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# Lodging Managers

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## Significant Points

- Long hours, including night and weekend work, are common.
- Employment is projected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations.
- College graduates with degrees in hotel or hospitality management should have better opportunities for jobs at full-service hotels and for advancement than those without a degree.

## Nature of the Work

A comfortable room, good food, and a helpful staff can make being away from home an enjoyable experience for both vacationing families and business travelers. Lodging managers make sure that these conveniences are provided, while also ensuring that the establishments are run efficiently and profitably. Most lodging managers work in traditional hotels and motels, but some work in other lodging establishments, such as recreational camps and RV parks, inns, boardinghouses, and youth hostels.

Lodging establishments can vary significantly in size and in the number of services they provide, which can range from supplying a simple in-room television and continental breakfast to operating a casino and accommodating a convention. These factors affect the number and type of lodging managers employed at each property. However, the one person who oversees all lodging operations at a property is usually called a *general manager*. At larger hotels with several departments and multiple layers of management, one general manager and multiple assistant managers coordinate the activities of separate departments. (See related sections elsewhere in the *Handbook* on supervisors and managers of housekeeping and janitorial workers, human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists, financial managers, advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations and sales managers, and food service managers.) In smaller limited-service hotels—mainly those without food and beverage service—one lodging manager may direct all the activities of the property.

Lodging managers have overall responsibility for the operation and profitability of the hotel. Depending on the hotel and the size of its staff, lodging managers may either perform or direct housekeeping, personnel, office administration, marketing and sales, purchasing, security, maintenance, oversight of recreation facilities, and other activities. They may hire and train staff, set schedules, and lend a hand when needed.

Within guidelines established by the owners of the hotel or executives of the hotel chain, lodging managers set room rates, allocate funds to departments, approve expenditures, and ensure that standards for guest service, decor, housekeeping, food quality, and banquet operations are met. Increasingly, lodging managers are also responsible for ensuring that the information technology that is common in today's hotels is operational. Some lodging managers work in financial management, monitoring room sales and reservations, overseeing accounting and

cash-flow matters at the hotel, projecting occupancy levels, and deciding which rooms to discount and when to offer rate specials.

*Front office managers*, a category of lodging manager, coordinate reservations and room assignments and train and direct the hotel's front desk staff. They ensure that guests are treated courteously, complaints and problems are resolved, and requests for special services are carried out. Any adjustments to bills often are referred to front office managers for resolution.

Some lodging managers, called *convention services managers*, coordinate the activities of various departments to accommodate meetings, conventions, and special events. They meet with representatives of groups or organizations to plan the number of conference rooms to reserve, the configuration of the meeting space, and determine what other services the group will need, such as catering or banquets and audio, visual, or other electronic requirements. During the meeting or event, they resolve unexpected problems and monitor activities to ensure that hotel operations conform to the group's expectations.

Lodging managers may work with hotel sales and marketing directors and public relations directors to manage and coordinate the advertising and promotion of the hotel. They help develop lodging and dining specials and coordinate special events, such as holiday or seasonal specials. They may direct their staff to purchase advertising and to market their property to organizations or groups seeking a venue for conferences, conventions, business meetings, trade shows, and special events.

Lodging managers who oversee the personnel functions of a hotel or serve as human resource directors ensure that all accounting, payroll, and employee relations matters are handled in compliance with hotel policy and applicable laws. They also oversee hiring practices and standards and ensure that training and promotion programs reflect appropriate employee development guidelines.

Computers are used extensively by lodging managers and their assistants to keep track of guests' bills, reservations, room assignments, meetings, and special events. In addition, computers are used to order food, beverages, and supplies, as well as to prepare reports for hotel owners and top-level managers. Many hotels also provide extensive information technology services for their guests. Managers work with computer special-



*Lodging managers ensure that standards for guest service are met.*

ists and other information technology specialists to ensure that the hotel's computer systems, Internet, and communications networks function properly.

**Work environment.** Because hotels are open around the clock, night and weekend work is common. Many lodging managers work more than 40 hours per week and are often on-call, which means they may be called back to work at any time. In some hotels and resort properties where work is seasonal, managers may have other duties less related to guest services during the off season or they may find work in other hotels or occupations.

The pressures of coordinating a wide range of activities, turning a profit for investors, and dealing with guests who are sometimes angry can be stressful. Managing conferences and working at the front desk during check-in and check-out times can be particularly hectic.

### **Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement**

Management trainees for larger upscale hotel chains almost always need a bachelor's or master's degree, preferably in hospitality or hotel management. If not coming directly from college, experience working at a hotel is generally required to get a position as a lodging manager.

**Education and training.** Most large, full-service hotel chains usually hire people who have a bachelor's degree in business, hotel, or hospitality management for management trainee positions; however, a liberal arts degree coupled with experience in the hospitality field may be sufficient. At other hotels, especially those with fewer services, employers look for applicants with an associate degree or certificate in hotel, restaurant, or hospitality management along with experience. Formal internships or part-time or summer work in a hotel are an asset. Most degree programs include work-study opportunities.

Community colleges, junior colleges, and many universities offer certificate or degree programs in hotel, restaurant, or hospitality management leading to an associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree. Technical institutes, vocational and trade schools, and other academic institutions also offer courses leading to formal recognition in hospitality management. More than 800 educational facilities across the United States provide academic training for would-be lodging managers. Hotel management programs include instruction in hotel administration, accounting, economics, marketing, housekeeping, food service management and catering, and hotel maintenance and engineering. Computer training also is an integral part of hotel management training due to the widespread use of computers in reservations, billing, and housekeeping management. Lodging managers also need to know how to generate and read profit-and-loss reports and other business and economic data.

More than 450 high schools in 45 States offer the Lodging Management Program created by the Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Lodging Association. This 2-year program offered to high school juniors and seniors teaches management principles and leads to a professional certification called the "Certified Rooms Division Specialist." Many colleges and universities grant participants in this program credit towards a postsecondary degree in hotel management.

Hotel employees who do not have hospitality training or a college degree but who do demonstrate leadership potential and possess sufficient experience may be invited to participate in a management training program sponsored by the hotel or a hotel chain's corporate parent. Those who already possess the people skills and service orientation needed to succeed in hotel management can usually train for technical expertise in areas such as computer use and accounting principles while on the job. Trainees usually begin as assistant managers and may rotate assignments among the hotel's departments to gain a wide range of experiences. Relocation to another property may be required to help round out the experience and to help a trainee grow into a more responsible management position in a larger or busier hotel.

**Other qualifications.** Lodging managers must be able to get along with many different types of people, even in stressful situations. They must be able to solve problems quickly and concentrate on details. Initiative, self-discipline, effective communication skills, and the ability to organize and direct the work of others are essential for lodging managers. Managers must have a good knowledge of hotel operations, including safety and security measures, repair and maintenance, and personnel practices. Knowledge of hotel financing is essential to operate a hotel profitably.

**Certification and advancement.** Large hotel chains may offer better opportunities for advancement than small, independently owned establishments, but relocation every several years often is necessary for advancement. Large chains have more extensive career ladder programs and offer managers the opportunity to transfer to another hotel in the chain or to a regional or central office. Career advancement can be accelerated by the completion of certification programs offered by various hotel and lodging associations. Certification usually requires a combination of course work, examinations, and experience.

### **Employment**

Most lodging managers work in the traveler accommodation industry, including hotels and motels, although they can work for any business that provides room or shelter for people. Companies that manage hotels under contract also employ managers. Lodging managers held about 71,000 jobs in 2006. The majority of lodging managers—54 percent—were self-employed, primarily as owners of small hotels and bed-and-breakfast inns.

### **Job Outlook**

Steady growth in travel will provide average job growth and very good job opportunities for lodging managers. However, those seeking jobs at hotels with the highest level of guest services will face strong competition.

**Employment change.** Employment of lodging managers is expected to grow 12 percent from 2006 to 2016, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. Steady business travel and increased domestic and foreign tourism will drive job growth. The many new hotels being planned or built will need lodging managers to run them. In 2007 alone, over 600 new hotels will open. Many of these will be located in suburbs where population and business activity are growing fastest. Most of these new hotels, however, will offer limited services and will not have large staffs or need many managers, somewhat mod-

**Projections data from the National Employment Matrix**

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Lodging managers.....	11-9081	71,000	80,000	8,700	12

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

erating job growth. Some lodging places also do not require a manager to be available 24 hours a day; instead front desk clerks assume some managerial duties at night. Still, there are expected to be a significant number of full-service hotels built, including resort, casino, and luxury hotels, which should generate many additional job openings for experienced managers and management trainees.

**Job prospects.** In addition to job openings from employment growth, additional job openings are expected to occur as experienced managers leave the labor force or transfer to other occupations, in part because of the long hours and stressful working conditions. Job opportunities are expected to be good for people with good customer service skills and experience in the food service or hospitality industries. People with a college degree in hotel or hospitality management are expected to have the best opportunities at upscale and luxury hotels.

**Earnings**

Median annual earnings of lodging managers were \$42,320 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$31,870 and \$58,380. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$25,120 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$82,510. Median annual earnings for lodging managers in traveler accommodations were \$41,880.

Salaries of lodging managers vary greatly according to their responsibilities, location, and the segment of the hotel industry in which they work. Managers may earn bonuses of up to 25 percent of their basic salary in some hotels and also may be

furnished with meals, parking, laundry, and other services. In addition to providing typical benefits, some hotels offer profit-sharing plans and educational assistance to their employees.

**Related Occupations**

Other workers who organize and direct a business focused on customer service include food service managers, gaming managers, sales worker supervisors, and property, real estate, and community association managers.

**Sources of Additional Information**

For information on careers and scholarships in hotel management, contact:

► American Hotel and Lodging Association, 1201 New York Ave. NW., Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005.

Internet: <http://www.ahla.com>

Information on careers in the lodging industry and professional development and training programs may be obtained from:

► Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, 800 N. Magnolia Ave., Suite 1800, Orlando, FL 32853. Internet: <http://www.ei-ahla.org>

For information on educational programs in hotel and restaurant management, including correspondence courses, write to:

► International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education, 2810 North Parham Rd., Suite 230, Richmond, VA 23294. Internet: <http://www.chrie.org>