

Reflection on Managing Hotel Administration

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Introduction

This reflective journal analyses my placement at the Delta by Marriott Newcastle Gateshead, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988). During my placement at the hotel, I did not experience Front of House, which limited my understanding of reception duties and administrative tasks. However, my previous work placement during the first year of my degree provided some insight into this area. Building upon this, I developed my understanding of administrative aspects through shadowing supervisory roles in Food and Beverage and the Leisure Club.

My Learning Objectives:

- Enhance knowledge of and experiencing hotel administration.
- Examine and understand workplace culture.

Section 1: Reflection on Experience and Personal Development

A particularly challenging incident occurred when the hotel's technology system failed while I was working in the Leisure Club. It affected essential administrative tasks, such as new member registrations and scanning members. This disruption seemed insignificant compared to what I imagined the Front Reception were encountering, given their reliance on the hotels systems for their entire booking system and communications (Anwar, Deliana and Suyamto, 2024).

I found it frustrating that I was not granted access to essential systems. While I understood and respected the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) restrictions in place (DPA, 2018), I felt excluded from fully engaging in the operational aspects of hotel management. A potential solution could have been requiring me to sign a non-disclosure agreement, allowing me to gain a more comprehensive understanding while maintaining data security.

Despite these challenges, I was impressed by the hotel's structured onboarding process (Hotel Speak, 2024), as a newly appointed Food & Beverage supervisor described his positive onboarding experience. This reinforced my respect for the hotel's commitment to staff development and its emphasis on ensuring employees feel well-prepared for their roles. This aligns with Herzberg's (1968) motivational theory, emphasising the importance of structured training. It also exemplifies Marriotts philosophy, "Take care of associates and they will take care of the customers" (Marriott, 2025).

The experience highlighted the importance of problem-solving, adaptability, and teamwork in maintaining service standards. However, my limited access to administrative systems hindered my ability to fully engage with certain aspects of hotel operations. Despite this, I gained insight into stock control, compliance with regulations, and the coordination of guest services, all of which are critical in hotel administration.

Reflecting on this experience, I recognise the importance of structured contingency planning in digital-dependent operations. While technology enhances efficiency, reliance on digital systems without alternative solutions increases vulnerability. The hotel could benefit from implementing Shostack's (1987) service blueprinting

approach by mapping potential failure points and establishing clear backup procedures.

To enhance my personal development, I plan to pursue further experience in Front of House operations to broaden my understanding of reception duties and guest interaction.

Section 2: Critical Analysis of Work-Based Skills and Technical Knowledge

One of the most significant skills I developed was problem-solving and adaptability, which Tanković, Kapeš, and Kraljić (2021) and Talawanich and Wattanacharoensil (2020) state are crucial for maintaining operational efficiency. During a particularly busy evening at the bar, there was a delay in the kitchen, and the guests became frustrated. I quickly adapted by engaging with the guests, keeping them informed of the situation, and offering complimentary drinks. This not only helped maintain a positive atmosphere but also ensured the operational flow remained smooth, demonstrating the importance of both problem-solving and adaptability in maintaining guest satisfaction.

I experienced compliance and regulatory knowledge, particularly in chemical balances of swimming pools and COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) regulations as well as food allergens. These knowledge are critical in hospitality, where compliance with health and safety legislation ensures legal and ethical operations (HSE, 2025).

Deshpande et al. (2024) and Mathur (2023), along with numerous others, highlight the importance of communication and teamwork in effective hotel administration. I strengthened these essential work-based skills by collaborating with various departments to ensure seamless service delivery. For example, while working in the bar area, I was often involved in serving food and handling last-minute food requests, which required clear and efficient communication with the kitchen and restaurant team. Lolli (2013) adds clear communication is vital, as poor coordination can lead to misunderstandings, service delays, and dissatisfied customers .

In the restaurant, effective communication and active listening was key to meeting guest expectations. Whether it was when I was managing dietary requirements like allergies, resolving issues such as when a large group arrived claiming they had booked a table that was not listed in the diary or politely declining a guest's request of rearranging furniture due to health and safety policies.

I also developed technical knowledge in booking and reservations management within the Leisure Club, where I was responsible for managing fitness class bookings, scanning members and processing card payments. This experience

highlighted how digital systems streamline operations, support guest engagement, and enhance overall efficiency (Amirulloh, Deliana and Suyamto, 2024). Given the increasing digitisation of the hospitality industry (EHL Graduate School, 2024), proficiency in digital literacy is essential for all associates in a hotel setting. Property management systems (PMS), reservation software, and customer relationship management (CRM) tools are essential for optimising operations and guest satisfaction (Ivanov & Webster, 2019).

As well as these developments, I identified areas where my technical knowledge remains limited. My lack of direct engagement with Front of House operations, including guest check-in/out procedures, financial reporting, and data management, highlighted key gaps in my learning. Expanding my experience in these areas will be crucial for a well-rounded understanding of hotel administration.

Section 3: Reflection on Organisational Issues

A key organisational issue I identified and discussed with my leisure club manager was the inefficiency in processing membership cards for new members. The current system requires staff to complete an online form, take a member's photo, print the form for the member's signature, and upload it alongside a direct debit setup and a non-disclosure agreement. These details are forwarded to Marriott headquarters, where membership cards are produced and posted to Delta Marriott, resulting in a turnaround time of three months.

Although new members can use the leisure club immediately, the huge gap in receiving their membership cards negatively impacts customer satisfaction. Without their cards, each time they attend, staff must manually search for member details on the computer, causing delays at reception and affecting customer flow. This also prevents staff from answering phone calls when members call to book classes. Additionally, some members falsely claim their cards have not arrived, leading associates to grant access without verification, resulting in revenue loss for the leisure club.

This issue also affects staff morale and productivity, as they frequently manage guest complaints and follow up on delayed cards. Furthermore, sometimes, cards arrive without a photo, necessitating another three-month wait, which is inefficient and unprofessional. From an operational perspective, this prolonged processing time damages the club's reputation and compromises service quality.

I asked my manager why an on-site card printing system had not been implemented, mentioning that the leisure club I attend prints membership cards within minutes. My manager explained that headquarters faced delays due to processing cards for multiple Marriott Leisure Clubs. Recognising the inefficiency, the manager expressed frustration, stating that they were bound by corporate policies set by Marriott's head office.

This experience underscored the importance of efficient administrative processes in ensuring guest satisfaction and operational effectiveness. It also reinforced the value of proactive problem-solving and employee feedback in identifying and addressing organisational inefficiencies.

Conclusion: Key Insights and Future Professional Practice

This placement provided invaluable insights into hotel administration, allowing me to develop essential work-based skills such as problem-solving, adaptability, communication, and compliance knowledge. While my exposure to Front of House operations was limited, I gained practical experience in food and beverage service, leisure club management, and administrative processes. These experiences reinforced the significance of structured onboarding, regulatory adherence, and digital literacy in ensuring operational efficiency and guest satisfaction.

However, the placement also highlighted areas for future development. Gaining hands-on experience in reception duties, financial administration, and advanced digital systems will be crucial in building a well-rounded understanding of hotel management.

Action Plan

I aim to seek opportunities that enhance my knowledge of front office procedures, property management systems, and financial reporting. By addressing these gaps, I will build a more comprehensive skill set, for a successful career in the hospitality industry.

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