

# Shhhh — it's a secret

“The customer is always right.” In retail, this phrase is viewed as the epitome of customer service. Keeping customers happy is what keeps them coming back to your store again and again. But that is getting to be more difficult these days.

Consumers have high demands when it comes to convenience and purchases. They value their hard-earned money and don't want to be hassled to locate items or prices in a store. So how do retailers learn about their customer base without polling everyone who walks in the door?

They hire mystery, or secret, shoppers.

Mystery shoppers are people local to a geographic area who earn money by shopping at different stores in order to gain knowledge about how the store is managed, how well customers are treated by employees, how convenient it is to locate items, how clean the store is and other details that provide a good shopping experience for consumers.

Creek Convenience Store Wetumpka (CCSW) always seeks to give its customers the best and uses mystery shoppers three times per year.

“Quality of service is key in any business, and we strive to implement practices that reflect exceptional customer service,” Tribal member and General Manager Ellis Martin said. **The past three scores came in at an average of 91.5 percent satisfaction rates.**

Employees and managers never know when mystery shoppers are present, but the value of what is learned from them helps the business gain insight in how to improve the store. Martin said the incentive of having this information is to boost productivity and increase customer satisfaction.

“I think about when I go to a store, what makes me happy or less satisfied when I leave,” he said. “Is it the ease of access to what I'm looking for? Is it how well an employee handled a question I have? Can I even find an employee to help me look for something? If I wouldn't be happy shopping here, how can I expect others to be?”

According to [secretshopper.com](http://secretshopper.com), managers get an honest, in-depth look at the business through the eyes of its customers. Secret shoppers are good at pretending. They engage employees in conversation, as a customer, and make note of what is said and done. They usually come back repeatedly, with a different or similar purpose each time.

“It really is a cool way to know what people think of your business,” Martin said.



# CCS WETUMPKA

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