones, but positive ones as well.

General principles for responding to customer reviews:

- reply to all reviews,

- please reply as quickly as possible,
- reply in a friendly and honest manner,
- Thank you,
- be specific,
- Sign here.

Tips on how to respond to positive reviews:

- Equal care for all guests - Not only the negative review needs to be answered. Up to 78% of potential guests have a more positive opinion of a hotel if they respond to a positive review.
- Praise your employees - Did your guest mention a very kind and pleasant colleague? Feel free to praise her in your reply as well. It costs nothing and your guests will see that you care about your employees/colleagues and value them enough.
- Don't force your guests into anything else - your guests have already done their job and written a nice review. You're trying to take advantage of the situation - invite them to your website or social media, ask them to share their experience with yours and their friends and family. If they wanted to, they already did. If they haven't, now is a good time to gently nudge them into something.
- Invite your guests to your next visit

Example of a positive review and response
<p>Guest: "Great staff, excellent cuisine, very tolerant of our two dogs. We enjoyed our holiday very much, I would go back again in a heartbeat ☺"</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Answer: Dear,</p> <p>Thank you for choosing our hotel for your holiday and we are very pleased with your kind words. We look forward to seeing you next time, the Slovak Paradise will enchant you in every season!</p>

Table 7: Example of a positive review and response

Tips on how to respond to negative reviews:

- Count to 10, or sleep on it.
- Don't ignore them, they won't go away.
- Excuse me.
- Control yourself - Never be defensive or aggressive in your response to a review. Even if the review upsets and upsets you, be professional. Remember that your response is not only seen by the guest who wrote it, but also by other potential guests who are deciding whether to choose you or your competition.
- Attend to the specific problem - Show him that you care. Write down what steps you will take to solve the problem or if it is already solved. Then add physical evidence of the problem being solved - a photo or video. Let guests see that their feedback is valuable information for you.
- Discounts only as a last resort - Never offer discounts and freebies unless absolutely necessary. Why? There will be plenty of customers who will want to take advantage of your kindness. They will complain on purpose to get the discount too, even if they were happy with your service.

Summary

As a receptionist, you will often be the first person a guest interacts with, so your demeanour is very important. You need to pay attention to all forms of communication - verbal, non-verbal and written. In terms of verbal communication, it is very important to maintain a kind, positive and calm tone of speech, even if you are dealing with situations that are not the most pleasant. In non-verbal communication, smiling is the most important. The smile should be polite, not forced. Even in the case of a negative customer experience, a gentle smile shows that you care about the customer's opinion and that you are trying to resolve their problem with calmness and detachment. In written communication, it is very important that you keep it clear and concise.

Literature used:

Beránek, J. et al. 2013. *Modern hotel operations management*. Prague: Mag Consulting, 2013. ISBN 978-80-86724-45-4.

Gúčik, M.-Gajdošík, T.-Lencséssová, Z. 2016: *Quality and customer satisfaction in tourism*. Bratislava: Wolters Kluwer, 2016. 207s.

Gúčik, M. et al. 2009. *Managing complaints in service organisations*. Banská Bystrica : EF UMB, 2009. 122 p. ISBN 978-80-8083-839-3.

Křížek, F. - Neufus, J. 2014: *Modern hotel management*. Prague: Grada Publishing, 2014. 224 p. ISBN 978-80-247-4835-1

Muhleisen, S.-Oberhuber, N. 2005: *Communication and other soft skills*. Prague: Grada Publishing, 2005. 183s.

Questions to test knowledge:

Define communication and state why effective communication is important not only in the hotel industry.

What is the most important in verbal communication when working at the reception?

What is the most important in non-verbal communication when working in reception?

How do you respond to positive reviews?

What are the guidelines for responding to negative reviews?

Skills development activities:

- Find negative reviews of hotels you know on the internet. Try to analyse whether the hotel's response to them was correct, if any. Try to write your own response to the negative reviews.
- Find positive hotel reviews on the internet. Analyze the hotel's response, if any, write down the response to such a positive review as well.
- Stand in front of a mirror, imagine you are working at the reception desk and a customer has come to check in. Try to have an imaginary conversation with him. Observe your verbal and non-verbal communication, making sure to keep a positive face and a smile on your face.

Recommended Reading :

Front office training: <https://www.erdo.sk/front-office/>

Muhleisen, S.-Oberhuber, N. 2005: *Communication and other soft skills*. Prague: Grada Publishing, 2005. 183s.

Mikulášik, M. 2003: *Communication skills in practice*. Prague: Grada Publishing, 2003. 360s.