

No Mystery Anymore: A No Frills Guide to Mystery Shopping

(Free Version)

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Shopping: it's become a sort of national, even global pastime. While we might do other things between the beginning and end of our days, at some point, we will need to shop and to buy something for our busy lives.

Whether it's food, clothing, or entertainment items, we need to buy things in order to complete tasks and take care of our selves and our families.

Businesses know that in order for them to stay in business, they need to know they're doing the right things for their customers. While they might try to monitor their employees, the truth is that it's impossible to watch every employee all the time.

Mystery shopping isn't a new practice – not by a long shot. This profession began in the 1940s and was used primarily by banks and retail stores.

These mystery shoppers would assess the integrity of the workers in these locations.

Even private investigators would enter stores as employees, helping to uncover any employees who might be stealing or causing troubles for the company.

A mystery shopper can come into a store, behave like a normal customer, and then provide feedback to the company about what their shopping experience was like.

In doing so, the company finds out how they are helping their customers and where they might be failing them as well.

You can become a part of the mystery shopping process too. All you need to do is to learn how to find businesses that want to employ you to find out more about how their company works.

And no, being a mystery shopper isn't just about finding out what's wrong with a company; it's also about finding out what's RIGHT with a company.

Ready to shop AND make a difference? You can when you're a mystery shopper.

Helpful Resources

It will help for you to have a long list of resources to use for your mystery shopping business and company. The more that you can learn from these websites and experienced shoppers, the better your business will become.

- www.mysteryshoppersinfo.com
- www.mysteryshop.org - The home of the MSPA (Mystery Shopping Providers Association) – They provide a certification program for mystery shoppers, with gold as the highest level of certification.

This site offers an extensive number of resources, including information about assignments, what to do after assignments, and frequently asked questions.

At this growing website, you will also learn when new smart phone applications will become available for you to download onto your phone.

- www.mysteryshoppersinfo.com
- www.volition.com/mystery.html
- Android App: “Shop Until You Drop 2”
- Iphone App: “Shop Until You Drop”

What is Mystery Shopping?

For many, the idea of being a mystery shopper seems to be a job that's too good to be true. Imagine being paid to shop in stores you already like in order to tell the company how they could serve you better.

What job is better than that?

Mystery shoppers are a valued resource in today's ever-growing business market. By providing a look into the everyday processes of a business, a mystery shopper is an extended part of the team.

And a team member that no one may ever meet.

WHO MAKES THE BEST MYSTERY SHOPPER

As a mystery shopper, a person will be in charge of many tasks, depending on the company's needs at the time.

For example, they might look for:

- Whether they were greeted
- Certain key phrases employees are supposed to say
- Ease of exchange and return processes
- Customer service skills
- Assistance with certain products
- Performance during complaints
- How customer service representatives interact with other customers
- The cleanliness of the business
- The speed of service
- Etc.

When you walk into a store as a customer, you expect to be treated well and to find what you're looking for. As a mystery shopper, you have the same expectations, and you will look to see if the company is meeting those expectations.

You will also be thinking about the expectations the company has of their staff – and then you will be taking notes about whether these expectations have been met, or exceeded.

A person who makes a good mystery shopper is a person who:

HAS HIGH STANDARDS OF SERVICE

A mystery shopper is someone who looks to see what a company is providing to customers. And companies want their staff and stores to provide the best service.

If you are already a person who expects a lot from their shopping experiences, you will be able to offer better advice for the company at the end of your trip into the company.

CAN BE UNBIASED

While it might seem as though a mystery shopper is someone who goes into a store, just to point out what's wrong, this is far from the case. Instead, you will be a person who walks into a store, finds out what's happening, judges based on the expectations from the company, and then writes out a report.

You need to be a person who can look at the facts and then create a summary of your experience based on what happened to you as the customer.

IS DETAIL ORIENTED

Since the company is counting on you to give them as much information as possible, you need to be able to note details in your shopping experience.

You need to be a person who can look at the experience as a series of events, each with smaller events and details that can help provide feedback to the company.

CAN FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Of course, when you're working for a company, you need to be able to follow the directions they give you. Often, you will be told what to look for during your visit or you might be told to perform certain transactions during a visit or series of visits.

The company relies on you to get certain pieces of information and if you do not focus on these details, the report you return to them may not be helpful.

HAS A GOOD MEMORY

When you're in the store, it's not a good idea to be taking notes on your experience since that will show what you are doing. You are supposed to be an invisible part of the process so that clerks and other employees treat you like any other person.

In your head, you need to make notes of what happens and then you need to write them down or record them in some way as quickly as possible after you are done with your visit.

CAN ASK QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CERTAIN RESPONSES

You will want to be comfortable talking to others, especially to the customer service team. You need to be able to interact in a natural way so as to find out what the employees know and how they behave when they think no one is looking.

If the company wants you to ask certain questions, you need to be ready and willing to do so.

HAS FREE TIME

Of course, you can't simply walk into a store, look around a bit, and then create a report on your experience. You need to have time to experience the store and its processes.

This requires that you be a person who can devote some free time to this mystery shopping job. When you aren't rushing, you're more likely to seem like an everyday shopper, plus you will get to see more of what happens in the store.

ALREADY FREQUENTS STORES IN PERSON AND ONLINE

If you're already a regular shopper and you know how things work in stores, or how they're supposed to work, this can help you with your mystery shopping services.

You already know how to act like an everyday shopper because you are one.

IS ABLE TO SELF MOTIVATE

When you're working independently, you will not have a boss looking over your shoulder to see if you're visiting the stores you need to visit. And you will not have someone telling you whether you are accomplishing all of your predetermined tasks.

You need to be able to manage yourself when no one else is looking in order to uphold your contract with the company.

You need to be ready to schedule the visits and to make time for the reports you need to write after the fact.

While mystery shopping seems like 'just' shopping, it's an opportunity for you to use the skills you already have.

And not everyone is a good fit for shopping for a company's needs and to inform them about their stores.

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Right now, the idea of mystery shopping sounds pretty good, doesn't it? In fact, it sounds like your ideal job:

- Good hours
- You get to do something fun: shop
- You are able to work when you want
- You are helping companies get better

You've already learned what a mystery shopper needs to do in order to be effective in their job, so do you have what it takes?

- Can you follow directions?
- Can you take good notes?
- Can you offer good advice?
- Can you remain unbiased when you evaluate a store?
- Will you do the work that's assigned to you?
- Can you be friendly?
- Are you able to work without any guidance?

While you might not know how to answer some of these questions right now, it's a good idea to think about how you feel about shopping with an agenda. Some people don't like the idea of shopping and having to do certain things.

Plus, you need to realize this isn't necessarily a job that will allow you to go into a store, buy something expensive, and then keep it. That's not the way it works.

Try out a few mystery shopping assignments and see if they work for you. You might find you're a natural – or not.

Truly, mystery shopping is so exciting and fun that most people continue on after the first assignment. After all, in what other job can you dress the way you want to dress, go to stores, and then be the one that companies turn to for advice?

Most jobs don't give you that sort of power.

WHY MYSTERY SHOPPING IS THE BEST JOB, NO MATTER THE ECONOMY

The one thing about mystery shopping that's not a mystery? Its long-term benefits for companies.

No matter what the economy is like, companies need to hire mystery shoppers to help them ensure they're doing their best work.

Mystery shoppers help:

- Point out where customer service can improve – Mystery shoppers help show where customer service may be able to improve.
- Promote better service – If the company's workers know that mystery shoppers are going to be coming around at some point, they will work harder and perform their jobs at a higher level.
- Show what's working for a company – A mystery shopper will also point out what the company is doing right and what they need to keep doing in order to be successful.
- Companies see what their competition is doing – Some companies will send mystery shoppers to the stores of their competition, helping them find out what their prices are like, how their service is, etc. With this information, a company will be able to adjust their own training and expectations.
- Find out when rules or regulations aren't being followed – You might also be tasked with looking to see if a company is following certain laws.
- Find out what other customer complaints are – A mystery shopper might also try to talk to other customers in the store about how they feel about their shopping experience, relaying the information back to the company.
- Point out employees that need training/discipline – As a mystery shopper, you will also find out what employees are in need of training or which employees are in need of discipline if they are doing illegal things or things that are out of line with store policies.

The mystery shopper is able to go to the places where managers and other higher ups may not be able to go regularly.

In doing so, they ensure a company will stay in business.

And that's why these shoppers, above all others, are needed in any economy.



pers are needed in your area, or in the surrounding areas of your community.

Get Started Checklist

In order to get started, you will want to follow this checklist:

- √ Get a professional email address.
- √ Find out what your area's policy might be in terms of business licenses.
- √ Sign up for forums.
- √ Sign up for mailing lists.
- √ Get the full detailed version of this book from amazon.com
- √ Create a cover letter.
- √ Create or update your resume.
- √ Begin to apply at mystery shopping organizations.
- √ Call mystery shopping companies to see if there is work available.
- √ Purchase the "Shop Until You Drop" application to always have access to mystery shopping advice and work.
- √ Complete your mystery shopping assignments.
- √ Report back on your shopping experiences, as instructed.
- √ Repeat.
- √ Find out if there are other mystery shopping opportunities in your area.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a mystery shopper may not be a job that reaps you millions of dollars, but it is a job that allows you to have:

- Freedom
- Fun & Flexibility
- Your own schedule
- An unending source of income

While you might not realize it right now, the mystery shopping job is an opportunity for you to help companies see their business through the customers' eyes.

Since they might not relate to the store at that level, your eyes provide them with the opportunity to truly see what is happening in the store and what they need to change – if anything.

You want the company managers to see what the experience is in the store, and whether it supports the values and the goals of the company as a whole.

If it does, then they know what they're doing is right and they should stick to their plan.

If not, the company knows it's time to change things up.

And that's where you come in. You can be the one to drive change and improvement in your local marketplace.

Just by shopping and telling companies what your experience was.

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