



B2B Mystery Shopping: Aim Small, Drill Deep

(Increase the effectiveness of Mystery Shopping by focusing on a small number of prioritized information points)

Mystery shopping is a well-established means of gathering information on how vendors interact with their customers, in particular, gathering information on competitor products and services and how they are sold to different market segments.

The effectiveness of Mystery Shopping can be increased dramatically by reducing the number of information points, prioritizing the information points, and training the shoppers to gather as much information on each information point.

B2C versus B2B

The need for reducing and prioritizing information points may not be a significant issue for mystery shopping in Business-to-Consumer (B2C) research, but it plays a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of mystery shopping in Business-to-Business (B2B) research.

Mystery shopping within Business-to-Consumer sector usually means conducting research on vendors that are accessible to the general public, such as department stores, restaurants, banks, etc. Recruiting mystery shoppers for this type of research is relatively easy and inexpensive, and oftentimes several mystery shoppers are sent to the same location in order to get corroborating information.

Mystery shopping within the Business-to-Business sector presents some significant challenges. For example, the “public” these businesses deal with are usually restricted to managerial personnel of other businesses. Recruiting managerial personnel is more difficult and they demand a much higher pay rate.

The smaller number of potential mystery shoppers, and the higher rate of pay they demand, makes it imperative that a B2B mystery shop be well-planned and executed correctly the first time. There may be no second chance in this type of research scenario.

Enhance Your Chances for Success

Given these restrictions, it is vitally important to minimize the number of information points, list them in descending order of priority, and have the mystery shopper focus on getting as much information on each item as possible. The client company must decide what it needs to obtain in terms of research findings, and what is of secondary importance.

This writer was once presented with a list of about 30+ information points (excluding subsections) that the mystery shopper was required to get answers on during a one-hour meeting with a B2B vendor. This would have been impossible to accomplish. The client reduced the list to five information points, for which the mystery shopper was able to get a significant amount of in-depth information that met and exceeded the expectations of the client.

Conclusion: Get More with Less

For anyone thinking about conducting mystery shops in a Business-to-Business environment, I would strongly urge you to focus on a prioritized list of a small number key business issues or information points. This would allow the shoppers to get as much in-depth information as possible on each point.

It will also ensure that any expenditure on mystery shopping will be money well spent - an investment in business success.

Choose wisely.

For a free consultation or further information on the Competitive Intelligence services:

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