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## **Not a pleasant story - about Mystery Shopping Scam**

US-based Service Excellence Group has become the victim of a mystery shopping scam. The scam is targeting unsuspecting consumers for mystery shopping projects. The scam artists have used Service Excellence' name in an attempt to trick consumers into disclosing their personal information in exchange for high paying "mystery shops". These 'scammers' have posted multiple advertisements on on-line job boards. They are adept at making these advertisements seem real. They have stolen the identity of Service Excellence Group company website and are claiming to be employees of the company.

### **Tips to Avoid Mystery Shopping Scams**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) provides guidance and tips to help individuals to avoid becoming victims of employment schemes associated with mystery shopping: [www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/e-scams](http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/e-scams). Here are precautionary tips for consideration:

- Be cautious of any job posting claiming to send you large sums of money for a mystery shopping assignment.
- Avoid completing any forms contained in e-mail messages that ask for personal information. A reputable mystery shopping firm will capture your contact information via a company platform.
- Always review the link in the e-mail to the link you are actually directed to and determine if they match and if they lead you to a legitimate website. If the link does link you to a legitimate website, send the company an email to confirm the legitimacy of the opportunity.
- Be cautious of any mystery shopping opportunities that involve transferring funds via Western Union.
- Reputable mystery shopping companies will not charge an application fee.
- No legitimate mystery shopper program will send payment in advance and ask the mystery shopper to send a portion of it back.
- Steer clear of any company asking you to accept payment in advance and advise you to send a portion of the payment to another mystery shopper.

There are many well established and reputable mystery shopping companies with legitimate mystery shopping opportunities for interested consumers. For information on how to get started as a mystery shopper or to find legitimate mystery shopping opportunities, visit The Mystery Shopping Providers Association's (MSPA) website.