

## **Year-Round Mystery Shopping Program Ensures Public Transportation Service Standards Are Met**



### **Background and Client Objectives**

A public transportation provider was looking to implement performance monitoring systems to ensure passengers found their services accessible, and their employees dependable and friendly. They operated fixed-route busses, paratransit vans, and transportation centers, all with passenger-facing employees—they wanted to ensure the information and services these employees provided—whether as drivers, as station attendants, or phone operators/dispatchers— was timely, accurate, and reliable.

They came to TrendSource hoping to develop a standing program that would ensure these standards were met year-round.

### **Program Development and Methodology**

TrendSource knew that a combination of various mystery shopping methodologies would offer the clearest and most efficient window into employee’s passenger-facing behavior.

After working with the client to document the particular performance standards they hoped to measure, TrendSource developed an in-field questionnaire and began dispatching Field Agents to perform various types of mystery shops, each targeting employees working in different capacities within the transportation company.

For fixed-route and paratransit drivers, TrendSource Field Agents posed as typical bus riders, reporting on the driver’s on-time performance, compliance with various service standards (such as clearly announcing each stop), and other criteria determined by TrendSource and the client. Agents also conducted phone mystery shops to ensure calls were answered in a timely, friendly, and accurate manner, as well as in-person mystery shops for employees working in public transportation stations.

### **Results and Analysis**

TrendSource developed a rapid reporting website for the client, meaning the results for each and every mystery shop were available within 72 hours. This allowed the client to take quick corrective action in cases in which company standards were not met, and also offered a reliable metric with which to evaluate employee performance.

These mystery shop provided the client boots on the ground analysis and gave them vast quantities of data to help shape future programs and initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

Oftentimes, market research in general and mystery shopping in particular are required during critical moments to provide snapshots of current situations, suggest future initiatives, and, ultimately to validate initiatives.

In this case, however, the client required a long-standing mystery shopping program to regularly evaluate its employees year-round, keeping service standards fresh in employees' minds and offering data about their adherence to these standards.