

## E-Tool #8 Tanning salon Mystery Shopping programs made easy ... and cheap!



There are many excellent reasons to initiate and consistently operate a mystery shopping program (MSP). The biggest is NOT to catch your employees doing something wrong, but to catch them doing something right and to provide the perception, and hopefully reality, of objective feedback on their performance in handling a customer's service. If your intent is to start a MSP to use it as a weapon to intimidate or brow beat employees, then you're probably not the leader they need to work for in the first place.

MSP's, when used properly, are an excellent tool to HELP employees not only see the areas of customer handling that are in need of improvement, but to also reinforce all of the good stuff they do as well. MSP's can work as a measuring post in time to tell you how well any one individual is doing with customer bonding and selling and also as a great way to formulate your plans of who gets trained in what area of salon sales! The most normal outcome of executing a MSP is correcting bad habits some sales personnel may have slipped into without even realizing it.

Lastly, a good reason to do a MSP is to establish a benchmark of the salon's overall progress at consistent sustained service excellence ... not mediocrity ... but excellence!

### **SOME SIMPLE RULES OF MSP'S**

You can hire a service company to do your in-salon shops and that will cost you a few dollars for each shop (Up to \$125 per shop in large metro markets!). These are professional shoppers and they are mostly very good at what

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they do. Some retail operators believe that they may intentionally give low marks to sustain their continued use for potential improvements. There are always some chances that service companies might score low for that purpose but there is still usefulness in their reports by their relativity of one employee to another. Relativity here means that, if they intentionally score everyone low, it still means that there is the value of comparing one employee's score to another's as a "relative" measure of how anyone does with customer visits.

A tanning salon's best choice for a MS (mystery shopper) is the utilization of a few trusted acquaintances of the owner or manager. This person should be new to the salon to avoid possible subjectivity that could creep in from relationships past customers may have had with certain employees. You want every one of your workers judged with the same clear view. Explain thoroughly to your MS person what you're trying to achieve. You want them to think and act like a normal consumer with normal expectations of being handled in a friendly, courteous and helpful manner in salon visits. They should also expect that your staff should be making every effort to:

- Create a rapport with the customer (before they lunge for that most expensive bottle of lotion or tanning package to sell!).
- Build some trust and customer perceived expertise of staff. (Remember, we prefer to "buy from those that we know, like and trust".)
- Gather information about the customer's tanning history and future tanning intentions or special events they want to be tanned for.
- Ask if the customer is or was "getting dark or tan enough?" if they have been a tanner prior to their visit at your salon.
- Conduct a salon tour where tanning equipment can be explained or demonstrated that matches the consumer's tanning plans. (The "tour" may only take place from a pitch pad or hand held pad device).
- Explain the features and benefits of each different level of tanning equipment and take the consumer up a path of potential upgraded equipment selling if they're a new tanner to the salon.

In conjunction with these conversations is the obvious talk about lotions and other products that will help prepare or soften the consumer's skin. At the very least, the consultant should inquire about what lotion, if any, the tanner is using today for possible recommendation to a better lotion. Also, always be certain they have protected eyewear! This should be a mandatory inquiry of all tanners.

After they have been exposed to all options of equipment, products and prices (Sell on a per session basis. That really demonstrates the cost value of a tanning membership!), attempt to close. If that's not possible, take the consumer to a point of some tanning that day (Free if required – remember, we're selling an experience. And that experience will help sell future buys).

Once you have your MS schooled on what to look for (and that will vary somewhat by salon depending on what



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an owner or manager feels is most important to “push”), provide them with an employee shift so each employee can be shopped.

Always give the shopper cash enough to buy a minimum of a month of level one unlimited tanning (plus some money for gas would be in order). That month package will give the shopper 12-15 visits to get to shop each employee at least once. (The shopper does not need to actually tan each visit. They can simply go into the tanning room, turn on the equipment and not get into the bed if they have tanned enough already that week.) Two visits for each employee would be better as anyone can have a bad or GOOD day that might not necessarily represent who they truly are.

Attached to this report is a suggested MS form that you can give to your shopper to start out with. The form and the corresponding points assigned to each criteria are only suggestions. You can certainly change or alter the form and points for your biases of good customer service. The key though, is to emphasize the points that deal with the selling and/or up selling efforts being made by the salon associates.

### **THE CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR MS SHOPPER**

Besides giving your shopper cash for the tanning packages, lotions and gas money, the real payment for their shop efforts is free tanning. For every month of shopping they do for you, give them two free months of unlimited tanning. That is a negligible cost for you but a real value for the information you get.

### **THE MS FOLLOW UP**

For the first series of shops, discuss the results with each employee individually to avoid embarrassment in front of other employees and to foster some opportunity for retraining and performance communication.

With a second series of shops, take the shop reports to your next monthly sales associate meeting. Highlight good as well as some bad areas of performance and stick them up on the wall of where you’re holding your meeting. The effect will be immediate as employees walk into to attend the conference. They’ll look at their own as well as everyone else’s reports and the awareness factor of what they’re doing, and the fact that it’s being watched by others, will be dramatically increased. Then, celebrate individual efforts that went well. Hand out some cash to the top 2 or 3 employees with the best reports. This reinforces the desire to consider what is being said to customers and how it’s being said.

Need more help? Contact John Farr at [www.johnrfarr.com](http://www.johnrfarr.com)

# TANNING SALON MYSTERY SHOPPERS REPORT FORM

Salon Name \_\_\_\_\_

Salon Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time In: \_\_\_\_\_

## TANNING SALON

	Shoppers Criteria (Max of 100 pts.)	
	Max Points	Points Earned
Immediate area in front of salon area free of debris? (Trash, cigarette butts etc)	1	
Were all interior and exterior signage lights working?	1	
Was the area in front and around and on top of the counter clean and neat and free of clutter?	2	
Were there any open food or drink containers on the counter?	2	
Were you smiled and greeted warmly by the first employee you saw?	4	
Did that employee attempt to establish a rapport with you before any sales pitch was started? Example: Did they use a compliment about you or know your first name (if you had been there before)? What did they say or do to help break down any barriers to you?	6	
Did the employee inquire about your tanning intentions or history?	5	
Did they attempt to offer a brief set of suggestions for you for a "tanning plan" including suggestions for lotions or upgrades?	10	
Did they offer a tour and explanation of the various tanning or services equipment and rooms? Did they talk about the savings experienced for tanning as a member? Did they explain the importance of lotions and inquire about any lotion you were intending to use?	15	
Did they attempt to "close" a sale with you? Did they offer you a summary of prices per tanning level and the several options? Did they inquire about your eyewear or did the salon offer that free on the tanning bed? If you did not have eyewear or they did not offer it free did they explain the critical need to use eyewear and try to sell you on buying some?	10	
Were the tanning rooms clean including beds, floor and walls and were all bulbs functioning?	5	
Were the salon lobby and hall floor areas clean, mopped or vacuumed where applicable?	2	
Were the bathroom(s) clean and "inviting"?	5	
Were storage areas with non-working beds, bulbs or other supplies exposed?	1	

## TANNING SALON MYSTERY SHOPPERS REPORT FORM (cont.)

Were the lotions properly displayed? Did they engage you in the need for lotions or inquire about lotions you were going to use?	10	
Did they suggest or inquire about your intentions to use eye wear?	5	
Staff member who waited on you (name/description). Were they wearing a name badge? If not did they volunteer their name?  # of customers in the lobby when you first entered:  # of employees working anywhere in the salon if you know  What was said when you were greeted?		
Did all staff members appear to be productively working? Were there any personal conversations taking place between employees to the detriment of interaction with customers?	2	
Were all staff members dressed professionally and wearing name tags?	5	
Did your sales associate suggest any current promotional offers?	5	
Were you thanked politely and "warmly" before you left?	4	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100</b>	

Narrative:

<b>SALON SCORING GRID:</b>		Salon Cash Incentive
85-100	"Great Job!"	\$50
75-85	Good-very acceptable	\$25
65-75	Not bad	--
65 and below	Time to talk with this employee	--