

## Mystery Shopping Results in Extraordinary Increase in Car Sales

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[PRLEAP.COM](http://PRLEAP.COM) Performance in People, [www.performanceinpeople.co.uk](http://www.performanceinpeople.co.uk), is one of the UK's leading specialists at measuring and improving customer service that drive increased sales within the automotive industry. Performance in People specialise in video mystery shopping, where an assessor (posing as a prospective customer) enters a dealership wearing a hidden video camera and captures the complete customer journey on DVD (with accompanying report). The entire interaction is then used to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience and maximise sales techniques. The demand for this kind of mystery shopping service is now greater than ever within the automotive sector. This is primarily because it will deliver verifiable information about the weaknesses that exist across a manufacturer's dealership network and when used in structured way, the video footage can create real and sustainable changes in the way sales people deal with customers.

With just 7% of human communication conveyed by the words used, 38% by how those words are said and 55% by body language, video mystery shopping is the core element in monitoring, measuring and evaluating experiences against prescribed standards or promises. By using the video mystery shopping material it allows staff to review their own performance and that of their colleagues, therefore allowing an organisation to create a much deeper recognition and understanding of customer service performance, then creating sustainable changes in staff behaviour.

Mike Dalloz, Managing Director, Performance in People:

'We understand that the customer service and sales performance skills of a manufacturer's dealers and their representatives are not only the key to maximizing sales opportunities, but also the primary factor in establishing the customer's perception of service standards. Mystery shopping has been used to measure customer service for over 50 years. We believe that having the opportunity to now see and hear the experiences of customers is an incredibly powerful way to recognize areas for improving sales and customer service delivery. We have not found any other service that has such a profound effect on changing staff behavior.'

It is believed that the demand is a result of the intense competition between car manufacturers and dealerships. The automotive industry is looking to increase sales in whatever way possible and are realising the importance of the optimal customer experience, which can result in fast direct sales. In some cases a properly implemented Customer Relationship Management program can lead to a 25% increase in sales.\*

Performance in People work in partnership with leading global manufacturers and dealership groups including the likes of Honda, Ford, BMW, Mitsubishi and Volvo.

As well as providing sales-based mystery shopping services including new and used car video mystery shopping visits, recorded telephone calls and email enquiries, Performance in People also conduct full vehicle service audits, where a vehicle with predefined faults is taken into



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dealership and a full customer service and technical audit is conducted on fault rectification. Many manufacturers are now conducting this exercise following disturbing reports from trading standards on the quality franchised dealership servicing standards.

As well as the mystery shopping service, Performance in People provides a complete solutions package including needs analyses, in-house training and development, business coaching, consultancy services, customer research, audits, assessments, certification reviews and corporate video production. Performance in People work right across the automotive sector as well as Retail, Financial Services and Public Services sectors.

Performance in People strives to improve customer service, sales and staff performance by utilising the opinions and participation of real life consumers. By being committed to implementing their solutions within their own organisation, Performance in People continue to ensure that their clients have the tools to transform their own businesses.

Notes to Editor:

\*Statistics gained from PricewaterhouseCoopers

\*\* Case study – Honda:

Before moving to Performance In People in 2003, Honda had worked with a number of mystery shopping providers, but felt that Performance in People were the leaders in delivering improved customer service and increased sales.

Paul Hunter, Development Standards Manager at Honda, UK, had the following to say:

Q. "Tell us about your role?"

A. Paul Hunter - I look after everything in the showrooms; mystery shopping, sales management, looking after the provision of customer demonstration cars and making sure that standards, which are a key part of our relationship with our distributors, is maintained fully.

Q. "What problems did you have with your previous mystery shopping programme?"

A. Paul Hunter - One of the key problems that we had was that we had been sending out mystery shopping results for a number of quarters and were not seeing any consequence, in terms of changed customer handling or changed sales process. So what we are really looking for is people who can help us deliver change in the selling process. This is already starting to be delivered through the PiP programme.

Q. "What improvements has Honda already seen?"

A. Paul Hunter - The kind of thing that we are looking for is to make sure that customers are identified, that their details are captured and obtained, that people are shown the car properly, that they are invited to take a test drive, that that invitation is clear and does actually make sure that the momentum in the sale is continued, that staff demonstrate the car properly and that they follow up enquiries. Follow up is obviously a key factor as people do more internet shopping, etc. and are more likely to walk away and take time to make a decision.

Q. "What is the data telling you so far?"

A. Paul Hunter - The data tells us that, in terms of identification of the customer, there are some improvements. Certainly in terms of qualifying what the customer wants, presenting the right features and the right car, those things are happening. We are seeing an increase in the number of customers who are closed on a test drive appointment.

Q. "What changes have you seen?"

A. Paul Hunter - The major change from what we had before, to have wanted to achieve, with new suppliers and how we do that between us is following through the DVD's to make sure that

the Area Manager and the Dealer Principal recognise the things that need to be done within the dealership, not just on the individual featured on the tape. So, we have had a lot of conversations and a lot of coaching and training on how to deliver change within the whole business, based on that one mystery shop tape.

Q. "How have retailers responded?"

A. Paul Hunter - There was a fairly jaundiced view amongst some people about "Here's another mystery shop tape" and just using it for negative purposes to criticise the individual, whereas, what we have got now is recognition that, with the right discipline of coaching and explanation and discussion, we can get a positive benefit; not just for the featured salesperson, but also for the dealership as a whole. We are really pleased with the early signs.

Q. "How will the programme progress?"

A. Paul Hunter - In terms of development, the things we are looking at next are integrating mystery shopping with our lead management system. We are lucky that we receive an ever increasing number of leads, through our own internet facilities for example and through our own national call centre, and those leads go through to the network. What we will be looking at is ways of making sure that those leads are followed up properly, because we know that they are very serious prospects that do deserve active following up. That's the next step

Q. "So why Performance In People?"

A. Paul Hunter - Both the briefing at the front end of the process and the de-briefing and coaching sessions at the back, the training if you like and so forth, those are areas that I identified where there was a significant difference between suppliers and particularly with the coaching and the following through. To deliver change, that was an area where Performance In People was stronger.

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