The front office staff interacts with all departments of the hotel, including marketing and sales, housekeeping, food and beverage, banquet, controller, maintenance, security, and human resources. These departments view the front office as a communication liaison in providing guest services. Each of the departments has a unique communication link with the front office staff.

**Marketing and Sales Department**

The marketing and sales department relies on the front office to provide data on guest histories, details concerning each guest’s visit. Some of the information gathered is based on zip code, frequency of visits, corporate affiliation, special needs, and reservations for sleeping rooms. It is also the front office’s job to make a good first impression on the public, to relay messages, and to meet the requests of guests who are using the hotel for meetings, seminars, and banquets.

The guest history is a valuable resource for marketing and sales, which use the guest registration information to target marketing campaigns, develop promotions, prepare mailing labels, and select appropriate advertising media. The front office staff must make every effort to keep this database current and accurate.

The process of completing the booking of a special function (such as a wedding reception, convention, or seminar) depends on the availability of sleeping rooms for guests. The marketing and sales executives may have to check the lists of available rooms three, six, or even twelve months in the future to be sure the hotel can accommodate the expected number of guests. A database of available rooms is maintained in the property management system by the front office.

Messages for the marketing and sales department must be relayed completely, accurately, and quickly. The switchboard operator is a vital link in the communication between the prospective client and a salesperson in the marketing and sales department. The front office manager should instruct all new personnel in the front office about the staff in the marketing and sales department and what each person’s job.

**Housekeeping Department**

Housekeeping and the front office communicate with each other about housekeeping room status, the
report on the availability of the rooms for immediate guest occupancy. Housekeeping room status can be described in the following communication terms:

- **Available Clean, or Ready**—room is ready to be occupied
- **Occupied**—guest or guests are already occupying a room
- **Stay over**—guest will not be checking out of a room on the current day
- **Dirty or On-Change**—guest has checked out of the room, but the housekeeping staff has not released the room for occupancy
- **Out-of-Order**—room is not available for occupancy because of a mechanical malfunction

Housekeeping and the front office also communicate on the details of potential house count (a report of the number of guests registered in the hotel), security concerns, and requests for amenities (personal toiletry items such as shampoo, toothpaste, mouthwash, and electrical equipment). These issues are of immediate concern to the guest as well as to supervisors in the hotel.

**FOOD AND BEVERAGE DEPARTMENT**

Communication between the food and beverage department and the front office is also essential. Some of this communication is conveyed by relaying messages and providing accurate information on transfers, which are forms used to communicate a charge to a guest’s account. Communication activities also include reporting predicted house counts, an estimate of the number of guests expected to register based on previous occupancy activities, and processing requests for paid-outs, forms used to indicate the amounts of monies paid out of the cashier’s drawer on behalf of a guest or an employee of the hotel. These vital services help an overworked food and beverage manager, restaurant manager, or banquet captain meet the demands of the public.

Incoming messages for the food and beverage manager and executive chef from vendors and other industry representatives are important to the business operation of the food and beverage department. If the switchboard operator is given instructions on screening callers (such as times when the executive chef cannot be disturbed because of a busy workload or staff meetings, or vendors in whom the chef is not interested), the important messages will receive top priority.

**MAINTENANCE OR ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**

The maintenance or engineering department and front office communicate on room status and requests for maintenance service. Maintenance employees must know the occupancy status of a room before attending to plumbing, heating, or air-conditioning problems. If the room is reserved, the two departments will work out a time frame so the guest will be able to enter the room or be assigned to
another room. Cooperative efforts produce the best solutions to sometimes seemingly impossible situations.

**SECURITY DEPARTMENT**

Communications between the security department and the front office are very important in providing hospitality to the guest. These departments work together very closely in maintaining guest security. Fire safety measures and emergency communication systems as well as procedures for routine investigation of guest security concerns require the cooperation of these departments.

**HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

The human resources management department may rely on the front office staff to act as an initial point of contact for potential employees in all departments. It may even ask the front office to screen job candidates. If so, guidelines for and training in screening methods must be provided.

**BANQUET DEPARTMENT**

The banquet department, which often combines the functions of a marketing and sales department and a food and beverage department, requires the front office to relay information to guests about scheduled events and bill payment. The front desk staff may also provide labor to prepare the daily announcement board, an inside listing of the daily activities of the hotel (time, group, and room assignment), and marquee, the curbside message board, which includes the logo of the hotel and space for a message. Since the majority of banquet guests may not be registered guests in the hotel, the front office provides a logical communications center.