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By [Steven Di Pietro](#), Founder & CEO at [Service Integrity](#)

This One Tool Will Expose Incompetent Mystery Shopping Companies

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Mystery Shopping is a service that is hard to understand. On the surface, it seems simple.

How hard can it be to send some people to a store and fill out a report?

It gets enormously complex. Mystery shopping companies must deal with questionnaire complexities, shop fraud, difficult-to-reach locations, navigation of micro payments in the banking system, translations, the normal account management issues, and bespoke client reporting requirements.

Moreover, individual results need to be collated and reported back in a way that makes sense and can be actioned. So how do you know if the mystery shopping company you're evaluating can do this? After all, you've probably not had experience dealing with the industry, or you may have had a bad experience many years ago.

You may also be thinking - Can technology help? Can we use ChatGPT? Is there some new concept out there? So not only are you grappling with the credibility of potential suppliers, but you're also probably wondering whether you should be using the service at all.

At the same time, Mystery Shoppers also have some apprehension. Is the company I'm dealing with reputable? Will I get scammed like my friend did? Will I get paid on time?

For credible mystery shopping providers, the challenge is to prove their credibility.

Providers always struggle to find ways to show people that we are credible, without shouting from the top of a mountain, screaming, "Trust me, trust me."

When I started this business 20 years ago, I struggled with these issues for many years.

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I did something very 'old school'. I voluntarily joined the industry association. The Mystery Shopping Providers Association has been in existence for over 20 years. I get quizzical looks when I tell people there's an association for mystery shopping - "There's an association for mystery shopping?"

Well, there is, and I've spent untold years traveling around the world to different conferences speaking and listening. But why?

I tell all potential clients the same one thing. They should search the Mystery Shopping Providers Association (MSPA) website and only receive quotes from member companies. I don't mind competing with other reputable competitors, but not fly-by-night rogues.

Here are three reasons why companies should only ask MSPA members to quote:

1. These are companies willing to invest money in becoming a member. This de facto means they are investing in the industry.
2. Member companies must sign rules of ethical conduct and a code of professional standards.
3. Member companies regularly interact through conferences and other forums to ensure they operate at the highest possible standards.

Although it sounds boring, it's worth noting three of the eight things that are required under the code of professional standards include:

1. Promoting excellence in the industry.
2. Honest and ethical methods of operations.
3. Conducting services in accordance with industry procedures and regulations.

And here are three of the seven rules of ethical conduct:

1. Not to falsify or misrepresent reports.

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2. Not to mislead shoppers about opportunities.
3. Not to encourage anyone to break confidentiality agreements.

It's easy to say these are just words, and they are easy to sign up for. However, in my experience, these are words that are taken seriously by MSPA member companies. There are also ramifications. Violations can lead to disciplinary action and banning from the association.

So, whether you're a shopper or a company seeking mystery shopping services, I encourage you to use the MSPA as your starting point.

If you're a mystery shopping company looking to expand your business, then I can't think of any better way than connecting with the best operators in the world. Not only can you learn, but you may also be able to teach.

With all that said, of course, all companies need to do their due diligence, and shoppers need to be very wary. I'm simply providing a shortcut or, more precisely, a first step on your journey to finding a provider, becoming a shopper, or trying to grow your business.

Below are the three MSPA regional global websites.

- [MSPA Europe Africa](#)
- [MSPA Asia Pacific](#)
- [MSPA Americas](#)
