Front Office Management Skills: Definition and Examples

The front office refers to the department in a company that directly faces customers or clients. The manager of the front office is responsible for setting and enforcing standards that directly influence customer experience. To land a position as a front office manager, it's important to know what skills potential employers may look for in candidates.In this article, we define front office management skills, discuss some examples of such skills, describe the steps you can take to improve them and explain how to apply them in the workplace and highlight them throughout your job search.

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What are front office management skills?

Front office management skills are abilities and characteristics that enable you to oversee the activities of the front office, the customer-facing department of an organization. Front office management is an administrative role, so it involves diverse responsibilities, and the skills that front office managers implement on the job are similarly wide-ranging. They commonly develop these skills through a combination of education, experience, training and certification.Front office managers work in a broad array of industries, including hospitality, health care, finance and sales. Different industries may emphasize certain skills or fields of knowledge over others, but the primary duties of front office management tend to be consistent. These duties include:

Training and supervising the front office staff

Setting and maintaining work schedules

Delegating tasks

Writing memos and correspondence

Entering payroll data

Developing and enforcing standards, best practices and workflows

Addressing the concerns, questions and complaints of clients or customers

Managing the inventory of office supplies and similar requirements

Arranging meetings and events

Monitoring financial data

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Examples of front office management skills

To carry out their duties successfully, front office managers apply the following competencies:

Technological savvy

Technology savvy refers to the ability to understand and use technology. A form of technological savvy is computer literacy. Computer applications such as word processors and spreadsheets are among the commonly used tools in front office management, which are essential for activities like writing communications and maintaining financial data. In some industries, front office managers may also use customer relationship management tools for tracking and optimizing customer data.Technology savvy relates to other commonly used tools in the front office. A tech-savvy front office manager is usually adept at working with equipment such as copiers, printers and fax machines as well.Related: Computer Skills: Definitions and Examples

Financial literacy

A financially literate person has a strong understanding of financial concepts and practices. Employers commonly expect their front office managers to perform basic finance-related activities such as budgeting and bookkeeping, which is the practice of maintaining an ongoing record of an organization's financial activities. A financially literate front office manager is adept at tracking transactions and setting reasonable limits concerning their employer's money.Related: Why Financial Literacy Is Important for Your Career

Decision-making and problem-solving

Decision-making and problem-solving are related skills that effective managers tend to have. The former refers to the ability to consider choices and choose the one most likely to achieve the desired result, and the latter is a type of decision-making that relates to overcoming challenges. As a front office manager, you can expect to make many decisions in the execution of your duties, such as those concerning schedules, task delegation and problems relating to customers or budgets.

Communication

Communication is the ability to express ideas, verbally and in writing, in such a way that others easily understand. Front officer managers use communication skills in numerous ways. When assigning duties to staff members, they clearly define activities and expectations. When writing memos or emails, they strive to craft messages that convey the appropriate meaning and preempt questions.

Organization

If you're an organized person, you're capable of handling tasks in an orderly, systematic way. You can plan out your time and prioritize your responsibilities so that you can give each the appropriate amount of attention. You're also likely to be skilled at keeping track of details that concern others, which is vital for tasks such as scheduling and budgeting.

Leadership

Leadership is a quality that impels others to trust your guidance and heed your directions. Front office managers are usually responsible for a variety of staff members, including those across departments. Individuals with strong leadership qualities often exercise authority fairly and cultivate relationships of mutual respect with their juniors. Such relationships are essential when it comes to delegating tasks or providing training to the staff.

How to improve front office management skills

Here are some things you can do to improve your front office management skills:

1. Stay up to date on technology

Computer hardware, software and office equipment are constantly evolving, as there updates and new versions of these tools become available every year. To make sure your skills continue to be marketable, try to stay current on new advances in the technology you're likely to use on the job. You can teach yourself by looking up tutorials on websites or video-streaming platforms. Alternatively, consider enrolling in a course, which can guide you through a formal curriculum and may even present you with a certificate that you can include on your resume.

2. Learn different leadership styles

As a front office manager, you play an important leadership role in an organization, and it can be helpful to develop your own leadership style. Begin by familiarizing yourself with common styles of leadership, such as:

Coaching

Democratic

Laissez-faire

Transactional

Transformational

Visionary

Then determine which style of leadership best fits your ideals, interests and ambitions. From there, you can start to work on developing the characteristics required to become the type of leader you want.

3. Consider other training courses

There are also formal courses you can take to become more skilled in other areas of front office management. One is leadership training, which can teach you valuable practices you can use to be an effective role model, communicate your vision to others and foster trust. They can also facilitate your development of a leadership style and help build skills relating to other key front office management skills, such as decision-making and problem-solving.Another type of training course to consider is finance-related training. Look for courses that teach you basic bookkeeping and budgeting skills, which are directly applicable to front office management work. If you're interested in pursuing a leadership or finance training program, search online for opportunities near you or web-based programs you can complete from home.

4. Identify and focus on areas of improvement

After you've built up what skills you can, perform a self-analysis to determine what skills still require development. If you feel that your verbal communication is fine but your writing isn't clear enough, direct your energies toward improving that area of your skill set. Seek further resources or training opportunities in such areas to close any gaps in your proficiencies.Related: 5 Common Areas of Improvement for Career Advancement

Front office management skills in the workplace

Here are some ways you can apply front office management skills in the workplace:

Cultivate relationships. When you're responsible for a staff of employees, it can be helpful to build and maintain healthy relationships with them. Learn their strengths and weaknesses, understand who they are as people and use this knowledge to be an effective, trustworthy leader to them.

Ask for and apply feedback. Often, others have a better understanding of your weaknesses, so consider asking colleagues for feedback concerning the areas of improvement you've identified. Thoroughly reflect on their critiques and apply their suggestions to build your competency.

Use technology to your advantage. There are various digital tools you can use to assist your development of soft skills such as communication and organization. Grammar and style applications can help you become a better communicator in writing, while task managers and other productivity tools can improve your organizational skills.

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How to highlight front office management skills

When you're applying and interviewing for front office management positions, apply these tips to improve your chances of landing the job you want:

Front office skills for resume and cover letter

On your application documents, there are many areas where you can mention and elaborate on your skills. Begin by studying the job description carefully and taking note of skills-related keywords you can include in your documents. As you write your resume, make sure to include a professional summary and a dedicated skills section, where you mention any of the skills keywords you've identified plus other skills you'd like to highlight. In the employment history section, when you describe your duties, mention these skills again while also explaining how you've used them in previous roles.When you're ready to write your cover letter, focus on the two or three skills you feel are your most valuable. Expand on the content you've included on your resume by crafting a narrative that shows precisely how you've implemented these skills to achieve measurable results at previous jobs. Make it clear that you can apply the same skills to the role you're applying for to achieve similar results.

Front office skills for the job interview

When you get a callback for an interview, prepare by researching common interview questions for front office management positions and thinking of ways you can connect your responses to your top skills. One question might ask what managerial duties you've performed at previous jobs. As you describe your duties, mention how you used a particular skill to succeed in the execution of your responsibilities. Another question might ask you how you'd respond in a hypothetical situation, in which case you can illustrate how you'd apply another skill to achieve a desirable outcome.