



# 5 TIPS FOR CHOOSING AN AIRPORT MYSTERY SHOPPING COMPANY

You've done the research. You know what a mystery shop is and how it will help your airport. So, now it is time to choose a company. What should you look for? What sets apart the good from the great when it comes to mystery shopping companies? CSE recommends these **5 TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND:**

1

## COMPREHENSIVE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT

**The results of mystery shops will not be isolated to one part of your airport; rather, their effects will have implications—ideally positive—throughout the airport.** Your provider should truly understand your goals and expectations for the program. Are you shopping because you want to catch someone “in the act” or because you want to IMPROVE the passenger experience? Mystery shopping to get a “temperature read” simply doesn't help move the needle of improvement. Rather than working with a provider that fits you into their template, seek a partner that will LISTEN to your needs, use the results as a COMPONENT of comprehensive airport improvement.

2

## QUALITY & ACCURACY

**Mystery shops can potentially contain sensitive information.** Therefore, it is important that the data is as ACCURATE as possible. Mystery shopping companies vary greatly in their quality control (QC) processes. Inquire with potential providers as to how they handle QC. How are the mystery shoppers chosen and prepared for their task? What happens to the mystery shop before it gets to you? How long does this process or lack of take? What is the company's percentage of successfully completed shops? The answers to these questions will provide insight into what you could expect when working with a provider. Great providers are proud of their QC processes and will be eager to share them with you!

3

## AIRPORT EXPERIENCE

**As you are already aware, airports are unique in many ways, and to operate a mystery shopping program as you would in a traditional retail, food and beverage, or services setting could be detrimental.** Be sure to choose a provider that has experience and knowledge IN airports and how they operate. This is especially important when scheduling mystery shops to coincide with flight schedules, arranging for shoppers to complete post-security shops, and understanding the dynamic among airport authorities, developers, managers, master concessionaires, individual brands, TSA, and transportation providers.

4

## BUDGETING RESOURCES

**If this is your first foray into mystery shopping, chances are your budget may not reflect the importance this initiative will ultimately provide.** Choose a mystery shopping company that will MAXIMIZE your resources. Rather than watering down your program, consider a robust pilot program to get a more accurate picture of your airport's potential benefits. Be sure to fully understand what your responsibilities will be and what services your partner will provide. Will they run reporting for you or will you be responsible for that? Will your provider send you completed mystery shops or will you be responsible for collecting them? What will happen if you have a dispute with a mystery shop—what is the process? Be sure you and your provider see eye-to-eye on this. Knowing this information up front will help to avoid potential roadblocks ahead.

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## INDUSTRY STANDARDS

**Your mystery shopping company should be a member in good standing of the Mystery Shopping Provider's Association (MSPA).** The MSPA is a trade association of companies that provide mystery shopping services and sets the standards for and monitors the mystery shopping industry. To be a member, each provider must be accepted based on operating according to the MSPA Code of Ethics and Professional Standards, their business practices and legitimacy in the mystery shopping space. To view MSPA member organizations, please visit [www.MysteryShop.org](http://www.MysteryShop.org).

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