

## **Manufacturers Can Evaluate Retail Branding Strategy and Increase Sales with Secret Shop Programs**

*Interview with a market research firm on manufacturer effectiveness with education and incentive programs for sales representatives at the retail level.*

*Presented by Mystery Shopper Services*

### **Introduction**

For several years, we've worked closely with a prominent market research firm that is using mystery shopping to evaluate the share of recommendations and/or conversations various manufacturers of electronics are receiving in retail environments. We asked a senior manager in product leadership to share insights that might be useful to others looking to gauge the effectiveness of their education and incentive programs for sales representatives at the retail level.

### **What got you committed to secret shopping as part of your research for manufacturers?**

*We delved into mystery shopping to help a telecom client track how their product was being presented to customers by retail sales representatives. The data was so powerful and helpful that we developed a syndicated retail tracking methodology that is now offered to a range of consumer electronics manufacturers, including TV makers.*

### **How does secret shop data help manufacturers evaluate in-store sales education and incentive programs?**

*Manufacturers want to ensure their brand makes it into the conversation between sales people and customer. In-store education, coupled with incentive programs, can improve brand sales. When a customer enters a store open to a conversation about brands, makes, models, etc., manufacturer education can help sales people better market their products. How brands are presented in-store by sales people as well as in displays impacts sales.*

*Our secret shop methodology allows manufacturers to evaluate regional managers effectively. Managers can access mystery shop data week-by-week through the Mystery Shopper Services dashboard. They can quickly see what brands are making it through to customers in floor sales conversations as well as specific brand value proposition messages. Mystery shops help us evaluate if the training aimed at the product differentiators, such as price, product superiority, etc. have worked.*

### **Why is secret shopping a uniquely good investment for manufacturers with a limited market research budget?**

*Brands with lots of money place their people in stores and/or incentivize sales people with SWAG, free phones, etc. Some manufacturers do not have the resources to compete on this level. For a relatively small investment, they can evaluate what's working or not at the retail level. This is how mystery shopping can be of great value. It is low cost compared to other approaches.*

### **How is secret shopping the best way to control key factors in market research aimed at understanding what's happening at the retail level between sales and customers?**

*We recommend the use of mystery shopping to electronics manufacturers because it's the only way to control for key factors that may impact recommendations. By controlling for critical variables such as region, time of day, and brands offered by each store, we can set up scenarios that offer very valid and actionable data by maintaining comparability. Manufacturers invest a huge amount of money in retail placement and sales training. They know sales people heavily influence the final buying decision for many consumers. Mystery shopping offers an unbiased snapshot of what's happening on a retail floor. Manufacturers often find that a syndicated secret shop program in retail stores is one of the quickest, least expensive ways, to evaluate brand presentation.*