

Mystery Shoppers Knock on Healthcare's Door!

San Diego, California, August 23, 2006 - Mystery shopping has been used to enhance customer engagement initiatives in most service industries, such as Hospitality, Retail, Automotive, and Financial Services for a very long time now. Is the Healthcare community finally embracing the benefits of this vital service and sales improvement tool as well? The answer appears to be yes.

Healthcare has traditionally limited itself to long-term approaches such as customer surveys or physician surveys. However, due to the competitive nature of today's technologically savvy and demanding "shopper", it seems the industry as a whole has woken to more aggressive techniques for fast acting monitoring and feedback such as mystery shopping.

Zachary Hooker, President of San Diego based Advanced Feedback, a leader in mystery shopping says, "Though we have been servicing almost all areas of the service industry for more than a decade now, this is the first time we have seen some activity on the Healthcare front. It looks to be pretty promising and long term."

"Mystery shoppers" posing as patients evaluate the facility by placing appointment calls, information calls for pricing, visiting the facility, faking symptoms, making special requests and sometimes staying in the facility overnight. The medical centers and facilities who have undertaken the services lately, believe that a number of changes have been made as a result of the practice including improvement in employee behavior, change in ambience of waiting room and reception areas, more concern towards patient privacy and lesser wait times.

While like most other research techniques, mystery shopping gives insights into ways to improve patient interaction, identifies problems in service, and increases customer loyalty, one of its most effective uses is the aid it provides in explanation of customer survey results, that is, its ability to explain the customer feedback or response.

The "Mystery Shopping" approach seems to be particularly popular amongst mid size and small size segment of the industry. This is possibly due to the stiff competition and evaluation the smaller clinics and nursing homes face. Larger organizations also benefit from the service by using mystery shoppers from within their patient database, as well as those out-of-plan. Certainly, the fast turn around time, immediate results and comparatively lower cost of service makes it an attractive feedback and training tool.

"The foray of Healthcare into the Mystery Shopping arena is a welcome move and we look forward to the customer service initiatives it will promote in the sector." Comments Zachary Hooker from Advanced Feedback.

Advanced Feedback has over 15 years of experience in doing mystery shopping and customer engagement surveys. For more information, please visit www.advancedfeedback.com or write to Zhooker@advancedfeedback.com.
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