

How to become a professional mystery shopper earning top money!

The Perfect Work-At-Home Job: Mystery Shopping

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**The Perfect Work-At Home Job:
Mystery Shopping**

By

Melanie R. Jordan

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This book is dedicated to the world's best husband—my husband, Rich—for his complete support in my quest to become the writer I always knew I could be. As always, "thank you for loving me".

The Perfect Work-At-Home Job: Mystery Shopping

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My Story

Ever do some surfing on the Internet and actually discover something worthwhile? That's how I first found out about Mystery Shopping, a.k.a. (also known as) Secret Shopping, a.k.a. Field Research, a.k.a. Service Evaluation. I was a mystery shopper—first to supplement my income in sales which fluctuated wildly. One month I had money coming in, the next, someone changes their mind about a purchase and “poof”—no income! I was looking for a way to supplement what I was earning, while evening out the peaks and valleys, and stumbled upon what I then felt was “The Perfect Work-At-Home Job”.

I am a former Vice President of Marketing for one of the country's top financial corporations who got caught up in a consolidating industry and a merger of giants. For all my hard work, I received the old “terminated due to merger”, a.k.a. layoff, a.k.a. downsized, a.k.a. “thanks for your eight years of service and loyalty, don't let the door hit you in the butt on the way out”.

Since then, while I did make additional attempts to stay in Corporate America, I found myself asking more and more frequently—“why”? Finally, I made up my mind to create a work life that allowed me to work out of a home-based office on my own schedule. My work had to fit my life, not the other way around.

So I became self-employed doing home-based financial services sales. For awhile it seemed like a good choice given my former corporate background except I discovered one thing—while I did well in sales, it just wasn't what I wanted to do solely in life. Well, at least I got the home-based part right, and ultimately it led to self-employed work as a marketing and infopreneur consultant—much more in line with my love of helping others succeed. But it was at the time I did sales myself that I needed something else to do to bring in some “pocket money” to help me during the down times that are a given in the sales field for my bills and living expenses.

So as I said, one day, by surfing the internet, I stumbled upon the concept of Mystery Shopping from a link that led to another link, that led to another link (you know how that goes). Since then, I have found a way to regularly bring in some money without upfront investment whenever I need it, without going back to school and without people calling my former employers for references (not that I have bad ones, but it's nobody's business what I choose to do). I'd found my “Perfect Work-At-Home Job”!

How This Book Will Help You Become The Best Possible Mystery Shopper

Not to take away anything from other mystery shopping books that are out there (I believe you can learn something from everyone), but I found most of them had very little of the “in the trenches” insight that I am going to share with you. Most relied heavily on publishing lists of companies to contact. The players keep changing, and it’s important to get the latest information which you can get for free very easily off the internet, and I will share with you how. Plus, applying to a couple of hundred companies is not, in my opinion, the best way to get mystery shopping work today.

Other books also focused on giving you forms for shops and long lists of what to look for on the shop which is really useless information. Every company—even for the same type of shop—will require you to fill out their own report forms and will have their own way to approach an assignment. There are some freebie tips posted here and there on the internet, but nothing that is this comprehensive that “tells it like it really is” and helps you become a professional mystery shopper who is in high demand getting the higher paying gigs, not just free hamburgers! Finally, the internet has changed this industry, and made becoming a mystery shopper easier than ever before. I’ll take you by the hand and show you how the business works today online.

In this book, you'll learn:

- how to get your first jobs for real without spending your valuable time applying to hundreds of companies;
- how to go through the “middlemen” of the industry to have a better chance of getting assignments on a regular basis (and have them *coming to you*);
- how to stand out from the crowd and keep yourself in high demand;
- what type of assignments are worth your time, which are not (and if they are not, how to make them worthwhile)—includes the new trends in mystery shopping—digital, audio and video shops;
- strategies to get organized;
- how to complete your shops quickly so you can get in more shops and make more money while still “wowing” your clients;
- the 6 must-have pieces of e-mail correspondence you need to create to get jobs and make connections;
- 13 things you need to make it as a mystery shopper;
- 9 steps to performing mystery shops to make sure you do a great job, so you can get another job;
- 10 ways to maximize your mystery shopper income;
- *and so much more that it's time to stop listing everything and get you into the “meat” of this book.*

While I have geared this publication to the beginning mystery shopper, I also feel that shoppers with some experience who aren't making the money they feel they should can also benefit—especially those who do not have experience with complex service category assignments. I believe that one good idea that lands you an assignment, or results in a connection for work that you didn't have before, is always worthwhile. You'll probably earn back more than the cost of this book with your first assignment within days, or maybe even hours, of reading this book! From then on, you'll have "The Perfect Work-At-Home Job" and a way to earn money on your own schedule forever.

And if you haven't purchased this book as part of my *Mystery Shopping 2-Volume Set*, as an experienced shopper, you should definitely get my book written with you in mind called *How-To Finally Make Money As A Mystery Shopper*. It's available 24/7 at <http://www.mysteryshoppercoach.com/books.html>.

Mystery shopping companies generally don't offer true training to their shoppers, and if they do, it's usually specific to that company's needs, and they certainly don't teach you how to maximize your income as a mystery shopper (since you would need to work for many different companies). But I won't leave you hanging after you have finished this book.

You can also subscribe to my free e-zine *Perfect Work-At-Home Job Update* (former National Center For Professional Mystery Shoppers (NCPMS) Winner Best Newsletter) by sending an e-mail to me at mscoach@aweber.com. In my e-zine I answer select questions from my readers and share some of my latest tips and news from the trenches—*the inside scoop that you've been looking for, but no one tells you*. Also be sure to regularly check out my web site Mystery Shopper Coach's Corner at <http://www.mysteryshoppercoach.com> for back issues of my e-zine, tips, resources, special offers and more!

Chapter One: So What Is Mystery Shopping Anyway?

It's not a secret that we live in a fiercely competitive business environment. Competing retailers open up the same type of store across the street from each other all the time. There are areas where there are four gas stations sitting on each of the four corners of a busy intersection. There are tons of places to get a hamburger. K-Mart®, Wal-Mart® and Target will all open within a few blocks of each other. If you are in a city or major suburb, there will be multiple apartment complexes competing for renters. Car dealers tend to all be on the same street. Several major hotels and motels cluster together for your vacation or business stay dollars. The list goes on and on.

What do all these businesses need to do to try and beat out the competition?

Top quality companies who want to be around for many years to come do ongoing market research into their customers' experiences. They want to know if their employees are:

- treating customers well;
- doing their best to increase sales by suggesting additional items or services to purchase;
- following up on prospective customers to keep business going strong;
- keeping their stores or facilities well-maintained;
- looking well-groomed;

- presenting the company and its products or services in the best possible light;
- placing emphasis on the things that the company wants prospective customers to know;
- providing a positive experience that will keep customers coming back and encourage their referrals;
- sufficiently trained to do their jobs well;
- keeping them in compliance with any government regulations or local ordinances;
- maintaining proper business hours;
- answering the phone properly, pleasantly and promptly; and
- truly outstanding, or poor performers that should be replaced,

These are all pieces of information that are pure gold to any business that cares about its future and wants to do its best to stay ahead of the competition.

Now if the business owner or another employee tries to get the real story on what customers are experiencing on a regular basis at different times and on various days, it becomes difficult to do. If you know you are going to be monitored, you will of course be at your best that day (at least you would hope so). Plus, even if a company sent an employee who is not well known from another location, if that same person keeps stopping in, the employee will be tipped off. Another problem is that a company may not have enough employees who are

“anonymous” to work with. Finally, an employee from the same company may be reluctant to rate a fellow employee poorly; may possibly rate a good employee poorly if he/she is having problems with that person; or even fail to tell the company something negative about its operations that may be difficult for “Corporate” to hear. Companies may succeed short-term with internal mystery shopping efforts, but long-term it’s tough.

So how does a company get objective eyes and ears? They turn to specialized companies to handle the research—they may be market research companies who do all types of research studies including field or mystery shopping; private investigator or security firms; and, most frequently, companies dedicated to offering mystery shopping services to clients in need. For the same reason I mentioned above—different, objective people are constantly needed to pull off this research unknown to the employee—mystery shopping and other research companies need a steady stream of new faces and voices to conduct these assignments, jobs or “shops” as they are popularly called. That’s where you and I come in. We are those faces and voices.

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