



First and foremost, all of us at Customer Perspectives wish you a warm and wonderful holiday season and happy, happy new year.

We also want to share with you a few tips about being a mystery shopping professional as well as a few tips from your Project Managers and Quality Assurance team.

Your Mystery Shopping Business

Most mystery shoppers do not think of themselves as business owners, but that is exactly what we are. As business owners, we are responsible for our profitability. Don't like the shops you are doing, the people you are working with or the amount of money you are making? It is up to you to change those things.

Start by having a business plan. That's right, a business plan. No, you don't have to have a binder full of spreadsheets, charts and graphs. All you really need is about a page that describes your vision for your mystery shopping business.

- What types of shops do you want to do?
- Will you take on other types of work, such as audits or surveys?
- How much money do you want or need to earn?
- Where will you work?
- How many days or hours will you work in a typical week?

You also need a marketing strategy. The mystery shopping companies are your clients and you need to market to them. That means, at a minimum, having a professional image and demeanor.

- Is your email address professional (e.g., marysmith@domain.com, not 2hot4u@aol.com)?
- Do your emails include a simple signature file with your contact information?
- Do you proofread all communications for proper spelling, grammar and punctuation?

Want to make more money as a mystery shopper? Step up your game.

- Apply to more mystery shopping companies. There are always more companies out there.
- Let schedulers know that you are interested in more assignments and that you are available when they have a cancellation or other last-minute job. Then help when they call.
- Consider putting together routes of shops so that it becomes profitable to travel farther from home.
- Take on new types of shops.
- Improve your skills. Take a one-day business writing course to improve your grammar and writing skills. Get MSPA certified.
- Learn about video mystery shopping, and be willing to invest in equipment as you begin getting assignments. (Many video mystery shopping companies will help you put together the equipment you need at a discount.)

And here is one way to make your mystery shopping business more profitable that you might not have considered: Keep better records. Keep track of mileage, tolls, parking and other expenses you incur while completing shops. Keep track of expenses for office equipment and supplies. Note the amounts of required purchases on mystery shops. All of these things are deductible. If you do not keep records of your expenses as they occur, you will forget many of them and pay more tax than you owe. And the IRS requires that you record expenses all through the year, not on April 14th as you get ready to file your tax return.

Mystery shopping is a business. Treat it like a business by always being professional, keeping good records and looking for ways to make your business more profitable.

By Cathy Stucker,
Mystery Shopper's Manual

The 10 Commandments of Mystery Shopping

1. Thou shalt not be memorable. Being memorable, either in appearance or scenario, can restrict your shopping opportunities, especially if you are on a rotation at the same location.
2. Thou shalt allow the target to lead. On mystery shops we have to give the target the opportunity to lead. We are portraying a “typical” customer, but we are the eyes and ears of the business owners as to how the customers are treated.
3. Thou shalt report events as they happen. We are not there to embellish or editorialize. At the same time, this does not mean that our writing needs to be dull. I have a Thesaurus on my desk and it comes with me on routes should I have the need to find that one especially descriptive word. If something occurs which you think that someone needs to be made aware of, tell your scheduler and let them decide if the information needs to be passed on up the line.
4. Thou shalt communicate with thy scheduler if unforeseen problems arise. This really should be a no-brainer, but needs to be mentioned because it is human nature to want to avoid mentioning bad news.
5. Thou shalt not flake on shops. Emergencies happen. Communicate with your scheduler. Don't leave them hanging in the dark.
6. Thou shalt be on time for appointments. Yet another obvious point that is easy to forget. For the route shopper especially, plan so your appointments are covered.
7. Thou shalt not change scenarios to suit yourself. If you don't have a dining partner, check with your scheduler—they may be able to get a waiver from the client. While the scenario may not make sense to us, ours is not to question the scenario we have been assigned.
8. Thou shalt give the target every opportunity to shine. As one MSC says, “Mystery shopping isn't about finding faults.” And really it isn't. It's about giving the target every opportunity to be perfect—and then objectively reporting the opportunities for improvement.
9. Thou shalt not entrap the target. Entrapment is defined as creating a situation that would encourage someone to do something they would not ordinarily do. For example, I was on a high performance car shop and the salesperson said, “The difference between models X and Y is that Y is for people who don't care if they get speeding tickets.” I replied, “That's why I want model X; I'm past the stage of wanting to get tickets.” During the test drive, the sales person took the car to over 100 mph on an open interstate. Had I indicated to the salesperson that I didn't mind going fast, he could have claimed entrapment, that I had encouraged him to exceed the speed limit. My saving that I was past the stage of wanting to get speeding tickets made his decision to exceed the speed limit by 40+ mph his own choice.
10. Thou shalt remember that mystery shopping is not about finding faults—it's about finding opportunities for improvement. That's pretty much self-explanatory and sums up why we do what we do.

Mystery Shopper Magazine



- ◆ It's that time again! We are asking our current shoppers to log in to your homepage and update all contact information (phone, cell #, address, etc.). If you have changed your email address, be sure to scroll down and confirm that your PayPal email address is up-to-date as well.
- ◆ We would also like to remind you to always check your emails from us and read the guidelines before doing your shops. Some clients change details regularly and it's important to review guidelines thoroughly when you accept the assignment in case you have any questions, and again right before conducting your shop.
- ◆ When emailing a scheduler to ask a question about a shop, please provide your full name, the client and the shop location. When rescheduling a shop, indicate your next available date to conduct the shop. If you need to cancel a shop, let us know if you can go at a later date, and when.

* **We welcome referrals for getting great shoppers. Please invite your family, friends and colleagues to visit www.CustomerPerspectives.com**

* **Follow us on Facebook.** Please like us on Facebook to find special or last minute shops.

<http://www.facebook.com/CustomerspectivesMysteryShopping>



HOT SPOTS: If you know anyone who lives in the areas listed and might be interested in conducting mystery shops, please direct them to the CP website (www.customerperspectives.com).

NORTHEAST: **ME**—Auburn, Augusta, Bangor, Bar Harbor, Biddeford, Blue Hill, Brunswick, Damariscotta, Deer Isle, Ellsworth, Kennebunk, Lewiston, Lubec, Machias, Milbridge, Mt. Desert, Northeast Harbor, Portland, Rockland, Scarborough, So. China, So. Portland, Southwest Harbor, Topsham, Waterboro, Waterville, Westbrook, Windham, Winter Harbor **NH**—Amherst, Boscawen, Bristol, Colebrook, Dover, Epping, Enfield, Exeter, Franklin, Gilford, Gorham, Grantham, Hanover, Hillsboro, Hinsdale, Keene, Laconia, Lebanon, Lyme, Nashua, New London, Newbury, Newport, Peterborough, Plaistow, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Rochester, Salem, Seabrook, Somersworth, Stratham, Sunapee, Tilton, W. Lebanon **VT**—Bethel, Chelsea, So. Stratford, Williston, Woodstock **MA**—Amherst, Auburn, Bedford, Belchertown, Berlin, Billerica, Boston, Chelsea, Chicopee, Danvers, Dedham, East Boston, Easthampton, Fairhaven, Fall River, Falmouth, Florence, Gloucester, Granby, Holbrook, Kingston, Lowell, Lynn, Marblehead, Marlborough, Milford, N. Billerica, N. Dartmouth, Natick, Needham, New Bedford, North Eastham, Northampton, Norwood, Quincy, Randolph, So. Attleboro, Salem, Seekonk, Sharon, Stockbridge, Sturbridge, Stoughton, Sudbury, Tewksbury, W. Springfield, Walpole, Wareham, Wellfleet, West Roxbury, Westfield, Westwood, Williamsburg, Winchendon, Woburn, Wrentham **CT**—Bridgeport, Bristol, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Colchester, Dayville, East Hampton, East Lyme, Enfield, Groton, Hebron, Lisbon, Mansfield Cntr., Milford, Moosup, Mystic, N. Windham, New Britain, Norwalk, Norwich, Pawcatuck, So. Windsor, Stamford, Stratford, Tolland, Vernon, Waterbury, West Hartford, Willimantic **RI**—Johnston, Middletown, No. Providence, Newport, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, Providence, Wakefield, Warwick, Westerly, Woonsocket **NY**—Fishkill, New York, Rochester, Waterloo **NJ**—Middletown, Paramus, Short Hills **PA**—Butler, Cranberry Twp, Greensburg, King of Prussia, McKeesport, McMurray, Monaca, Monroeville, Natrona Hgts, North Fayette, North Huntingdon, Pittsburgh, Pleasant Hills, Warrington **DE**—Newark

SOUTHEAST: **VA**—Amelia Court House, Chesapeake, Christianburg, Glen Allen, Gloucester, Goochland, Hampton, King William, Manassas, Mechanicsville, Midlothian, Newport News, No. Chesterfield, Richmond, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, Woodbridge **NC**—Apex, Asheboro, Carrboro, Creedmoor, Durham, Fayetteville, Gastonia, Jefferson, Raleigh, Shallotte, Siler City, Wallace **WV**—Elkins, Philippi **SC**—Florence **TN**—Athens, Etowah, Kingston, Madisonville, Oak Ridge, Sweetwater, Tellico Plains, Venore **FL**—Daytona Beach, Ft. Myers, Ocala

MIDWEST: **IN**—Avon, Castleton, Columbus, Franklin, Greenwood, Indianapolis **KS**—Wichita **MI**—Escanaba, Gladstone, Harvey, Iron River, Ishpeming, Marquette, Munising, Negaunee, Newbury, Ontonagon, Wetmore **MN**—Alexandria, Aurora, Baudette, Beaver Bay, Crookston, Duluth, Ely, Emily, Grand Marais, Hibbing, International Falls, McGregor, Park Rapids, Roseau, Thief River Falls, Tofte, Two Harbors, Virginia, Walker, Warroad **ND**—Fargo, Minot, Stanley, Williston **SD**—Mobridge **WI**—Abbotsford, Calumet, Cornell, Ladysmith **OH**—Cleveland, Elyria, North Canton, Wooster **MT**—Bozeman, Glasgo, Havre Kalispell

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SOUTHWEST: **TX**— Amarillo, Conroe, El Paso, Kerville, Magnolia

WEST: **MT**— Glasgow, Havre, **WY**— Sheridan, **ID**—Meridan **CO**— Denver **CA**—San Luis Obispo, Seaside, Vista **OR**—Portland **WA**—Spokane, Woodinville **AK**—Kenai, Soldotna

CANADA: **BC**— Abbotsford, Kamloops, Kelowna, Langley, Nanaimo, Vancouver, Victoria **AB**— Edmonton, Ft. McMurray, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer **MB**—Winnipeg **SK**—Regina, Saskatoon **ON**—Hamilton, Vaughan **QC**—Granby, Laval, Longueuil, Quebec, Rouyn, Sherbrooke, Terrebonne

PUERTO RICO: Ponce