



**Onboarding plan for Front Office employees- PIERDREI Hotel
Hamburg HafenCity**

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Bachelor of Hospitality Management

Bachelor Thesis

2024

Abstract

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Degree Bachelor of Hospitality Management
Thesis Title Onboarding plan for Front Office employees- PIERDREI Hotel Hamburg Hafency
Number of pages and appendix pages 20 + 9
<p>This is product-based research which is focusing on creating onboarding plan for the new Front Office employees in PIERDREI Hotel Hamburg Hafency. The research is done on the request from Front Office HODs of PIERDREI Hotel Hamburg Hafency, and is practically applicable to daily department operations and procedures.</p> <p>The main goal of this research was to create a new onboarding plan for Front Office employees in order to effectively train new employees during daily operations. This plan was required to be practical and be able to be used as a main onboarding plan for Front Office employees.</p> <p>After analysing professional literature on the topics of onboarding and orientation the author has summarised differences in between those. Not only was that helpful for understanding terminology and key points of each part, it also assisted in gathering information that was needed for coming up with interview questions.</p> <p>After thoroughly describing current situation at the PIERDREI Hotel Hamburg Hafency the author has conducted the first interview round and gathered employee opinions on current state of onboarding process. After detecting potential improvement points the author has made a first version if onboarding plan by adjusting already existing plan to needs and wishes of the department. Which resulted in significantly extending onboarding process and provided more detailed tracking plan. After testing onboarding plan on two new employees second round of the interviews was conducted to find issues that still need to be improved. The use of Daily Log was implemented in order to help new employees adjust better to daily operations.</p> <p>Due to the two-phase interview process the author was able to test the efficiency of the created plan and made needed adjustments in order to boost the efficiency of the product in the daily operations. Nevertheless, final product would have benefited from additional interview round and collection of feedback. In lack there of the author has used her observations to conclude if adjustments we successfully implemented and well executed.</p> <p>Overall, the author has reached the goal of the research. Moreover, given format of the researches well as the final product can be used as a template for updating onboarding plan in different PIERDREI Hotel department.</p>
Key words Onboarding, PIERDREI Hotel, Front Office

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1 Introduction

The first day at the new job can always be exciting, and most of the new employees are looking forward to the day and approach it with open mindset. However, the first days at the new workplace can be easily ruined by unstructured and poorly put together onboarding process, and ruin the excitement and first impression of the company and/or department.

Most of the employees in the hotel industry have experienced at least once during their career or during the study period the lack of attention and/or responsibilities given at their new job, or left unheard when providing feedback or asking for more tasks and responsibilities. Where you are given an „easy“ task just not to bother your new colleague to do their daily business. Onboarding process can easily feel rushed and inattentive due to the natural structure of the hotel industry. All of this can easily contribute not only to bad first impression, hierarchy and lack of team spirit, but also affect company financially, by keeping employee turnover on the high rate.

It is a common sense for anyone that had experience in the hotel industry to understand the significance of onboarding process, both as a first impression of the daily operation processes in the company and/or chosen department, as well as a tool to motivate new employees and keep team spirit up.

The current thesis project is commissioned by PIERDREI Hotel in Hamburg Hafencity, located in Hamburg, Germany, where the author is a full-time employee in the duration of writing thesis. Since the author personally experiences different types and styles of onboarding processes, as well as assisted with new employee onboarding in PIERDREI Hotel for the last two years, the author has noticed that several things might be improved in order to minimise the workload and work stress on current employees, as well as better integrate new employees in the the daily operations. Author saw an opportunity in structuring the process as well as deepening her knowledge in to this specific topic of the hotel industry.

The goal that was set by the author of the thesis is to create a new onboarding plan by analysing current situation in the department, as well as taking needs and wishes of the HODs and current employees into account. The final product will be analysed by Front Office manager and Rooms Division Manager and feedback will be provided.

2 Theoretical framework

Onboarding and orientation can be perceived as a similar concept on the same process, some drastic differences can be pinpointed between three of them. It is important to come to understanding of similarities and differences between those before proceeding with the project-creating a guide and a plan of action for the Front Office HODs and Shiftleaders for introducing new employees to the Frontdesk work environment and hotel daily operations at the PIERDREI Hotel.

2.1 Onboarding

Onboarding of the new employees is a process where new employees are being engaged and introduced to the company culture and the daily operations. Employee onboarding is meant to assist new employees to become a part of the team, as well as to learn doing daily tasks (Klein, 2015). Successful onboarding process has a power to motivate employees in taking their new responsibilities and helps them find their place in the team (Sims, 2010)

2.2 Orientation

Employee orientation introduces new employees to the different company aspects, such as rules, regulations, policies and procedures, as well as to the human aspect of the work- coworkers and working environment (Bennett, 1974). According to Wallace (2009) orientation is a process that is designed as an extension of the recruitment, selection and hiring process.

Successful employee orientation can also build as positive image of the company for the new employees therefore helping companies to minimise employee turnover.

At this point in the industry orientation is somewhat expected by the new employees and can be a identification of a successful start for them (Snell, 2020)

2.3 Differences between Onboarding and Orientation

New employee onboarding and orientation are two different concepts that often are hard to differentiate. In order to successfully proceed with further thesis research it is important to understand differences and similarities between those two. Author has struggled to differentiate each of them, therefore a Table was compiled (Table 1) after analysing professional literature from such authors as Arthur (2020), Sims (2018), and Peek (2023), where differences of onboarding and orientation are presented more clearly and in more accessible way.

Table 1. Differences between the orientation and onboarding

Orientation	Onboarding
One-time event	A process: might take several months
Mainly focused on the employee role in the company	Mainly focused on the employee role in the department
Most often carried out in groups	Most often carried out individually
Most often conducted in the separate space (eg. Conference room), can be conducted online	Requires direct presence on the job
Preparing employee for conducting specific job-oriented trainings	Conducting specific job-orienting trainings
One-way communication (mostly presented by the HR department)	Two-way process where both parties are included and rely on each other
Formal training	Most often a combination of formal and informal trainings, as well as information sharing, collecting feedback, and personal communications.

According to Sims (2018), the most noticeable differences in between orientation and onboarding are duration and implementation of the processes. Opposite of orientation, onboarding is catered more to the individual person and his/hers positions, as well as daily operations in the company.

According to research, onboarding process also uses more methods of bringing information to the new employee and can be seen and more indirect and personal, as well as impact employee relationship within the department or company. Where orientations is a more official introduction of the company and may present how company wants to be viewed (Arthur, 2020).

Peek (2023) argues that one of the important factors for nowadays reality in the Hotel industry is that orientation process can be easily conducted online in case of any unforeseen circumstances. However for the onboarding process in the majority of the cases within the Hotel industry, the in-person presence is required from both employee, and company representatives. From the personal experience the author has noticed that many employees who were not able to get proper onboarding process during the COVID pandemic have mentioned that company has not met their expectations and were not able to adjust to the team and later normalised daily operations. Many

of those employees needed to redo their onboarding process in the „normal“ circumstances, or were not able to last long in their respective positions.

One of the main outcomes of this research is that orientation process for the further onboarding process and one can not be conducted without another in order to successfully retain employees and fulfil their daily work wellbeing and expectations.

3 Research methods

In order to conduct the research and come up with onboarding plan the author has used one qualitative research method: qualitative interviews. According to Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020) such research method answers the questions that are required for successfully implementation of the final product: „what works from whom when, how and why“, as well as focus on improvement. Qualitative research leads to better understanding of the problem.

However, since timeline of the research was extended several times, it allowed the author to conduct second round of the interviews with recently started employees, Front Office HODs, and regular employees at the end of the research in order to collect feedback on the created onboarding plan. Following research will also take the authors previous experience and practical knowledge into consideration.

The author had gained a first-hand experience of the onboarding process shortly after hotel opening in October 2019, as well as experienced numerous onboarding processes for the new employees, being closely involved in it for the last four years. As it was not the first onboarding experience for the author, there was a room for comparison as well as opportunities for improvement. Now, as a full-time employee, the author would like to assist the new employees to make working in PIERDREI Hotel as well as being a part of Hotel industry be an enjoyable experience.

3.1 Aims and objectives of the research

The main goal of this research is to create a new onboarding plan for Front Office employees in PIERDREI Hotel to ensure more effective and efficient training process for new colleagues. onboarding plan is required to be practical and correspond with PIERDREI Hotel values and style.

In order to give a structure to the research the author has come up with three primary questions that became the main base for the interview questions:

1. What is the current status and process of training process for new Front Office employees?
2. What are strengths and limitations of current onboarding plan?
3. What needs and can be improved?

3.2 Qualitative interview

Methods that were used for conducting the research prior the product development are qualitative interviews with HODs of the Front Office department, such as Rooms Division Manager and Front Office Manager. As well as regular employees: Front Office Agents and Shiftleaders.

Interviews were conducted in order to collect current relevant data and feedback regarding already existing operation plan and training structure. Unlike quantitative researches, much smaller pool size will be used for collecting needed information. According to Mwita (2022) qualitative interviews can be conducted with the smaller sample, however it needs to be sufficient as well as important one since it directly affects quality of the research. For this research the total of 9 people: 2 HODs, 3 Shiftleaders, and 5 Front Office Agents were interviewed is the first part of the research in order to collect data for making the first version of onboarding plan.

During the personal one on one interviews the author asked the 3 primarily questions mentioned above, and leaving room room for other open questions that might arose during the interview process. Additional questions are required in order to assist the author with figuring out the main complaints and possibilities for improvement, as well as to clarify any possible misunderstandings.

Second round of the interviews with freshly started employees, Front Office HODs, and regular employees in total amount of 11 people has been conducted in order to collect feedback on created and tested onboarding plan. 9 employees from previous interview round, as well as two new employees who will be experiencing going through first version of onboarding process are included in this part of the research. This allowed the author to add any adjustments and corrections to the first version of the onboarding plan, and create more.

After implementing adjusted onboarding plan on another new employees, the author was able to observe how the improvements changed the overall implementation of the product and improved daily operations, as well as the whole onboarding process. This (third) new employee was not interviewed due to the lack of time and conflicted schedules.

Following research leaves the author an opportunity to constantly improve whether final product of the conducted research by taking already existing work as a base, and gradually adding new interviews and collection more feedback in order to keep the PIERDREI Hotel Onboarding plan for Front Office employees up to date and satisfy both, employer and employee needs, wants, and expectations.

4 PIERDREI Hotel Hamburg HafenCity- current situation

The commissioning party for the thesis is one of the relatively new hotels in Hamburg- PIERDREI Hotel in Hamburg HafenCity. Being opened in September 2019. Being independently owned and not attached to any of big hotel groups PIERDREI hotel stand out in its uniqueness.

Being located in the central area of Hamburg, between UNESCO protected Speicherstadt area and newly established HafenCity area at Am Sandtorkai 46, the hotel provides guests with easy access to most of the touristic attractions such as Landungsbrücke, Speicherstradt, and Reeperbahn. In addition, the transportation available allows easy access for both business and leisure tourists to access all needed point as well as the hotel. The customer-service oriented front desk employees are always happy to assist with navigating the city and suggest most convenient routes.

The hotel provides its guests with 212 stylish and comfortable rooms of 5 categories: Small, Medium, Medium+, Large and Extra Large. Every room is equipped with a ventilation system (according to HafenCity Gold Standard), a desk, a mini fridge, a safety deposit box, a flat screen TV, and a private bathroom. Extra Large room, referred also as Family Room is also equipped with a kettle, coffee and tea amenities, as well as a „Kids Box“that includes complimentary amenities for kids, such as mini-books, colouring book, pencils and small toys. Room category-specific differences may include the size of the rooms and beds, as well as an options between twin beds or single bed. On top of that the day-bed which Medium+ rooms are equipped with can be bedded down and used as a extra sleeping space (PIERDREI HafenCity | Über uns s.a.).

On top of that hotel provides quests with a possibility to book one of the three campers that are located on the 1st upper floor of the hotels backyard. Each camper is specifically named and themed: Flower Coco, Retro Coco, and Hippie Coco. Which can be seen from both outside and inside interior, as well as camper-specific amenities such as guitar, record player, disco-ball, and Kasette player. Guests' who have booked one of the campers can also exclusively enjoy using picnic table located in the backyard (no grilling or smoking is prohibited), as well as lent yoga matt or game equipment (eg, badminton). Camper City has shared all-inclusive sanitary facilities that are exclusive to Camper City guests.

Every guest that stays at the hotel with their kids has access to the RackerRoom. The RackerRoom is a kids playing area that is open 24/7 and provides small guests with variety of books in both German and English, as well as variety of toys and games. RackerRoom also provides organised playtime and game event, where kids can enjoy various programs carefully supervised and monitored by RackerRoom employees, such as Harry Potter night, Movie Night & Lazy&Crazy. During the events kids from 4 years old can be left without their parents' supervision.

Kids 0-3 years old have are allowed to access area only with adults and during the event opening hours. Registration for the various program is sometimes necessary and can be booked online in advance through hotels webpage. Nevertheless, KITCHENS restaurant guests are also welcomed to use RackerRooms facilities. However, for those guests' registration online is compulsory.

Guests can also enjoy various F&B facilities of the hotel, which include KITCHENS restaurant with its unique concept of changing menu, where each new menu is a trip to a different country or region. Previous „trips“include Asia, Canada, South Tirol, Iceland, Istria, Portugal. Current „trip“is Tuscany, which will be changed to Norway in the middle of November. Before having a new men's head-chefs a trip to a country/region to research the Cousine, traditions and atmosphere, to further get 3 or 5-course menu ready for hotel guests with their interpretation to the research Cousine. Nevertheless, guests can order separate dishes from current or previous menus as well as more traditional hotel restaurant dishes. Restaurant accommodates both hotel and non-hotel guests Tuesday to Saturday evenings. During the day or on the days restaurant is off guest can enjoy a lunch menu, which includes weekly rotation of one salad dish, meat dish, one fish dish, one vegetarian/vegan dish, soup of the day, or sandwich (meat/cheese/vegetarian).

Hotel and non-hotel guests are welcome to enjoy a drink or a light snack in ThreeFingers Bar every day starting from 15:00 up to 01:00 at night. ThreeFingers is a more traditional cocktail bar with big local beer selection, that also accommodates such locally popular events as Negroni Week and Christmas Market stand. During the summer season (May-October) guests are also welcomed to visit Moon46 Rooftop Bar, which opens a beautiful view on Hamburg old city landscape from one side, and currently growing Hafencity are from another side. Moon46 is supported and opened in cooperation with FritzKola, which is a Hamburg based soft-drink company beloved by locals.

Breakfast takes place in the KITCHENS restaurant which is located in the lobby floor. The breakfast can be included to the room rate, as well as added extra during the stay. Guests are treated by a buffet with a variety of dishes and local products available, with variety of choices of freshly made dishes and condiments, hot and cold drinks, as well as more common buffet items such as cheese, meat and fish boards, cereals, yoghurts, and much more. Hotel breakfast also offers many gluten-free, lactose-free, as well as vegan alternatives to the guests. The breakfast is served 6:30-11:30 daily. Nevertheless, there is an option of an Early Bird breakfast during the weekends and bank holidays, where guests get a price discount of 6€ per person if they are ready with their breakfast until 8:30. For guests who do like to have their breakfast light or would like to have their breakfast to-go breakfast team can prepare a FRANZTÜTE: a to-go bag that contains a locally sourced apple, a Hamburg-region traditional sweet pastry (Franzbrötchen), organic juice,

bottle of water, and to-go cup for a hot drink which allows guests to choose a drink of their preference (PIERDREI HafenCity | Gastronomie Hamburg s.a.a).

The hotel also provides a non-traditional meeting room called HAFENBÜHNE („Harbour Stage“) that is built like a stage/theatre, and is recommended to be used for product presentations, movie screenings, and TED-Talk-like events. Equipment of the meeting room allows accommodating up to 75 people and provides technician equipment to ensure meeting and event opportunities for in-person or hybrid events. Besides privately organised meeting and event HAFENBÜHNE also hosts weekly entertainment events such as stand-up comedy, poetry slams, and public readings in cooperation with local artists.

Main differentiation point of the PIERDREI Hotel is a cooperation with Miniature Wunderland (miniature museum): the most popular museum in Hamburg. In order to acquire regular entrance museum visitors are required to purchase their tickets online with a reservation for a certain date and time. Due to a high demand visitors must need to do that up to 3-6 months in advance, and most of the times most desired entrance times are sold within days. Nevertheless, due to one of the hotel owners being also one of the owners of Miniature Wunderland museum, hotel guests have an option to get a „VIP Ticket“ which does not require time and date reservation. With this ticket guests can enter museum once during their stay, avoiding the entrance lines. VIP Tickets can be acquired by booking „Miniatur Wunderland Package“, with combines room and tickets (breakfast can be added) or can be purchased directly at the reception at any time.

In the Lobby guests can also find PIERSHOP: an assorted and carefully curated selection of souvenirs and local products. As well as hotel merch, such as shower gel, mugs, and socks (that come in the pack of three) can be purchased from the shop.

If guests would like to explore Hamburg and its surroundings by bike, guests can rent DREICYCLES: both regular city bikes, as well as E-bikes, which come in three different options: Regular, Sport, and Cargo with compartment in front, where kids can be seated or MaxyCozy can be attached. For guests with kids who would also like to be a part of cycling group various sizes and options of kids bicycles are available free of charge. Bicycles can be reserved in advance through hotel webpage, or directly at the reception. Upon availability non-hotel guests can also rent bicycles at PIERDREI Hotel.

Before COVID each room was equipped with minibar. However, due to COVID restrictions and regulations all of the items needed to be taken out, and since then minibar serves as a mini fridge in the room. In order to compensate for that and give guests a variety and option to get some drinks, snacks and basic hygiene products SPÄTI was built. SPÄTI is a self-service convenience

store on the Lobby floor which guests can enter with their room card. In SPÄTI various drinks of both room temperature and cooled, ice-cream, both sweet and salty snack, alcohol drinks, basic hygiene products can be found. SPÄTI works on trust basis. After entering SPÄTI and selecting products guests need to fill a Formular, where they need to write their last name and room number, as well as note what they took from the store, and drop it in the special compartment. Later, night shift employees collect all of the Formulars and book items on guests hotel room (PIERDREI HafenCity | Entertainment & Events s.a.a).

The hotels front desk team is relatively small for a hotel of such size. There are two to three employees working full time during morning and evening shifts, which consist of one Shiftleader and minimum one Front Office Agent. Employees are supported by Front Office manager or Rooms Division Managers from the back office during the office hours on the weekdays. Night shift consists of two employees per shift from outsourced company. Front desk is open 24/7.

4.1 PIERDREI values and service standards

PIERDREI Hotel has 2 hashtags that can be translated into „time for new perspectives“and „hotels are not what they are used to be“, which also describes philosophy of the hotel, and the way customer service is provided.

Employees must have appreciation towards guests, team members, service providers, and business partners. Since it is a multi-cultural team, all nationalities and religious backgrounds need to be treated with attentiveness and respect. Complaints and criticisms from both guests and colleagues should be viewed as feedback. Challenges and problems should be viewed as experience.

Of course, the Front Office department has a traditional department tasks, nevertheless in PIERDREI Hotel Front Office team is seen as a multifunctional one. A department that acts outside of the box and is not „stuck“at the designated counter. All front desk employees need to pass following requirements.

- A certain level of empathy
- Resilience even in stressful situations
- Organisational and improvisational skills
- Reliability and flexibility
- Well-groomed appearance
- Sense of responsibility
- Child friendly
- Being introduced to the topic of sustainability

- Being open to new things and being ready to take different paths.

The Front Office department employees are also responsible for PIERSHOP, SPÄTI, and DREICYCLE.

4.2 Cross-training

After the first two weeks-month of onboarding, onboarding add leering systems and hotel practices every Front Office employee is required to go through cross-training in Housekeeping and Reservation departments. Usually, employees spend one shift in each department, however upon request, if employee is not feeling confident in certain area additional half-day or full-day shift can be added.

Cross-Training in reservation department is considered one of the most essential practices for the Front Office employees, since there are no in-house reservation department employees during the weekend, and Front Office employees are the ones assisting guests with their reservations enquirers, questions and requests. Therefore, it is essential for employees to be properly trained and be confident in basic reservation services.

During the cross-training in Reservation department Front Office employees learn how to properly answer phone calls, take and update both online and off-line reservation requests, assist guests with online bookings, differences between different OTAs, as well as how to handle special guest requests.

In regards of cross-training with Housekeeping department, usually new employees, most of whom finished German apprenticeship Program (Ausbildung Hotelfachmann/Hotelfachfrau) are familiar with the daily Housekeeping processes and operations and processes. As well as most of the Housekeeping services in PIERDREI are outsourced. Therefore during the cross-training process Front Office employees only need to adjust to PIERDREI Hotel Housekeeping practices, and familiarising themselves with Housekeeping offices layouts.

4.3 5-minute training

5-minute training is a daily training practice specifically requested to be made by HODs of the department. Such daily training that is conducted during the hand-over in order to help to prevent the loss of information regarding unpreventable changes within hotels daily operations and shift-working system. As well as helping employees to train their knowledge that are important but are not used on the regular basis.

5-minute training is made as time-short quiz-like questionnaire that can be conducted by HODs or Shiftleaders present during the hand-over during the Early to Late change of the shift. This practice is serving as an alternative to Marriott MGS training program or Hilton University.

It is requested for 5-minute training to have a daily topic for each day of the month, with last day being „Open-question“day, where employees can discuss over the topics that they feel to lack knowledge of, or HODs/Shiftleaders have a specific topic that need to be re-trained and discussed.

Unfortunately depending on the amount of daily extra tasks, events and/or occupancy 5-minute trainings are not performed daily.

4.4 Compulsory trainings

There are several compulsory trainings that each of the PIERDREI Hotel employees need to complete annually. That includes First Aid training, Data Protection Training, and Work Security Training. First Aid and Data Protection trainings are conducted by outsourced companies: Red Cross and Shield Datenschutz und Sicherheit respectively. Work Security training is conducted by hotel Technic. Upon completion of each compulsory trainings employees sign a form to confirm that they understood and agree to provided information.

It is important to note that it regular hotel practice in Hamburg Area, Germany it is not compulsory for all employees to be trained in the first aid. The decision to make it compulsory for PIERDREI employees is made by Hotel Owners and General Manager.

4.5 Current onboarding and training practices at Front Office

In order to organise daily operations daily checklist is used (Appendix 1). Checklist tasks are decided into Early and Late shift. Since night shift is outsourced, their checklist is organized by FOM and outsourced company and can be adjusted only upon both parties agreeing to changes.

Current FO onboarding and training checklist can be seen in Appendix 2. As at can be seen, it is relatively short, composed of basic Front Office ethics and computer program training, as well as topics for the onboarding that are decided on only two days. This type of an express onboarding has been proven to be stressful, emotionally exhausting and often undoable, as the author can judge from her personal experience.

5 New onboarding plan for PIERDREI Hotel Front Office employees

In order to be able to create the new onboarding plan for PIERDREI Hotel Front Office employees it is important to take into consideration... Author tried to achieve the goal of creating the new onboarding plan for PIERDREI Hotel Front Office employees that will improve the daily operations as well as the training process for both: current and new employees.

For the authors and readers convenience reasons all of the created materials will further be conducted in English and later separate version will be translated into German for the use during actual employee onboarding. The project implementation process is summarised and visualised in Figure 1 and is further described in detail in following chapters.

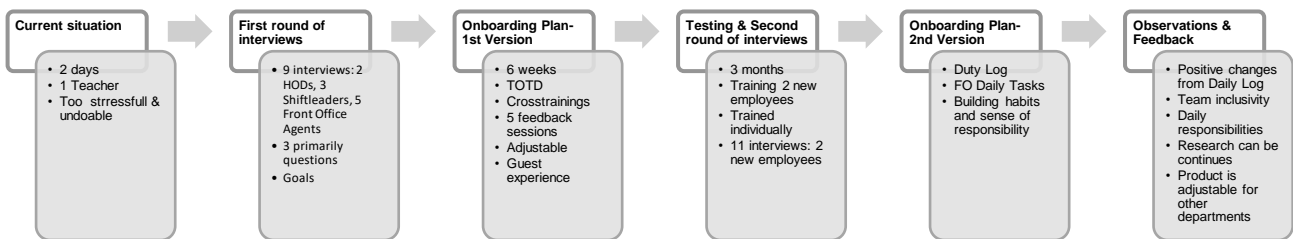


Figure 1. Project implementation plan.

5.1 Goals for the new onboarding plan

After speaking with HODs, having interviews with Agents and Shiftleaders, as well as reviewing authors personal experience in Front Office employee onboarding, the author has summarised the needs of the new onboarding plan into three goals:

1. For the new onboarding plan be longer and more well-rounded

At the moment, the official onboarding plan consists of onboarding topics that should be covered in one day, and training process that theoretically should be covered in two days (Appendix 2.). The given structure can seem to „pushy“ and stressful, especially for the employees that are new to the industry.

Introducing a more integrated daily structure to the new employees as well as integrating cross-training procedures into the main Front Office onboarding plan is suggested to be beneficial, as well as make new employees feel „taken care of“.

2. One trainee- multiple teachers

According to current employees, as well as the authors personal experience, one of the main difficulties often current onboarding plant is the lack of the „teacher figure“ as well as struggles of overviewing that Information was introduced to the new employees and by whom. This can bring new employees to being taught the same topic in different ways, which sometimes can contradict one another. The lack of „teacher figure“ was connected to working in shifts and writing weekly schedule that both is following German laws, as well as is fair to the team.

Often, if the assigned „teacher“ can not be present due to the poorly written schedule or any unforeseen circumstances, the new employee had a misfortune to become assigned a small and insignificant tasks, such as bringing amenities upstairs, or checking the bicycles. It can be argued that there are no small and insignificant tasks.

It is important for new Front Office employees to be at the Front officers much as possible and to learn the main daily operations. It was suggested by most of the employees that it is beneficial for the new employees not to have a specific „teacher figure“ for the whole learning process, but be trained by them team together- one „teacher“ per shift. Nevertheless, there have to be more overview on the topics that still need to be learned and that have been learned. It was suggested that this type of learning process can also be beneficial for the new employees since they will be able to learn different working styles and become more well-rounded and flexible employees.

3. To control the progress

The third goal is closely connected to the second one and was highly requested by HODs, since often they are not the ones who are personally involved in the onboarding process, but still are responsible for the new employee performance and well-being in the team.

Resolving these issues as well as having an overview and understanding of the new employee knowledge and learning process will be beneficial for all the parties: HODs, current and new applies.

5.2 New onboarding plan with example schedule

The new onboarding plan that can be seen in Appendix 3 now consists of three main columns: time period and main tasks, task description and place for initials from Teacher of the Day (TOTD). This type of layout will help to have more detail oriented approach to the task learning and allow better control of the progress.

As it can be seen, the onboarding plan time span was maximised from two days to 6 weeks with detailed description for every week as well as Feedback session planned with one of the HODs at the end of almost every week.

Since new employees are familiarised with the hotel and basic handlings during employee orientation, this onboarding plan is mainly focused on the Front office daily activities, and tasks/departments related to that. Nevertheless, first two days in the department are dedicated to deeper familiarising new Front Office employees with basics such as emergency and guest safety, sustainability at FO, different types of ethics for Front Office employees. As well as familiarising oneself with different types of computer Programs needed for smooth daily operations.

Weeks 1 and 2 are combined in one block, since they contain a lot of new materials that new employee need to get familiar with with main concentration on check-ins and check-outs. During the first two weeks employees are usually working in the Late shifts since they are less hectic and current employees have more time and energy to dedicate to new employees. After the first two weeks the first feedback session with one of the HODs. Feedback is gathered together and analysed by HODs.

During third week new employees continue to concentrate on check-ins and check-outs by expanding their abilities. As well as concentrating on providing bigger variety of customer services, as well as having more personalised and open guest contact. Topic of Reservations is introduced during this week since employee is already familiar with basic Front Office tasks and can expand his/hers spectrum of services. The week is followed by the second feedback session with one of the HODs.

Fourth week brings the first crosstraining day and the first department: housekeeping. Since most of the new employees are familiar with basic Housekeeping services, one shift is enough to familiarise themselves with specification of Housekeeping operations in PIERDREI Hotel. Also, new employees can familiarise themselves better with different types of rooms, their layouts and amenities in order to provide better service to hotel guests.

Besides the crosstraining day in Housekeeping department during fourth week new employees are introduced to different outlets that Front Office department is responsible for. Such as: SPÄTI-minibar shop, PIERSHOP-souvenir shop, DREICYCLE-bike rental service, and FORT KNOX-luggage storage service. Week is followed by yet another feedback session.

During the fifth week new employees have one more crosstraining day- at the Reservation department. Employees are introduced to specifics of making reservations, importance of correct updates, as well as see themselves how important cooperation in between these two departments is. Further new employees are introduced to Group and Event handlings, as well as basic knowledge and technical issues and how to handle them. Week is ended with Feedback session.

Week six is the final week of the onboarding process and consists of overview of the topics that need to be overviewed once again, or crosstrainings that need to be done according from the collected feedback & analysis from HODs. New employees can also let HODs know if there are any topics or crosstraining that they wish to participate in. The highlight of the week as well as of the whole onboarding process is the Guest Experience: complimentary employee stay with 5-course dinner and breakfast included. This allows new employees to feel rewarded, as well as to see and experience the services they provide from the guests perspective. Nevertheless, new employees are required to provide a feedback for their Guest Experience. Week is finalised with the last feedback session that usually determines if new employee will pass his/hers probation period and if he/she is the right fit for the company.

5.3 Product testing and second-round interviews

After coming with the first version the author was responsible for onboarding of 2 new employees in time span of 3 months. Employees were trained individually and were aware that they are part of the research and will need to provide a feedback in form of the interview at the end of the onboarding process.

It was challenging for the author and the team to follow the created onboarding plan since it was new for the team, as well as high occupancy and hectic tourism period were overlapping to constant employee sickness, therefore a team shortage. Author admits that conditions for the testing of the new onboarding plan were not perfect, however the author and the team were trying its best to follow the plan.

Nevertheless the feedback was mostly positive, and most employees as well as HODs were satisfied with the results there was one topic that was mentioned by the interviewed new employees that was bothering them and could bring a big improvement to the first version of the onboarding plan. The main concern from the feedback provided by the new employees was the

daily structure or lack there of that is oriented specifically to the new employees, and weak progress training. New employees did not feel the sense of daily responsibilities and often were missing or forgetting the informations that they were feeling like ether are lacking in due to the sometimes hectic daily operations.

Upon further interview with HODs and current employees and deliberately bringing this topic and concerns of the new employees up, most of the interviewees agreed that it is indeed an issue and can be a major room for improvement for this project.

5.4 Addition of Duty Log and product summary

After analysing the results of the second interviews the author decided to use her previous experience in the hotel industry and borrow the concept of the daily Duty Log from her previous employees. According to the author, this type of daily checklist can improve issues from the created onboarding plan and can be easily adjustable and suitable for PIERDREI Hotel Front Office employees needs. Thus the Duty Log was introduced to the team.

5.4.1 Introduction of the Duty Log

Since the review of the second-round interviews clearly indicated the lack of progress training as well as the overall trainer/trainee overview, the author borrowed an idea from her previous hotel work experience and composed together a Duty Log: and Excel File that will assist in tracking onboarding and training process of the new employees, as well as help to track who was doing onboarding on certain topics and training specific subject. This type of tracking can not only be of help for new employees, but also track gaps in knowledge and required training topics for current employees.

Excel table by the name of Duty Log (Appendix 5) will be saved in the main handover file (OneNote) and will be accessible for every employee and trainee of the department. The use of the file by the Front Office employees of both shifts will ensure that required tasks are done and needed topics are learned and trained. Nevertheless, it also can be a communication tool for one shift to another, since sometimes information can be lost during verbal handover. Duty Log is a space that gives employees a freedom to provide different type of notes, informations, suggestions for improvement, and overall review of the daily processes.

The file structure will be helping trainees and new employees to build a habit of daily tasks that are assigned treachery specific shift. The Duty Log made for PIERDREI Hotel can be found in Appendix 5. Few tasks on the Duty Log are the same, but it is because they require 24/7 attention.

Nevertheless, this kind of handover and overview file can also help new employees to learn what information is important or crucial to be shared with colleagues, and which can be hold on.

As mentioned before, new employee Duty Log will be added to the main Front Office handover file. This way it will not overcrowd the main file and interfere with main handover information. New employees will have freedom to adjust the Duty Log file if needed.

5.4.2 Summary of the new onboarding plan

The addition of the Duty Log has been a huge improvement for the second version of the onboarding plan, changes to which can be seen in Appendix 5 and are marked in yellow. It could be observed that new employees are feeling more like actual part of the team from the beginning of the onboarding. New employees got „more responsibilities“ during their onboarding process, as well as the Daily Log assisted them in structurizing daily operations, not loosing the important informations, and adjusted their multitasking levels.

Daily Log massively helped department management to figure out the missing informations and areas that are lacking in improvement. Author is satisfied that she was able to conduct the research in two parts and improve created onboarding plan.

6 Evaluation

The thesis process and created onboarding plan brings big value to the company. The onboarding plan that was made by the author was proven to be useful and the management of the company was grateful for the overall review of the current onboarding situation at the Front Office department, as well as for the provided onboarding plan for the future front office employees. The making and structuring of the onboarding plan was long overdue and highly requested from upper management.

PIERDREI is a fast growing company despite the fact that it is an independent solo hotel. In the future year it is planned to expand the team and hire more employees to various departments, In order to keep this process in order the given thesis will be used as a template as well as provide a checklist of what is required to be done at any stage of the onboarding process no matter the employee or department. The plan is clear enough for any employee to be able to handle employee onboarding if so required. If onboarding process is organized properly, in a systematic way, it can save time and money for the company. Given onboarding plan provides a more organized and professional image of the company for the new employees especially as a relatively new but fastly growing company.

The thesis results is proven to be useful for the company. It will is used currently and will be used in the future, and in some time will require modifications to follow company's updated processes and requirements. Results can be used by other departments by adapting it to required departments needs and structures.

7 Authors learning process

In order to maintain higher level of motivation in writing the thesis the author decided to write one about her current workplace- PIERDREI Hotel. After discussing potential scenarios and topics for the thesis study advisor suggested the author to use one of the project the author was currently working on at the workplace and to turn it into the thesis project, which would be beneficial for the author (providing extra motivation) and for the employer (providing more in-depth and qualitative research with guaranteed product in the end).

Author experienced quite a few challenges which resulting in delay in the thesis writing process. One of the challenges was to arrange the interviews, due to the differences in schedules of everyone participating and sudden COVID outburst in the team during the process. Unfortunately the second interview part was also delayed due to few employees leaving the team therefore minimising the pool of interviewees, as well as the lack of provided feedback from employees who went through initially created onboarding plan, which according to the author was an essential part of the research.

However the biggest challenge has proven to be the literature review and analysis. After long break the author struggled to read and collect information needed for the researching appropriate manner. Author understands that literature analysis part is lacking, however the author did try to summarise al of the consumed information in more accessible and non-professional friendly way. Nevertheless the author tried her best to complete the thesis and come up with somewhat presentable materials as well as to practice her academic writing sills.

Despite the difficulties in actually writing the thesis, the whole process was very enjoyable and beneficial for the authors work life, and showed to the HODs and hotel management the capabilities and professionalism of the author. Employer was very satisfied with both process and results of the thesis. Author has struggled with the journey, and if not for help and support of thesis supervisor would not be able to finish it.

All in all the author believes that this thesis writing process has improved her knowledge of the industry and equipped her with the confidence and tools of continuing similar research & project projects and aiming for promotion.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Current daily checklist

Appendix 2. Current FO Onboarding and Training Checklist

Appendix 3. Onboarding plan for new employees- first version

Time period	Task description	TOTD
Day 1		
Front Office tour	Keys and master cards	
	Company organization and communication with different departments	
	Front Office & Back Office storage and organisation	
	Employee benefits	
	Service standards	
Emergency safety	Evacuation plan and fire exits	
	Alarm systems and different types of alarms	
	How to use fire extinguisher	
	Reception SOP in case of fire alarm	
	Importance and use of downtime reports	
	First aid kit location and basic usage	
	Handicap accessibility and variety	
	Handicap emergencies SOP	
	Location and use of emergency (panic) buttons	
	Elevator emergency SOP	
	Guest safety	Datenschutz and Dattentonne
Guest privacy		
Guest room access		
ID check and State requirements		
Key handling		
Sustainability at FO	Green Key	
	Daily Sustainability practices	
	Digitalisation	
	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle	
Day 2		
FO-Etikette	Start of the shift	
	Smoking breaks	
	Desk organisation & cleanliness	
	Back Office Organisation & cleanliness	
Phone-Etikette	Picking up the phone	
	Forwarding the call	
	Taking & confirming information	
	Finishing the call	
	Wake-up call	
Email-Etikette	Checking the Emails	
	Forwarding Emails	

	Organizing & personalizing Emails	
	Use of templates	
	Answering emails	
	Email follow-up	
Microsoft Office & others	Outlook	
	OneNote	
	Different types of templates and where to find them	
	Scanner, Printer & fax	
	SOPs	
	Excel basics	
	How to find files & hotel hard drive Organisation System & access	
Week 1 and 2		
Check In	Familiarizing with Protel: log in, shortcuts & hacks	
	Finding reservation	
	Types of reservations	
	ID Check	
	Registration card: compulsory fields	
	Registration card: terms and conditions	
	CC authorization policy & pre-payment	
	Early C/I & Late C/I	
	Basic infos for the guest: elevator, breakfast, restaurant, bar, SPÄTI, DREICYCLE, RACKER ROOM	
Check out	Collecting feedback	
	Controlling the Invoice: everything posted? Double bookings?	
	Adding missing charges	
	Handling different types of payments: CC, EC-card, Cash, Voucher	
	Finalizing invoice	
Feedback session #1		
Week 3		
Check In	Upsell, Upgarde & Cross-selling	
	Billing instructions	
	Pre-payment at C/I	
	Walk-Ins	
	COMP Bookings	
Check out	Invoice styles	
	CC authorizations forms: their types and use.	
	Return policy: CC, EC-Card, Cash	
	Splitting invoice, splitting postings	
	Different types of payment requests: Splitting, Taking over	
	Early departure	
	Reinstating C/O and what to take care of	
	Moving open invoice to KTO	
	Handling Walk-outs and reservations with open balance	
	Paylink	
Consierge service	City basic activities	
	City activities for any taste	

	Restaurant recommendations	
	Restaurant recommendations for Sunday & Monday	
	Personal recommendations	
	Cross-selling touristic activities	
	Public transportation	
	Ordering & pre-ordering Taxi	
Reservations	Types of OTAs and their conditions	
	Room availability	
	Shortcuts	
	Creating new reservations through Hotel webpage	
	Creating new reservation through Protel	
	Packages	
	Modifying reservation	
	Cancelling reservation	
	Reservation confirmation & cancellation confirmation	
	Updating reservation	
	Use of Notes, Comments, Traces & Messages	
	Different type of Rates & concept of Daily Rate	
	Cancellation policies	
	No Shows	
Feedback session #2		
Week 4		
Crosstraining day at Housekeeping		
SPÄTI	Items available	
	Refilling & organizing the products	
	Inventory and Expiration Date check	
	Ordering items	
	Storage	
	Items available	
PIERSHOP	Refilling and organizing the products	
	Inventory & Expiration Date check	
	Storage	
DREICYCLE	Types of bicycles available & how to handle them	
	Types of bookings & Prices	
	How to book online VS hot to book through Backend	
	Regular maintenance	
	Basic skills	
	Handling	
	SOP for emergency situations (flat, tyre, stolen bike, etc)	
	Checking bike after return	
	Charging guest	
	Non-hotel guests	
	Booking requests on the full sold-out day	
FORT KNOX	The concept & handling	
	Taking deposit	
	Oversized luggage	
	Controlling inventory and setting traces	

Feedback session #3		
Week 5		
Crosstraining Day at Reservations department		
Technical issues	Servers down: how to work old-school	
	Whom to contact in case of IT emergencies	
	OOO & OOS: what is the different and how to set them	
	Printers down	
	How to fix Klima	
	How to fix TV	
	How to open safe	
	Other type of potential technical difficulties and how to handle them	
Groups and events	Function Sheet & Group Sheet: where to find them & how to understand them	
	Preparing for the group C/I	
	Making group C/I	
	Routings & payment instructions	
	Group C/O	
	Difference between business groups and leisure groups	
	How to be fully prepared for the Events	
Feedback session #4		
Week 6		
Guest experience day	Overnight stay experience & Feedback	
	Dinner experience & feedback	
Additional crosstrainings & Topics		
Feedback session #5		

Appendix 4. Duty Log for new employees

Morning Shift Checklist	Done	Checked by:
Topic of the day:		
Employee:		
Print Emergency Reports		
Controll Franztüten		
Controll Garage Invoices		
Double check Check-out Invoices of the day		
Sort out Invoices		
Sort out Registration Cards		
Check Emails		
Answer Guest Chat		
Important Infos for the next Shift:		
Questions?		
Late Shift Checklist	Done	Checked by:
Topic of the day:		
Employee:		
Print Emergency Reports		
Check Guest Profiles for the next day		
Check Invoice addresses for the next day		
Code access rights for the RACKER ROOM		
Contact guests for non-guarantee bookings after 18:00		
Prepare Group arrivals for the next day		
Check Emails		
Answer Guest Chat		
Important Infos for the next Shift:		
Questions?		

Appendix 5. Onboarding plan for new employees- second version

Time period	Task description	TOTD
Day 1		
Front Office tour	Keys and master cards	
	Company organization and communication with different departments	
	Front Office & Back Office storage and organisation	
	Employee benefits	
	Service standards	
Emergency safety	Evacuation plan and fire exits	
	Alarm systems and different types of alarms	
	How to use fire extinguisher	
	Reception SOP in case of fire alarm	
	Importance and use of downtime reports	
	First aid kit location and basic usage	
	Handicap accessibility and variety	
	Handicap emergencies SOP	
	Location and use of emergency (panic) buttons	
	Elevator emergency SOP	
Guest safety	Datenschutz and Dattentonne	
	Guest privacy	
	Guest room access	
	ID check and State requirements	
	Key handling	
Sustainability at FO	Green Key	
	Daily Sustainability practices	
	Digitalisation	
	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle	
Day 2		
FO Daily Tasks	Introduction to Checklist	
	Writing Daily Log	
	Handover	
	5-Minute Training	
FO-Etikette	Start of the shift	
	Smoking breaks	
	Desk organisation & cleanliness	
	Back Office Organisation & cleanliness	
Phone-Etikette	Picking up the phone	
	Forwarding the call	
	Taking & confirming information	
	Finishing the call	
	Wake-up call	
Email-Etikette	Checking the Emails	
	Forwarding Emails	
	Organizing & personalizing Emails	
	Use of templates	

	Answering emails	
	Email follow-up	
Microsoft Office & others	Outlook	
	OneNote	
	Different types of templates and where to find them	
	Scanner, Printer & fax	
	SOPs	
	Excel basics	
	How to find files & hotel hard drive Organisation System & access	
Week 1 and 2		
Check In	Familiarizing with Protel: log in, shortcuts & hacks	
	Finding reservation	
	Types of reservations	
	ID Check	
	Registration card: compulsory fields	
	Registration card: terms and conditions	
	CC authorization policy & pre-payment	
	Early C/I & Late C/I	
	Basic infos for the guest: elevator, breakfast, restaurant, bar, SPÄTI, DREICYCLE, RACKER ROOM	
Check out	Collecting feedback	
	Controlling the Invoice: everything posted? Double bookings?	
	Adding missing charges	
	Handling different types of payments: CC, EC-card, Cash, Voucher	
	Finalizing invoice	
Feedback session #1		
Week 3		
Check In	Upsell, Upgarde & Cross-selling	
	Billing instructions	
	Pre-payment at C/I	
	Walk-Ins	
	COMP Bookings	
Check out	Invoice styles	
	CC authorizations forms: their types and use.	
	Return policy: CC, EC-Card, Cash	
	Splitting invoice, splitting postings	
	Different types of payment requests: Splitting, Taking over	
	Early departure	
	Reinstating C/O and what to take care of	
	Moving open invoice to KTO	
	Handling Walk-outs and reservations with open balance	
	Paylink	
Consierge service	City basic activities	
	City activities for any taste	
	Restaurant recommendations	
	Restaurant reccomendations for Sunday & Monday	

	Personal recommendations	
	Cross-selling touristic activities	
	Public transportation	
	Ordering & pre-ordering Taxi	
Reservations	Types of OTAs and their conditions	
	Room availability	
	Shortcuts	
	Creating new reservations through Hotel webpage	
	Creating new reservation through Protel	
	Packages	
	Modifying reservation	
	Cancelling reservation	
	Reservation confirmation & cancellation confirmation	
	Updating reservation	
	Use of Nottes, Comments, Traces & Messages	
	Different type of Rates & concept of Dadily Rate	
	Cancellation policies	
	No Shows	
Feedback session #2		
Week 4		
Crosstraining day at Housekeeping		
SPÄTI	Items available	
	Refilling & organizing the products	
	Inventory and Expiration Date check	
	Ordering items	
	Storage	
	Items available	
PIERSHOP	Refilling and organizing the products	
	Inventory & Expiration Date check	
	Storage	
DREICYCLE	Types of bicycles available & how to handle them	
	Types of bookings & Prices	
	How to book online VS hot to book through Backend	
	Regular maintenance	
	Basic skills	
	Handling	
	SOP for emergency situations (flat, tyre, stolen bike, etc)	
	Checking bike after return	
	Charging guest	
	Non-hotel guests	
	Booking requests on the full sold-out day	
FORT KNOX	The concept & handling	
	Taking deposit	
	Oversized luggage	
	Controlling inventory and setting traces	
Feedback session #3		

Week 5		
Crosstraining Day at Reservations department		
Technical issues	Servers down: how to work old-school	
	Whom to contact in case of IT emergencies	
	OOO & OOS: what is the different and how to set them	
	Printers down	
	How to fix Klima	
	How to fix TV	
	How to open safe	
	Other type of potential technical difficulties and how to handle them	
Groups and events	Function Sheet & Group Sheet: where to find them & how to understand them	
	Preparing for the group C/I	
	Making group C/I	
	Routings & payment instructions	
	Group C/O	
	Difference between business groups and leisure groups	
	How to be fully prepared for the Events	
Feedback session #4		
Week 6		
Guest experience day	Overnight stay experience & Feedback	
	Dinner experience & feedback	
Additional crosstrainings & Topics		
Feedback session #5		