Front Office – Reservation

Reservation of the hotel accommodation is one of the important responsibilities of the front office department. A potential guest contacts a hotel for availability of the desired type of accommodation and any allied services that the hotel offers. The front office department needs to react to the enquiry of the guests.

For a guest, reservation increases the chances of a better deal for assured accommodation on arrival. For a hotel, reservation can enable a better management of guest experience during usual as well as peak seasons. Reservation procedure varies depending on the size and brand of the hotel and the reservation system employed.

Let us know the details how the front office handles reservations.

Types of Hotel Reservation Systems

An efficient and effective reservation system is what adds to the hotel's profitability. Following are the most popular reservation systems:

Whitney System of Reservation

It was developed in 1940 by Whitney Paper Corporation from New York, hence the name. This is a conventional manual reservation system the hotels used to follow during pre-computer days in the hotels. It contains the following setup for reservation:

- Slip for request of accommodation reservation.
- Whitney slip that records guest name, accommodation type, number, and duration of stay.
- Temporary/Permanent arrival slip.
- Guest bill.
- Guest registration card.
- Correspondence file.
- Bedroom journal that records daily occupancy of the guest with date, guest name, room type, and room number.

    Let us see how a Whitney slip and the bedroom journal looks like.

Whitney Slip

Guest Name	Date of Arrival	Room Type	Room Rate	Date of Departure
Mode of Reservation		**Reserved By**		**Date Received**
Reservation Agency if Any:				
Billing Instructions		**Date of Confirmation**		

Bedroom Journal

Date: _____

Guest Name	Room Number	Room Particulars

Though this system proved efficient, it generated a lot of paperwork with occasional scope for errors. The drawbacks were overcome by the central reservation system.
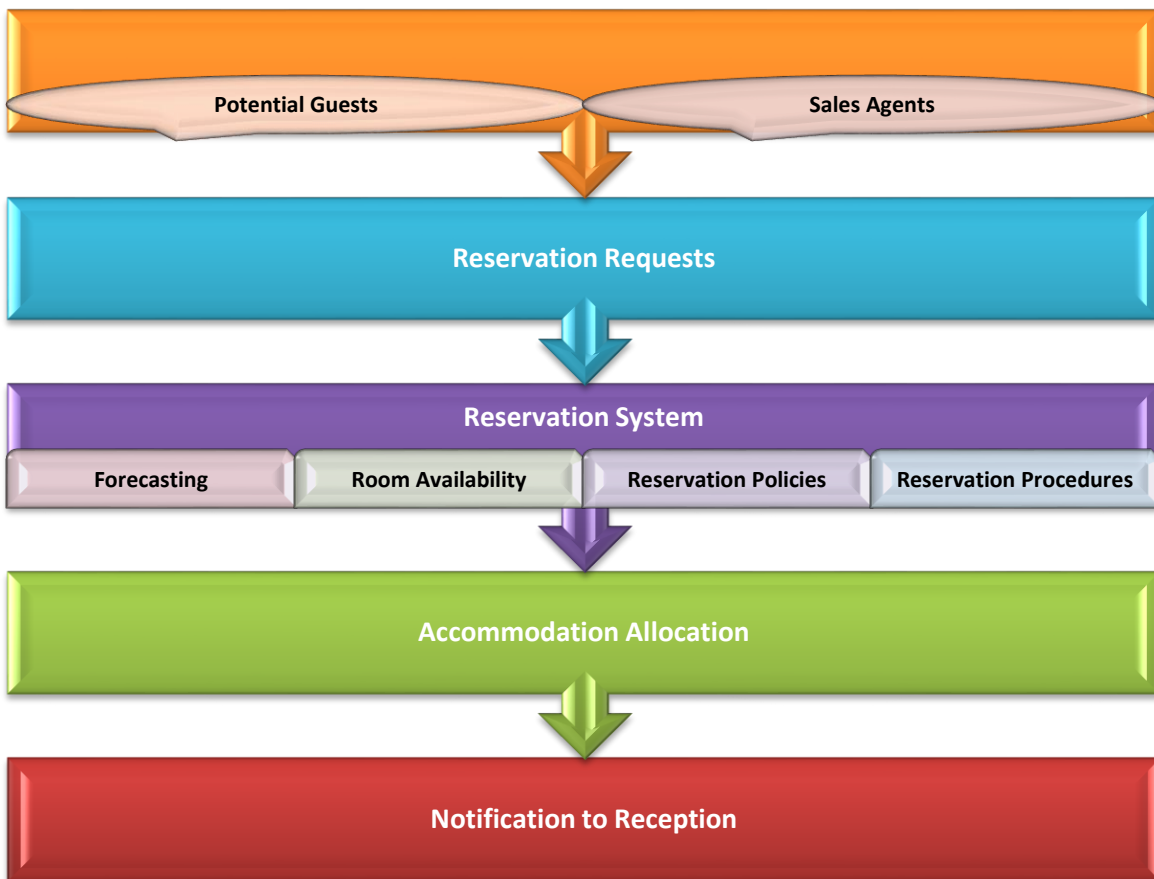
Central Reservation System (CRS)

It is a computerized reservation system that reduces paperwork and can handle large amount of reservation data effortlessly.

In this system, since the guest data and reservation data are stored on the storage disks of the computers, it can be accessed at wish. It is stored in the form of a database of collection of records which can enable searching, adding, removing, or updating any guest related data.

The computerized reservation system not only helps to make guest reservations but also helps to forecast how many accommodations can be reserved in an upcoming time period.

This is how a CRS typically works:

Potential Guests	Sales Agents

Reservation Requests

Reservation System

Forecasting	Room Availability	Reservation Policies	Reservation Procedures

Accommodation Allocation

Notification to Reception

The guests of hotel sales agents call for checking room availability. It is forwarded to the front office reservation staff. The staff finds out details about the requirement and checks the availability of desired accommodation in the database. According to the reservation policies and procedures, the reservation staff member then notifies or suggests the reception about the accommodation availability and takes further appropriate action.

The Role of Internet in Reservations

The Internet has brought a momentum in the hospitality business as well. It facilitates seamless management of a hotel's offices located at various places and their various departments.

The hotel businesses are actively working on the Internet 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Internet has simplified complex system of reservations. It enables Online Hotel Management Systems (OHMS) such as Hotelogix to help guests reserve accommodation of their choice fast and conveniently. The guests of the hotel can access rate charts, accommodation availability, check-in and check-out timings, details about the restaurants, and so on, at their own convenience.

Sources of Reservations

People travel for various reasons such as personal as well as for MICE. There are various sources from whom the requests of reservation pour in:

- **Direct Request from Guests**: The prospective guests can approach individually to the hotel for reservation of accommodation mostly when they are single travelers or family travelers.

- **Request from Travel Agent**: They can approach the hotel for booking accommodations for group travelers.

- **Request from Corporate Agent**: An organization can request a hotel to reserve accommodations for their employees, clients, or visitors.

- **Request from Airlines**: The airlines can reserve accommodations for their working staff for routine stay as well as in case of flight cancellations.

- **Request from Institutions**: Various SMERF or NGO institutions request to reserve hotels for sports people, delegations of embassies, or performing-art program groups, workshop groups, and alike who travel to different location.

Managing Reservations

The first step in reserving an accommodation is to check if the requested kind of accommodation is available for selling for a specific period of time. It is done by checking forecast boards or computerized systems.

Accepting Reservation of Accommodation

Reservation of an accommodation is accepted if the desired type of accommodation is available in the hotel for selling. If it is not available during a rush season or if the guest is in urgent need, the staff member suggests for almost similar alternative accommodation by stating its amenities and facilities.

Reservation is accepted in the following cases in conjunction with the availability of the accommodation:

- Is the guest new to the hotel?
- Does the guest have good credentials with the hotel regarding payment and behavior?
- Is the guest a VIP?

Denying Reservation of Accommodation

Denial of reservation directly means loss of revenue. But there are certain situations when the reservation staff turns down the reservation for the guests or agents. The potential causes of denying reservation are:

- All accommodations in hotel booked: In such case, the reservation staff refuses the reservation politely and suggests an alternative hotel in the same area or different property of the same owner in a nearby area.

- Requested type of accommodation not available: In such case, the reservation staff suggests an alternate accommodation.

- Guest/Agent blacklisted: Some guests or agents are blacklisted due to their history of payment dues against the hotel. In such case, the reservation clerk seeks for reservation manager's advice.

Finally, the reservation section of the front office prepares the list of the reservations for the day and sends it to the front desk. The list also contains vital information such as if the guest is new or repeat, guest preferences about room location or décor. The rooms are then prepared by housekeeping.

Cancelling a Reservation of Accommodation

This is yet another event when the hotel loses business with a guest. Though the fact is overt loss of revenue, the front office staff must react to it politely and gracefully. The staff member also needs to

convey any cancellation charges the guest must pay while cancelling the reservation. Cancellation is done in the following steps:

- Finding out details of the guest and respective reserved accommodation.
- Verifying charges of cancellation, if any.
- Notifying the guest about cancellation charges.
- Cancelling the reservation in the system.
- Updating the system for accommodation availability.
- Confirming the guest about the cancellation.

Generating Reservation Report

Reservation reports are generated for the sake of helping the management find trends and making forecast about business.

The reports typically are of the following types:

- Occupancy report.
- Special arrival report.
- Revenue forecast report.
- Turn away report.