



The Voice of Your Customer

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Mystery Observations Can Really Increase Sales!

By Crystal L. Kendrick

While there are a number of organizations that offer secret shopper services, contracting a reputable marketing consulting firm to assess the experiences of your customers can ultimately result in increased profitability, employee retention, industry recognition and a competitive advantage. Well defined mystery observation programs evaluate customer service, processes, telephone systems, websites and the appearance of physical locations, even when your business is closed!

Designing an effective mystery observation program requires quite a bit of planning; however, the impact to your business can be very rewarding. The most effective evaluations include the following elements:

- 1) Training programs that clearly highlight components of an exceptional customer experience
- 2) Mystery observation criteria that mirrors components highlighted in the training program
- 3) Mystery Shopping Provider Association (MSPA) certified shoppers with extensive sales, marketing and consumer behavior experiences
- 4) Recording capabilities when required
- 5) On-going schedules of mystery observations
- 6) Timely feedback presented in a format that can be easily interpreted by the organization
- 7) Trend data that tracks improvement
- 8) Recognition for employees who do well and training opportunities for those who need development
- 9) Competitive analysis to confirm best practices

Many companies make the mistake of asking managers and/or friends to complete mystery observations, typically resulting in an assessment of employee performance. Experienced mystery shoppers are trained to re-create scenarios, ask probing questions and offer an unbiased opinion of the experiences of many customers serviced during the observation. In addition, experienced mystery shoppers routinely include comments regarding accessibility, convenience and customer perceptions that can often be used to improve the overall customer experience and continue to build loyalty for your business.

Crystal L. Kendrick is the President of The Voice of Your Customer, a consulting firm specializing in survey research, market assessments, business trainings and social marketing campaigns named the 2007 SCOMBC Emerging MBE of the Year. For more information, visit www.thevoiceofyourcustomer.com.



Do you offer EXCEPTIONAL customer experiences...or simply good products and services?