

OFFICE PRACTICE (DES 1103)

LECTURE : 8

TOPIC : Receiving visitors

AIM : To understand the importance of a Receptionist and her duties

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this chapter you should be able to understand:

1. The duties of a receptionist
2. How to deal with visitors with appointments and without appointments

TOPIC OUTLINE:

8.1 The Reception area

8.2 The Receptionist

8.3 Receiving Visitors

8.4 Dealing with the press



NOTES:

In a large firm, a special reception area may be provided but in a small business it may be necessary for the receptionist to combine this work with other duties. In a large organization a visitor is expected to wait in the reception area until the executive's secretary arrives to bring the visitor to the employer's office.

The reception area is usually situated just inside the main entrance to the organization.

The area may contain:

- A well organized reception counter
- Internal and external telephone links
- A waiting area with comfortable chairs, tables, magazines, newspaper and ashtray.

8.1 THE RECEPTION AREA

Location

Set up in a proper location where a visitor could not listen to telephone conversation or staff discussions.

Tidiness

Must be tidy, clean and attractive

Chairs and walls decor must be properly arranged

Personal items should not be displayed

Bins of paper and ashtray should be emptied frequently

The reception counter should be cleared of folders and files, which are not in use.

Flowers

Fresh flowers to brighten up the area

Faded flowers should be removed

Indoor potted plants should not be allowed to become dusty

Reading material

Leave current newspapers

Remove old and torn magazines

Furniture

Arranged for maximum convenience and comfort



8.2 THE RECEPTIONIST

The receptionist acts as a link person – the first contact with the outside world. Her main duty is to receive and assist callers' with/without an appointment.

Qualities of a Receptionist

Appearance

Should be pleasant, well-poised, be neat and possess a warm personality

Good communications skills

Able to converse intelligently with good command of languages.

Courtesy

Courteous in her action, speech and mannerisms.

Self-control

Especially when handling difficult situation such as dealing with rude callers.

Loyalty

Never criticize her employer or the firm to outsiders or to other staff members.

Discretion and tact

To be careful when giving out information. Know how to keep confidential matters

Versatile and flexible

Familiar with a wide range of reference sources. Know how to track down new ones when the need arises.

Know about the company

Have thorough knowledge of the company, its activities, its products or services and the role of all personnel.

Accuracy

When dealing with names, addresses, dates, times and figures.

8.3 RECEIVING VISITORS

An appointment book will show the names and times expected callers will arrive. Unexpected callers must be dealt with tact and if necessary a future appointment must be made.

Asking caller's business card can save a lot of questions. This will show:

- The caller's name
- The name and address of his/her company
- The type of firm he/she works for
- The person's position in his/her firm

A reception register can be used to receive the date and time of arrival of a visitor.

The Secretary's role when receiving visitors with and without appointments

Visitors with appointments

- Secretary should notify reception of all appointments made by the executive at the beginning of each day.
- Ensure the visitor is greeted in a warm and courteous manner.
- Ask visitor to enter particulars of their visit in the callers register (visitors' book).
- The receptionist must notify the secretary the arrival of the visitor so that the secretary could collect the visitor from the reception area.
- Where applicable offer to relieve visitors of any bags, and cases.
- Where time permits offer refreshments or reading materials.
- Be prepared to make casual conversation, bearing in mind the necessity of getting on with her work.
- Should there be any delays, apologize and explain the reason for the delay. Try to reassure the visitor that he/she has not been overlooked or totally forgotten.
- Inform the executive first before the caller is shown to the executive's room.
- When introducing a visitor, announce the name, title and company clearly.

Visitors without appointments

- Some guidelines should be worked out on dealing with visitors without appointments.
- Many firms have very strict rules when dealing with unexpected visitors especially sales representatives.
- Be prepared to cater for eventualities in organizing the executive's (boss's) daily program so that she does not 'over protect' the executive (boss) to the extent that business opportunities are missed.
- The secretary/receptionist should use her discretion to assess whether the visitor can be a valued business associate or client.
- Greet the visitor politely.
- Explain that it is company's policy that visitors will not be seen without an appointment.
- Ask for his/her business card.
- If no card is offered, ask visitor for details and make a note of them.
- Assure the visitor that you would inform the executive about his presence, and would then call him/her if the executive wishes to see him/her.
- Offer the visitor to make an appointment at a future date and time.

8.4 DEALING WITH THE PRESS

- Press representative is greeted politely
- Be cooperative, however great care must be exercised when giving information

- Emphasize that information could only be supplied by authorized personnel probably the Public Relations Officer

REFERENCES:

1. John Harrison, Secretarial Duties (10th Edition)

TUTORIAL QUESTIONS – WEEK 8

1. Reception duties form part of many secretarial posts and some callers do not have appointments. Describe the secretary's role in:
 - a) receiving callers with appointment
 - b) dealing with callers without appointments

2. Explain the duties that might be performed by the receptionist in taking responsibility for the security of the reception area. Give examples where appropriate.

