

A Conversation with a Successful Community Bank

Consumers are increasingly going for online and mobile versus brick-and-mortar when it comes to purchases and services. However, there are some situations when meeting with a person in a physical location is necessary. Banking is one of those competitive services that must offer excellence online and in-person. According to a 2016 Wall Street Journal reader survey on banking preferences, 35% still rank branches as important in their choice of a bank.

Presented by Mystery Shopper Services

We spoke to a Senior Vice President / Retail Banking Administrator at Bank XYZ with twenty-plus years of experience in banking customer service about how to use mystery shopping as a precision tool to ensure you are satisfying customers in-person as well as facilitating better online experiences.

How do you remain competitive when consumers demand easy access and excellent service both online and in-person?

It's still all about relationship. You must adapt your business to meet the ways customers want to be touched. This often means also altering how you deliver customer service. Even with everything going online and mobile, sooner or later people need to come into a bank. We are a community bank, which allows us to be relational with our customers. I use mystery shops actively to help our bank employees understand how to add value to every customer that walks through the door, emails, or calls on the phone.

Do you use mystery shops to increase brick -and- mortar banking and coach employees?

We train our bank employees to really listen to what a customer is saying and do their best to help them, going the extra mile to "own" the customer's problem. Mystery shopping helps them know when their effort paid off as well as identify where they need to improve. Bank XYZ can't fix a problem, if we don't know one exists. Mystery shops help us know what we don't know. Online and mobile banking are areas many people want to utilize, but they can also be confusing. Some of our secret shop questions relate to mobile banking. We want our employees to explain mobile banking benefits, how to utilize the features effectively, and generally walk them through the process. We use mystery shop data to coach to that type of service.

How do management and marketing collaborate to make use of mystery shop data?

Everyone at Bank XYZ is about making customers happy. That happens more frequently when we seek opportunities to learn. Secret shops tell us a lot about how customers see each branch and Bank XYZ as a provider of banking services. Management and marketing work closely with our contacts at Mystery Shopper Services to regularly modify our questions as well as analyze the results. A copy of each shop goes to the branch manager, training officer, and marketing. When we see gaps in our customer service expectations or missed opportunities with customers, we ensure the next training covers those topics. Mystery shops are a reminder for us to stay on top of our business. We must look at how we are doing day after day.

What should every business do to stay in-tune with their customers?

Listening to what customers are saying is vital. Next, you've got to own the issue. Take time to pick up a phone and reach out. Be forward focused with your customer conversations. The shops create enormous value for us because if we don't know how our customers are experiencing the branch employees, we are at risk of losing them to a competitor. Our goal is to provide consistent, top-notch customer service at all locations. We take advantage of secret shops as a powerful tool to help achieve that goal.