

Guide to MYSTERY SHOPPING



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At the Mystery Shopping Professionals Association (MSPA) our goal is to improve and stimulate the understanding, performance, reputation, and use of Mystery Shopping. We work to cultivate the culture of professional standards and ethics within the industry, and have an ongoing series of events to connect, learn and share new ideas and developments.

The aim of this document is to clarify the role and purpose of the MSPA; to explain who the MSPA are, why you should invest in Mystery Shopping from one of our members, and why you need to do so now!

A Word to the Whys'...

Nigel Cover, Consultant and Governor of MSPA EA



We exist in a world of constant change - sometimes better, sometimes worse, always different, often challenging. We are surrounded by creative solutions that solve difficult problems - claims are made, budgets are spent, but what is the pay off?

To keep things simple, a very wise colleague once gave me a few words to the wise... or “The Whys” to be a bit more precise... It is often said that every great product has its truth, its compelling reason to buy, its clear and discernible advantage. The delivery of that truth at the point of contact with a customer is an age old story - more true now than ever before... here are the moments that matter:

Product, Promotion, Price, Placement, Process and Passion

Does your proposition deliver every “P” at the point of no control? At the moment of truth? Where the product, your people and your customers and prospects meet? If you think it does, then good news, even better is to know it does, every time, everywhere, all the time.

So back to a word for the Whys.... In simple language, Why Buy Something? Why Buy it From You? Why Buy it Now? Or in the terms of Mystery Shopping - Why use it?, Why use an MSPA Member? and Why do so today? in the challenging markets we face... please read on...

MSPA[®] **MYSTERY SHOPPING
PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION**

Why use Mystery Shopping?

It goes back decades, to a time and place where companies wanted to know that their product was on display, that their staff knew what they were doing and could explain the benefits, that their customers were welcome, and everyone was friendly. Such happy days.

But in today's complex, competitive, multichannel world the uses are more varied and sophisticated than just the human aspects of good service – and life is often not so rosy.



So, in the spirit of exploring product or service “Truth” here it is for Mystery Shopping according to the world of the MSPA, as outlined in our latest guidelines.

We live in an age where efficient and fast, easy and impulsive beat friendly, caring and courteous to the race for a sale. So where does Mystery Shopping fit in?

Later in this guide we will share one of many case studies that prove the value of measuring and motivating better business performance across the board. But for now, our job is to explore the scope and variety of Mystery Shopping and its use.

The Purpose of Mystery Shopping



The use of Mystery Shopping to measure business performance at the point of customer contact is now an established technique.

There are great a variety of objectives and methodologies used in Mystery Shopping. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Customer Experience delivery
- Employee Engagement, performance, and training
- Third party channel (dealer/Franchisee/reseller) performance
- Product availability
- Product display and conditions
- Pricing
- Age verification
- Legal adherence
- Health and safety compliance
- Accessibility and inclusion

At any or all of the following channels:

- On-line and e-commerce
- Email
- Social media
- Call Centres
- Physical Premises
- Delivery of products and services

What should we measure?



In simple terms, every moment where your product or service delivers to a customer, using managed, motivated and skilled operators to give you that local view at every touchpoint and channel.

The 'use' cases are many and varied, we must live in the moments that matter...

Is my **PRODUCT** where I want it, **PROMOTED** properly, **PRICED** competitively?

Are my **PROCESSES** efficient, compliant, safe, hygienic?

Do my **PEOPLE** display **PASSION** for my brand and care for my customer?

Above all, is my business consistent? **WHERE, WHEN** and **HOW** do I need to improve?

Mystery Shopping is used the world over, in every sector from Retail, Hospitality, Leisure, Finance. It is used by companies, regulatory authorities, trade associations, tourist authorities, towns and cities (and in some cases whole countries) to make their proposition stand above the rest. And the best of all of these recognise that using a professional, ethical and well established provider is essential.

Why use an MSPA member?



The MSPA has over 200 member companies in Europe & Africa alone, and over 500 globally. MSPA members are professional companies who are experienced in the art and science of controlled contact, the skill to motivate a potential or actual customer to fulfil a scenario that can accurately, on time, every time, measure any of the moments of truth mentioned above.

Sounds easy? It takes commitment, investment, knowledge and skill to carry out Mystery Shopping to a standard and on a scale that enhances the client, their brand and their people.

MSPA members benefit from a constant programme of “CONNECT, LEARN AND SHARE”. They adhere to Ethics and Codes of Conduct that protects the interests of their clients and their people, their employees and their shoppers, the industry they operate in and the legislative constraints that apply in their markets.

So Why Buy Mystery Shopping Now?



Many things have changed in the last few years, but one thing remains the same - now, last year, last century, and definitely for the future...

Time is money...

- every moment an opportunity is missed, a sale is lost
- every moment a problem persists that is not solved, efficiency is lost
- every moment legislation is not followed it adds to risk and damages reputation

There is not a moment to lose.

But there will be moments to cherish as well...

- every “perfect 10” from a customer should be recognised
- every new insight and better practice can be shared
- every motivated employee can be praised
- every improvement applauded

Mystery Shopping can celebrate and share the good moments as well as identify and help rectify the not so good. But only if you measure the moments!

Meet the MSPA at work and play...



The pages that follow show our members at work (and occasionally at play) as they build experiences, networks and opportunities together. The association welcomes companies from over 50 countries in Europe and Africa and prides itself on a growing membership base even during the recent pandemic and economic challenges.

As well as member companies, the MSPA also welcomes individual, academic, client or associate members to experience the opportunities to share, learn and connect. The MSPA is the only association dedicated to Mystery Shopping and is proud to help members and clients deliver their business objectives using this unique and innovative service.

**To take the Mystery out of
Mystery Shopping
CONNECT, LEARN and SHARE**

www.mspa-ea.org

The most respected providers in the industry meet annually at the MSPA EA Conference



Collaborating and Celebrating Together



Proving Return on Investment

Jill Spencer, Past President MSPA EA & Chair MSPA Global



Proving Return on Investment (ROI) has long been a client priority when commissioning customer research. Researchers know that if they can prove the value of research in terms of revenue gains and/or highlighting revenue saving opportunities, their budgets will undoubtedly increase year-on-year.

Depending on the type of research commissioned, it can be almost impossible to definitively prove ROI, so every effort should be made to think multi-dimensionally when calculating the ROI of each project. At the annual conference of MSPA Europe/Africa, held in Varna, Bulgaria, a special focus was placed on this topic, including presentations of case studies as well as think tank and networking groups, so that best practice could be shared across the membership. Many compelling case studies were introduced, all of which proved ROI in mystery shopping programmes – some increasing revenues by up to 5x the cost of the mystery shopping project undertaken. These mystery shopping projects all shared common themes:

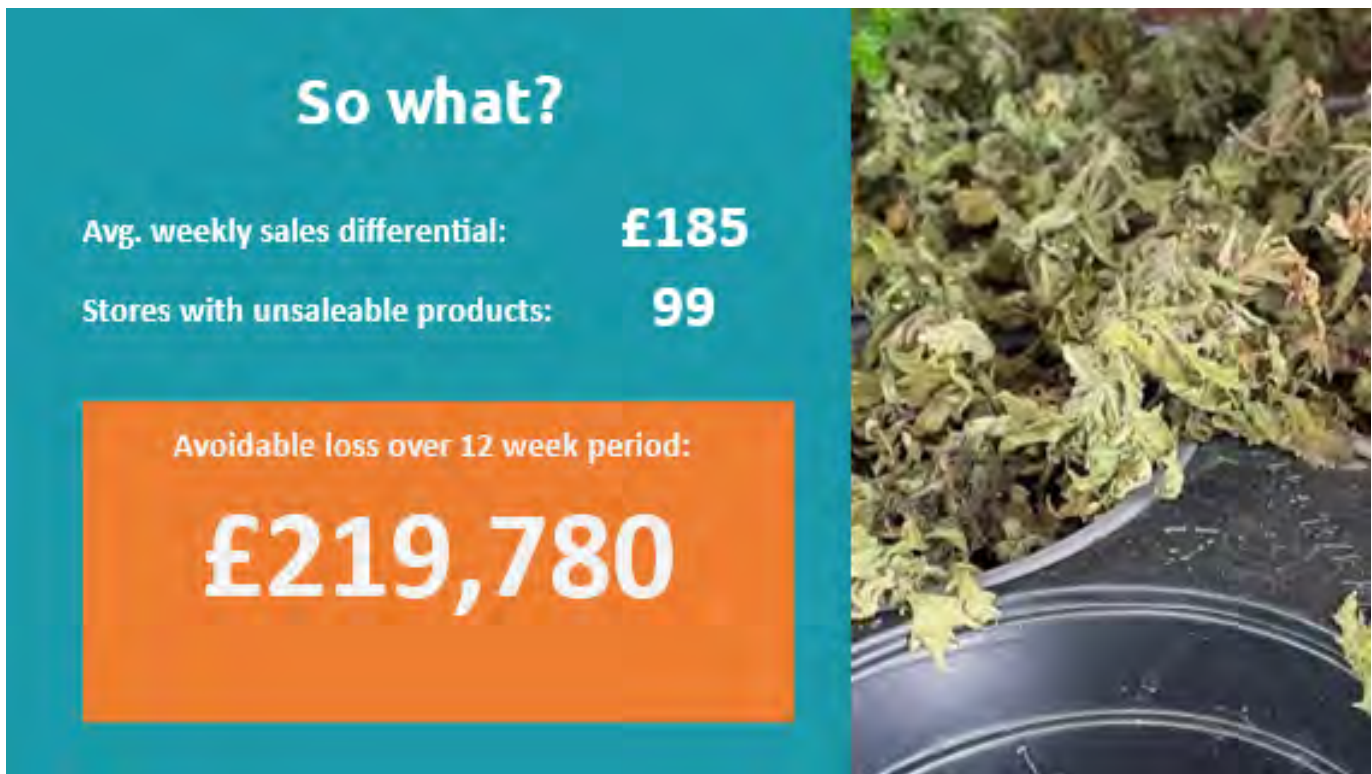
- The collection of high-quality mystery shopping data.
- The sharing of data cross-departments within the client organisation so that appropriate actions could be taken.
- The analysis of mystery shopping data alongside other customer research.
- The use of sales data to prove the link between the programme findings and revenue gains/opportunities.

Background

One of the most interesting and topical case studies discussed related to a project conducted by a Supermarket/DIY chain in the UK. The mystery shopping data highlighted that products (plants) were not being displayed in saleable condition. i.e. they were dead or dying! Action was immediately taken to support the store teams at Central and Local level - care guides were created and shared with stores.



By cross-referencing sales data at store level, and looking at shrinkage alongside, the client was able to identify an average weekly sales differential of £185 when comparing plant quality across the estate. i.e. the 99 stores that failed on the mystery shopping measure were posting sales of £185 p.w. on average lower than their counterpart stores. When looking across the 12 weeks of peak trading of these products across the estate, an avoidable loss of £220k was identified. The cost of the mystery shopping programme over the same period was only £40k!



What happened next?

Having conducted the project in one season and identified the issue ahead of the next 12-week bedding plant sale season, they increased like-for-like sales by £178k! Recovering most of the losses projected in the previous period and of course preventing dried up plants and sales.

The following article highlights the issues that still exist elsewhere in the industry [supermarkets killing plants](#).

This is one example of how mystery shopping can be used to increase revenues and build market share.

For more case studies and best practice guidelines visit the [MSPA EA site here](#).



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Visit the MSPA Europe/Africa website to learn more about our member companies, case study programme, articles and sign-up to the newsletter to stay in touch with us.

For a list of MSPA Europe/Africa providers in your country, please click this link: [MSPA provider search.](#)

If you have questions about MSPA Europe/Africa please contact us directly or use the contact form on the [website.](#)