

MYSTERY SHOPPING SCAM ALERT



SCAMMERS ARE CONTACTING UNSUSPECTING INDIVIDUALS VIA LINKEDIN, FACEBOOK, MAIL, EMAIL, PHONE CALLS AND TEXT MESSAGES PRESENTING THEMSELVES AS NEVADA LICENSED MYSTERY SHOPPING COMPANIES. THESE SCAMMERS ARE VERY CONVINCING, SENDING WHAT APPEAR TO BE LEGITIMATE BANK CHECKS FOR THE VICTIM TO DEPOSIT INTO THEIR PERSONAL BANK ACCOUNT. THE VICTIM IS THEN ASKED TO “SHOP” OR “CONDUCT A SURVEY” FOR LOCAL STORES SUCH AS WAL-MART OR APPLE, PURCHASE GIFT CARDS AND SEND THE GIFT CARDS TO THEM.

FOR THOSE IN THE US PLEASE REPORT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH A SCAMMER TO THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ([FTC](#)). FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE SCAMS AND HOW LEGITIMATE MYSTERY SHOPPING COMPANIES ARE BEING TARGETED PLEASE VISIT [MSPA AMERICAS](#) REPORT A SCAM PAGE.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS LICENSING BOARD ALERT

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www.pilb.nv.gov



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Consumer Information

consumer.ftc.gov

FTC: The bottom-line on fake checks scams

February 10, 2020

by Colleen Tressler

Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

If someone you don't know sends you a check and asks for money back, that's a scam.

Fake checks (<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-spot-avoid-and-report-fake-check-scams>) drive many types of scams — like those involving phony job and income opportunities, online classified ad sales, and others. In a fake check scam, a person you don't know asks you to deposit a check — sometimes for several thousand dollars and usually for more than you are owed — and send some of the money back, often by wire transfers or gift cards, to them or another person. The scammers always have a good story to explain the overpayment. They might say they're stuck out of the country, they need you to cover taxes or fees, you'll need to buy supplies, or something else.



<http://youtu.be/c7PEPW09b58>



<https://youtu.be/HfHI6ToZff4>

By law, banks have to make deposited funds available quickly — you'll usually see the money in your account within a day or two. But it may take weeks for your bank to learn the check was bad. By that time, the scammer has the money you sent, and you're stuck paying the bank back.

Over the last several years, the number of fake check scams reported to the FTC has steadily increased, and so have the dollars lost. In its most recent Data Spotlight, [Don't bank on a "cleared" check](#)

(<http://ftc.gov/news-events/blogs/data-spotlight/2020/02/fakechecks>), the FTC reports that consumers lost more than \$28 million to fake check scams in 2019 alone. The median loss reported was \$1,988. That's more than six times the median loss on all frauds tracked by the FTC. What's more, reports about fake check scams are up by about 65% over 2015 levels. The FTC found that younger people are hit especially hard. In 2019, people in their twenties were more than twice as likely as people 30 and older to report losing money to a fake check scam.

Want to learn more? Visit ftc.gov/fakechecks (<http://ftc.gov/fakechecks>).

FAKE CHECK SCAMS

Did someone send you a check and ask you to send some money back?

THAT'S A SCAM.

MAYBE:

- You win a prize and are told to send back taxes and fees.
- You get paid as a "secret shopper" and are told to wire back money.
- You sold an item online and the buyer overpays.

IN ALL CASES:

- You get a check.
- They ask you to send back money.

THAT'S A SCAM.

IF IT'S A FAKE CHECK, WHY IS MONEY IN YOUR ACCOUNT?

Banks have to make deposited funds available within days. It's the law. But recovering a fake check can take weeks. By then, the scammer has your money. And you have to repay the bank. Remember -- just because the check has "cleared" does not mean it is good.

WHAT TO DO:

- Be wary. Talk to someone you trust and contact your bank before you act.
- Never take a check for more than your selling price.
- Selling online? Consider using an escrow or online payment service.
- Never send money back to someone who sent you a check.
- Spot this scam? Tell the Federal Trade Commission: ftc.gov/complaint



ftc.gov/ScamAlerts



aba.com/Consumers

(<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/fake-check-scams-infographic>).

Blog Topics: [Jobs & Making Money](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/jobs-%26-making-money) (<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/jobs-%26-making-money>).

REPORT A SCAM

(<https://bit.ly/2UpdE3r>) Did you hear? Our very own MSPA Americas President, Sam Hersey was on The Steve Warneke Radio Show discussing how to avoid the latest mystery shopping scams. Check it out here (<https://bit.ly/2UpdE3r>) by listening to the portion from 18:20 to 25:08.

Scams are common in our industry and new twists on the classic check scam are developed every day. Scammers often operate by pretending to be MSPA Americas or our member companies and contact the general public by email, telephone, job boards or social media sites. They use fake names and titles to entice people to receive a check in the mail, conduct a false assignment, and then wire money or send items to a specified address. Regardless of the variations of this classic scam, the checks will bounce and the victim is left footing the full bill and the bank fees associated with it.

For those in the US, please report your experience with a scammer to the FTC here (<https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/#crnt&panel1-1>). If you're located in Canada, please contact the Canadian Anti-Fraud at 1-888-495-8501.

Though we cannot stop every scam or the people behind them, we can continue to educate the public about this issue. You may have seen a recent news story (<https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/jacksonville-woman-warns-of-walmart-secret-shopper-scam/754632642>) or legal filing (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdpa/pr/pittsburgh-man-charged-mystery-shopper-scam>) on the matter too. We are always so appreciative of these! We will share scams with the membership as they are known to us. If you have one to share, please email mspa@hqtrs.com (<mailto:mspa@hqtrs.com?subject=Report%20A%20Scam>) and we will share them here.

Member Companies: using this guide is a great way to start fighting back! **Scam Response Guide** (/CMS/Resources/internet-scam-response-guide.pdf)

As a reminder, MSPA Americas (or any of the regions throughout the globe) do not solicit mystery shoppers. The most frequent question we receive is if MSPA is hiring and if a variety of names are employed by us. The answer is always no. Opportunities only come from MSPA Service Provider Companies (<https://mspa-americas.org/what-is-mspa/search>) and after you register with them or they find you through the MSPA Evaluator Database.

February 2020

- If you receive a message stating "INTELLISHOP® is accepting applications for qualified and reliable agents for Walmart shopping survey. The assignment will pay \$500 per duty. Click on the link for more information: <https://bit.ly/363p4MW>" please do not follow through. This is a scam and could result in you losing money.
- Helion Research notified us of a scam involving their company's name. Text messages and emails are being received from David Goedel, Survey Coordinator, asking for people to work for them. This is a scam and can be found on CareerBuilder as well.

January 2020

- Mailers are going out with opportunities from Donald Price with MSPA information on it. We do not hire mystery shoppers and do not have a Donald Price on our team. Please consider this a scam.
- IntelliShop let us know about another scam. A scammer is contacting people through LinkedIn to sign up to be a mystery shopper, with a link to fill out this registration form (/CMS/Resources/scams/intellishopregistrationform.pdf). The scammers are using real employee names but fake employee email addresses.

December 2019



- CSE Inc. let us know about check scam using Customer Service Experts as the MSPA. Rest assured that is a scam and if you have questions, please contact CSE directly.
- Alta260 Research is the victim of a scam. " I just received a call from a young lady who had \$7000 stole from her and this individual that is scamming them is using our website and has reconfigured it I am sending the URL below: <https://retailsresearch.com/> (<https://retailsresearch.com/>) "
- WeCheck is also a victim of a scam. Two websites have been shut down already but no luck on shutting down the scammers. Please remember that no companies will send you a check prior to shopping and be sure to check the URLs of websites you visit. When it doubt, access the company through the MSPA Americas website.

November 2019

- If you receive a message with the subject line: NEEDED | Jobs~Assignment's Available from premium.job@null.net, please delete immediately. The message includes answering personal questions and is most certainly a scam. "Hello, We are a company that conducts surveys and evaluate with 'Secret~Shopper'. * You will be taught how to run the task and earn your income. * You will get training information and instructions via e-mail. * You must complete the task well so that your income is high (Incentive is \$290) / assignments. To get more information and instructions from us, reply to this e-mail with the following data to => " premium.job@null.net " Your response would be greatly appreciated, thanks... Sincerely. Wanda C. Hill 2019 MS-Agency, LLC

October 2019

- BEWARE of emails from <mailto:martin.turner@info-elitexcs.com>] - Martin Turner, Recruiting dept, Mystery Shopping, Elite CX Solutions: This is a SCAM. They are using our logo and even M Turner! Please do NOT respond to these emails. They are Walmart Gift Card enticements. We believe this has started from a hacked LinkedIn account.
- IntelliShop has recently been made aware that some scammers have purchased the website domain www.intelli-shopp.com and are pretending to be employees from IntelliShop to scam people. Please let everyone know that if they receive an email from www.intelli-shopp.com with 2 "p's" instead of just one, it is actually a scam.
- The Consumer Insight is the victim of a scam. The message states: "I just received a letter from your company along with a check from capital one bank in the amount of \$2,899.00. In the memo; Portalatin Hairston. This is for apple store get 2 gift cards 1 for \$1500 & \$1000. Once I'm don't they want me to scratch/peel the back and take a picture & send it to, (678)210-9866. It says don't get rid of the gift cards cause they will be used for forthcoming assignments." The recipient was warned NOT to cash the check, to contact their local law enforcement and the local postmaster. Please do not fall for this!
- Intelli-Shop is a victim of scammers. Messages (text and email) are being sent from Brian Caldwell asking for contact information in exchange for \$300 per shop.
- BestMark has been in contact with local, state and federal law enforcement to report any incidents that we've been made aware of and ask that if you are contacted by anyone you feel may be illegally representing themselves as a representative of BestMark, that you contact The Federal Trade Commission Complaint Submission link at www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov. We would also encourage you to contact your local authorities, the FBI, and the Federal Trade Commission to report any potential fraud. If you have additional questions for BestMark please call 952-922-3890.
- Another scammer is now pretending to be the COO of IntelliShop and "recruit shoppers" through LinkedIn. He's telling potential shoppers that he'll pay them \$300.00 per assignment, but as a part of the onboarding process, he'll need their credit card information. IntelliShop would never ask for someone's credit card information to become a mystery shopper. If you could please add this to your "Report a Scam" page on your website, that would be great.

May 2019

- There is a scam attempt that is using Market Force and Mystery Shoppers Inc. names in a solicitation email. If you need to contact the companies directly, do so through the MSPA Service Provider Search.
- Coast to Coast Scheduling Services needs your help! They are currently being targeted by scam artists. These people are sending emails from email addresses that look at first like CTCSS but are not! Please beware! They are asking for shoppers to purchase CVS cards and fill out an email survey. This is not Coast to Coast. If you will look at the reply email addresses, they have 3 s' (CTCSSS) or are not a similar domain at all. Please spread the word so we can stop these scam artists from giving our wonderful industry a bad name!

April 2019

- A hometown paper shared how KSS International and IntelliShop are victims of a scam. Check it out here (<http://www.kittanningpaper.com/2019/05/02/local-police-chiefs-warn-of-scams/77004>).
- IntelliShop has been the victim of a scam promising \$500 per assignment. The scammers promise shops with the USPS and Wal-Mart. Please be on the watch and don't fall for it!
- Bestmark has been the victim of an advertising scam. The scammers place ads in local newspapers without using the Bestmark name or logo but instead the company's name at a Gmail address. Then they bill back to Bestmark for the postings.

March 2019

- From ARC: Earlier this week, a gentleman showed up at our place of business looking for reimbursement for gift cards purchased at Walmart. He found the job on indeed.com under the company name of MSPA ARC. We directed him to the police department.

February 2019

- MSPA was notified of a scam that involves a past ShopperFest logo and as well as the name of member company Secret Shopper. This scam is managed through Time Code Outsourcing.
- This scam was reported by Insight You Can Use: "We are looking for people to apply for positions in our team as a secret customer. How it works: Register and if you are selected, you will receive \$150 for shopping at the shops, affiliates or at competition stores. Your review will make a difference in providing better services and products."

January 2019

- "I was contacted by a company called, ExtraPack Shoppers (<https://mspa-americas.org/CMS/Resources/scams/extrapack.pdf>), and offered a job as a mystery shopper. I went to their website and they claim to be a member of your organization. I did a search for them and netted no results of a company by that name in your membership. Further, I called the office building they are listing as their home base and they have no companies in their building by that name. They sent me a cashier's check to deposit in my bank account and told me I would earn \$200 for completing a task. Does this seem like a scam? They have contacted me via text message using the number, 833-545-5168." ExtraPack Shoppers is NOT a member of MSPA Americas.
- As reported by The Consumer Insight: The scammers are contacting college students via email; at least one of the attempted scams represented themselves as a college "Job Placement & Student Services Office", offering "Part-Time Job Opportunities" and is directing them to the following website: consumerinsight.us, which is a spoof of the Sights On Service website.

December 2018

- The MSPA Americas and other MSPA regions are often used as a veil for scammers however this most recent one (/CMS/Resources/scams/img_20181030_162226.jpg) also targets the overarching MSPA Global, the governing board of MSPA. It is another typical check scam (/CMS/Resources/scams/img_20181030_162247.jpg) using the MSPA Global name to seem legitimate.

November 2018

- A scammer has targeted MSPA Member Company Intouch Insight. Their trademarked logo has been used to send letters of fake Mystery Shopping assignments that are accompanied by cashier's checks totaling over \$2000. The fake assignments vary from having to purchase different money orders from Walmart, Apple store gift cards or Reloadit gift cards. One also asks to purchase a personal money order made out to the American Cancer Society.

October 2018

- One of our evaluator members recently contacted us about a cashier's check for \$2,871 that was received allegedly from Service Sense Inc. Though ServiceSense is a member, this scammer who goes by "Dr. Scott Dean" and was texting from (856) 818-3926, was posing as an employee.
- Though check scams are popular, there is also a scam that involves purchasing gift cards and sending a photo with information for the scammer to use the funds. Check out this one (</CMS/Resources/scams/scammspaimg.jpeg>) we uncovered that uses MSPA logos to make it seem more legit.

August 2018

- Recent scamming is specifically targeting college students.

July 2018

- A scammer imitating member company Reality Based Group is also sending out a letter accompanying a fake check.
- Stephanie Couture, President of Confirm With Us, is being impersonated by a scammer sending checks that seem to come from her. Interestingly the letters that accompany the checks are referencing another member company, HS Brands, as well! Scammers are clueless about how the industry actually works--they're just trying to steal your money!
- Member Company IntelliShop has a scammer using their name and logo, sending out large fake checks--do not deposit these or waste your time communicating with the scammer. You will have a returned check fee!
- Someone going by Chris Nicholson, email address eaxi132@gmail.com is sending scam emails, posing as a company called Consumer Delight Evaluations.
- A scammer posing as an MSPA representative is also sending out fake checks. May go by the name of Michael Bailey but regardless, the MSPA does NOT hire or assign mystery shopping opportunities.

June 2018

- Though we do have a contact here at headquarters named David, note that the MSPA will NEVER contact evaluators about shopping opportunities.
- QSI Specialists has been targeted by a scammer, the name and logo being used in an ongoing scam using www.qsispecialistsLTD.com rather than their domain, www.qsispecialists.com.

- MSPA Member Company Dynamic Advantage has a scammer that created a very convincing webpage in order to impersonate them: <http://www.da-shoppers.com/>. Phone and Address on this page are incorrect while everything else looks like their site: <http://dynamic-advantage.com/>
- A scammer is mailing letters that appear to be from our Member Company, Helion Research along with the standard fake check accompanying the instructions and "survey."

April 2018

- Blink Research has been the victim of the standard check scam this month. The scam features standard components – priority mail envelopes arrive at the homes of people who have signed up somewhere online to be secret shoppers or participate in surveys. A counterfeit check for \$2,450, a letter signed by “Alex Baker” with a fake phone number with a 202 area code (like Blink, which is based in DC), and instructions for depositing the check, proceeding to their local Wal-Mart, etc. The scammers also created a duplicate website at <https://blinkserviceevaluators.com>
- There are multiple scammer websites using the Secret Shopper logo. One is <https://www.1secretshopper.com> and another is <http://undercover-shopper.com/>. Though Secret Shopper is a member company, this website is unaffiliated with them.
- MSPA member company Helion Research is also, unfortunately, experiencing a wave of scammers using their company name to try and appear legitimate.

March 2018

- Shoppers View has a scammer using their name and logo as well to carry out a standard check scam.
- Member company Helion Research has a scammer going by Patrick Dawkins, sending emails from info@job-helionresearch.com about an "evaluation exercise" that is another variation of the standard check scam. True emails from Helion will be from the @helionresearch.com domain.

February 2018

- Remington Evaluations has a scammer, unfortunately, posing as one of their schedulers, conducting a standard check scam.
- Coyle Hospitality is also a victim of the persistent check scamming. Individuals listed on letters/checks go by Daniel Richards Jr (720-623-5276) drichardsjr@coylehospigroups.com, Steven D Lovemore, and Bruce Michael.
- Our member company Confer, unfortunately, had a rogue scheduler who contacted evaluators to collect money for a personal purpose. Confero has been in touch with us to explain the situation and that they have addressed involved parties.
- A scammer is posing, using the MSPA Europe/Africa region logo, targeting US evaluators via email. This is a typical check scam so it follows the usual protocol: a check is sent upfront for a large amount along with the request to make a small purchase while "evaluating" the store.

January 2018

- Another standard check scam is occurring from someone who calls himself Alex Baker and poses as being an Assignment Coordinator with our member company Kinesis.
- An email that appears to come from Liam Olivia at mjudisch@uiowa.edu who is said to represent the University of Iowa for Mystery Shopping Company is most definitely not a legitimate mystery shopping assignment.
- It is highly unlikely for a scheduler to first contact you via text! Reports have come in about a scammer texting from 304-449-6805.
- Emailed opportunities coming from Allen Tyler, allentyler667@gmail.com, that reference the MSPA Europe/Africa and Mystery Shopper Inc. is a scam.

December 2017

- MSPA Member Coast to Coast Scheduling Services, Inc. has been targeted in a mystery shopping scam. Michael Caulfield, using the email misj2ssinf4@gmail.com, mailed a check out for \$2850, asking the person to deposit it and purchase \$2500 in gift cards plus a \$30 clothing item and keep \$320 for “weekly commission, your logistics and gift card charges fee.” He also instructs, “Completing assignment fast earns you reward to receive more assignments promptly. I want you to know that completing the assignment and sending in the report as soon as funds are available in your account earns you a 30% payment increase on your next assignments.”
- Another scammer is imitating our member company Sights on Service, Secret Shopper and going by the name of Michael Richardson, email address ok213898@regiscollege.edu. His email references the MSPA and legitimate information about the company, however, the "opportunity" to visit a location and make observations in regards to customer service and get paid \$500 per visit, is definitely a scam.
- A check scam coming from Steve Gregory (stevegreg9292@gmail.com) who claims to be with both The Consumer Insight and Shoppers Confidential has been reported. This one is trying so hard to seem real that he's referencing **two** unrelated member companies!

November 2017

- Someone going by Madelyn Thomas, reaching out from 203-590-5436, is sending scam checks. The sender's name on the check we were notified of was Mark Greenberg.

- Carlton Robertson with Mystery Evaluations is not an MSPA Member. This is an unfamiliar company and communication we've seen from info@mysteryevaluations.com does not seem to be legitimate.
- Anonymous Insights shared on the IC Facebook page that a person by the name of Rebekah Patrick is attempting to steal our identity. She is representing herself as an employee of Anonymous Insights. She has created a LinkedIn profile that says that she has worked for Anonymous Insights since 2000 and gives an email address that follows the same format as ours (rpatrick@a-insights.com). This is not a real email address but if you reply to it, it will be sent to a different email address that is "hidden" behind it. THIS IS A SCAM. This person does not work for or represent Anonymous Insights, Inc. in any way. If you hear from her do not give her any personal information and do not accept anything from her. Report her to the police and BBB immediately.
- Unfortunately, the Mintel scam is still going strong. Please keep in mind that our member companies are legitimate but scammers sometimes try to make themselves appear to be associated with legitimate companies.
- A scammer going by Jacob Heckman is posing as an associate of Create Image Associates, Inc.
- Intouch Insight has a scammer sending out money orders and using their logo.

October 2017

- MSPA Headquarters has received numerous reports of messages being sent from MSPA staff looking to hiring evaluators. Since MSPA staff do not hire, we know this to be a scam.
- One of our International members notified us that someone with a US phone number (641) 316-0393 added their company as a group on Whatsapp and sent unnamed messages in Turkish. The phone number is from Iowa according to the area code. The person has poor Turkish written skills, so we struggled to understand the meaning of the messages. Please be aware of both of these scams and want your evaluators to do the same.
- On behalf of Intouch Insight, we have been alerted of mystery shopping scams using our logo and information. We received messages from people saying that they received a money order from us. None of these people are mystery shoppers registered with us, but one of them was able to send us the letter that they received which did have our logo on it. We never ask mystery shoppers to cash a cheque or deposit a money order before completing a shop. We want to alert mystery shoppers that this is a scam and that we are not involved.
- Don't be tricked by a company going by "Circle of Services." The MSPA does have a member company named Circle of Service however Circle of Services seems to be a typical check scammer.

September 2017

- Someone posing as a Karen Lane from Market Cube Survey, LLC (research.masters@outlook.com) is sending check scam emails.
- Another check scammer is posing as Mystery Shoppers, Inc., emailing from mysteryinreports@gmail.com and perhaps texting from 931-896-8849.

August 2017

- People are sending out emails in the name of MSPA asking for shoppers to work for them. MSPA does not solicit shoppers so this is a scam. Please delete and do not reply to any messages from Bill Belgard or like names.
- From Circle of Service: It seems that there is a group out there that have attached themselves to our logo and information. They are falsely sending mystery shopping opportunities to large groups of people on LinkedIn. This group is sending checks for large amounts to shoppers. We have been contacted by many shoppers throughout the country who are concerned. Many have turned the information over to their local authorities.
- A scammer posing as a Mintel Co-ordinator named Brian Anthony at briananthony@job4u.com is sending out letters to text 904-299-2607 or 206-691-8131 about an assignment and sign up at <https://www.quirks.com/jobs>. Though Mintel is a legitimate company and current member, this scammer is dishonestly portraying themselves as an employee--they are not.
- Western Union Scams (<https://www.thebalance.com/western-union-scams-315825>) (posted December 2016) and Scam Warning Signs (<https://www.westernunion.com/us/en/fraudawareness/fraud-be-aware.html>) (from the Western Union website)
- Shared by Insight, and recently received from a shopper: I am Michael Richardson Recruitment Specialist with Sights On Service Inc. "We have a mystery shopping assignment in your area and we would like you to participate." Secret Shopper® has been in business since 1990. We are a charter member of the Mystery Shopping Provider's Association (MSPA), the professional trade association for the Mystery Shopping industry. This is a scam!
- From a shopper: I recently signed up to be a member/partner with Beta Research Company, but something doesn't seem right to me. They mailed me a check in the mail for over \$2,700 and want me to deposit it into my account and keep \$250 for myself. They sent me a one-page evaluation sheet in the mail to evaluate the bank but it just doesn't seem right to me. They've sent me multiple emails and text messages reminding me to follow up with them. I began ignoring them.
- ABO Skin Serum, the producer of Calypso, has been removing funds from people's accounts without sending them a product.
- Packages have been received by numerous shoppers from Mystery Guests Co. including an assignment and a check for more than \$3,000.
- Six Star Solutions shared there are some men (Louis, Aaron, Mark, etc.) sending out emails promising \$3,000 a month salary on top of \$350 for each shop completed. It all started with LinkedIn. The company suggests reporting it to the FTC.
- From a shopper: I received a check drawn on Citibank but no instructions. It looked legitimate. I had emailed info for a mystery shopper job. I called Citibank verification number 866-678-0088. The check is a fraud. The routing number is 031100209. Account number 38762924. The return address is from Francis Paul Landover MD. Then I received a text 2 days later asking if I received the check. And then an email instructing me to deposit into my account and keep \$250. And to send \$1030 to two others. IT IS A SCAM!

July 2017

- Members are reporting an influx of messages from Western Union Malaysia saying the recipient is approved to receive \$1.5 million dollars. The reply email is wu.payout@my.com.
- Bestmark shared that someone has been masking their email as marketing@bestmark.com to conduct their phishing and/or scamming. Reply emails go to Eric Jennings at jenningsgroupplc@outlook.com and the scammer is offering \$500 per shop, after asking for personal details.
- DSG Shared this on Facebook: "It has come to our attention that there is a scam continuing to go on using our name, DSG Associates. If you receive an email, letter, and/or package from "DSG ASSOCIATES INC" asking you to cash a check and purchase Walmart gift cards, please ignore it. These are NOT from DSG Associates. Please do not cash, deposit, or use the check to make any type of purchase. If you have not yet performed an assignment for us and receive a check or you receive a check in an amount different from the pay of your shop, please contact us ASAP.
- A Shopper shared this on Facebook after receiving a bogus email: Gap Burster Inc is currently hiring for "Part-Time Mystery Shoppers." Pay is \$200/ weekly. If you are still interested, Kindly e-mail the following to application@gapbusterinc.com.

REPORT A SCAM

(<https://bit.ly/2UpdE3r>) Did you hear? Our very own MSPA Americas President, Sam Hersey was on The Steve Warneke Radio Show discussing how to avoid the latest mystery shopping scams. Check it out here (<https://bit.ly/2UpdE3r>) by listening to the portion from 18:20 to 25:08.

Scams are common in our industry and new twists on the classic check scam are developed every day. Scammers often operate by pretending to be MSPA Americas or our member companies and contact the general public by email, telephone, job boards or social media sites. They use fake names and titles to entice people to receive a check in the mail, conduct a false assignment, and then wire money or send items to a specified address. Regardless of the variations of this classic scam, the checks will bounce and the victim is left footing the full bill and the bank fees associated with it.

For those in the US, please report your experience with a scammer to the FTC here (<https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/#crnt&panel1-1>). If you're located in Canada, please contact the Canadian Anti-Fraud at 1-888-495-8501.

Though we cannot stop every scam or the people behind them, we can continue to educate the public about this issue. You may have seen a recent news story (<https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/jacksonville-woman-warns-of-walmart-secret-shopper-scam/754632642>) or legal filing (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdpa/pr/pittsburgh-man-charged-mystery-shopper-scam>) on the matter too. We are always so appreciative of these! We will share scams with the membership as they are known to us. If you have one to share, please email mspa@hqtrs.com (<mailto:mspa@hqtrs.com?subject=Report%20A%20Scam>) and we will share them here.

Member Companies: using this guide is a great way to start fighting back! **Scam Response Guide** (</CMS/Resources/internet-scam-response-guide.pdf>)

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February 2020

- If you receive a message stating "INTELLISHOP® is accepting applications for qualified and reliable agents for Walmart shopping survey. The assignment will pay \$500 per duty. Click on the link for more information: <https://bit.ly/363p4MW>" please do not follow through. This is a scam and could result in you losing money.
- Helion Research notified us of a scam involving their company's name. Text messages and emails are being received from David Goedel, Survey Coordinator, asking for people to work for them. This is a scam and can be found on CareerBuilder as well.

January 2020

- Mailers are going out with opportunities from Donald Price with MSPA information on it. We do not hire mystery shoppers and do not have a Donald Price on our team. Please consider this a scam.
- IntelliShop let us know about another scam. A scammer is contacting people through LinkedIn to sign up to be a mystery shopper, with a link to fill out this registration form (</CMS/Resources/scams/intellishopregistrationform.pdf>). The scammers are using real employee names but fake employee email addresses.



December 2019

- CSE Inc. let us know about check scam using Customer Service Experts as the MSPA. Rest assured that is a scam and if you have questions, please contact CSE directly.
- Alta260 Research is the victim of a scam. " I just received a call from a young lady who had \$7000 stole from her and this individual that is scamming them is using our website and has reconfigured it I am sending the URL below: <https://retailsresearch.com/> (<https://retailsresearch.com/>) "
- WeCheck is also a victim of a scam. Two websites have been shut down already but no luck on shutting down the scammers. Please remember that no companies will send you a check prior to shopping and be sure to check the URLs of websites you visit. When it doubt, access the company through the MSPA Americas website.

November 2019

- If you receive a message with the subject line: NEEDED | Jobs~Assignment's Available from premium.job@null.net, please delete immediately. The message includes answering personal questions and is most certainly a scam. "Hello, We are a company that conducts surveys and evaluate with 'Secret~Shopper'. * You will be taught how to run the task and earn your income. * You will get training information and instructions via e-mail. * You must complete the task well so that your income is high (Incentive is \$290) / assignments. To get more information and instructions from us, reply to this e-mail with the following data to => " premium.job@null.net " Your response would be greatly appreciated, thanks... Sincerely. Wanda C. Hill 2019 MS-Agency, LLC

October 2019

- BEWARE of emails from <mailto:martin.turner@info-elitexcs.com>] - Martin Turner, Recruiting dept, Mystery Shopping, Elite CX Solutions: This is a SCAM. They are using our logo and even M Turner! Please do NOT respond to these emails. They are Walmart Gift Card enticements. We believe this has started from a hacked LinkedIn account.
- IntelliShop has recently been made aware that some scammers have purchased the website domain www.intelli-shopp.com and are pretending to be employees from IntelliShop to scam people. Please let everyone know that if they receive an email from www.intelli-shopp.com with 2 "p's" instead of just one, it is actually a scam.
- The Consumer Insight is the victim of a scam. The message states: "I just received a letter from your company along with a check from capital one bank in the amount of \$2,899.00. In the memo; Portalatin Hairston. This is for apple store get 2 gift cards 1 for \$1500 & \$1000. Once I'm don't they want me to scratch/peel the back and take a picture & send it to, (678)210-9866. It says don't get rid of the gift cards cause they will be used for forthcoming assignments." The recipient was warned NOT to cash the check, to contact their local law enforcement and the local postmaster. Please do not fall for this!
- Intelli-Shop is a victim of scammers. Messages (text and email) are being sent from Brian Caldwell asking for contact information in exchange for \$300 per shop.
- BestMark has been in contact with local, state and federal law enforcement to report any incidents that we've been made aware of and ask that if you are contacted by anyone you feel may be illegally representing themselves as a representative of BestMark, that you contact The Federal Trade Commission Complaint Submission link at www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov. We would also encourage you to contact your local authorities, the FBI, and the Federal Trade Commission to report any potential fraud. If you have additional questions for BestMark please call 952-922-3890.
- Another scammer is now pretending to be the COO of IntelliShop and "recruit shoppers" through LinkedIn. He's telling potential shoppers that he'll pay them \$300.00 per assignment, but as a part of the onboarding process, he'll need their credit card information. IntelliShop would never ask for someone's credit card information to become a mystery shopper. If you could please add this to your "Report a Scam" page on your website, that would be great.

May 2019

- There is a scam attempt that is using Market Force and Mystery Shoppers Inc. names in a solicitation email. If you need to contact the companies directly, do so through the MSPA Service Provider Search.
- Coast to Coast Scheduling Services needs your help! They are currently being targeted by scam artists. These people are sending emails from email addresses that look at first like CTCSS but are not! Please beware! They are asking for shoppers to purchase CVS cards and fill out an email survey. This is not Coast to Coast. If you will look at the reply email addresses, they have 3 s' (CTCSSS) or are not a similar domain at all. Please spread the word so we can stop these scam artists from giving our wonderful industry a bad name!

April 2019

- A hometown paper shared how KSS International and IntelliShop are victims of a scam. Check it out here (<http://www.kittanningpaper.com/2019/05/02/local-police-chiefs-warn-of-scams/77004>).
- IntelliShop has been the victim of a scam promising \$500 per assignment. The scammers promise shops with the USPS and Wal-Mart. Please be on the watch and don't fall for it!
- Bestmark has been the victim of an advertising scam. The scammers place ads in local newspapers without using the Bestmark name or logo but instead the company's name at a Gmail address. Then they bill back to Bestmark for the postings.

March 2019

- From ARC: Earlier this week, a gentleman showed up at our place of business looking for reimbursement for gift cards purchased at Walmart. He found the job on indeed.com under the company name of MSPA ARC. We directed him to the police department.

February 2019

- MSPA was notified of a scam that involves a past ShopperFest logo and as well as the name of member company Secret Shopper. This scam is managed through Time Code Outsourcing.
- This scam was reported by Insight You Can Use: "We are looking for people to apply for positions in our team as a secret customer. How it works: Register and if you are selected, you will receive \$150 for shopping at the shops, affiliates or at competition stores. Your review will make a difference in providing better services and products."

January 2019

- "I was contacted by a company called, ExtraPack Shoppers (<https://mspa-americas.org/CMS/Resources/scams/extrapack.pdf>), and offered a job as a mystery shopper. I went to their website and they claim to be a member of your organization. I did a search for them and netted no results of a company by that name in your membership. Further, I called the office building they are listing as their home base and they have no companies in their building by that name. They sent me a cashier's check to deposit in my bank account and told me I would earn \$200 for completing a task. Does this seem like a scam? They have contacted me via text message using the number, 833-545-5168." ExtraPack Shoppers is NOT a member of MSPA Americas.
- As reported by The Consumer Insight: The scammers are contacting college students via email; at least one of the attempted scams represented themselves as a college "Job Placement & Student Services Office", offering "Part-Time Job Opportunities" and is directing them to the following website: consumerinsight.us, which is a spoof of the Sights On Service website.

December 2018

- The MSPA Americas and other MSPA regions are often used as a veil for scammers however this most recent one (/CMS/Resources/scams/img_20181030_162226.jpg) also targets the overarching MSPA Global, the governing board of MSPA. It is another typical check scam (/CMS/Resources/scams/img_20181030_162247.jpg) using the MSPA Global name to seem legitimate.

November 2018

- A scammer has targeted MSPA Member Company Intouch Insight. Their trademarked logo has been used to send letters of fake Mystery Shopping assignments that are accompanied by cashier's checks totaling over \$2000. The fake assignments vary from having to purchase different money orders from Walmart, Apple store gift cards or Reloadit gift cards. One also asks to purchase a personal money order made out to the American Cancer Society.

October 2018

- One of our evaluator members recently contacted us about a cashier's check for \$2,871 that was received allegedly from Service Sense Inc. Though ServiceSense is a member, this scammer who goes by "Dr. Scott Dean" and was texting from (856) 818-3926, was posing as an employee.
- Though check scams are popular, there is also a scam that involves purchasing gift cards and sending a photo with information for the scammer to use the funds. Check out this one (</CMS/Resources/scams/scammspaimg.jpeg>) we uncovered that uses MSPA logos to make it seem more legit.

August 2018

- Recent scamming is specifically targeting college students.

July 2018

- A scammer imitating member company Reality Based Group is also sending out a letter accompanying a fake check.
- Stephanie Couture, President of Confirm With Us, is being impersonated by a scammer sending checks that seem to come from her. Interestingly the letters that accompany the checks are referencing another member company, HS Brands, as well! Scammers are clueless about how the industry actually works--they're just trying to steal your money!
- Member Company IntelliShop has a scammer using their name and logo, sending out large fake checks--do not deposit these or waste your time communicating with the scammer. You will have a returned check fee!
- Someone going by Chris Nicholson, email address eaxi132@gmail.com is sending scam emails, posing as a company called Consumer Delight Evaluations.
- A scammer posing as an MSPA representative is also sending out fake checks. May go by the name of Michael Bailey but regardless, the MSPA does NOT hire or assign mystery shopping opportunities.

June 2018

- Though we do have a contact here at headquarters named David, note that the MSPA will NEVER contact evaluators about shopping opportunities.

- QSI Specialists has been targeted by a scammer, the name and logo being used in an ongoing scam using www.qsispecialistsLTD.com rather than their domain, www.qsispecialists.com.
- MSPA Member Company Dynamic Advantage has a scammer that created a very convincing webpage in order to impersonate them: <http://www.da-shoppers.com/>. Phone and Address on this page are incorrect while everything else looks like their site: <http://dynamic-advantage.com/>
- A scammer is mailing letters that appear to be from our Member Company, Helion Research along with the standard fake check accompanying the instructions and "survey."

April 2018

- Blink Research has been the victim of the standard check scam this month. The scam features standard components – priority mail envelopes arrive at the homes of people who have signed up somewhere online to be secret shoppers or participate in surveys. A counterfeit check for \$2,450, a letter signed by "Alex Baker" with a fake phone number with a 202 area code (like Blink, which is based in DC), and instructions for depositing the check, proceeding to their local Wal-Mart, etc. The scammers also created a duplicate website at <https://blinkserviceevaluators.com>
- There are multiple scammer websites using the Secret Shopper logo. One is <https://www.1secretshopper.com> and another is <http://undercover-shopper.com/>. Though Secret Shopper is a member company, this website is unaffiliated with them.
- MSPA member company Helion Research is also, unfortunately, experiencing a wave of scammers using their company name to try and appear legitimate.

March 2018

- Shoppers View has a scammer using their name and logo as well to carry out a standard check scam.
- Member company Helion Research has a scammer going by Patrick Dawkins, sending emails from info@job-helionresearch.com about an "evaluation exercise" that is another variation of the standard check scam. True emails from Helion will be from the @helionresearch.com domain.

February 2018

- Remington Evaluations has a scammer, unfortunately, posing as one of their schedulers, conducting a standard check scam.
- Coyle Hospitality is also a victim of the persistent check scamming. Individuals listed on letters/checks go by Daniel Richards Jr (720-623-5276) drichardsjr@coylehospigroups.com, Steven D Lovemore, and Bruce Michael.
- Our member company Confer, unfortunately, had a rogue scheduler who contacted evaluators to collect money for a personal purpose. Confer has been in touch with us to explain the situation and that they have addressed involved parties.
- A scammer is posing, using the MSPA Europe/Africa region logo, targeting US evaluators via email. This is a typical check scam so it follows the usual protocol: a check is sent upfront for a large amount along with the request to make a small purchase while "evaluating" the store.

January 2018

- Another standard check scam is occurring from someone who calls himself Alex Baker and poses as being an Assignment Coordinator with our member company Kinesis.
- An email that appears to come from Liam Olivia at mjudisch@uiowa.edu who is said to represent the University of Iowa for Mystery Shopping Company is most definitely not a legitimate mystery shopping assignment.
- It is highly unlikely for a scheduler to first contact you via text! Reports have come in about a scammer texting from 304-449-6805.
- Emailed opportunities coming from Allen Tyler, allentyler667@gmail.com, that reference the MSPA Europe/Africa and Mystery Shopper Inc. is a scam.

December 2017

- MSPA Member Coast to Coast Scheduling Services, Inc. has been targeted in a mystery shopping scam. Michael Caulfield, using the email misj2ssinf4@gmail.com, mailed a check out for \$2850, asking the person to deposit it and purchase \$2500 in gift cards plus a \$30 clothing item and keep \$320 for "weekly commission, your logistics and gift card charges fee." He also instructs, "Completing assignment fast earns you reward to receive more assignments promptly. I want you to know that completing the assignment and sending in the report as soon as funds are available in your account earns you a 30% payment increase on your next assignments."
- Another scammer is imitating our member company Sights on Service, Secret Shopper and going by the name of Michael Richardson, email address ok213898@regiscollege.edu. His email references the MSPA and legitimate information about the company, however, the "opportunity" to visit a location and make observations in regards to customer service and get paid \$500 per visit, is definitely a scam.
- A check scam coming from Steve Gregory (stevegreg9292@gmail.com) who claims to be with both The Consumer Insight and Shoppers Confidential has been reported. This one is trying so hard to seem real that he's referencing **two** unrelated member companies!

November 2017

- Someone going by Madelyn Thomas, reaching out from 203-590-5436, is sending scam checks. The sender's name on the check we were notified of was Mark Greenberg.
- Carlton Robertson with Mystery Evaluations is not an MSPA Member. This is an unfamiliar company and communication we've seen from info@mysteryevaluations.com does not seem to be legitimate.
- Anonymous Insights shared on the IC Facebook page that a person by the name of Rebekah Patrick is attempting to steal our identity. She is representing herself as an employee of Anonymous Insights. She has created a LinkedIn profile that says that she has worked for Anonymous Insights since 2000 and gives an email address that follows the same format as ours (rpatrick@a-insights.com). This is not a real email address but if you reply to it, it will be sent to a different email address that is "hidden" behind it. THIS IS A SCAM. This person does not work for or represent Anonymous Insights, Inc. in any way. If you hear from her do not give her any personal information and do not accept anything from her. Report her to the police and BBB immediately.
- Unfortunately, the Mintel scam is still going strong. Please keep in mind that our member companies are legitimate but scammers sometimes try to make themselves appear to be associated with legitimate companies.
- A scammer going by Jacob Heckman is posing as an associate of Create Image Associates, Inc.
- Intouch Insight has a scammer sending out money orders and using their logo.

October 2017

- MSPA Headquarters has received numerous reports of messages being sent from MSPA staff looking to hiring evaluators. Since MSPA staff do not hire, we know this to be a scam.
- One of our International members notified us that someone with a US phone number (641) 316-0393 added their company as a group on Whatsapp and sent unnamed messages in Turkish. The phone number is from Iowa according to the area code. The person has poor Turkish written skills, so we struggled to understand the meaning of the messages. Please be aware of both of these scams and want your evaluators to do the same.
- On behalf of Intouch Insight, we have been alerted of mystery shopping scams using our logo and information. We received messages from people saying that they received a money order from us. None of these people are mystery shoppers registered with us, but one of them was able to send us the letter that they received which did have our logo on it. We never ask mystery shoppers to cash a cheque or deposit a money order before completing a shop. We want to alert mystery shoppers that this is a scam and that we are not involved.
- Don't be tricked by a company going by "Circle of Services." The MSPA does have a member company named Circle of Service however Circle of Services seems to be a typical check scammer.

September 2017

- Someone posing as a Karen Lane from Market Cube Survey, LLC (research.masters@outlook.com) is sending check scam emails.
- Another check scammer is posing as Mystery Shoppers, Inc., emailing from mysteryinreports@gmail.com and perhaps texting from 931-896-8849.

August 2017

- People are sending out emails in the name of MSPA asking for shoppers to work for them. MSPA does not solicit shoppers so this is a scam. Please delete and do not reply to any messages from Bill Belgard or like names.
- From Circle of Service: It seems that there is a group out there that have attached themselves to our logo and information. They are falsely sending mystery shopping opportunities to large groups of people on LinkedIn. This group is sending checks for large amounts to shoppers. We have been contacted by many shoppers throughout the country who are concerned. Many have turned the information over to their local authorities.
- A scammer posing as a Mintel Co-ordinator named Brian Anthony at briananthony@job4u.com is sending out letters to text 904-299-2607 or 206-691-8131 about an assignment and sign up at <https://www.quirks.com/jobs>. Though Mintel is a legitimate company and current member, this scammer is dishonestly portraying themselves as an employee--they are not.
- Western Union Scams (<https://www.thebalance.com/western-union-scams-315825>) (posted December 2016) and Scam Warning Signs (<https://www.westernunion.com/us/en/fraudawareness/fraud-be-aware.html>) (from the Western Union website)
- Shared by Insight, and recently received from a shopper: I am Michael Richardson Recruitment Specialist with Sights On Service Inc. "We have a mystery shopping assignment in your area and we would like you to participate." Secret Shopper® has been in business since 1990. We are a charter member of the Mystery Shopping Provider's Association (MSPA), the professional trade association for the Mystery Shopping industry. This is a scam!
- From a shopper: I recently signed up to be a member/partner with Beta Research Company, but something doesn't seem right to me. They mailed me a check in the mail for over \$2,700 and want me to deposit it into my account and keep \$250 for myself. They sent me a one-page evaluation sheet in the mail to evaluate the bank but it just doesn't seem right to me. They've sent me multiple emails and text messages reminding me to follow up with them. I began ignoring them.
- ABO Skin Serum, the producer of Calypso, has been removing funds from people's accounts without sending them a product.
- Packages have been received by numerous shoppers from Mystery Guests Co. including an assignment and a check for more than \$3,000.

- Six Star Solutions shared there are some men (Louis, Aaron, Mark, etc.) sending out emails promising \$3,000 a month salary on top of \$350 for each shop completed. It all started with LinkedIn. The company suggests reporting it to the FTC.
- From a shopper: I received a check drawn on Citibank but no instructions. It looked legitimate. I had emailed info for a mystery shopper job. I called Citibank verification number 866-678-0088. The check is a fraud. The routing number is 031100209. Account number 38762924. The return address is from Francis Paul Landover MD. Then I received a text 2 days later asking if I received the check. And then an email instructing me to deposit into my account and keep \$250. And to send \$1030 to two others. IT IS a SCAM!

July 2017

- Members are reporting an influx of messages from Western Union Malaysia saying the recipient is approved to receive \$1.5 million dollars. The reply email is wu.payout@my.com.
- Bestmark shared that someone has been masking their email as marketing@bestmark.com to conduct their phishing and/or scamming. Reply emails go to Eric Jennings at jenningsgroupllc@outlook.com and the scammer is offering \$500 per shop, after asking for personal details.
- DSG Shared this on Facebook: "It has come to our attention that there is a scam continuing to go on using our name, DSG Associates. If you receive an email, letter, and/or package from "DSG ASSOCIATES INC" asking you to cash a check and purchase Walmart gift cards, please ignore it. These are NOT from DSG Associates. Please do not cash, deposit, or use the check to make any type of purchase. If you have not yet performed an assignment for us and receive a check or you receive a check in an amount different from the pay of your shop, please contact us ASAP.
- A Shopper shared this on Facebook after receiving a bogus email: Gap Burster Inc is currently hiring for "Part-Time Mystery Shoppers." Pay is \$200/ weekly. If you are still interested, Kindly e-mail the following to application@gapbusterinc.com.

RESOURCES ()

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- SCAM ALERTS (/SCAM)
- RESOURCE LIBRARY (/LIBRARY)
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