



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1: OPERATIONS · MODULE 1: FRONT OFFICE · LESSON 9

Night: The Shift Nobody Sees

General managers come from the people who shone when nobody was watching.

In five lines

At night the hotel seems asleep, and it is exactly the opposite: it is when the fewest people are left awake — sometimes just one, and that is only arranged when the risk assessment and the night-work protocol allow it, with means of communication and assistance always at hand. The night shift concentrates the three most serious responsibilities of the craft — the safety of those who sleep, the truth of the day's accounts and the guest who arrives broken at 3 a.m. — with support a phone call away, which is what the call chain and the night-work protocol are for: they organize the response, but they don't replace the staffing or the preventive measures that apply. That is why it is the best school of judgment there is, and why we general managers pay so much attention to who does it well.

The script, step by step

- 1. The round with all five senses.** At least twice per shift: doors, lights, noises, smells, access points. The round isn't a stroll: it is reading the building. What the night detects, the day doesn't suffer.
- 2. The close is the photograph of the day.** The night audit reconciles what was produced with what was collected and leaves the day ready to start. Do it understanding, not just executing: whoever understands a close is learning to read an entire hotel.
- 3. The 3 a.m. guest.** They arrive tired, sometimes without a reservation, sometimes with the system down. The order: first the person (a seat, water, calm), then the solution (paper registration if needed, a safe room), and at dawn, the full handover of their case.
- 4. Know whom to wake up.** Every hotel has its night-time call chain: learn it before you need it. Waking the right person in time is professionalism; not waking anyone "so as not to bother them" is the doorway to disaster.
- 5. The dawn handover.** The morning shift inherits your night: incidents, open cases, arrivals in the small hours, whatever is pending. Five minutes of orderly handover are worth an entire shift.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Company (working the shift alone)	The hotel's lone-worker protocol — means of contact, checks, whom to call — is learned before you need it. And priorities burned into memory: people's safety > the guest in front of you > the administrative close. Paperwork waits; an alarm or a guest, never.
The system (a night-time crash)	Paper templates prepared in advance (registration, pending payments, incidents) and a manual log of everything, with the time. A night without a system is documented twice as much, not half as much.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Low voice, calm presence, impeccable uniform at any hour: the night amplifies everything you do.	Let your image or your attention slip “because there’s nobody around”: there is always somebody — and it is usually the one who needs you most.	Open a room for anyone who cannot prove they are its occupant, however convincing or insistent they may be. No exceptions, at any hour.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Treating the night as a waiting shift: it is a watch shift, and the difference shows on the night something happens.
- ◆ Doing the close without understanding it: you lose the best free training in numbers this craft gives you.
- ◆ Solving something in the small hours and not putting it in writing: what isn’t in the handover didn’t happen — and it will blow up mid-morning.
- ◆ Not asking for help “so as not to bother anyone”: the boss would rather get a call at 4 a.m. than a catastrophe at 8.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“General managers come from the people
who shone when nobody was watching.”**

This lesson’s exercise

A guest arrives at 2:40 a.m., without a reservation and with the system down. Write out your complete course of action, in order: what you do with the person, what you do with the registration, what you leave ready for the handover. In the answer that follows, I share my version — and we begin Module 2: Housekeeping.