

# Secret Shopper

SHELTER GOES UNDERCOVER



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## Just Say No Don't Stock What You Don't Want to Sell

No dealer wants to say, “No, I’m sorry, we don’t carry that.” For this reason, it’s not uncommon for a dealer to toss a single product line into a corner of the showroom. Then, at least, he can answer “Yes, we do.” Not a bad idea; but, if you do, it might not be a good idea to respond with a long, drawn out, “Well ... yeah ... we do.”

Right away I could tell Ruffin and Payne Inc. wasn’t interested in selling cabinets. Though the counter salesman addressed me

within seconds of entering the showroom, I obviously rained on his parade by asking for this product.

“So, not really, I take it?” I responded after his pause.

“No, no, we have some,” he responded with renewed energy.

“David would be our cabinet man,” he said, pointing directly behind me to a gentleman seated at a desk.

David wasn’t any more excited about a cabinet customer than his co-worker. I didn’t expect him to trip over himself trying to greet me, but, David all but hid behind his desk when he was introduced as the “cabinet man.” He just glanced at me.

“So you’re the cabinet guy?” I asked.

“Well, yes,” he responded with obvious reluctance. “We carry Aristokraft,”

David said pointing to a small display station positioned in a dingy corner. He was quickly saved by a ringing phone.

When David’s phone call was over, I waited patiently for him to rejoin me, but he didn’t. I’m not one to sit around playing “rescue the lonely shopper,” so I decided to approach him again, this time with some questions such as: Where are they made? Are custom sizes available? Are they solid wood or veneer? Each got a one-, maybe two-word answer. David wasn’t rude or unkind; he just wasn’t interested in selling cabinets.

Finally, I asked a rhetorical question: “Do you sell many of these?”

“Naaah,” he half whispered back to me. He was very honest when he explained to me that they “take a while to get” and that Lowe’s and Home Depot have a number of brands and options to choose from. I took the hint.

I requested some product literature, which he dug around for, muttering, “I know I’ve got one somewhere,” before I thanked him and headed for the door.

He never stood up. And I didn’t bother to stop and look at those two-panel doors I need for this weekend’s project.

### SECRET SHOPPER REPORT CARD

Ruffin & Payne Inc.

LOCATION: Richmond, Va  
FACILITY TYPE: Building  
Materials Dealer



#### SUBJECT

Store was Easy to Find  
Parking Lot was Clean  
Windows were Clean  
Greeted upon Entering  
Store Aisles were Clear of Debris  
Neatness of Displays  
Employee Politeness  
Employee Appearance  
Employee Product Knowledge  
Store Experience Satisfaction  
Overall Grade

#### GRADE

B  
A  
A  
A  
D  
C  
D  
B  
C  
D  
D

#### MARKING CODE

A Excellent  
D Below Average  
B Above Average  
C Average  
F Unsatisfactory