

Age Compliance Mystery Shopping

Protect Your Business with Proactive Verification

Convenience stores, grocery stores, bars, restaurants and cannabis shops all sell age-restricted products. As such, they must adhere to strict legal guidelines to ensure they are not selling to underage customers.

The sale of tobacco and vaping products, alcohol, lottery tickets, cannabis and smoking accessories all require employees to verify the age of their customers. Failure to comply with age verification can result in selling age-restricted products to a person under the minimum legal age. This can lead to serious consequences, including hefty fines, license revocation, and reputational damage.



Mystery Shopping: A Proactive Solution for Age Compliance

Mystery shopping is an effective tool for assessing whether businesses are consistently following age-compliance protocols. Mystery shoppers can anonymously evaluate whether employees are asking for proper ID, allowing businesses to gain valuable insights into their day-to-day operations.

By using mystery shopping for age compliance, businesses take a proactive approach to identifying potential compliance gaps before they lead to serious legal repercussions. Whether it's testing transactions at a convenience store, restaurant, or cannabis shop, mystery shoppers simulate real customer interactions and assess if employees are following the required protocols.

Mystery shopping doesn't just test compliance—it provides businesses with the tools they need to train their employees, reinforce best practices, and safeguard against the consequences of non-compliance.

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The Age Compliance Mystery Shop Process

Age compliance mystery shops are designed to see if the employees are doing the right thing when faced with a customer who could be underage. Here's how it works: a mystery shopper walks into the establishment and attempts to make a purchase—maybe they are trying to buy rolling paper at a tobacco or cannabis shop, or they are ordering a beer at a bar.

The mystery shopper will be of legal age—such as a 19-year-old shopper in Canada—but they will appear young enough to raise questions about their eligibility to make a purchase.

Here's the key moment: **Will the employee ask for ID?**

The mystery shopper will assess if the employee follows proper protocol and requests identification. If asked for ID, the mystery shopper will usually respond that they do not have their ID on them.

If the employee refuses to make the sale, the mystery shopper will leave, noting that the employee did exactly what they should have.

If the employee completes the sale without getting proof of age, the mystery shopper will go through the transaction just like any other customer would and document what happened.

This process gives you a clear picture of how your team handles compliance in real-time, allowing you to catch and fix any potential gaps before they become a bigger problem.

Elevate your Age Compliance Mystery Shop Program

While age compliance mystery shopping primarily focuses on whether employees ask for ID, there are other factors that contribute to a thorough evaluation of your business's compliance practices. These additional checks complement the core objective of your mystery shopping program while ensuring your business is fully aligned with legal requirements and best practices.

Evaluation of the Transaction Experience

Even when employees are diligent about asking for ID, how they handle the interaction can impact the overall customer experience. Mystery shoppers can assess whether the employees request ID politely and maintain a respectful tone throughout the transaction. This not only helps with compliance but also ensures that customers leave with a positive impression of your brand, regardless of the outcome of the sale.



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Verification of Age-Restricted Signage

Mystery shoppers can verify whether age-restricted signs are clearly displayed at key locations like the entrance, at the point of sale, or near age-restricted products. Proper signage informs customers of your policies and reinforces the legal obligation to verify age before completing the sale. Ensuring this visibility shows your commitment to compliance and makes it easier for employees to enforce ID checks.

On-the-Spot Rewards

Some businesses take a step further by offering on-the-spot rewards to employees who follow proper ID-checking protocol. Mystery shoppers can reveal their identity after the transaction (or refusal of sale) and provide instant recognition for employees who did their job correctly. Whether it is a small reward in the form of a gift card, or positive feedback in the form of a certificate, this can motivate employees to remain vigilant about age compliance.

It's a great way to encourage compliance culture while also improving employee engagement.

Check for Age Compliance in the Digital World

With the rise of online shopping for age-restricted products, it is important to ensure compliance extends beyond physical stores. Mystery shoppers can test your e-commerce platform to check whether the proper age-verification steps are in place during the purchase process. This could involve age gates, ID verification at checkout, or checking for age confirmation upon delivery. Ensuring these processes are effective online is just as crucial as in-store compliance, helping your business avoid penalties while expanding into digital sales.

Don't leave compliance to chance.

Let's create a proactive mystery shopping program that fits your needs, strengthens your brand, and ensures your business stays protected.



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