

Module Five:

Reporting your Mystery Shopping Results

Mystery Shopping Reports

Mystery shopping reports must be many things to be valuable to the companies who hire mystery shoppers:

- Honest
- Fair
- Thorough
- Accurate
- On time
- Well written
- Detailed
- And most importantly, OBJECTIVE

Honest

A mystery shopper's report must first and foremost be truthful.

Be at the right store, bank or company, accurately record date, day, time, and names.

Don't even THINK about falsifying a report or making up information that you may have forgotten to obtain. Your integrity is your most valuable asset in this industry! Many businesses today have security cameras that can track your every movement, and the exact dates and times that everything happened from the time you entered the door. It is not unusual for them to review their tapes to validate your mystery shops, so your integrity is crucial.

Fair

A mystery shopper is always fair. Unless otherwise instructed, give the employee a chance to succeed by being generally cooperative, understanding and friendly. Most companies are not looking for mystery shoppers to be angry, upset, disruptive, demanding or unpleasant. They want mystery shoppers to reflect their "typical average" customer. Mystery shoppers should "blend in" with other customers that are at the shop location. Don't cause a scene; don't do anything that will make you be "remembered". While you do need to be fair, don't make it too "easy", by leading the

employee to say the correct thing. Allow them to do their job (or not) without making it too hard or too easy. Be a normal customer or enquirer

Thorough

Mystery shopping reports "tell the whole story".

They are factual, nothing left out. Make the reader feel like they were "there" with you during the shop. Your job is to give a clear picture of your visit. Most narratives should be a step by step "walk through" of your visit. What happened from the minute you arrived until the time that you left. Mystery shopping agencies will generally tell you if they want notes or complete sentences.

Accurate

Facts clearly state the situation, events, time, date, and names. Nothing is left out, and all of it must be truthful and absolutely accurate. Opinions or interpretations are not necessary or wanted. You should provide "Just the Facts". Example: Don't say "I thought the bathrooms could use a good cleaning." DO SAY: "The garbage can was overflowing and the floor was littered with toilet paper. The bathroom had a strong and offensive odour." These are the facts.

On Time

Businesses rely on mystery shopping reports to be timely. They need data fast! Mystery shopping reports must arrive on time. If your report falls outside of the deadline, you can expect that your fee will be reduced at best, or you may not be paid at all. This is VERY important. In general, businesses want their reports within 24 to 48 hours after the mystery shopper leaves their establishment. They want to act on the data received while the experience is still fresh in their employee's mind. The mystery shopping agency needs time to prepare the clients reports. Deadlines for submission must be watched and carefully adhered to at all times. Read your guidelines!

Well written

Clients must be able to read, understand and comprehend mystery shopping reports. Reports should be:

- Written according to the guidelines.
- Organized and thoughtful.
- Spelled correctly (Use spell check!).

- Grammatically correct.
- Businesslike and professional
(not flowery, poetic, dramatic, overly lengthy, or obtuse)

Detailed

Reports should have enough detail for companies to know what transpired. Just like a reporter, a mystery shopper needs to include: who, what, where, when, why and how. Make sure to include details that make the reader "see" what you saw during your visit. Include names, descriptions and times! If you answer a question with a "no" be prepared to back it up with factual data as to what DID occur. The more specific your details, the better use your report will be to the client company!

Objective

Mystery shopping reports are not reviews or opinions. They are statements of facts. Tell what happened and what you observed, not what you think the client should do. You will observe or take a "snapshot" of your experience, and the business owner will decide the best course of action for his business. Keep your opinions to yourself.

If your work is not honest, fair, thorough, accurate, on time, well written, objective and with enough detail the mystery shopping agency and you are not a credible source of information, so both are in grave danger of losing that client's business. As a mystery shopper, you are likely to be removed from that agency's database of mystery shoppers.