

FRONT OFFICE · OPERATING STANDARD 107

The In-House Line Standard

WHO

Front office, bell desk and concierge, checked by shift leads

WHEN

Every call and message from a room, the app, a guest's phone or outside

YOU NEED

Headset, the PMS, the message inbox, today's outlet hours, the transfer list

TIME TO TRAIN

45 minutes, with two calls and two messages role-played

What this standard achieves

A guest who calls or writes to the front office, the bell desk or the concierge reaches a person who answers at once, speaks calmly and settles the request or names a time for it. Every automated service keeps a human alternative, so no guest is left alone with a screen they cannot or will not use.

Measured by

01 Phone answered within three rings or 10 seconds

02 Room calls greeted with the guest's name

03 Hold only after asking and hearing a yes

04 Call-back offered once a hold passes 30 seconds

05 No voices, music or radio heard behind the agent

06 Written messages answered within 3 minutes, day and night

07 Replies in the guest's language and register, no abbreviations

08 Every request given a clock time for the answer

09 A person reachable for every automated service

10 Hotel app offered once at check-in, never pressed

PHASE 1

Set up the line

STEPS 1–5

- 01** Log in to the phones, the PMS and the message inbox ten minutes before the shift. Read the handover for open requests and promised call-backs, and write down the time of each one.
- 02** Keep the day sheet in view: opening hours of every restaurant, bar, spa, pool and gym, today's events in the hotel, the weather forecast and the duty manager's extension.
- 03** Take calls from a quiet position with a headset. No conversations, radio or music within reach of the microphone; when the desk is loud, take the call in the back office and tell a colleague.
- 04** Agree who covers the phones and the inbox during breaks and arrival peaks, so no line rings out and no message waits while both agents are with guests.
- 05** Check yourself against The Presence Standard before the first call: uniform, name badge, and today's VIPs and in-house occasions in mind.

PHASE 2

Answer the phone

STEPS 6-11

- 06 Answer within three rings or 10 seconds, whichever comes first. Finish the sentence you were typing after the greeting, never before it.

- 07 For an outside call, greet with the time of day, the hotel's name, your department and your first name, then offer help, in that order.

"Good evening, [hotel name] front office, Sara speaking. How may I help you?"

- 08 For a call from a room, read the name on the display and check it in the PMS before you greet the guest by it. If two guests share the room, use the surname only.

"Good evening, Mrs Tanaka. This is Sara at the front desk. How may I help?"

- 09 Speak as The Presence Standard sets out: calm and clear, in full sentences, without hotel jargon. The lines in this standard are examples: say them in your own words.

- 10 Let the guest finish, write the request down as they say it, and repeat it in one sentence before you act, so they never have to say it twice.

"So that's a taxi at 19:30 to the opera, for two people. Is that right?"

- 11 If the phone rings while you are with a guest at the desk, ask their permission, answer within three rings, take the caller's name and number, and be back with the guest in front of you within 30 seconds.

"Excuse me for one moment, Mr Novak. I'll be right with you."

PHASE 3

Hold and transfer

STEPS 12-16

- 12 Ask before you press hold, give the reason, and wait for a yes. If the guest says no, stay on the line and tell them what you are checking as you go.

"May I put you on hold for a moment while I check with the spa?"

- 13 Come back within 30 seconds, thank the guest by name, and say what you have found or what you are still waiting for.

"Thank you for waiting, Mrs Tanaka. The spa has 16:00 free; I'm checking the therapist now."

- 14 If the answer will take longer than 30 seconds, offer a call-back at a stated time and confirm the room or the number. Write it in the call-back log at once, with the time and your name.

"This will take a few minutes. May I call you back in your room by 18:20?"

- 15 Transfer only to a person who holds the answer. Stay on the line until they pick up, give the guest's name and request in one sentence, then connect. Nobody after 20 seconds: take it yourself.

"I'll put you through to Luca at the restaurant, who can book the table for you now."

- 16 Never send a guest to voicemail or back to the switchboard without telling them first. Calls for a booking follow The Three-Ring Standard; missed calls follow The Callback Standard.

PHASE 4

Answer written messages

STEPS 17–22

- 17 Watch the inbox (app chat, WhatsApp, text messages and email to the desk) as closely as the phone. Reply to every new message within 3 minutes, day and night, even when the reply only says when the answer will come.

- 18 Write in the guest's language and match their register: short and warm to a short message, fuller to a detailed one. Full words and sentences, no abbreviations, no slang, and no emoji unless the guest used one first.

"Good evening, Mr Al-Harbi. Your car will be at the main entrance at 19:30. Sara, front desk"

- 19 Sign every message with your first name and department, so the guest knows a person has read it and whom to ask for at the desk.

- 20 Answer every question in the message, in the guest's order. If one part needs checking, answer the rest now and give a clock time for the missing part.

"The pool is open until 20:00. I'm checking the late check-out with housekeeping and will reply by 10:00."

- 21 Move anything sensitive (a complaint, a health matter, a payment) to a call or a visit, with the guest's agreement. Never ask for card numbers or passport details by message.

- 22 Close each thread once the request is done: say what happened and ask whether anything else is needed. A thread still open at the end of the shift is handed over by name.

PHASE 5

Keep a person reachable

STEPS 23–26

- 23 For every automated service (online check-in, digital keys, the chat bot, QR menus, kiosks), know the human alternative and offer it as soon as a guest hesitates: the desk, a call, or a printed copy.

- 24 Keep printed copies at the desk of everything the app and the QR codes show: outlet menus and hours, the spa list, the hotel map. Hand one over at once to anyone who asks.

- 25 When the chat bot or an automated reply cannot answer, a person takes over the conversation within 3 minutes and says so by name.

"This is Omar at the concierge desk. I'll take care of this for you now."

- 26 When the app, the digital keys or the message system fails, tell the duty manager within 5 minutes, switch to phones and printed sheets, and tell guests at the desk how to reach you.

PHASE 6

Offer the app

STEPS 27–29

- 27** At check-in, offer the hotel app once, in one sentence, with one thing it does for this guest: ordering breakfast, the spa diary, messages to the desk. If the guest declines, never raise it again.

"Our app lets you message the desk and book the spa from your phone. Would you like the link?"

- 28** If the guest accepts, send the link or show the QR code, and check that they can log in before they leave the desk. Note the answer, yes or no, in the PMS.

- 29** Tell every guest, with the app or without it, the room-phone extension for the desk and the concierge, and that a person answers it day and night.

"Dial 0 from the room at any hour, and one of us will answer."

PHASE 7

Close and follow up

STEPS 30–33

- 30** Before you end a call, sum up in one sentence what will happen and when, thank the guest by name, and let them hang up first.

"So the taxi is booked for 19:30 at the main door. Thank you, Mrs Tanaka. Enjoy the opera."

- 31** Log every request from a call or a message within 5 minutes: room, name, channel, what was asked, who owns it and the time promised.

- 32** At the promised time, check the request was done and tell the guest through the channel they used. The Guest Request Standard sets out how a request is followed to the end.

- 33** Once a week the front office manager times five calls and reads ten message threads per agent, and scores rings, holds, reply times and wording against this standard.

What to record

Every call

- ☐ Time of the call and time answered
- ☐ Room number or caller's number
- ☐ Guest's name and its spelling
- ☐ Request in the guest's words

Holds and call-backs

- ☐ Hold asked for and accepted
- ☐ Call-back time promised
- ☐ Call-back made, with the time
- ☐ Who owns the call-back

Every message

- ☐ Channel: app, WhatsApp, text or email
- ☐ Time received and time of first reply
- ☐ Language the guest wrote in
- ☐ Time promised for the full answer

App and alternatives

- ☐ App offered at check-in: yes or no
- ☐ Guest accepted or declined
- ☐ Printed menus and hours stocked at the desk

System faults

- ☐ What failed, and the time
- ☐ Duty manager told, with the time
- ☐ Guests told how to reach the desk

Weekly check

- ☐ Calls timed per agent
- ☐ Message threads read per agent
- ☐ Score, and one point to work on

When the situation changes

Two lines ring at once

Answer the first, ask permission to hold, answer the second within three rings and take a name and number, then return to the first within 30 seconds.

A guest calls with an emergency

Never put it on hold. Take the room and what is happening, and call the duty manager and security by radio while you stay on the line. See The Doctor on Call Standard.

A caller asks if a guest is staying

Neither confirm nor deny. Offer to take a message and pass it on if the guest is in house. Never give or confirm a room number, as The Key Standard sets out.

A message is in a language you can't read

Reply within 3 minutes in English with a holding line, then ask a colleague who speaks it or use a translation tool, and check the meaning of your reply before you send it.

A message arrives at 03:00

The night agent replies within 3 minutes, as at any hour. If the answer needs a department that is closed, give the time it opens and the time you will confirm.

The guest is angry on the phone

Let them finish, apologise once, and offer to come to the room or meet them in the lobby with the duty manager. See The Recovery Standard.

The guest won't use the app

Do it for them by phone or at the desk, in the same time and with the same care. Never answer a request with "it's all in the app".

The headset fails mid-shift

Switch to the handset at once and tell the shift lead. Take calls from the back office until a spare headset is found, so the lobby stays out of the guest's ear.

Common mistakes

MISTAKE

Saying "Hold, please" and pressing the button before the guest can answer. The guest has been put aside before saying why they called.

MISTAKE

Leaving a guest on hold for two minutes because the answer is nearly there. Every second past 30 feels longer on the line than at the desk.

MISTAKE

Replying "Noted" to a message and nothing else. The guest doesn't know who read it, what will happen or when.

MISTAKE

Taking calls at the desk with colleagues laughing behind you. The guest hears the office and stops trusting the answer.

MISTAKE

Telling a guest at the desk to "use the app for that". A guest who came to a person is sent back to a screen.

MISTAKE

Copying the log's shorthand into a message: "ETA 10 min, rm rdy". It reads as if nobody had time to write to the guest.

Check your team

After training (45 minutes, with two calls and two messages role-played), each person answers these without the sheet.

- 01 Within how many rings or seconds is the phone answered?
- 02 What do you do before putting a guest on hold, and what happens after 30 seconds?
- 03 How quickly is a written message answered, and how is it signed?
- 04 What must the guest never hear behind you on a call?
- 05 What is the human alternative for each automated service in your hotel?
- 06 When is the app offered, how often, and what happens if the guest declines?
- 07 What goes into the log after every call or message?

Every Channel, Its Time

How fast each kind of contact is answered, and what the guest has by the end of it. One table for the phone, the inbox and the desk.

Contact	Answer within	The guest then has
Phone call, from a room or outside	Three rings or 10 seconds	Their request read back and a time
A call on hold	30 seconds	News, or a call-back time they agreed to
A transfer that rings out	20 seconds	You back on the line, message taken
App chat, WhatsApp or text	3 minutes	A full answer, or a clock time for it
Email to the desk	3 minutes, a first reply	A named person and a time for the answer
Chat bot that can't answer	3 minutes	A person who signs by name
Phone rings during a desk guest	Three rings	The desk guest served again in 30 seconds

How to use this with your team

Read one row at each shift briefing for a week, and ask who last missed it and why. In the second week the shift lead times three calls and three messages a day and reads the times aloud at the briefing.

Part of the DolceVita Standards Library: free operating standards for every department of the hotel, at dolcevitahospitality.com/free-resources.