

# Mystery Shopper Program Reinitiated

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In an effort to get a snapshot of how Durham's customer service is viewed from the visitor perspective, DCVB is reinitiating its mystery shopper program. DCVB was one of the first bureaus in the early 90's, to use this technique long favored by banks and retail stores.

Mystery shoppers frequent a variety of businesses such as hotels, restaurants, retail establishments and taxicabs, then provide written feedback on the experience. They visit in person and by phone, and it's difficult to know when you are talking to one because they look and sound like the guests with whom we communicate every day.

The purpose of the program is to catch people doing things right and to acknowledge it on the spot, but to also gather information that will guide programs to improve the overall level of service. Better customer service leads to satisfied guests and repeat visitation. It is hoped that the program will also shed some light on branding issues and help identify ways to recoup the \$275 million spent by Durham visitors each year in neighboring communities.

The most-targeted organization on the list of "mystery shops"? DCVB itself. Mystery shopper programs provide one of the best methods to evaluate employees' knowledge, responsiveness and customer-service orientation.