Choosing a Certification Body That Has Seen a Hotel

GUIDING QUESTION *Before signing with a certification body, ask for the name of the lead auditor who will come to your hotel and read their background. Then ask how many audit days they propose, how the number was calculated, and how many hours of those days will be spent at the front desk, in the back office at night and with your suppliers. If the answers do not mention the hotel's operations at all, you are buying a certificate, not an audit.*

Property: _____ Completed by: _____ Date: _____

How to use this sheet: work through the five parts with the people who own the process. The text in the left-hand columns comes from the book; the empty columns are for what is true in your property.

1. Verification Pact: what is commonly believed, what actually holds, and your property

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	In our property
«All accredited certificates are the same, so buy the cheapest.»	The certificates look alike. The audits behind them do not.	
«The certifier decides the number of days.»	It calculates them by rules. The hotel can ask how and challenge the result.	
«The hotel cannot choose its auditor.»	It can ask for the team's background and object, with reasons, to an appointment.	
«Fewer findings means a better hotel.»	It may mean a thinner audit. Findings describe what was examined.	
«An auditor who knows the hotel well is ideal.»	Sector knowledge helps. Familiarity with this hotel threatens impartiality.	

2. What the standard requires, and what demonstrates it

From Table 4.2.a. The third column of the book (what is method, not requirement) is left out here: write what your property actually holds as evidence.

What is required	What demonstrates it to a hotel	In our property
Audit time calculated	A proposal stating the days and showing the calculation from people and complexity	
Competent audit team	A lead auditor or team member with hospitality experience, shown in their background	
Team disclosed in advance	Names and background received, with time to object	
Audit plan communicated	A plan the hotel has read, commented on and agreed, with time in operations	
Impartiality managed	No consultancy offered; a policy on rotation and familiarity	
Time at the site	Hours at the hotel during operation, including late or night hours where relevant	

3. The instrument: Table 4.2.b, Comparing proposals

The instrument of this subchapter. The Venice proposals as they should have been compared, one column per accredited certification body.

Question	Body A (chosen)	Body B	Body C
Price per audit day	850 euros	1,150 euros	1,200 euros
Initial audit days, stage 1 and 2	4	6.5	7
How the days were calculated	Not explained	From staff numbers, adjusted for events and suppliers	From staff numbers, adjusted for night operation
Lead auditor's sector experience	Banking and telecommunications	Eight years auditing hotels and restaurants	Service businesses, some hotels

Question	Body A (chosen)	Body B	Body C
Time in operations in the plan	Half a day, office hours	Two afternoons and one evening	One afternoon, one night hour
Consultancy offered	Pre-assessment workshop	None	None
Three-year cycle cost, approximately	8,500 euros	17,000 euros	18,000 euros

The rows above are the book's; the empty rows are for lines your property needs to add.

4. Common mistakes: self-check

Common mistake	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)	Where we see it
Choosing a certification body on its price per audit day.		
Accepting a number of audit days without asking how it was calculated.		
Not asking who the lead auditor will be, or what they know of hotels.		
Accepting an audit plan that spends almost no time in operations.		
Letting the IT provider be the auditor's only guide.		
Reading few findings as a sign of good health rather than a thin audit.		
Keeping the same auditor for years until familiarity replaces scrutiny.		

5. Action plan

Step from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
Send every certification body the same one-page description of the hotel.			
Compare total cost over the three-year cycle, not the price per day.			
Ask each body how its audit time was calculated.			
Ask for the lead auditor's background and look for hospitality experience.			
Read the draft audit plan and ask for time in operations, at the right hours.			
Decline any offer of consultancy or of workshops to prepare the hotel's own documents.			
Put heads of department, not only the IT provider, beside the auditor.			
Judge the audit's usefulness before renewing, and accept rotation of auditors.			

In brief

Among accredited certification bodies, the hotel chooses the audit, not the certificate. It describes itself to every body in the same way, compares the whole cycle, asks how audit time was calculated, asks who will come and what they know of hotels, reads and comments on the plan, guides the auditor with the people who run the operations, declines any consultancy, and judges the audit's value before renewing. It wants an auditor who knows hotels, and it accepts that the same auditor should not know this one too well.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 5b: The Lens, subchapter 4.2. This sheet does not reproduce the text of the standard; work with your own copy of ISO/IEC 27001:2022 from an authorised source.