WORKSHEET 1.15

Discretion, the Oldest Control in the Building

Subchapter 1.15 · case in the book: Monaco

Ask the most senior concierge or head of reception in your property to tell you the rules they follow to protect guests who do not wish to be seen. Then look for those rules in your information security system. If they are not there, the most effective protection your hotel has is held in one person's memory, and it will leave when they do.

This worksheet turns the tools of the subchapter into a form you can fill in. The texts come from the book; the empty columns are for your own property. Adapt it before use: an unadapted checklist is exactly what the book warns against.

Practical application: what to do in your property

Step (from the book)	Done?	What we found / owner
Write down the rules of discretion with the chief concierge, head housekeeper and senior maître d'hôtel while they are still in post.		
Classify guests who have asked for discretion, and use aliases wherever their names would leave the front office.		
Write rules for printing, carrying and destroying lists, plans and messages.		
Have agency and event staff sign the confidentiality agreement and receive a short briefing before their first shift.		
Forbid photographs by staff in service areas and the sharing of anything about guests in messaging groups.		
Teach the rules to every manager who joins from outside, in their first week.		
Recognise staff who protect a guest's privacy under pressure.		
Bring the rules of discretion into the classification scheme, the Statement of Applicability and the awareness programme.		

These steps are the book's method, not requirements of ISO/IEC 27001. Evidence can take whatever form suits the property; a separate document is needed only where an applicable requirement, or the property's own system, makes it necessary.

Verification Pact: what is believed, tested against the standard

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	Our position
«Information security is about systems.»	The standard covers information in every form, including paper and what people know.	

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	Our position
«Discretion is culture, not a control.»	Discretion is a set of practices for limiting who knows what. Written down, it becomes classification, handling, clear desks and confidentiality.	
«A guest's presence is not information to classify.»	It is the most sensitive information a luxury hotel holds, and a classification scheme that ignores it cannot protect it.	
«Agency staff are covered by the agency.»	Confidentiality and awareness have to reach everybody doing work under the hotel's control.	
«Our senior staff know the rules.»	Rules held only in memory leave with the people who hold them.	

Common mistakes: a self-check

Mistake (from the book)	Present here?	Action / owner
Treating discretion as culture rather than as a control.		
Leaving the rules of discretion in the memory of a few senior staff.		
Building the information security system around digital information and ignoring paper.		
Using a classification scheme that does not recognise guests' presence as information.		
Assigning agency and event staff to sensitive work without confidentiality or briefing.		
Having no rule on photographs in service areas or on sharing in messaging groups.		
Assuming that the culture of discretion will renew itself without help.		

Operative synthesis

- **Discretion is the oldest protection of guests' information in a hotel, and in the best houses it has always been practised with a precision no system can match. It is a set of rules for limiting who knows what: aliases, numbers instead of names, lists printed only as needed, sensitive work kept to trusted people, paper collected and destroyed. Written down, those rules fit the standard's controls on classification, labelling, handling, clear desks, confidentiality and awareness, and they can be taught, checked and preserved.**
- **The instrument is a few pages of the rules of discretion, written with the people who practise them and brought into the information security system. It protects what a luxury hotel actually sells, and it preserves, beyond the careers of the people who hold it, the knowledge that makes that protection possible.**
- **In Monaco nothing had been neglected through indifference. The hotel's system protected its databases well, its chief concierge protected its guests superbly, and a new banqueting manager ran an efficient service. The rule that would have kept the seating plan off the pantry**

shelf had protected the house for decades and had never been written down, because nobody had ever needed to write it.

› **This chapter has looked at information security from the owner's chair: the value of what is held, the context, the interested parties, leadership, scope, the law, policy, risk, applicability, objectives, resources, suppliers, the staffing model, the review and discretion. Each of them is a decision the owner takes, or allows others to take without knowing it. The next chapter moves to the operational chair, where the management of the hotel decides, every day and every night, who can reach what, how guests' documents and cards are handled, how suppliers log in, and what happens when the system stops. It begins where most hotels' exposure begins, with the accounts that are opened when people join and forgotten when they leave.**

Action plan for our property

Action	Owner	Due	How we will know it worked

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 5a «The Helm», subchapter 1.15. Edizioni Effedore, 2026. Clause references are paraphrased; this sheet does not reproduce the text of ISO/IEC 27001. It is not legal advice: data protection and information security law is that of the place where the property operates.