

# Reset and Revive:

## A Comprehensive Guide to Relaunching Your Mystery Shopping Program for CX Excellence



# Introduction

The 2020s have been challenging for Quick Serve Restaurants (QSR). From pandemic upheaval to supply chain issues and tight labor markets, we know that many brands have had to compromise programs, cut operational initiatives, and reduce budgets.

Returning to business as usual continues to be a challenging journey, and many programs have yet to be restarted. However, did you know that mystery shopping can be crucial to your business?

A mystery shopping program is a powerful market research tool to measure and improve your guest experience. After all, happy customers are the basic building block for any business. Stopping mystery shopping programs has left many restaurant chains falling behind their competition because they lack key operational and CX data needed to help keep guests happy and satisfied, **so they come back.**



# Why is mystery shopping data important for today's restaurants?

Companies that use mystery shopping see an **average growth of over 10%**<sup>1</sup>

**61% of customers** have switched brands due to poor customer service<sup>2</sup>

**32% of all customers** would stop doing business with a brand they loved after **one bad experience**<sup>3</sup>

**90% of Americans** use customer service as a factor in deciding whether or not to do business with a company<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> MSPA

<sup>2</sup> Microsoft - <https://cloudblogs.microsoft.com/dynamics365/bdm/2018/08/30/now-available-the-2018-state-of-global-customer-service-report/>

<sup>3</sup> PwCt - <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/consumer-intelligence-series/future-of-customer-experience.html>

<sup>4</sup> American Express - <https://www.business2community.com/customer-experience/personalization-and-customer-experience-strategies-for-success-02330244>



# Why should you restart your mystery shopping program?

Mystery shopping is a strategic tool that sends anonymous shoppers into restaurants to evaluate a wide range of customer experience aspects. These can include the restaurant's cleanliness, the staff's friendliness and helpfulness, the wait times, food quality, and many other crucial factors that contribute to a customer's overall experience. This process allows brands to obtain critical insights into the guest experience, pinpointing areas that excel and identifying opportunities for enhancement.

Staying ahead in the highly competitive QSR sector requires a deep understanding of customer preferences and operational efficiencies. Mystery shopping data is invaluable in this regard, offering brands a detailed view of how well their locations perform against a set of predefined standards. More importantly, it provides a direct comparison with competitors, revealing where a brand stands in the market and what it takes to lead.

## Mystery Shopping Key Benefits:

Ensure adherence to cleanliness, service quality, and food safety standards.

Identify training needs to boost staff skills in customer interaction and service efficiency.

Align restaurant practices with diners' expectations for a standout dining experience.

Improve the effectiveness and return on investment of marketing and operational strategies in QSR settings across all channels: dine-in, drive-thru, and delivery.





# Do you like what you see but are not sure how to get started?

Restarting a Mystery Shopping program can be an overwhelming task but fear not – we're here to assist!

Since many brands shelved their mystery shopping programs, customer expectations have evolved, and the competitive landscape has shifted. To navigate these changes, we suggest starting with a strategic Discovery Phase. Focus on your brand and a few of your key competitors. This will give you a solid foundation so you can review and benchmark your performance in the market.

## Here are three essential questions to consider when planning the discovery phase.

**What has changed?** Adapt your program to post-pandemic shifts in operations, customer interactions, and business models.

**What remains the same?** Analyze consistent elements for relevant data on your brand against competitors.

**What's essential for our business?** Focus on key aspects of the customer experience for optimized results.



Once you have the answers, you can move on to implementing your Mystery Shopping program. Leave the daunting task of implementing the program to us at Intouch Insight; we are here to provide you with dedicated support every step of the way.

**Make 2024 the year when your customers leave the competitors for your brand.**

# Getting the Most out of Mystery Shopping in 2024

## 1. Enhancing the Guest Experience

Mystery shopping can help businesses evaluate important factors such as speed of service, staff engagement, and dining environment. By including loyalty programs in the ordering process, companies can get valuable insights into guest satisfaction and repeat visits. Mystery shoppers can report on how easy it is to use, how engaging these programs are, and whether they make the dining experience more personalized and rewarding.

## 2. Leveraging Technology for Competitive Advantage

Technology is important for creating memorable dining experiences in today's experience-based economy. Mystery shopping can evaluate how well a restaurant uses technology, such as online ordering, drive-thru technology, and self-service kiosks, to meet modern consumer expectations.

## 3. Supporting Marketing and Brand Initiatives

Mystery shopping can help ensure that all locations maintain consistency in executing marketing campaigns, such as limited-time offers or the launch of new menu items. It provides feedback on how effectively staff members promote these initiatives, if all your locations are complying with brand standards (e.g. promotional signage), and identifies potential supply chain issues that could limit product availability.



## 4. Shopping the Competition

Mystery shopping is a way for restaurants to evaluate their performance against their competitors. They can analyze menu diversity, service quality, speed of service, and pricing to understand how they stack up. This helps businesses identify areas for improvement and innovation, and where they can differentiate themselves to remain the preferred choice for diners in the market.

**Mystery shopping** can help brands improve their **operations and customer experiences** by providing insights from a customer's perspective. It's a unique approach that can help businesses understand their strengths and weaknesses.

# Trends QSR Brands are Talking About



## Automation and Customer Experience

As brands embrace automation, they're not just speeding up service but revolutionizing customer interactions. From AI-driven order-taking to robot-assisted kitchens, these innovations aim to enhance efficiency and accuracy. For instance, Domino's use of autonomous delivery vehicles showcases the industry's move towards integrating cutting-edge technology to meet consumer demands for convenience. Mystery shopping can evaluate how these automated services impact customer satisfaction and operational efficiency, providing insights into areas for further enhancement.

## Personalization through Technology

The push for personalized dining experiences is leading restaurants to adopt technologies that tailor the service to individual customer preferences. McDonald's, for example, has been experimenting with digital menu boards that change offerings based on factors like weather and time of day, aiming to personalize the customer experience further. Mystery shoppers can assess the effectiveness of these personalized experiences in meeting customer expectations and encouraging repeat visits.







## Evolving with Electric Vehicles (EVs)

Restaurants are integrating charging stations to cater to Electric Vehicle drivers. Starbucks collaborated with Volvo and ChargePoint to install charging stations along a major route from Denver to Seattle, promoting environmental stewardship. Mystery shopping can evaluate the functionality of these stations and their impact on customer dwell time and satisfaction. This feedback can help brands refine their approach to accommodate EV drivers and enhance the customer experience.

## Health and Wellness Trends

The increasing consumer focus on health and wellness is prompting QSRs to introduce healthier menu options. Smoothie King's growth reflects this trend, with its offerings catering to health-conscious consumers looking for nutritious alternatives. Mystery shopping can assess the appeal of these healthier options and their effect on customer perceptions of the brand.



By leveraging mystery shopping to explore these trends, QSR brands can gain valuable insights into how well they are adapting to evolving market dynamics and consumer preferences, enabling them to refine their strategies and stay competitive.

# Conclusion

The competition between restaurant chains continues to heat up! Restarting mystery shopping programs is, therefore, imperative for brands seeking to thrive in the current landscape.

Restarting your [mystery shopping program](#) will allow you to:

- Identify where your locations are failing to meet brand standards,
- See how your competitors are performing compared to your locations,
- Take strategic action to improve key aspects of your locations' performance,
- Track the impact of these initiatives over time.

Implementing a strong mystery shopping program requires careful planning, execution, and analysis. Partnering with an experienced mystery shopping provider can streamline the process and ensure the program's success. With a comprehensive understanding of your customers' experiences, you can make informed decisions that enhance your business's reputation, drive growth, and exceed customer expectations.

At Intouch Insight, we specialize in helping multi-location restaurant chains run mystery shopping programs based on the latest industry best practices. Our team of experts has over 40 years of experience and can guide you through the process of restarting your program. We offer a suite of solutions that will give you instant access to all your data and a vast network of shoppers. Intouch Insight is the most technologically advanced mystery shopping provider in North America, specializing in delivering deep insight to help our clients drive immediate and impactful action.

Our goal is to help you achieve operational excellence so you can exceed customer expectations, strengthen your brand reputation, and improve financial performance

## Let's get to work!

Contact us today to discuss how we can help you reclaim your edge.

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