

Removing the Mystery from Mystery Shopping

Paul Hector

Vice President, Business Solutions



When Paul Hector worked as a Director of Operations for a multi-national home improvement retail chain, he helped develop a mystery shopping program that collected data on the total customer experience at every one of his corporation's 1,500+ stores each month.

In the process, Paul became a believer in the intrinsic value of mystery shopping while also recognizing how many organizations, including his own, lost much of the valuable intelligence obtained through mystery shopping because of a failure to fully understand and utilize the data they were receiving. Too often, that data was not being analyzed effectively or was being diluted as it passed through the hierarchy of the company.

Solving the Mystery

After changing mystery shopping providers and hiring Service Intelligence™, Paul was able to tighten the focus of his corporation's mystery shopping program so it produced tangible recommendations for process improvements as granular as the scheduling of managers on certain days at particular stores. Through Paul's efforts, the mystery shopping program became an invaluable part of his company's customer service approach, marked by improvements of up to 11% in key behavioral categories. The program also became a benchmark for other major retailers.

Joining Service Intelligence

Given his experience, Service Intelligence recently jumped at the chance to bring Paul Hector aboard as its new Vice President, Business Solutions. Paul, in turn, sees a great opportunity at Service Intelligence to apply the lessons he learned as a corporate user of mystery shopping in such a way as to benefit each and every Service Intelligence client. As Paul describes it, the mystery shopping industry is ripe for a major paradigm shift, and Service Intelligence is the provider that is leading the way.

Not All Providers Are Equal

Paul understands that many prospective clients see little difference among mystery shopping providers and sometimes choose vendors solely based on price. However, he knows from personal experience this is a mistake.

"When you decide to implement a mystery shopping program, it's not about the cost of the program. Instead it's about how much not having an effective mystery shopping program will cost you in the long run," states Paul. "While all mystery shopping vendors are data providers, Service Intelligence differentiates itself through consultative guidance. We help our clients extract the maximum benefit from their data by analyzing it and making recommendations for improving their businesses."

As part of its consultative approach, Service Intelligence works with each client to ensure the client is focusing on the areas that will most impact consumer perception and translate to the success of the business. Processes and procedures that are known to be regularly evaluated typically receive the most attention from employees; therefore, ensuring that a mystery shopping program is properly targeted greatly contributes to the achievement of objectives. Service Intelligence also ensures that mystery shopping programs reflect the "real world" consumer experience. Because Service Intelligence deploys mystery shoppers to assignments in their home geographies, shoppers are, in fact, also authentic target consumers.

Seizing the Opportunity

With over 30 years of retail experience in the areas of home improvement and grocery, Paul recognizes a missed opportunity when he sees it. Too many companies, he believes, never seize the opportunity presented to them by their mystery shopping programs—the opportunity to improve their organizations, whether it's through training, merchandising, marketing, or other changes in process or procedure. Paul maintains that every client should benefit from the type of strategic intelligence he did while working with Service Intelligence as a provider.

"Clients need a holistic approach," Paul states. "Service Intelligence shows them how their data correlates to the top line and the bottom line. Working as a business partner, not just a vendor, we help our clients achieve their business goals." When it comes to understanding what clients need from their mystery shopping programs, Paul Hector is an expert. After all, he was a client once, too.