

or a few employees performing all of these functions. However, owing to the size and complexity of many lodging properties (some with thousands of rooms and employees), additional managers, support staff, and hourly employees performing a variety of specific functions may also be required to ensure effective and efficient operations.

No matter how large or small the property, the ultimate responsibility for property management remains with the General Manager (GM). GMs hold uniquely important positions, as they are the focal point for employees, guests, and the community. As the top manager of a property, they perform many different but interrelated roles. These roles include providing leadership, working with the community, gathering and distributing information, allocating resources, handling problems, and coordinating a wide variety of activities and functions.

Research continues to confirm the importance of the role of the GM in the successful operation of a hotel; the scope of this role is also changing depending on the type of property being operated. “In many hotels, the GM is an employee of a hotel operating firm and is effectively an agent of the operator or owner (and sometimes both parties). . . . With regard to individual functional areas, chain GMs have relatively greater authority in human resources, marketing, and strategy but limited autonomy in finance and operations” (p. 433).

As properties grow, the primary administrative and senior management duties for the revenue-producing activities of the hotel are typically divided between the front office manager, the director of food and beverage, and the director of housekeeping, who report to the general manager. It is also common in larger properties to find the front office manager and the executive housekeeper reporting to the director of rooms. These duties are further divided between front-of-the-house positions (guest contact services) and back-of-the-house positions (guest support services). For all but the smallest properties, front-of-the-house room’s duties are performed in the front office and by guest service employees such as the bell, concierge, and valet parking staff. Back-of-the-house room’s duties are typically performed by the housekeeping department. You will learn more about food and beverage operations in Chapter 8.

Larger and more complex properties will require additional cost center functions such as marketing (sales), accounting (controller), human resource management (HR), information technology (IT), building maintenance (engineering), purchasing, and security services. An example of a traditional organizational structure for a large lodging property can be seen in Figure 7.2. No matter what brand or management structure, “[t]he modern guest is looking for environments that are refreshing, colorful, creative, and connective, not just efficient and tasteful” (p. 22).²⁷

Meeting Guests’ Needs

The front office serves as the “heart” of all lodging properties as well as the first and last point for guest contact. Front office operations are the nerve center and focal point of all guest activities and many employee contacts. Front office employees are charged not only with meeting and greeting guests but also with fielding their inquiries about other available services and serving as the point of exchange for most financial transactions. Other special assistance that may be provided under the direction of the front office includes bell service, concierge service, and valet parking. It is interesting to note that during interviews with hotel guests about delightful experiences, the front office was the most cited service department by both North American and Northern European guests.²⁸

A key back-of-the-house guest service support group that is critical to guest satisfaction is housekeeping. In addition to ensuring the cleanliness of all guest facilities, the housekeeping department typically has the largest number of employees in a lodging