

BRANCH MANAGER'S LETTER

strategies for branching excellence

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How to Select a Mystery Shopping Service

When selecting a mystery shopping service, Constance Anderson, President of Constance Anderson & Associates (New York, NY) advises...

→ Look for a provider who has experience in the financial service industry. They will be able to provide feedback that is relevant to helping your employees improve in specific areas that are critical to client satisfaction as it pertains to banking.

→ Consider using your own clients as shoppers. "Our company provides clients with the option to use either their own clients or to use our professional shoppers. In side-by-side tests we have found that the feedback actual clients provide is consistent to that provided by professional shoppers," Anderson says. "This is, however, dependent on the specificity of the questions that the shoppers must answer."

TIP: Look for a provider who gives you specific behavior-based questions for the shoppers to answer. By using your own clients you can save money and decrease the likelihood that employees will detect who the shoppers are.

→ Most feedback that shoppers provide should be based on specific behaviors rather than subjective opinion. Generally, subjective feedback is difficult

to coach and train to.

Specific behavior: The employee thanked you for your business.

Subjective opinion: The employee was friendly.

→ Look at pricing carefully. Make sure you will be charged only for the shops that are delivered. Also, ask about fees in addition to the per shop charge that is typically assessed.

→ Ask *if* and *how* the company trains your coaches to best utilize the results.

→ Find out how reports are delivered. Do you have to wait until the end of the month to get results or can you view new shops daily? Are shops delivered via paper or can you access them on the Internet?

→ Are both sales and service factors included on a shop or must you purchase separate shops for sales versus service? Anderson's company, for example, believes that when selling is needs-based, it is a true service to the client. Therefore, they integrate needs-based selling into all of their forms.

→ What about organizational factors such as signage, hours, etc? Is there an extra fee for evaluating these areas? "While we measure institutional factors

"We didn't always do it that way"

Periodically telling employees that something used to be different reminds them that change is an ongoing process. Letting employees know nothing is constant also encourages them to offer new solutions.

such as hours and parking, individual performers are only held accountable for those things that they can control,” notes Anderson.

→ Can the service evaluate all channels and branches?

→ Does the provider have industry-specific benchmarks for its questions to help you benchmark and set goals?

Constance Anderson & Associates is the provider of www.MemberShoppers.com, a mystery shopping and coaching effectiveness system for financial institutions. The company also provides lending sur-

veys, internal mystery shopping, and focus groups to financial institutions across the United States and Canada.

For more information, call Constance Anderson & Associates at 1-800-548-4417 or go to www.MemberShoppers.com.

4 Tips for Getting Results from Mystery Shops

“The effectiveness of a mystery shopping program is only as good as the effectiveness of the coaches who use the system,” emphasizes Constance Anderson, President of Constance Anderson & Associates (New York, NY). To reap the best benefits from shops, Anderson recommends...

1. Keep an open mind. Remember, all feedback is valuable but not all feedback is valid. “Mystery shops and survey results are simply someone’s perception of one person at one time on one day. They are not the totality of that employee or of the retail experience in a branch,” Anderson says. “Look for patterns rather than isolated instances of effective and ineffective behaviors.”
2. Hold people accountable for performance improvement. Anderson’s system, for example, is color-coded so that coaches and employees can compare their scores to a national median. Challenge employees to meet or exceed the national median in all areas.
3. Continually train and coach to areas where employees fall short of the standard.
4. Reward exemplary performance in a public forum such as team or employee meeting.

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Lana J. Chandler, Editor

Lana@BranchManagersLetter.com

1-304-343-0206

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