

“The balance sheet of service”

It would be ridiculous to imagine a modern hospitality business not counting revenue or costs of operating. But regularly, they overlook measuring the service level offered to customers. The use of an independent Mystery customer programme within a business can provide the information that completes the picture. Is service friendly and efficient? Are sales opportunities missed? Is training effective?

Hospitality Assured from the H.C.I.M.A, like all business excellence and QM programmes requires that vital business criteria be measured independently. Allowing management to take actions based upon measured criteria rather than their own perceptions. It adds to management’s own observations throughout the business, which may or may not be a true reflection of the customer experience. E.G. Go into any kitchen when the Manager is dining and their order will have been identified to the chef. Why?

The benefit of a bespoke mystery customer programme is that management has a tool to measure service performance, sales effort, or as a measurement for performance related incentives for senior staff. Programmes developed should assess on a regular basis to provide management with independent, valuable information that they can utilise with their teams to improve service. However, mystery customer programmes must guard against being critically biased, they must also highlight excellence in service. Most clients are surprised by how many opportunities there are to recognise and thank staff members who exceed the standard level of service.

Mystery customer programmes are now used within Business intelligence in many industries from retailing and banking to car showrooms, and of course call centres. Hotel companies such as multiple award-winning group Red Carnation Hotels who have 10 luxury properties in 4 countries have used mystery guests programmes for 7 years and primarily use them in maintaining excellence in service. The reports also focus training plans, measure sales effectiveness and acts as one of the indicators for management incentive plans. As Jonathon Raggett M.D of Red Carnation commented “If you don’t have some form of measurement how do you know what direction is forward? By using mystery guest reports properly, we have seen consistent and significant leaps in service.”

Graham Hardiman
Managing Partner of The Mystery Partnership
Tel 0870 9007073
Graham.Hardiman@the-mystery-partnership.co.uk