

Mystery Shop-Her™

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What Is Mystery Shopping?

Mystery shopping is the practice of using trained shoppers to anonymously evaluate customer service, customer experience, operations, employee integrity, and program quality.

Why Is Healthcare Mystery Shopping Important?

Today's healthcare consumer is more educated, more selective and more demanding than ever before. In addition, increases in co-pays and deductibles are influencing how the customer judges value for their hard earned dollars. Add to this the time constraints that the primary buyer, coordinator and consumer of healthcare service – women – have, and you can see that delivering good service is just not good enough!

The Cost of Poor Custom-Her™ Experience

When location, pricing and services are no longer unique, customer experience is often the key to success or failure in programs. The widely quoted statistic, "it costs 10x's more to get a new customer than to keep one" is especially true for female customers because of their wide social network. If you meet her expectations, she will tell all her friends, if you don't, she's likely to tell all her friends, chat about it on line, post a complaint on one of the many opinion sites and she may even create her own blog regarding her experience. Beware, today's female consumer is empowered by technology and she knows how to use it!

Benefits Of A Hospital Based Mystery Shopper Program

A Mystery Shopping program is not just a shopping activity and subsequent report of findings, but a comprehensive method for:

- Analyzing how you currently deliver your services and programs to each of your constituencies i.e., doctors, nurses, patients and managed care companies...)
- Learning how your service delivery training translates "on the floor"
- Understanding how each customer group wants their healthcare experience delivered
- Identifying changes to improve the customer experience

Mystery Shopping Programs Can Also Help You:

- Monitor and measure service performance
- Improve physician, nurse, employee and patient retention
- Educate employees on what is important in serving customers
- Reinforce good employee, medical staff and administrative practices
- Provide a framework for incentive based customer improvement reward systems

What Type of Program Is Right For You?

Many people think that Mystery Shopping refers to only one type of program – the in person, on-site experience. However, depending on what you are trying to find out other Mystery Shopping techniques might be a better choice. For example, you may want to conduct telephone shopping to see how your billing, finance and admin areas deliver support by phone. You may deliver critical information to patients by electronic means, in this situation, an e-Commerce web site shopping evaluation may be necessary or you may want to learn more about how other healthcare providers in your area are delivering their services, in this instance, Competitive Shopping is the approach of choice.

What Does Mystery Shopping Involve?

There are three phases to a Mystery Shopping Program. Phase I is the Planning Phase. During the Planning Phase you will:

1. Develop Goals and Objectives for the study
2. Define who/what your target is for the shopping experience
3. Develop a shopping script and/or questionnaire and conduct shopper training

Phase II involves profiling your perfect Mystery Shopper, recruiting like shoppers and training your shoppers on observation requirements, needed information and reporting methods. Phase II is where many companies take a “penny wise, pound foolish approach”. They often use internal employees as their shoppers because they want to save money. The problem with this is that employees; or those in the healthcare field, by their very nature, are more healthcare savvy than your everyday consumer. Their biases, regarding good and bad service delivery, influence their opinions, and most importantly, they may not mirror the buyer profile you are trying to tailor your product or service for.

With today's changing marketplace recruiting shoppers of the correct age, ethnic, generational and lifestyle profile is absolutely necessary when looking to improve desired customer experience per service or change payer mix.

Data Collection and Reporting

Phase III involves the actual shopping experience, data collection and report development. Your shopping program may involve time capture, collection of on-site materials, observation of multiple staff groups, observation of the location/space, shift specific requirements and multiple experience or location stops to capture all components of the total customer experience. Finally, your shoppers will be constructing their reports and turning them in for review and compilation. Timeliness, accuracy and thoroughness will make or break your effort. If your shoppers fail to produce information that is factual and unbiased, and inclusive of all your requirements, your work will be worthless.

What Do You Do With Your Findings?

Mystery Shopping fills in the gaps that exist between operations and marketing. Its findings focus on the identification of real customer opinions, perceptions, needs and wants and the outcome often provides recommendations for operational and training improvements.

Finally, Mystery Shopping can be a powerful tool for building employee evaluation and incentive programs. For this reason, your Human Resource Department and Department Managers can be your staunchest allies for budgeting and planning your Mystery Shopping Program.

Terri Whitesel is the Founder and President of **Interpret-Her™, LLC**. To find out more about **Interpret-Her's** Mystery Shop-Her Program contact Terri at 952-926-2445 or at terri@interpret-her.com



Translating *her* mindshare
into *your* marketshare.

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