

Good Practices Guide for Guesthouses and Small Hotels



Dear Guesthouse or Hotel Owner / Manager,

This is an exciting time for the hospitality industry. Tourism is growing, and there will be many opportunities for your business to prosper—if it is managed well. Because you may have questions about how best to manage your guesthouse or hotel, however, we have created this Toolbox to give you guidance and suggestions.

The Toolbox contains

1. A written **Good Practices Guide** for owners and managers that includes
 - a. Checklists
 - b. Sample forms
 - c. English language guides
2. A DVD that includes
 - a. Instructional videos to help your Receptionists, Housekeepers, and Breakfast Servers improve their skills
 - b. Copies of all the checklists and forms so you can change them to meet your needs (this way, you can print them and post them for your employees to see)

Not all guesthouses and hotels are the same, and not all of this material will apply to your facility. But much of it will, so please review the Toolbox and take from it the ideas and suggestions that are appropriate for you and your employees.

The Toolbox was designed to be used with your staff, at *your* convenience, in the comfort of *your* guesthouse or hotel. You and your staff can work through it at your leisure and review the materials often.

We wish you much success in managing your guesthouse or hotel.

Sincerely,

The ILO Team

Instructions for Using the Toolbox

General Introduction

1. Show the Toolbox to your Receptionists, Housekeepers, and Breakfast Servers.
2. Explain that the Tourism / Hospitality industry will continue to grow, and that this is an excellent way to develop valuable skills.
3. Explain that the Toolbox was created to help them
 - a. Develop a professional image.
 - b. Develop good customer service skills (important for every job!).
 - c. Perform duties in a professional, systematic way.
 - d. Learn valuable English words and expressions.
4. Stress that these skills will be valuable for *any* job they decide to do.

Using the DVD

1. Explain that there is a separate module on the DVD for each of these roles:
 - a. Receptionist
 - b. Housekeeper
 - c. Breakfast Server
2. Ask them to watch **each** module that applies to them (some employees do all *three* roles and will benefit from all three modules).
3. Explain that each module includes:
 - a. A list of the contents.
 - b. Checklists to help them do their jobs efficiently.
 - c. An accompanying **English Language Guide**.
4. Inform them that they do not have to watch all the segments immediately.
 - a. Recommend that they watch a little bit at a time and discuss and practice the concepts together.
 - b. Encourage them to pause the DVD and do the activities that are relevant for them.
5. Explain the benefits of learning the English language words and phrases.
6. Ask them to speak to a manager if suggestions on the DVD differ from your policies.

Remember

1. Keep the Toolbox in a place that is easily accessible for your employees.
2. Provide a comfortable place for them to view the DVD.
3. Encourage and support your employees to keep practicing the English words and phrases until they can use them confidently.
4. Praise and reward your employees when they learn new skills.
5. Use the Toolbox as part of your training program when you hire new employees.

Content

Module 1 Good Practices Guide for Managers	5
Section 1 Good Management and Workplace Relations	5
1.1 Creating Systems.....	5
Case Study: The Blue Guesthouse and the Yellow Guesthouse	5
Exercise: Brainstorming on Systems.....	6
1.2 Solving Problems	8
1.3 Improving Service	8
1.4 Developing Loyal Employees	12
Section 2 Health and Safety	12
2.1 Basic Health and Hygiene	13
2.2 Preventing Accidents	14
2.3 Responding to Accidents and Emergencies.....	16
2.4 Pest Control	17
Exercise: Customize Your Health and Safety Checklists	17
Section 3 – Facility Improvement.....	19
3.1 Improving the Exterior	19
3.2 Improving the Interior	19
Exercise: Engage all Workers in Keeping the Facility Clean and in Good Repair..	19
3.3 Maintenance Requests	22
Section 4 - Sales and Marketing	23
4.1 Marketing Overview	23
Exercise: Update Your Current List of Items for Sale.....	24
4.2 Simple Marketing Ideas.....	25
Exercise: Simple Marketing Activities.....	25
4.3 Sales Skills for Hotel Workers and Managers	26
4.4 Managing Sales Channels	28
4.5 On-Line Travel Agents (OTAs).....	31
4.6 Building and Maintaining a Website	32
Section 5 - Pricing and Budgeting.....	33
5.1 How To Set Your Prices:	33

5.2 Budgeting.....	35
Case Study: It's Budget Time.....	35
Section 6 – Green Operations	36
6.1 Developing your Environmental Policy	36
Exercise: Develop an Environment Policy for your Guesthouse	36
6.2 Staff Communication.....	37
Exercise: Develop Environment Checklists for Guesthouse Operations	37
6.3 Guest Awareness.....	38

Module 1 Good Practices Guide for Managers

Section 1 Good Management and Workplace Relations

1.1 Creating Systems

One of the most important management techniques for guesthouses and hotels is to put systems in place to guarantee consistent, high quality on a daily basis.

Stop and think about what would happen at your guesthouse or hotel if you were not there to oversee everything. Are you confident things would run smoothly?

To ensure smooth operations, create **systems** to define roles, responsibilities, and procedures. Systems can help your employees

- Understand clearly what is expected of them
- Learn to perform tasks without constant supervision
- Develop self-confidence
- Improve their workplace skills

If you don't have **systems** in place now, and you'd like to create them to make your guesthouse or hotel run smoothly, you can introduce the idea of systems to your staff by doing this activity with them.

Case Study: *The Blue Guesthouse and the Yellow Guesthouse*



Activity time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Participants: Manager and employees.

Purposes:

- (1) Help employees understand that you want to improve your guesthouse or hotel.
- (2) Demonstrate the value of systems.
- (3) Discuss creating systems at *your* guesthouse or hotel.
- (4) Get commitment from your employees to follow the suggestions in this Toolbox that are appropriate for *your* guesthouse or hotel.

Materials: Please refer to **Appendix 1 Case Study: The Blue Guesthouse and the Yellow Guesthouse**

Step 1: Have someone read the story of The Blue Guesthouse aloud. Listen to the story together.

Step 2: Have someone read the story of The Yellow Guesthouse aloud. Listen to the story together.

Step 3: Discuss the following questions with your staff:

- What did they think about the stories?
- Which guesthouse would they prefer to work in?
- What do they think about the comments from the guests?
- Are they willing to make changes to improve our guesthouse or hotel?

Step 4: Get a commitment from your staff to work together to make improvements. Explain that, if you work on the ideas in this Toolbox together, you will be able to create your own customized systems to improve the quality of your guesthouse or hotel.

Exercise: Brainstorming on Systems



Activity time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Participants: Manager and employees

Purpose: to identify and develop the systems that should be in place for the guesthouse to run smoothly

Process:

Step 1: ask the group to brainstorm and name all the systems that the guesthouse would possibly need

Step 2: List the systems according to functions such as Front Office, Reservations, Sales and Distribution, Accounting and Finance, Housekeeping, Food Production and Food and Beverage Services

- Step 3:** Identify which systems are already in place, which ones need to be improved and which ones need to be developed
- Step 4:** Rank the ones to be improved and developed according to their importance to the operations
- Step 5:** Assign appropriate staff to work on the systems and agree on a timeline for review and delivery. If workload is too heavy to tackle all the systems, get started on the important ones first and schedule the others for later when more resource is available.
- Step 6:** Ensure that all staff understand that their deliverable should include work flow chart, standard operating procedures and standards of delivery such as scripts, guaranteed turnaround time, presentation etc.

See **Appendix 2 Brainstorming Outcome Summary** for a template to capture the results of the brainstorming

1.2 Solving Problems

Every business has problems. The more problems you can avoid, however, and the more quickly you can solve problems when they occur, the better your business will be.

If you want a **system** to help you solve problems when they occur, please refer to the following chart with step-by-step instructions for problem-solving.

A System for Solving Work-Related Problems	
1	Write the problem down. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This will help you clearly identify the problem.
2	Invite those employees to a “brainstorming” meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage <i>everyone</i> to contribute suggestions for solving the problem.• Seek as many ideas as possible, even unusual ones.• Make everyone feel <i>safe</i> and <i>comfortable</i> contributing ideas.
3	Evaluate each possible solution. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the pros and cons of each?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Cost?○ Time?○ Materials?
4	Select the best solution (even if it’s not perfect). <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider combining solutions to create the best one.
5	Make a plan for action and implement the plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who will do what?• Should you do a small “test” first?

Later, ask your employees to help you evaluate the results of your solution.

- Was it as successful as you had hoped?
- If not, what would you do differently next time?

Please refer to **Appendix 3 To Solve Work-Related Problems** for customizable template.

1.3 Improving Service

If you want to improve the service at your guesthouse or hotel, but you aren’t sure how to do so, consider taking advantage of these two valuable resources:

(1) Your employees

(2) Your guests

How can your employees help you?

Employees often have more direct contact with guests than owners and managers do. As your employees perform their daily tasks, they may hear or see your guests showing frustration, disappointment, or anger. That's **valuable** information! But how do you gain access to it?

The best, most systematic way is to schedule **Daily** or **Weekly Staff Meetings**.

Daily or Weekly Staff Meetings can be helpful in many ways. For example, they

- Give you access to important information about guests' likes and dislikes.
- Help you establish a systematic approach for ongoing improvement.
- Build rapport between managers and staff.
- Increase employees' self-confidence and professionalism.
- Give employees an opportunity to discuss sensitive information.

Here are guidelines to follow if you want to start holding Staff Meetings:

Guidelines for Holding Daily or Weekly Staff Meetings

- Meet when people can relax and focus (maybe in the afternoon when it is quiet).
- Keep the meetings short (about 10 - 15 minutes).
- Keep the meetings fun and informal.
- Set a friendly, positive tone.
- Agree that this is a way for **everyone** to suggest ways to improve.
- Agree to show respect for each other's ideas and opinions.
- Make it **safe** for employees to offer their ideas, opinions, and suggestions.
- Encourage **everyone** to contribute to the discussion.

And here is a format to make your Staff Meetings successful:

Suggested Format for Staff Meetings

First

- Discuss what has happened since your *last* Staff Meeting.
- What has gone well?
- Have there been any problems?
- What could have been done better?
- Has any employee done anything *special* for a customer?
(If so, be sure to **thank** and **praise** the employee at the meeting.)

Second

- Discuss what you want to achieve before your *next* Staff Meeting.
- Does anyone have suggestions for improvement?
- Does anyone have questions or concerns?
- Is there anything unusual to be aware of? (An upcoming price change, an upcoming holiday, a big maintenance project, etc.)
- Are there any health or safety issues to discuss?

Third

Invite employees to stay after the meeting to speak privately with a manager to discuss personal issues (illness, conflict, the need for a day off to do something important, etc.).

How can your guests help you?

Customers love to make comments about the products and services they purchase. But we don't always want to listen to those comments. Why? Perhaps because we fear complaints.

A basic principle of good management, however, is to encourage customers to share comments about what they like and dislike.

Successful managers in the hospitality industry – hotels and other travel/tourism businesses included – understand that “a complaint is a gift.” Why? When guests are dissatisfied but do not complain, they leave you with a problem unresolved. They are then not likely to return to your hotel, or write positive reviews on the Internet, and refer their friends and family to your hotel. They may even write a bad review.

But if they complain, and your employees....

1. Apologize
2. Show they care

3. Say they will take action to fix the problem for future guests

...most guests will leave with a positive feeling. Research shows that guests whose complaints get a positive response are likely to repeat and refer!

In short, you want to hear their complaints!

How do you encourage guests to voice their complaints?

1. Train your employees and constantly remind them to ask guests about their experience, and to cheerfully listen and respond to any complaints.
2. Encourage guests to fill out a Guest Comment Card before they leave. This is the best way to identify what you are doing right (and to keep doing it!) and what you are doing wrong (and to change it!).

Here is a sample you can use to create a simple one for *your* guesthouse or hotel. Please see **Appendix 4 Guest Comment Form** for a copy of the template that can be customized.

1.4 Developing Loyal Employees

People have different ways of communicating. As a result, misunderstandings occur frequently. And, often, misunderstandings can lead to friction and negativity at work.

Please ask yourself these questions:

- Do my employees hate coming to work?
- Is there friction between me and my staff?
- Is there friction among staff members?
- Do I feel frustrated because employees are not loyal?
- Is negativity affecting the success of my business?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, please read the checklist about creating a positive workplace, and begin to adopt the suggestions. See **Appendix 5 Checklist: How Positive is My Workplace?** for customizable template.

Checklist: How Positive Is My Workplace?

- Do all my employees clearly understand what is expected of them?
- Do I compliment my employees every day?
- Do I turn mistakes into opportunities for learning?
- Do I treat all my employees with respect?
- Do I treat all my employees fairly?
- Do I know, understand, and respect national labor standards, including:
 - Employee working hour limitations?
 - Minimum wage requirements?
 - Avoiding split shifts?
- Is my guesthouse or hotel a clean, safe, and pleasant place to work?
- Do I arrange fun, informal events so my employees can socialize?
 - Do we have breakfast or lunch together?
 - Do we celebrate employee birthdays or holidays together?

Section 2 Health and Safety

As the owner or manager, you are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of your employees and guests.

There are many things you can do to make your property healthy and safe—and most of those things can be done at little or no expense.

2.1 Basic Health and Hygiene

For the health of your guests and your employees, it is helpful to train your staff about the level of personal hygiene that is appropriate for people who work with the public.

Here is a checklist you can use as a guideline. Also available in **Appendix 6 Checklist: Personal Hygiene for All Employees** for customizable template.

Checklist: Personal Hygiene for All Employees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Bathe or shower daily.<input type="checkbox"/> Use deodorant.<input type="checkbox"/> Brush your teeth daily.<input type="checkbox"/> Wash hands after using the toilet.<input type="checkbox"/> Tie long hair back when near food.<input type="checkbox"/> Do not smoke while on duty.<input type="checkbox"/> Tell your manager if you are sick.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Wash your hair daily.<input type="checkbox"/> Keep fingernails clean and trimmed.<input type="checkbox"/> Wear clean, neat clothes and shoes.<input type="checkbox"/> Wash hands before and after eating.<input type="checkbox"/> Protect open cuts with a Band-Aid.<input type="checkbox"/> Cover your mouth if you cough or sneeze.<input type="checkbox"/> Throw dirty tissues away immediately.

2.2 Preventing Accidents

It is wiser to *prevent* accidents than to have to deal with the consequences of them. Here are two checklists to help you think about ways to make your guesthouse or hotel as safe and secure as possible. See **Appendix 7 Sample Checklist** for customizable template.

Dos and Don'ts of Workplace Safety and Security for Managers	
Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Illuminate walkways and public areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Install handrails on all stairways. <input type="checkbox"/> Put locks on windows and doors. <input type="checkbox"/> Repair broken steps and stairs quickly. <input type="checkbox"/> Make electric outlets grounded (earthed). <input type="checkbox"/> Keep fire extinguishers maintained. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a well-stocked First Aid Kit. <input type="checkbox"/> Practice fire and accident procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leave obstructions in public areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Install any hooks at eye level. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow pets in kitchen or dining area. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow unsafe knife usage. <input type="checkbox"/> Block fire exits. <input type="checkbox"/> Leave valuable items unattended. <input type="checkbox"/> Use broken equipment. <input type="checkbox"/> Overwork your employees.

See **Appendix 8 for Sample Checklist** for customizable template

Dos and Don'ts of Safety and Security for Employees	
Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wear sturdy, supportive shoes. <input type="checkbox"/> Wear a mask and gloves when working with toxic chemicals. <input type="checkbox"/> Block off wet floors when cleaning. <input type="checkbox"/> Report broken equipment. <input type="checkbox"/> Tell your manager if you are sick. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Move or lift heavy items alone. <input type="checkbox"/> Stretch too far while on a ladder. <input type="checkbox"/> Leave guestroom doors unlocked. <input type="checkbox"/> Touch electric sockets with wet hands. <input type="checkbox"/> Try to fix something if it is not safe. <input type="checkbox"/> Carry things higher than eye level.

Do you have a well-stocked First Aid Kit at your Front Desk in case of accidents or emergencies? If not, please use this checklist to create one. See **Appendix 9 Sample Checklist** for customizable template.

Checklist: First Aid Kit

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> An assortment of bandages | <input type="checkbox"/> Antiseptic cream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton wool packs | <input type="checkbox"/> Painkiller (aspirin) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety pins | <input type="checkbox"/> Mosquito lotion (Calamine) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rolled elastic bandages | <input type="checkbox"/> Tweezers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sterile pads | <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical thermometer | <input type="checkbox"/> Log book to record injuries |

Be sure to review the Fire Safety Checklist carefully and to take steps to prepare your guesthouse or hotel in the event of a fire. See **Appendix 10 Sample Checklist** for customizable template.

Checklist: Fire Safety

- Install smoke alarms in each guestroom.
- Post evacuation procedures on the back of each guestroom door.
- Practice evacuation procedures with your staff on a regular basis.
- Choose a safe place to evacuate to.
- Keep fire extinguishers on each floor.
- Ensure an easy exit from each guestroom (2 ways recommended).
- Have a safe means for all occupants to reach the ground floor.
- Ensure that all windows and doors can be opened in case of fire.
- Know and comply with all local and national fire codes.

2.3 Responding to Accidents and Emergencies

See **Appendix 11 What to Do in Case of Accident or Emergency** for customizable template.

What to Do in Case of Accident or Emergency

1. Get everyone involved to a safe place.
2. Call for help if needed (use emergency telephone numbers at the Front Desk).
3. Assist the injured if possible (use the First Aid kit at the Front Desk).
4. Find out what caused the accident or emergency and try to limit the damage.
5. Later, discuss how you can prevent the accident or emergency from recurring.

Fires can happen any time, and unfortunately, they often take people by surprise. If a fire occurred at your facility, would your staff know what to do? If not, be sure to schedule regular fire drills, and have them practice the steps outlined in this checklist. See **Appendix 12 Sample Checklist** for customizable template.

Checklist: In Case of a Fire

- Alert people in the area.
- Turn on the fire alarm.
- Call the fire department immediately.
- If in doubt, evacuate the building.
- Evacuate guests and staff quickly but calmly.
- Remove all cash, if possible.
- Take the Room Availability Chart to confirm all guests have left the building.
- Gather everyone in one, safe location.
- Close doors and windows if possible.
- Turn off the heat source, if possible (gas or electricity).
- Keep phone lines open.
- Be vigilant in case of theft.
- Use fire extinguishers, if it is safe.
- Do not use water on a fire involving fat, oil, or electrical equipment.
- Wrap blankets around someone whose clothes have caught fire.
- Call for an ambulance or medical help, if necessary.

2.4 Pest Control

See **Appendix 13 for Sample Checklist** for customizable template.

How to Prevent Pest Infestation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Keep a high standard of cleanliness.<input type="checkbox"/> Seal openings in floors and walls.<input type="checkbox"/> Seal openings around pipes.<input type="checkbox"/> Dispose of waste quickly.<input type="checkbox"/> Clean up spills immediately.<input type="checkbox"/> Store all food in sealed containers.<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure doors and windows close tightly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Keep all storage areas clean and dry.<input type="checkbox"/> Keep lids on all trash bins.<input type="checkbox"/> Clean and disinfect trash bins often.<input type="checkbox"/> Keep plants trimmed.<input type="checkbox"/> Keep all equipment clean.<input type="checkbox"/> Do not leave food scraps exposed.<input type="checkbox"/> Examine food deliveries for signs of pests.
Keep things clean! It is better to <i>prevent</i> pests than to have to get rid of them!	

Exercise: Customize Your Health and Safety Checklists



Activity time: Ongoing.

Participants: Manager and all employees

Purposes:

- (1) Raise awareness about health and safety issues.
- (2) Protect the health and safety of all employees and guests.
- (3) Prevent accidents from happening
- (4) Create systems that promote health and safety.

Materials: The Health and Safety Checklists are listed above.

Step 1: Review each list carefully and customize it for *your* guesthouse or hotel. Delete items that are not relevant. Add items that are missing.

Step 2: Invite your employees to review the revised checklists with you. Is there anything they would add? Is there anything they would change? Your employees are constantly moving around the property, and they might have a better understanding of these issues than you have, So listen to their feedback—they could point out an important health or safety issue that you overlooked.

Step 3: Get agreement on the final versions of the checklists.

Step 4 (optional): Print copies and post them in appropriate places so employees will be reminded of health and safety measures frequently.

Section 3 – Facility Improvement

3.1 Improving the Exterior

First impressions are important, and the first time guests or prospective walk-in guests see your hotel, they make instant opinions about the quality and cleanliness. Be sure to make that first impression a positive one by keeping your facility clean, safe, and attractive.

Systems need to be in place to ensure that

- Housekeepers regularly clean the public areas including the entrance.
- Receptionists do their part to
 - Communicate repair needs to the Maintenance workers.
 - Keep the area in front of the hotel neat at all times.
- Maintenance workers need to respond immediately to requests for repairs.

3.2 Improving the Interior

As with the exterior, all employees need to share in the work of keeping the interior in good repair and constantly clean. Review the housekeeping section for guidance on cleaning procedures.

Exercise: Engage all Workers in Keeping the Facility Clean and in Good Repair



Activity time: 90 minutes

Participants: Manager and all employees

Purposes:

- (1) Raise awareness about cleanliness and maintenance issues.
- (2) Maintain facility cleanliness, good repair, and safety.
- (3) Determine who is responsible for various tasks.
- (4) Create systems that ensure good maintenance and cleanliness.

Materials: Writing materials for each worker (optional)

Step 1: Manager tells workers the importance of keeping the hotel/guesthouse as clean and in as good repair as possible

Step 2: Manager shares some examples of good practices in cleaning and maintenance

Step 3: Manager asks workers to walk around the facility and make a list (written or mental) of all ways to maintain and improve the facility – allow 30 minutes

Use the following list or one similar. See **Appendix 14 Ways to Maintain and Improve the Interior and Exterior** for customizable template.

Ways to Maintain and Improve the Interior and Exterior
✓ Repair broken items such as chairs, tables, and handrails
✓ Replace burned-out light bulbs
✓ Sweep public areas two times per day
✓ Put flower pots near the entrance
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓
✓

Step 4: Workers return to meeting place, and Manager leads a discussion reviewing ideas from each worker. Make list of all ideas, and mark each idea according to:

- Take immediate action
- Consider for future action
- No action at this time

In addition to this type of activity for all employees, the Owner and Manager of the hotel/guesthouse need to consider the level of quality of their hotel. Consider the

competition, and how making more permanent improvements might allow you to raise your room rates.

Consider making upgrades to your facility. Here are items to consider.

Mid-Range Amenities

1. Soap in guest bathrooms
2. Telephone by the bed with easy instructions for calling the Front Desk
3. Safe Deposit Box in the room
4. Mirror above bathroom sink
5. Shelf in the bathroom for guest toiletries
6. Non-skid bathmat
7. Facial tissues for guest use
8. Place for guests to put away and / or hang up clothes (with hangars)
 - i. A cupboard with shelves or drawers
 - ii. Hooks for hanging clothes
9. Sterilized water glass for each guest. (e.g., 2 in a room with a double bed)

High-End Amenities

1. Good, bright light above mirror in bathroom
2. Full-length mirror in the room
3. Hair Dryer
4. Slippers
5. Robes
6. Spa / massage services
7. Shampoo, conditioner, and body lotion

3.3 Maintenance Requests

Broken or damaged equipment can lead to unwanted accidents and to dissatisfied guests. Therefore, it is important to have a system in place for reporting and repairing maintenance problems.

One suggestion is to use an on-going Maintenance Request Form or Log Book. If you wish to use this system, here are some steps to follow.

Steps for Using a Maintenance Request Form or Log Book	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Keep the Maintenance Request Form or Log Book at the Front Desk.2. Ask all employees to report maintenance requests immediately.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Ask employees to write the requests themselves, or to give the information to the Receptionist to write down.3. Designate someone (a manager or Receptionist) to manage the requests:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Determine who can best solve the problem (another employee, an external repairman, a plumber, etc.).b. Contact that person and schedule the repair to be done.c. Follow-up to ensure the repair was done satisfactorily.4. Record the date the repair was successfully completed on the Maintenance Request Form.	

See **Appendix 15 Sample Maintenance Request Form** to help you design your own Maintenance Request Form or Log Book.

Maintenance Request Form			
Date Requested	Room	Description of Request	Date Completed
04/07/11	5	Toilet will not flush.	04/07/11
22/09/11	3	Broken fan.	25/09/11
07/02/12	1	Faucet in bathroom sink broken.	08/02/12

Section 4 - Sales and Marketing

4.1 Marketing Overview

Marketing is not just advertising and promotion – it includes all elements of how you influence guests (customers/clients) to visit and enjoy your hotel or guesthouse.

Typically, marketing education talks about the “4 P’s”:

1. Product
2. Price
3. Place
4. Promotion

But, in addition to the traditional “4 P’s”, tourism and hospitality add:

5. “People” because of the importance of good service

Product includes goods and services, which for hotels and guesthouses can include:

- Guest rooms
- Dining facilities
- Quality of food
- Add-on services such as bicycle rentals, laundry service, and much more

Price includes room rates and any add-on services. *This will be explained later in Section 5.*

Place refers to sales methods used to reach the customer. These can include online-Internet activities, travel agent relationships, marketing partners, ticketing agencies, etc.

Promotion refers to advertising and all other elements of sales and marketing activities. It includes the important concept of known as “branding.”

People refers to how well you serve the customer and how well you train and treat your workers.

Exercise: Update Your Current List of Items for Sale



Activity time: Ongoing.

Participants: Manager and Receptionists

Purposes: (1) Ensure that Receptionists are aware of items currently for sale
(2) Benefit from their buy-in to the current and future list of items
(3) Improve or expand the list of items for sale

Materials: Two lists: current items and a worksheet of potential items. See **Appendix 16 Sample Retail Opportunities in the Guesthouse.**

Step 1: Manager creates a list of current items for sale. First on the list are guest rooms. Then include any other items for sale, such as beverages, bicycle rentals, laundry service, sightseeing, transportation, postcards, etc.

Step 2: Manager meets with Receptionists to make suggestions to add or remove items.

Step 3: Manager develops a plan for making changes to the list.

4.2 Simple Marketing Ideas

Here are additional practices to consider when welcoming guests:

1. Give the guest a welcome drink on arrival.
2. Present the guest with a hotel information pack.
3. Place a personalized welcome card in the room.
4. Offer juice and other beverages in the reception area for sale.

Make sure that information about your hotel or guesthouse is current, accurate, and has a positive sales message. Put this information where travelers can easily see it, for example, at airports, bus and train terminals, marketplaces, etc. Provide sales flyers for your hotel in local and regional tourist information offices.

Seek ideas and suggestions from your employees for simple and inexpensive ways to make guests feel welcome and to better enjoy their visit.

Exercise: Simple Marketing Activities



Activity time: Ongoing.

Participants: Manager and Receptionists

Purposes:

- (1) Review marketing methods that work well
- (2) Find new simple and inexpensive marketing methods
- (3) Train employees to focus on marketing and customer service

Materials: pens and paper for list-making

Step 1: Participants make list of reasons guests choose and like your hotel or guesthouse. This will help you decide what to promote.

Step 2: Participants make list of *current* marketing methods.

Step 3: Using the list from Step 1, discuss how you can improve your current list of methods.

Step 4: Discuss the following:

1. Who is responsible for taking action on each method.
2. How and when they will work on it.

See **Appendix 17 Sample Simple Marketing Activities** for customizable template

4.3 Sales Skills for Hotel Workers and Managers

Sales skills are essential for all workers and managers who speak or email with guests and prospective guests.

Your #1 guiding principal should be: “Make the Booking!” That means that any time you speak with guests about staying in your hotel, you ask them to make a reservation.

Sales skills include:

- Customer service skills and positive friendly attitudes.
- Knowing the difference between a “hard sell” and a “soft sell” technique. The difference is that most people respond to sales techniques, but when pushed too hard, they turn away. Successful sales people know how much to push and when to stop pushing.
- Understanding how important it is to:
 - Encourage guests to return on future visits
 - Refer your hotel or guesthouse to their friends and family
 - Ask guests to write a positive review online, for example, on Trip Advisor

Reservations/booking processes must be easy and convenient for guests. There are many hotels and guesthouses to choose from. Good sales skills are needed to persuade potential guests to choose **your** hotel or guesthouse.

Essential sales skills and policies include:

1. Guest payment policies and procedures
 - Make it easy and convenient for guests to pay with cash or credit cards.
 - Train your Receptionists to **cheerfully** accept credit cards. (**Note:** Banks will give this training free of charge.)
 - Credit card payments are **essential**, because most international travelers
 - Prefer the security and convenience of using them instead of cash.
 - Receive points for gifts and benefits by using them.
 - Avoid paying ATM fees by using them.
 - Avoid charging a surcharge for credit card use.
 - These surcharges are not applied in most of the world and travelers view them negatively.
 - Instead, add the surcharge to the room rate.
 - Understand that travelers usually spend more if they can pay with credit cards

Remember: *hotels that do not accept credit cards are LOSING BUSINESS to their competitors.*

2. Booking policies and procedures

- Hotels usually do not require deposits for future bookings. If you choose to require deposits – perhaps for peak sales times – be very clear with written policy information on the amount of the deposit, due date for the deposit, and cancelation policies (including cancelation fees).
- Provide written confirmation of bookings, preferably by email.
 - Guests want the confirmation to guarantee that they will have a room for the agreed-upon dates and rate.
 - Without written confirmation, guests feel comfortable booking another hotel before arriving.

3. Make the Booking!

When guests are ready to purchase, confirm the booking before they change their mind and book with a competitor. Examples of good practices:

- Ask for the booking when guests ask questions in person, on the telephone, or via email.
- Follow up quickly to email messages or telephone calls from prospective guests.
- Answer all of the prospective guests' questions.
- Send an email to confirm reservations.

4.4 Managing Sales Channels

Managers and owners of hotels need to have a clear understanding of where their business comes from, and which “channels” offer potential for growth.

The first step is to create a chart of how your business currently comes to you, see **Appendix 18 Sales Channel Analysis** for a customizable template.

Category	Subcategory	Current Year Room Sales YTD	% of Sales Current Year	Prior Year Total Room Sales	% of Sales Prior Year
Walk-ins	----	33	3.3%	47	4.0%
Taxi driver referrals	----	14	1.4%	22	1.9%
Tour Operators	----	180	17.9%	220	18.8%
Travel Agents	----	88	8.7%	131	11.2%
Our Website	----	47	4.7%	10	0.9%
OTAs	Agoda.com	260	25.8%	290	24.7%
OTAs	Booking.com	210	20.9%	230	19.6%
OTAs	Teamworkz.com	90	8.9%	110	9.4%
OTAs	All others	30	3.0%	40	3.4%
Others	----	54	5.4%	73	6.2%
Totals:		1,006	100.0%	1,173	100.0%

Notes:

- “YTD” = year-to-date, which means sales from the beginning of this year to today
- OTA = Online Travel Agencies
- Manage the categories in a way that works best for your business

Note: If you do not have the information needed to make the chart, you should begin collecting this information. You can run a report from your property management system or tabulate the number of roomnights produced by channel and/or account source by hand in the absence of a system. See **Appendix 19 Account Production** for a customizable template.

The following chart shows common characteristics of various sales channels. Use the chart to help you decide how best to market your hotel or guesthouse.

<u>A. Offline</u> Sales Channel	Description	How to Succeed With This Sales Channel	Problems With This Sales Channel
Walk-Ins	Wait for guests to come to you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need good location • Use good signs that inform and welcome guests • Receptionists are well-trained in sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance bookings unlikely • Competitors can access your potential customers before you • Very price-competitive • Need good location
Boat / Taxi Drivers	Taxi and boat drivers bring potential customers to your hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop working relationships with taxi and boat companies and individual drivers • Pay a commission that motivates them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance bookings unlikely • Competitors can access your potential customers before you • Very price-competitive • Commissions can be too high
Tour Operators	Group bookings for multiple rooms from established tour company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales calls to local inbound tour operators and information sent to international outbound tour operators • Website of your hotel with professional photos and good information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very competitive • They have purchasing power and can bring your profits down • They may prefer working with larger hotels
Travel Agents	Market and sell your hotel rooms for you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales calls to them • Good website of your hotel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to control how they sell your hotel or how much effort they put into this • Often require higher commission levels

<u>B. Online Sales Channel</u>	Description	How to Succeed With This Sales Channel	Problems With This Sales Channel
Your Own Website	A website dedicated to your hotel(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good website design with professional photos and strong sales message • Strong Search Engine Optimization (SEO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good websites can be expensive to build and to update
Online Travel Agents (OTAs)	Selling your hotel on OTAs such as agoda.com or teamworkz.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit from their strong market reach • Use last-minute price reductions to fill empty rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissions can be high
Tourism Promotion Organizations	Feature your hotel on regional and national tourism promotion websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose sites that attract many viewers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These sites receive less traffic than OTAs
Travel review websites (example: TripAdvisor)	Encourage satisfied guests to write testimonials about your hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testimonials are powerful sales tools • Satisfied guests are happy to help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You lack control over what the guests write

Notes:

- Travel review websites such as Trip Advisor are not true sales channels if the traveler cannot make a booking through them; however, they influence sales and should be managed.
- SEO = Search Engine Optimization, which means actions you take to push your website higher in search results such as Google.com

4.5 On-Line Travel Agents (OTAs)

Online sales channel management is an important part of hotel sales and marketing, and requires special attention and skills.

Important points to consider when choosing which OTAs to partner with:

1. The “market reach” of the OTA – how many visitors per month to their website and their volume of hotel sales
2. The percentage of commission they charge for bookings
3. The ease of listing your hotel on their site, and of maintaining your hotel’s profile on the site

Regardless of commission amount, it is best to maintain the same room rates (prices) for your hotel on all OTAs and on your own website (if you have one). Room rates can vary by season, by day of week, etc., but each of those rates should be the same for all sales channels. Otherwise, you create confusion for the traveler and too much communication between yourself, the OTAs, and potential guests.

Refer to **Appendix 20 Contracted Agent List** for the customizable template.

4.6 Building and Maintaining a Website

Having your own website is helpful for prospective visitors to get necessary information about your hotel. Even if they book through an OTA, while they are shopping and looking at several hotels in your city or destination, they may wish to see your own website.

They expect hotels to have their own website. Not having one may make your hotel appear unprofessional and unorganized. However, having a bad website may be worse than not having one!

Websites must be contemporary to international standards:

- Good quality photos
- Easy to read
- Nice design (color, layout, etc.)
- Accurate, up-to-date, and clear information
- Easy to contact the hotel
- Reservations systems work properly – it is important to decide whether you will include:
 - A complete booking system on the website
 - A partial system in which booking requests can be made, but not confirmed on the website
 - No booking capability

Section 5 - Pricing and Budgeting

5.1 How To Set Your Prices:

In general, your prices must be:

- Low enough to attract customers to buy
- High enough to give your business a profit

You must have certain information before you decide what prices to charge. To set your prices you need to:

1. Know your **costs** – Get a sense of your total average monthly rooms expenses by adding all the direct expenditure on rooms including cleaning and maintenance, supplies and labor in the last six months and divide the number by six to get rooms department direct cost. Then calculate the average overhead cost in the last six months by taking all overhead costs such as administration, sales and marketing, insurance and depreciation etc. and allocating a portion of that to rooms. The allocation percentage should be in proportion to the size of your rooms operation compared to your F&B operation. This gives you your overhead costs for rooms department. Add rooms department direct cost to overhead costs and then divide that by the number of rooms in your property to understand your cost per room.
2. Know how much **customers** are willing to pay – you can find out how much they are willing to pay by asking them directly. Then test market by quoting different rates to see customers' reaction. If you are filling your rooms very quickly, then your rate has room to go up. If many customers are not buying after receiving your quotation, ask them for the reason and if you find rate resistance, then reduce your quotation until you get to a comfortable point.
3. Know your **competitors'** prices – call around to find out what your competitors are quoting.
4. Know how to make your prices more **attractive** – you can either lower your price or add more value by packaging such as including breakfast or late checkout in your rate.

The price becomes a strategic business tool that will set you apart from your competitors. Use a **flexible and creative price management strategy**. Here are some guidelines:

- Seasons: offer lower prices during the off-season
- Groups: offer discounts for groups (do not publish these rates for all to see)

- Special offers: two-for-one specials, or “buy two nights, get a third free”
- Advance purchase: offer discounts on early bookings
- Product “add-ons”: discounts or gifts, such as free room-category upgrades, free bicycle rentals, etc.

Set one price for all online sales. If you set different prices for different online travel agents (OTAs), they are all going to be competing with each other on price. That will cause them to ask for the same or better prices than their competitors. (You may have favorite sales channels, or new ones you want to develop – but instead of giving them lower prices, give them higher commissions.)

If you choose to change your prices for high season versus low season, last-minute discounts, and other discounts – whatever price you charge on a given day should be the same for all sales channels.

See **Appendix 21 Pricing Chart** for a customizable template

5.2 Budgeting

Follow these steps in establishing or improving budgeting for your hotel:

1. Determine your current operating costs. Use an Excel spreadsheet or similar software to list all costs and categorize them as monthly costs according to these types:
 - a. Fixed costs for items you cannot control, or can do little to control (for example, rent or borrowing costs)
 - b. Variable costs per number of rooms sold
 - c. Sales and Marketing costs
2. Set room rates according to market conditions.
3. Compare the cost analysis to the revenue generated by those prices; determine whether profits are high enough based on those costs and prices.
4. Develop plans to reduce costs and to continually examine costs in the future.

Case Study: It's Budget Time



Activity time: Approximately 45 minutes.

Participants: Manager and Accountant

Purposes: (1) understand how a budget is put together
(2) learn to use the spreadsheet provided to put together next year's budget

Materials: Please refer to **Appendix 22 Case Study: It's Budget Time**

Step 1: Read through the case study carefully.

Step 2: Identify the different types of revenue and expenses

Step 3: pluck the numbers in the case to the spreadsheet provided in **Appendix 23 Budget Worksheet** for customizable template and compare the results with those provided in the case

Section 6 – Green Operations

Maintaining green operations is part of sustainable tourism. The basic principles include the 3Rs of reduce, reuse and recycle. This requires close cooperation of staff as well as communication with guests.

6.1 Developing your Environmental Policy

Running a green operation requires the full support of your staff. One way to communicate with them is by sharing your environmental policy.

There are many examples of Environmental Policy Statements on the Internet.

For guesthouses, these are a few examples of many:

Kingsway Guest House Edinburgh <http://www.edinburgh-guesthouse.com/links.htm>

Flora Glen Guest House <http://www.floraglen-guesthouse.com/environmentalpolicy.htm>

For restaurants, these are also a few examples of many.

Chris's Beacon Point <http://chriss.com.au/environmental-policy.html>

The Captain's Galley <http://www.captainsgalley.co.uk/joomla/content/view/15/30/1/1/>

Exercise: Develop an Environment Policy for your Guesthouse



Activity time: one hour

- Use these as examples to show your key staff during a staff meeting
- Review the content of the policies
- Ask for everyone's input to put together a policy for your guesthouse
- Encourage your staff to put the policy into a display / poster format that can be put up in appropriate places around the guesthouse.

6.2 Staff Communication

You can engage with employees in many different ways (trainings, activities, etc.) and through the use of visuals (stickers, posters, reminders, etc.).

Communicating environmental concerns to staff is crucial because:

- They are the ones operating the equipment, using water, chemicals and electricity
- If staff understand the reasons for and the benefits of your hotel's environmental Commitment, they will be proactive

You can make use of different channels:

- Present your commitment to every staff in the hotel (what you are already doing plus what is in the pipeline)
- Train staff on best practices depending on their position
- Integrate environmental best practices during staff induction
- Use visuals at the back of the house where staff are spending time (i.e. staff canteen, recreational area, smoking area)
- Include Green Operations as a standard staff meeting agenda item

Please refer to **Appendix 24 PowerPoint Sample Presentation – Staff Awareness Raising** which can be customized for your guesthouse for presentation to your staff.

To promote waste management, please refer to **Appendix 25 PDF Sample Presentation - Waste Management** for your reference.

Exercise: Develop Environment Checklists for Guesthouse Operations



Activity time: one hour

- Work with your staff to develop environmental checklists for their areas of work
- Customize the examples attached to fit the operating environment of your guesthouse. Examples include:
 - **Appendix 26 Sample Ecofriendly Checklist – Kitchen**
 - **Appendix 27 Sample Ecofriendly Checklist – Rooms**

6.3 Guest Awareness

You can engage with guests during their stay at your guesthouse in many different ways, and the use of visuals (stickers, posters, reminders, etc.) is easy to implement.

Communicating environmental concerns to guests is important for two reasons:

- Many guests (Europeans, Australian, Japanese,..) value hotels' efforts to be environmentally friendly
- Guests play a big role in helping hotels improving their environmental impact and energy and water usage

With guests as with staff, you can make use of different channels:

- Online: you can communicate your commitment on your website
- At Reception and upon guest check-in: you can engage guests from the start of their stay with by displaying signs/posters in appropriate places or by having Reception staff inform the guests
- Inside guest rooms with cards/signs where they are visible (i.e. on the towel hanger, on the pillow or next to the light switches)
- In F&B outlets: you can choose seasonal and only local ingredients/menus to communicate your concerns for the environment
- During check-out: consider adding environmental issues to your guest feedback form

Do talk about broader concerns for the environment, instead of just focusing on energy savings: it shows a more serious commitment from your hotel and can help motivate guests to collaborate. Mention what you are already doing (and your awards/certifications if any). If you have a vision/slogan/concept for your hotel, think about linking it to your environmental message.

See **Appendix 28 Environmental Awareness Card for Guest** for a customizable sample.

“At hotel X, we are committed to involving our guests, owners and key partners to participate in our endeavors to help protect our environment.

Should you have any comments or suggestions, please fill in the space below and drop into the box provided.

Name: _____

Country of Residence: _____

Email Address: _____

My comments concerning conservation and/or management of:

Energy Water Waste

**Together, we can secure a better future for the generations to come.
We thank you for your participation.**