

Hotel Service Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for hotel service manager roles typically assess your ability to manage operations, lead teams and handle guest issues under pressure. You can expect a mix of operational, behavioural and scenario-based questions, often with a focus on compliance and service standards.

- **Process and operational:** Questions about how you handle rostering, budgeting, and daily workflows, often asking you to walk through your approach step by step.
- **Behavioural:** Requests for past examples of leadership, conflict resolution, or overcoming challenges, usually structured around the STAR method.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations such as a guest complaint, staffing shortage, or compliance breach, testing your judgement and problem-solving in real time.
- **Technical:** Questions about your proficiency with property management systems like Opera or RMS Cloud, and how you use them to support operations.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions on your knowledge of liquor licensing, responsible service of alcohol, food safety, and work health and safety obligations.

The interview process often starts with a phone screen with HR or a recruiter, followed by a face-to-face or video interview with the hotel general manager and department heads. Some employers include a walk-through of the property and a short practical exercise, such as reviewing a roster or responding to a guest complaint scenario.

1. Walk me through how you approach creating a staff roster for a busy weekend.

Why they ask

This question assesses your operational planning, understanding of award conditions, and ability to balance staffing needs with cost control.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: provide a clear step-by-step explanation of your process, from forecasting to publishing the roster, highlighting any tools you use and how you handle changes.

Example answer

"First, I review the occupancy forecast and any events or functions booked. Then I map out required staffing levels for front desk, housekeeping and food and beverage based on historical data and expected check-ins. I use Deputy to build the roster, ensuring compliance with award conditions and avoiding overtime where possible. I also factor in breaks and shift lengths, and I keep a few staff on call for unexpected absences. Finally, I publish the roster a week in advance and adjust if bookings change."

2. Tell me about a time you had to resolve a serious guest complaint.

Why they ask

This question explores your customer service skills, ability to stay calm under pressure, and how you turn a negative experience into a positive outcome.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the Situation, the Task you needed to accomplish, the Action you took, and the Result, focusing on the guest's satisfaction and any follow-up.

Example answer

"At a previous hotel, a guest arrived to find their room wasn't ready due to a late checkout. They were frustrated and had a dinner reservation. I apologised, upgraded them to a suite that was ready, and arranged for a complimentary drink at the bar while we moved their luggage. I then followed up with housekeeping to ensure the original room was prepared for the next guest. The guest later thanked me and left a positive review."

3. You notice that a staff member is not following food safety procedures during a busy dinner service. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This scenario tests your ability to enforce compliance while maintaining team morale and service flow, and your judgement on when to intervene.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess the immediate risk, take discreet corrective action, then follow up with training or documentation after service.

Example answer

"I would immediately pull the staff member aside discreetly, remind them of the correct procedure and the importance of food safety. I would ask them to correct their action right away and check if they need additional training. After service, I would document the incident and arrange a refresher session for the whole team if needed. I would also review why the lapse occurred, such as inadequate training or time pressure, and address the root cause."

4. What experience do you have with property management systems like Opera or RMS Cloud?

Why they ask

This technical question gauges your familiarity with the systems used daily in hotels, and your ability to train others or generate reports.

How to structure your answer

Technical demonstration: list the systems you have used, describe your typical tasks, and give a concrete example of how you used the system to improve operations.

Example answer

"I have used Opera daily in my current role for reservations, check-ins, check-outs and managing guest profiles. I also have experience with RMS Cloud for smaller properties, including rate management and reporting. I am comfortable training new staff on these systems and using them to generate occupancy and revenue reports for budgeting."

5. Describe a time you had to manage a budget shortfall in your department.

Why they ask

This behavioural question examines your financial acumen, resourcefulness, and ability to make tough decisions without harming service quality.

How to structure your answer

STAR: outline the Situation and the budget gap, the Task of bringing costs under control, the Actions you took, and the Result in terms of staying within budget.

Example answer

"In a previous role, our housekeeping budget was overspent due to increased linen costs. I analysed supplier contracts and found a more cost-effective laundry service without compromising quality. I also introduced a linen inventory system to reduce loss. By the end of the quarter, we were back within budget and maintained guest satisfaction scores."

6. How do you ensure your team complies with liquor licensing and responsible service of alcohol requirements?

Why they ask

This compliance-focused question checks your knowledge of legal obligations and your approach to embedding a culture of safety and responsibility.

How to structure your answer

Compliance check: explain your policy for certification, training, monitoring during service, and how you handle incidents or refreshers.

Example answer

"I make sure all front of house staff hold a current RSA certificate and complete refresher training annually. I display licensing notices prominently and conduct regular checks during service to ensure staff are checking IDs and refusing service appropriately. I also keep an incident register and review it with the team to learn from any issues."