

## **BELL DESK**

### **Introduction**

Bell desk is an extended arm of the front desk. There are many activities at the time of arrival, during the stay, and at the time of departure of the guest which cannot be carried out from the front desk but are to be carried out essentially, in order to provide services to the guest. As the name suggests it is a small desk/counter in the lobby near the main entrance of the hotel. The bell desk should be situated in clear view of the front desk, cashier, and particularly the doorman standing outside the lobby, so that the doorman may signal for a bellboy at the arrival of a guest. Further, it is also important that the bell desk is situated near the luggage center and luggage entrance.

### **Head Hall Porter**

The in-charge of uniformed staff is the head hall porter, and he usually wears a uniform of either tails or a frock coat with brass or silver buttons and gold or silver braid or any other uniform as decided by the management. The majority of hall porters in larger hotels are members of an international society called “Societe des clefs d’ or” and wear a badge of crossed keys on the lapel of their coat.

## Functions of Bell Desk

The senior bell captain is the in-charge of the bell desk and along with his staff performs various duties from here. The various functions performed from here are as follows.

### **1. Luggage handling**

Luggage handling of the guest is done on various occasions such as arrival, during stay (change of room), and at the time of departure. At the time of arrival when the luggage of the guest is moved from car/taxi to the lobby and further to the allotted room, the activity is called “up bell activity”. When the luggage of the guest is moved from room to lobby and further to the car/taxi at the time of departure the activity is called “down bell activity”. The baggage is collected from the room upon request. A left luggage register is maintained in this case and an entry is made in this book. A baggage ticket (which has two parts) is used. One part is attached to the luggage and the counterfoil is given to the guest. This portion details the hotel’s liability exemption clause. When the guest comes to collect his luggage, he has to produce his portion of the baggage ticket. The luggage storeroom must be secure at all times.

### **2. Paging**

Apart from luggage handling the bell desk is also responsible for paging a guest. The paging is a system of locating the guest in the hotel. Many times, the in-house guest expects a phone call or a visitor but decides not to wait in the room, and might decide to go to public areas such as a bar, restaurant, swimming pool, lobby or lounge, etc. of the hotel or may go out of the hotel. In such cases, the hotel requests the guest to tell about his whereabouts through a location form. This proforma may be kept in the stationary folds in the room as well as at the information section of the counter. Usually, it is filled in by the guest but many times it may be filled in by the hotel staff on the instructions of the guest. The completed location form is kept in

the key and mail racks. This information is sent to the telephone department also (the guest may directly inform or the front desk may do so). The purpose of the form is to earmark the area of paging and save time. In the case of a computer system, the information is recorded on the computer instead of the location forms.

### **3. Mail and Message Handling**

The bell desk's function is also to handle and distribute mail and message received by the front desk in the absence of the guests to their respective rooms. Also, distribution of newspaper and magazines etc. to various rooms and the areas of the hotel and keeping a record of the same is done by the bell desk.

### **4. Delivery of Newspapers**

As per the hotel policy, all hotel guests receive a copy of a local newspaper each morning. The bellboys in the night shift are responsible for delivering the newspapers to all occupied rooms. The bell captain obtains the room verification report (providing information on all rooms presently occupied). The bellboy then marks the room numbers for each newspaper. The bellboy also inserts the daily newsletters in each paper provided by the public relations office the previous evening. The bellboy then distributes the newspapers. The record of numbers of newspapers received on a daily basis is maintained by the night shift bell captain.

### **5. Collection of Room Keys at Departure**

Another very important function of the bell desk is the collection of room keys from a checkout guest and depositing the same at the information desk.

### **6. Miscellaneous Jobs**

Miscellaneous jobs such as postage stamps handling, taking care of outgoing mail of the guest, carrying out outside errands for the guest

and hotel such as buying of cinema tickets, moving of files and documents, etc. for the guest as well as going to banks, post office and FRRO police station for delivering of 'C forms' etc., confirming of railways/bus reservation, etc. are done by the bell desk. Bellboy shall do the outside jobs only on the instructions of hell captain. A service call slip will be prepared. Also, an entry in the logbook will be made and an entry in the bell captain's control sheet, which is meant to control the movement of bellboys will be made. Finally, when the bellboy will return an entry will be made in the service call slip and bell captain's control sheet and will be signed by bell captain. In most hotels these days the bell desk is also responsible for car parking areas and control of revenue generated from the car parking area. At times when there is a room discrepancy, the bell desk staff helps the lobby manager in checking and sorting out of the status of the hotel.

## **7. Wake Call**

In some hotels, the wake-up call to groups and crews is coordinated by the bell desk. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the bell captain on duty in the morning shift to prepare the wake call sheets of all the groups and crews in-house.