



April 2013 Client Newsletter

Dear Judi,

Mystery Shopping is just as relevant today as we recognized when we founded Customer Perspectives 30 years ago.

Judi

Keep Your Staff on Their Toes With Mystery Shopping

Have you ever wondered what your staff does when you are not in the office or shop? How are they really treating your customers when you are not around? Getting answers to these questions will give you an idea of how your employees are doing and where you can improve their performance and your business's customer service.

So, how can you do it?

Mystery shopping is the way to go. You have someone, who the staff does not know, go into your place of business as a typical customer. You can choose the shopper's profile. If your customer base is young, choosing a college-age shopper is the best option. If your customer base is more mature, a man or woman in their 40s might be a better choice. This will allow that shopper to get a true representation of how your staff treat customers.

What can you learn from a mystery shopping campaign?

- **Customer View** - How does a customer see your business? You want to see your business from the perspective of someone looking for your products or services. The mystery shopper can give you their impressions of your store, your employees, and your merchandise.
- **Training Effectiveness** - Are your employees following your training and customer service standards? If you have set expectations for how they treat customers, a mystery shopper can tell you if they are doing that or not. If they are going off script, the shopper can tell you that as well.
- **Skill Strengths** - Do you need to strengthen your employees' skills in one or more areas? Your mystery shopper can tell you if your staff handle the phone as well as they do face-to-face interactions. Also, if the mystery shopper asks for an unusual item, you will know how your staff handles it.
- **Promotional Compliance** - Are your employees promoting specials or particular merchandise as expected? You can use a mystery shopper to verify your staff members are pointing out new merchandise or specials to customers.

For complete article, [click here](#)

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By Shelly Lustice

Lessons Learned from Mystery Shopping

Gas prices rise and fall almost cyclically in and around summertime, but they remain unpredictable due to myriad other forces. How does a convenience store protect against a customer who is predisposed to aggravation based on the soaring prices, and guard its own bottom line?

Superior customer service is clearly a factor. Mystery shopping -- the only honest, transparent view of actual customer service measured against the factors important to your brand -- has helped c-stores protect their bottom line by ensuring attentiveness to the shopper.

"Quality service still sells," said Al Goldsmith, vice president of Maritz Research Virtual Customers, a Mystery Shopping Providers Association - North America (MSPA-NA) member. "We see it in every industry, but particularly in the dynamic and competitive retail petroleum sector. Since most petroleum products are commodities, an effective differentiation strategy must rely heavily on quality service and consistent delivery at retail to achieve sales and customer loyalty objectives."

A major retail petroleum company that's a customer of Goldsmith's Maritz Research has the numbers to prove that scoring your customer service -- and making adjustments on the fly -- directly benefits the bottom line. The client's mystery shopping program scores its channel partners three times year and what's been revealed is that locations attaining high marks on mystery shops and audits sell more gas, regardless of fuel prices. In the first year of the program alone, the client's channel partners experienced a double-digit increase in average monthly volume.

Gas prices are an important factor in customer decisions, but other factors play as important a role. A recent survey by MSPA-NA member Corporate Research International, a division of Stericycle, revealed that three of the top five factors that drive customer choice relate to employees.

For complete article, [click here.](#)

By Dan Denston
MSPA

Upcoming Events:

IIR - The Future of Consumer Intelligence - May 14-16 in San Francisco. For more information, [click here.](#)

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