

A photograph of a woman in a dark blue blazer and light blue shirt smiling and handing a business card to a man in a white shirt. Another man in a white shirt is visible in the foreground on the left, looking towards the woman. The background shows an office setting with windows and plants.

COVID STRATEGY EBOOK: **FRONT OFFICE**

SETTING UP MODIFIED FRONT
OFFICE PROCEDURES FOR
SUCCESS

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The new regulations hotels must follow in light of Covid-19 have made hoteliers everywhere reconsider many aspects of their operation. Even basic parts of the guest journey, including check-in and -out or engaging with in-house guests, must be reimagined to create both a safe and memorable experience.

The good news is, there are many tools and solutions you can leverage to make this recovery phase a success for your property.

To give you some food for thought, we've collected input from seasoned hospitality professionals to create the following front office guide.

It covers:

- Practical ways to adapt your front office set-up and operations
- The importance of digitisation
- Creative ideas for ways to engage with your guests

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This ebook includes insight from
Arian Roehrl, General Manager at [Seehotel Schlierseer Hof](#) &
International President at [AICR International](#)
Nathalie Mulder, Rooms Division Manager at [Kimpton De Witt Hotel](#)

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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING UP MODIFIED FRONT OFFICE PROCEDURES FOR SUCCESS

DESPITE NOTABLE CHANGES TO THE INDUSTRY, THE RAISON D'ETRE OF HOSPITALITY REMAINS INTACT. UPHOLDING THE SAME STANDARDS YOUR HOTEL IS KNOWN FOR WILL REQUIRE CARE AND FORESIGHT.

Featuring advice from:

Arian Roehrlé, General Manager at [Seehotel Schlierseer Hof](#) &

International President at [AICR International](#)

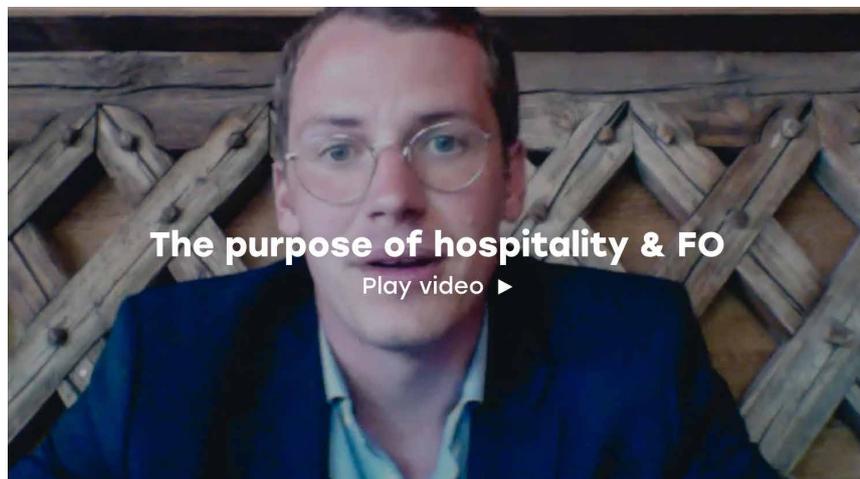
Nathalie Mulder, Rooms Division Manager at [Kimpton De Witt Hotel](#)

Your front office team is more important now than ever because they can offer a safe and warm welcome to your guests at a time when the perceived risk of travelling is higher than usual.

1.1 ACKNOWLEDGE CHANGES AND PLAN FOR THEM

Without a doubt, Covid has resulted in many new challenges for the hospitality industry. While some of them may be hard to face, try to see the opportunities around you, too.

- **The purpose of hospitality hasn't changed.** Before Covid, you welcomed guests and created meaningful memories and experiences for them. Even with new rules and regulations in place, this goal remains the same. At first, it may feel a bit more difficult to achieve. But with the right [preparation, strategy and communication](#), you will still be able to create a memorable stay for your guests.



CHAPTER ONE

- **Find ways to adapt.** When moving forward, acknowledge that your circumstances are different now and you will be most successful if you look for creative ways to adapt sooner rather than later. Whatever stage of closure or reopening your property is at now, start brainstorming ways to make your post-Covid front office operations effective, efficient and engaging for your guests.



1.2 MAKE SAFETY AND HYGIENE THE PRIORITY IN PUBLIC SPACES

Local authorities will provide rules and theoretical guidelines, but it's up to you how you implement them to ensure your guests are both safe and have a good time.

- **Space out your seating.** Many countries have new rules about how many people can be in a closed area at a time. Space out your seating in the lobby and other public areas to limit the number of people who spend time there. Avoid boring empty spaces by setting up plants, artwork, or decorative separators that suit your property's style.
- **Share information.** In many countries, hygiene regulations vary from region to region or city to city. Help your guests stick to local and in-house guidelines by publicly [displaying safety information](#). This can include details on when to wear a mask, where to find hand sanitising stations in the hotel, how many people are allowed in the elevator at a time and anything else that applies to your property.
- **Set up sanitiser stations.** For the safety of staff and guests, have sanitiser stations in strategic spots at your hotel. This can include all entrances, the reception desk, the area in front of the elevator and the host's desk in your dining outlets. Keep your property from looking like a hospital by making the stations blend in with branded stands, dispensers, or sleeves for the sanitiser bottle.

CHAPTER ONE



1.3 BUDGET FOR NEW STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Implementing and following all the new hygiene regulations will generate new costs. Get an overview of them now to avoid surprises, cash flow challenges and shortages in the future.

The following points are a few of the main new cost drivers to consider.

- **PPE for staff and guests.** Depending on your local rules, you'll need to supply your staff with masks and/or gloves. You may also want to offer these items to your guests. Perhaps you're planning to buy reusable branded masks which would look better but also come at a higher initial cost. Either way, calculate what you will need daily and include this cost in your operational budget.
- **Disinfectant and hand sanitiser.** Determine the cost of refilling your hand sanitiser stations regularly and buying more disinfectant to clean reception counters, credit card machines, pens and everything else staff and guests touch regularly. Keep in mind that these costs will rise as you welcome more guests and bring back more staff.
- **Time spent on new Covid-related tasks.** Cleaning and sanitising the reception area and your equipment several times a day as well as dealing with new paperwork and service requirements can quickly take a lot of time out of your staff's day. Try to find creative ways to handle this work efficiently and ensure you consider these tasks when planning your rotas and labour cost.

CHAPTER TWO

REIMAGINING YOUR FRONT OFFICE OPERATIONS

WHILE TECHNOLOGY IS AN OBVIOUS SOLUTION TO RETAINING EFFICIENT SERVICE, DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF GUEST AUTONOMY. SOMETIMES A LESS HANDS-ON APPROACH IS THE EASIEST AND SAFEST OPTION.

Featuring advice from:

Arian Roehrle, General Manager at [Seehotel Schlierseer Hof](#) &

International President at [AICR International](#)

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As you look at how to change some of your front office procedures, always look for creative ways you can bring together safety, social distancing and personal engagement.

Since this may sound hard at first, we've put together the following tips from our hospitality experts to inspire you to find a solution for your property.

2.1 ADAPT FRONT OFFICE SERVICES

Today, new restrictions make it difficult to provide the same services to guests as before the pandemic. However, there are ways to change things up and still provide the same level of service, albeit in a slightly different way.

- **Check-in and check-out.** Implement online check-in and check-out to give guests the option to skip the reception if they want to. Registration forms are also available digitally now and can be filled by the guest before they arrive. This will save your team time they can invest in other forms of guest interaction, training, or keeping up with new hygiene measures. When a guest does check in and out at the front desk, wipe down the counter, credit card reader and pens after every use.
- **Porter service.** Have porters disinfect their trolleys regularly and offer guests the option to have their bags disinfected too. Keep the number of people entering a guest room to a minimum by offering to leave the luggage in front of the room and ringing the bell to announce its arrival.

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- **Valet parking.** Ensure the safety of your valets and guests by disinfecting the car before and after parking it. Of course, guests need to agree before staff use sanitising products in the vehicle.
- **Make more services optional.** In the past it may have been a given to park a guest's car or take their bags on arrival. With people being more careful about direct and indirect physical contact, it's important to offer them a choice of which services they want and how they would like them carried out.

2.3 EMBRACE DIGITISATION

Instead of thinking of digitisation as a way to replace staff and do away with human interaction, see it as a tool that can help you add value for your guests.

By saving time on repetitive tasks and making operations more efficient, your staff's life becomes easier, and they have more time and energy to focus on genuinely connecting with guests. And isn't that what it's all about?

- **Make your website a direct communication channel:** Add a live chat feature to your website, so guests can get quick answers while they research. Consider using a chatbot to answer repeat questions at all times of the day and night.

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- **Implement a messaging platform for guests:** The trend towards digital communication with guests already started before Covid. As more people want to avoid contact with the front desk these days, this trend will be magnified.

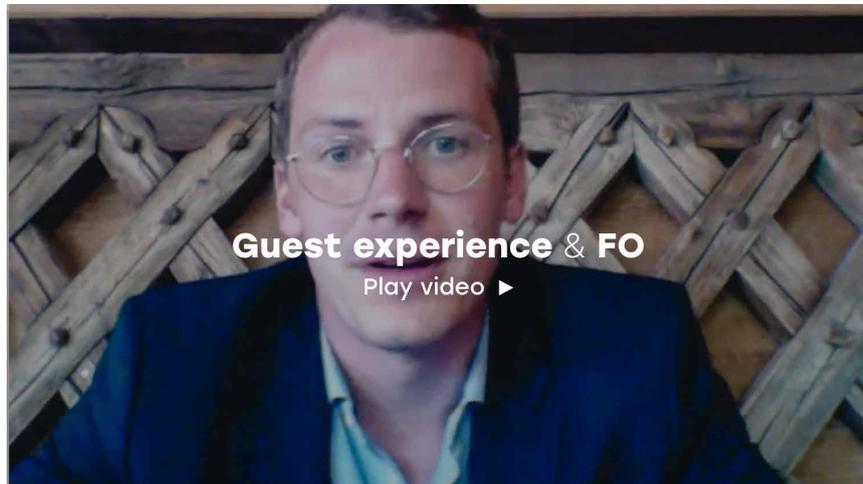
Set up a direct messaging platform to communicate with guests before, during and after their stay to accommodate this demand. Use this tech solution to streamline your guest communication, respond to questions, requests and complaints quickly and effectively and to generate more reviews through post-departure messages.

- **Generate revenue through pre-arrival upselling:** With fewer guests wanting to check in at reception, the front desk loses out on the opportunity to upsell on arrival. Implement a pre-arrival upselling platform like Oaky to promote your property's unique offers, let guests customise their stay and drive ancillary revenue for your property.
- **Modernise internal communication:** Now that you've made guest communication quicker and more efficient, do the same for your internal communication. Leverage new tech solutions to cut back on time spent in meetings, ensure messages go to the right departments and complete action items promptly. On top of helping you save time and reduce direct contact between staff, this will boost guest satisfaction because your response time will be shorter.
- **Offer online restaurant reservations:** Restaurant capacities are limited in many regions, so guests want to book ahead to secure a spot. Allow them to do this online with a tool where they can choose their desired date, time and even the table they want.
- **Provide digital services and amenities:** Newspapers at breakfast, a hotel's A-Z guide in the room... guests want them but they're yet another thing that should be cleaned after every use. Save yourself this hassle by [digitising these amenities](#).

Offer online access to popular newspapers, magazines and your hotel guide via your app or a dedicated online platform. This not only saves time on cleaning and reduces waste, it also does away with the hassle of replacing a single page in the room service menu in every single room simply because you had to update a few dishes.

CHAPTER TWO

2.4 SHIFT YOUR FOCUS TO EXPERIENCES



Experiences are why we travel, so naturally, you want to make it worth your guest's while. Let's look at a few ways you can provide memorable and satisfying experiences even during these difficult times.

- **Localise experiences and offers:** There has been a growing interest in local experiences and this trend has only gotten stronger since Covid came onto the scene. Show your guests a new side of your city or region with locally inspired menus, activities like guided hikes and runs, or events featuring regional artists. This offers an opportunity to engage and to [upsell services for ancillary revenue](#).
- **Find new ways to interact with guests:** For hotel staff, face masks can make it harder to connect with guests since they can't even exchange a smile. That doesn't have to stop you though...
If your local rules allow you to remove your mask in an F&B venue, why not check your guests in at your bar or in your lounge? That way everyone can sit down and handle formalities in a relaxed atmosphere. Guest relations staff can do the same and join guests at the breakfast table for a few minutes to check on them and see if they need something. Always ask guests if they are comfortable with this, of course.
- **Seize the opportunity of changing demand:** Whether it's the demand for more local experiences or the desire for more authentic engagement, the guests' changing demands are a great opportunity for you to try something new. Guests are currently very understanding of the fact that hotels are undergoing changes and are also open to a different stay experience. So feel free to get creative and break with outdated traditions and processes you've been wanting to overhaul for a long time.

Now it's your turn!

Let these ideas inspire you to create an amazing front office experience for your guests and make the most of your returning demand.

