

Hotel Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Hotel Manager interviews weigh commercial judgement as heavily as people skills. Panels typically include the General Manager or an area/cluster manager, sometimes alongside HR, and expect candidates to move comfortably between budget detail and guest-facing scenarios.

- **Operational/process:** Questions about how you run day-to-day operations across departments like housekeeping, front office and food and beverage.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about leadership, staff management and handling difficult situations, usually answered with STAR.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical guest or staffing situations testing decision-making under pressure and service recovery instincts.
- **Financial/commercial:** Questions probing budgeting, forecasting and revenue management knowledge, often with a request to walk through actual numbers or logic.

Expect an opening conversation about your operational background and current or most recent property, then a run of scenario and behavioural questions, followed by a deeper dive into budgeting and revenue figures, and a closing discussion of availability given the role's long and irregular hours.

1. Walk me through how you'd manage a hotel's operations across housekeeping, food service and front desk on a typical week.

Why they ask

Tests whether you understand how the departments interact and can prioritise across competing demands without losing sight of guest experience.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: describe your usual sequence of checks and touchpoints (morning briefing, occupancy review, department handovers), the tools you use to track it, and how you adjust when one area is under pressure.

Example answer

"I start each morning with a stand-up across department heads to review occupancy, arrivals and any overnight issues flagged in the PMS. From there I check housekeeping's board against expected checkouts and check-ins, confirm food and beverage covers for the day against bookings, and flag any maintenance requests that could affect guest rooms. If one department is short-staffed, I'll shift a supervisor across for the shift rather than let service standards slip, and I follow up with a shorter check-in mid-afternoon before the evening handover."

2. Tell me about a time you had to turn around an underperforming budget or cost line.

Why they ask

Financial control is core to the role and panels want evidence you've actually managed a budget under pressure, not just monitored one.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set out the situation and the specific budget problem, the action you took to investigate and correct it, and the measurable result once it was resolved.

Example answer

"Our food and beverage division was consistently running over budget when I took it on. I pulled the last six months of invoices and found a supplier contract that hadn't been reviewed in years,

alongside portion sizes that had drifted from the original costing. I renegotiated the contract, retrained kitchen staff on portion control, and reviewed the menu pricing against current food costs. Within two quarters the division was back within forecast, and I kept monthly variance reviews in place afterwards so it didn't slip again."

3. A guest is at the front desk demanding a refund after a poor experience, and the duty manager can't resolve it. What do you do?

Why they ask

Guest complaint escalation is a constant reality in hotel management, and panels want to see judgement, not just a scripted apology.

How to structure your answer

Scenario/judgement: state your immediate priority, how you'd gather the facts before committing to anything, and how you'd balance guest satisfaction against the hotel's commercial position.

Example answer

"I'd move the conversation somewhere private so it's not playing out in the lobby, and let the guest explain fully before I say anything. I'd check what actually happened against our records and speak briefly with the duty manager to understand what's already been offered. If the complaint is legitimate, I'll offer a fair resolution on the spot, whether that's a partial refund, a room upgrade or a credit for a future stay, and I'll follow up personally afterwards so the guest knows it was taken seriously rather than just processed."

4. How do you decide when to adjust room rates in response to occupancy and competitor pricing?

Why they ask

Revenue management is a named skill for the role and interviewers want to know you can think commercially, not just administratively.

How to structure your answer

Technical/process: explain the data you monitor, the decision rules you apply, and how often you review and adjust pricing.

Example answer

"I track occupancy forecasts alongside competitor rates on Booking.com and Expedia daily, particularly in the two weeks before any date. If we're tracking below forecast with soft demand, I'll release a rate reduction or a value-add package rather than dropping the headline rate outright, to protect brand positioning. If demand is running strong, I'll hold or lift rates in line with what comparable properties are charging, and I review the overall pricing strategy monthly against actual RevPAR results."

5. Describe a time you had to manage a staff performance issue across one of your departments.

Why they ask

People leadership and staff appraisal are named tasks in the role, and panels want evidence of direct, fair management rather than avoidance.

How to structure your answer

STAR: outline the performance issue, the conversation and support you put in place, and the outcome for the staff member and the team.

Example answer

"A housekeeping supervisor was consistently missing room turnaround targets, which was affecting check-in times. I sat down with them privately to understand what was going on rather than assuming it was a motivation issue, and it turned out the roster wasn't accounting for a run of larger suites

needing more time. I adjusted the scheduling formula, set a clear standard going forward, and checked in weekly for a month. Turnaround times came back on track and the supervisor stayed with the team well after that.”

6. This role runs well beyond standard hours. How do you manage your own workload and wellbeing alongside your team's?

Why they ask

At around 50 hours a week with irregular demands, panels want reassurance you can sustain the pace without burning out or burning out your team.

How to structure your answer

Behavioural/reflective: describe how you structure your week, delegate, and protect time for both yourself and your staff.

Example answer

“I block out my week in advance around the predictable peaks, like weekend check-ins and month-end budget reporting, and I lean on my department heads to run day-to-day decisions rather than escalating everything to me. I make sure rostering gives staff genuine days off, not just rotated shifts, because a tired team makes more service errors. For myself, I protect at least one full day off a week where I'm not checking the PMS remotely, which keeps me sharper for the weeks that do run long.”