

ENTRY OF THE *Mystery Shopper*

ATTENTION ALL SHOP AND HOTEL STAFF: BEWARE THE MYSTERY SHOPPER. **CLAIRE BOSQ-SCOTT** HAS SET UP A MYSTERY SHOPPER SERVICE TO HELP LOCAL RETAILERS IMPROVE THEIR SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

UNUSUALLY for an illustrated magazine, we have taken a nice view of our interviewee as she walks away from us, and which shows her back and back of her head. This is Claire Bosq-Scott going about her new business as a chartered mystery shopper.

It is not absent-mindedness on our part, just that it seems a bit daft to write about someone whose new job it is to be a 'mystery shopper' and to attach a picture of her face for the benefit of all those people whom she might be meeting and assessing in the course of her daily work.

Until recently she was the deputy general manager at the Hotel L'Horizon. She is now capitalising on the experience she has gained in her career in hospitality to set up 'Four Star Services', a company that specialises in event and wedding planning, sales and marketing advice, and especially 'mystery shopping'.

Her reasons for setting up on her own will strike a chord with anybody trying to juggle work and family life: 'I have two young children, and I wanted to manage my time better to see more of them, and to set up a better balance in my life.'

Event and wedding planning, of course, is something that she has been doing for years.

'There is a market for it,' she said, 'despite the fact that we are in a recession. And in fact, because we are in a recession, it is in the better interests of organisations to have a self-employed "project manager" working on specific events, rather than employing someone full-time as an event organiser.'

She is also taking on a 'mystery shopping' role – something she has done for a UK company, but has now decided that the local



demand for the service merits a local operation to cater for it.

A mystery shopper's role is defined by the title – although maintaining the fiction that is simply another customer, she is assessing the standards of service, politeness, friendliness, efficiency and capability of the staff she encounters in hotels, or retail or catering outlets.

And can't we all think, in Jersey, of places that would benefit from her professional activities!

Claire said that there were a couple of local companies that would provide this service, if asked, but did not specialise in it. Other companies might send personnel over from the UK – but, as she said, it is far more cost effective to engage a local company, that does not have to charge the costs of travel and accommodation.

She thought that this would be a service that would not be overly affected by the recession: 'Whether the client is an hotel or a shop, both need high standards of customer service to be able to thrive commercially. The staff should be aware of things like eye contact, or stopping a private conversation with a colleague if a customer comes to pay!

'If there is insufficient friendliness or positive attitude towards the paying customer, then the employer needs to know. Unfortunately, 96 per cent of retail customers won't say whether a product is right or not, or if they are dissatisfied with the service – they will simply go elsewhere.

'And calling in an outside "project manager" is economically more worthwhile than employing someone full-time to fulfil this role; measuring a business' customer service also enables it to be benchmarked against its main competitors. Mystery shoppers are

particularly useful for making objective comparisons between the standard of service of a business and that of its competitors.'

She also plans to take on the running of corporate events – she has, after all, a long experience of running meetings, and such events as training sessions, product launches, and hospitality events from private functions to corporate Christmas parties.

It has been 18 years since Claire first arrived in Jersey. She is French, and comes from Grasse in southeast France. Her father had a restaurant there, and after school she went to catering school in Nice. She worked her first season in Jersey at the old Couperon de Rozel, returning to work in French ski resorts during the winter.

After three years she travelled to America to work in Disneyworld, in Orlando, Florida ('a completely different culture of hospitality than in Europe'), and then afterwards returned to England where she married – two children arrived in due course.

Then nine years ago the opportunity came to return to work in Jersey, and for

six years she worked at the St Brelade's Bay Hotel. She moved from there to the Royal Yacht Hotel at the time of its extension and refurbishment, followed by two years at L'Horizon before launching out on her own.

She loves Jersey, and its mixture of Frenchness and Englishness, countryside and town.

'I love visiting my parents in France, but I also love returning to Jersey, which I feel is my home and the home of my children.

It is a fantastic Island, and a lovely lifestyle.'

Claire Bosq-Scott's company, Four Star Services, can be contacted by telephone on **07797 828950** or by e-mail on **contact@cbs4starservices.com**.

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