4 Things You Need to Know Before Launching a

MYSTERY SHOPPING PROGRAM

INTOUCH INSIGHT

What is Mystery Shopping?

Since the 1940's forms of research designed to assess and track operational and behavioral performance were established - this became known as mystery shopping. Yet, really mystery shopping began to grow in the retail industry in the early 1990's. The industry expanded at a rapid pace as the internet grew. That's when mystery shopping went beyond its original roots in the retail space and became the invaluable tool it is today in a broad cross-section of industries.

In general, mystery shopping requires a shopper to visit or call a company under the guise of being a prospective customer. The shopper then observes the interaction and assesses performance based on specific pre-defined criteria that the business is trying to measure. This criteria can involve customer service skills, selling skills, how well employees are adopting specific behaviors, whether certain practices are followed and much more.

Mystery shopping can also examine operational aspects of a business such as cleanliness, merchandising, maintenance etc. Shoppers evaluate the look and feel of a business, on top of the employees.

Depending on the type of business, certain businesses use mystery shopping specifically to ensure that their local laws and standards are being met. Companies that deal with regulated products such as tobacco or alcohol use mystery shopping to ensure that their employees are complying with age and identification requirements.

Mystery shopping is commonly used as a tool for auditing the execution of specific customer service and operational standards, whereas to assess ongoing customer satisfaction and attitudes; customer satisfaction surveys are more reliable. To measure any aspect of your business and evaluate how your teams are performing, mystery shopping provides insight you wouldn't otherwise be privy to.

In this ebook, we'll explain everything you need to know to implement a mystery shopping program at your business.

Different Types of Mystery Shopping

You can use mystery shopping to measure a variety of different aspects of your business. An effective mystery shopping program addresses your customer touch points and mirrors the way customers interact with your brand. Currently, there are four common types of mystery shopping:

1. In-Person Mystery Shops
2. Telephone Mystery Shops
3. Internet Mystery Shops
4. Multiple Touchpoint (Hybrid) Mystery Shops

In-Person Mystery Shops

The most common type of mystery shop is when a single shopper visits a location and assess performance based on pre-defined metrics set out by the business. Depending on the nature of the metrics, the purpose of the shop, as well as the type of industry, these shops can last anywhere from 10 minutes to hours to complete.

In-person mystery shops are great for businesses where a shopper can present them self as a potential customer without causing any suspicion. The most common types of industries that use in-person mystery shops are:

- Retail
- Restaurant
- Convenience and Gas
- Banking
- Fitness
- Wireless
- Hotel
- Health Care
- Automotive

Telephone Mystery Shops

Telephone mystery shops are most common in call centre environments or in industries that interact with customers primarily over the phone - where the telephone is an integral part of the customer experience. They are typically conducted by single shoppers who call the business to evaluate the level of service and detail they receive over the phone.

Telephone mystery shops are common in the following industries:

- Call Centers
- Hotel
- Travel
- Tourism
- Information Technology
- Telecommunications
- Health Care

Internet Mystery Shops

Internet mystery shops are conducted by a shopper who assesses how responsive a company is online, how easy their website is to navigate or how they interact with customers on social media. By evaluating websites, as well as customer service online, shoppers work from the comfort of their own home, while still providing valuable feedback to companies.

Internet mystery shops can be valuable and informative for any business with an online presence, but the most common industries are:

- Travel
- Telecommunications
- Automotive
- Real Estate
- E-Commerce

Multiple Touchpoint (Hybrid) Mystery Shops

Many larger companies require that multiple types of mystery shopping are conducted at their business in order to get an accurate representation of their customer experience. A lot of companies are interacting with their customers on a number of levels, and understand that providing stellar customer services means delivering at every touch point. Hybrid mystery shopping involves mystery shoppers following an entire customer journey - from the internet to the telephone to a live experience.

Depending on the nature and size of your business, many companies benefit from hybrid mystery shops, yet hybrid shops are most common in the following industries:

- Banking
- Travel
- Health Care
- Hotel
- Real Estate
- Automotive

The Mystery Shopping Process

In order to ensure the highest level of quality, we've outlined four crucial steps to ensure that you execute the most reliable and insightful mystery shopping program for your business.

1. Strategic Assessment
2. Shopper Training
3. The Mystery Shop
4. Shop Reports & Analytics

Strategic Assessment

Every project begins by asking a few key questions to determine what the goals are and what you want to achieve. In this case, ask yourself what is the purpose of your program? How will you use the mystery shopping results? What specific operational and behavioral elements drive your business? When working with IntouchShop, analysts take all of this into consideration when designing your mystery shopping program.

Shopper Training

With custom certifications, IntouchShop ensures that shoppers are well trained on the specifics of each mystery shopping assignment. Depending on the complexity, the training includes written instructions and a telephone briefing. This ensures that shoppers are prepared to provide high quality feedback.

The Mystery Shop

Based on the shop requirements, shoppers will visit locations, telephone teams and/or interact through the Internet. They'll pose as typical customers then observe and record the specific operations and employee behaviors that have been identified as critical to your company's success.

The information is recorded based on the type of questions set out in the shop. Whether the questions required a written answer or a score, the results are tallied to provide you with significant details about your customer experience. These results give you strong reference points for team scores, as well as describes a real-life situation employees can easily relate to.

Shop Reports & Analytics

At any time, you can login to your Intouch account for a real-time feed of top performance issues. Compare results over time and identify high performing teams with role and location-level dashboards. Filter results by date, cycle, hierarchy, location, attributes, questions and more. Use your insights to view trending problems and top issues across your locations, then prioritize next steps so teams can focus their efforts on areas with the highest impact.

How To Design A Mystery Shopper Program
Determine the Metrics

Designing a mystery shopping program starts by working with qualified and dedicated teams that can help you create a program to measure important aspects of your customer experience. With IntouchShop, you work with a team that helps you build sophisticated programs for your goals.

Once the objectives of your mystery shopping program are established, the next step is to determine the specific metrics. This could be anything from elements of the sales process, customer service, procedure and policy issues, employee availability, or any other metric that's critical to your customer experience. Next, you need to weigh these elements in relative importance to each other so that you can achieve a quantitative representation of the impact they have on your business. The finer you tune the metrics, the more relevant your results will be.

Develop the Methodology

Now that you have your objectives and criteria, the next step is to develop the mystery shopping methodology. At this stage, there are many things to take into consideration:

- Frequency of shops
- Timing
- Execution
- Format
- Scenarios, etc.

It's critical that the methodology be clearly developed in order for the information you receive to be useful and an accurate representation of your customer experience.

Establish How You Need the Data Reported

There are a number of ways to represent data collected from mystery shops, but you need to determine what will work best for your organization. Who needs to see the data, and what parts of the data do they have permission to view? For example, you may not want to share data from all of your stores with each location. Figure out what works best for you so that you're able to utilize your results effectively and accurately.

Conclusion

Once you fully understand the benefits of mystery shopping and see how it can help your business, it will become clear what types of shops could improve your performance, and what areas of your business you should focus your attention on. Use mystery shopping as a way to evaluate performance and use your results to truly understand your customer experience. Please contact us for more information on mystery shopping programs that will meet your goals.

Explore Intouch Insight mystery shopping programs: intouchinsight.com/shop/

Questions about mystery shopping? Call us at 1-800-263-2980 ext. 1