

**OMB STATEMENT FOR THE
COLLECTION IMPROVEMENT PILOT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS
FOR THE SB/SE DIVISION
BPA TIRN0 05-Z-00014, Task Request #S-6-S0-0F-MF-A08-001**

Introduction

The IRS has replaced the traditional measures of accomplishment with a balanced measurement system consisting of business results, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction. Since 1998 for the IRS and since 2000 for the Small Business Self-Employed (SB/SE) Division, customer surveys have been the vehicle for measuring customer satisfaction performance. To date, SB/SE has undertaken a portfolio of nine ongoing customer surveys: (1) Compliance Services Collection Operation (CSCO); (2) Automated Collection System (ACS); (3) Automated Underreporter (AUR); (4) Compliance Center Examination (CCE); (5) Field Examination; (6) Field Collection; (7) Estate and Gift Tax; (8) Employment Tax; and (9) Excise Tax. In addition to producing the required customer satisfaction “score,” these customer surveys have also produced significant information about the key dimensions of the customers’ experience in dealing with the IRS and SB/SE in their tax matters, as well as pointers to where improvement opportunities might lie.

In response to the results of the Field Collection customer satisfaction surveys, the Collection Improvement Team was formed to determine how to best improve customer satisfaction and business results in Field Collection. The team has developed three pilot projects to improve three aspects of service to Collection customers, and plans to survey customers who experience each of these three pilots. The three pilot projects are:

- (1) DVD: At the start of a Field Collection case, send a DVD with a clear and straightforward explanation of what to expect of the field Collection process and how to easily resolve their case.
- (2) Postcard: Together with the letter requesting that the customer send specific information to the field collection agent, include a postcard for the customer to send with their information to the IRS. This postcard acts as a confirmation of receipt of taxpayer information by the agent, and as soon as the agent verifies that all of the requested information has been sent, that agent will send the postcard back to the taxpayer.
- (3) Closing letter: Send a closing letter to inform those whose cases have been closed that no further action is required.

Samples of each of these pilot projects, including a script of the DVD are attached. The customer surveys will help the Collection Improvement Team determine if the pilot projects work and if they should be more widely implemented in Field Collection. Each of these three pilot projects will have its own customer satisfaction survey.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Collection Improvement Team will oversee Collection employees who will administer the three customer surveys of Collection Improvement Pilot customers, and the team will analyze and report survey results during a ten-month period of performance, expected to begin April 1, 2007 and conclude December 31, 2007. Each survey will include taxpayers or powers of attorney (POAs) who receive the pilot product (DVD, postcard, or closing letter). The objective of the surveys will be to determine the effectiveness of the three pilot products and whether they should be more widely implemented.

The three questionnaires are attached. The estimated time for survey completion is 3 minutes for each of the surveys. The survey includes several rating questions evaluating service delivery during Field Collection process. Rating questions will utilize a 5-point rating scale, with 1 being “*very dissatisfied*” and 5 being “*very satisfied*.” All survey responses generated will be confidential. The Collection Improvement Team shall ensure that taxpayers responding to the survey are guaranteed anonymity.

Design and Methodology

Each of the three surveys will be administered by mail. In order to obtain the highest response rate possible for the mail survey, each survey will be sent together with a cover letter on IRS stationary explaining the importance of the survey. Procedures for each of the three surveys are described below:

(1) DVD: Customers, who are either taxpayers or POAs, selected for this pilot program will receive a DVD, together with cover letter and a customer satisfaction survey in the mail prior to the first visit of their field collection agent. Customers will be selected for this pilot program based on their Regional Office. In order to obtain 300 survey responses, and assuming a 60% response rate, 500 surveys will be sent to Collection DVD pilot customers.

(2) Postcard: Customers, who are either taxpayers or POAs, selected for this pilot program will receive a postcard together with the letter that requests specific information be sent to their field collection agent. Six weeks after the letter and postcard are sent to the customer, a survey with cover letter will be sent to the same customer. Customers will be selected for this pilot program based on their Regional Office. In order to obtain 300 survey responses, and assuming a 60% response rate, 500 surveys will be sent to Collection Postcard pilot customers.

(3) Closing Letter: Customers selected for this pilot program will receive one of two different closing letters, together with cover letter and a customer satisfaction survey in the mail after their case is closed. The type of closing letter depends on the type of case closure. Customers who receive a letter about “Notice of Case Resolution” will receive version A of the questionnaire, and customers who receive a “Case Closed – Currently Not Collectible” letter will receive version B of the questionnaire. Customers will be selected for this pilot program based on their Regional Office. In order to obtain 300 survey responses, and assuming a 60% response rate, 500 surveys will be sent to Collection Closing Letter pilot customers.

The total number of customers receiving one of these three surveys will be 1,500, and the total number of completed questionnaires will be 900. These estimates assume a 60 percent response rate, which the contractor will aim to achieve.

Evaluation

For the three reports, IRS analysts will use basic and advanced statistical techniques including, but not limited to, frequency analysis and analysis of variance.

- Survey counts and overall response rates.
- Usage rates of the pilot product.
- Usefulness of the pilot product.
- The overall level of customer satisfaction with services provided by Field Collection.
- The averages and frequencies for all satisfaction rating questions.
- The differences in satisfaction ratings and attitudes between Collection pilot customers and Collection non-pilot customers, where applicable.
- Analysis of the open-ended questions, including those for improvement suggestions.

Estimates of the Burden of Data Collection

The three Collection Improvement Pilot surveys have been designed to minimize burden on the taxpayer. The time that a respondent takes to complete the survey has been carefully considered, and only the most important areas are being surveyed. The average time of survey completion is expected to be 3 minutes for each survey, plus 2 minutes to read the pre-notification letter. The questions are generally one sentence in structure and on an elementary concept level.

We have made every attempt in designing this survey to maximize the response rate. Using the response rate of 60%, the total burden in hours for the three surveys is estimated to be 96 hours, broken down as follows:

(1) DVD:

Respondents: 25 hours (300 surveys x 3 minutes / 60 minutes + 300 pre-notification letters x 2 minutes / 60 minutes).

Non-respondents: 7 hours (200 pre-notification letters x 2 minutes/ 60 minutes).

The total for the DVD survey is estimated to be 32 hours.

(2) Postcard:

Respondents: 25 hours (300 surveys x 3 minutes / 60 minutes + 300 pre-notification letters x 2 minutes / 60 minutes).

Non-respondents: 7 hours (200 pre-notification letters x 2 minutes/ 60 minutes).

The total for the Postcard survey is estimated to be 32 hours.

(3) Closing Letter:

Respondents: 25 hours (300 surveys x 3 minutes / 60 minutes + 300 pre-notification letters x 2 minutes / 60 minutes).

Non-respondents: 7 hours (200 pre-notification letters x 2 minutes/ 60 minutes).

The total for the Closing Letter survey is estimated to be 32 hours.

Confidentiality, Disclosure and Security

We will limit and control the amount of information we collect to those items that are necessary to accomplish the research questions. We will carefully safeguard the security of data utilized as well as the privacy of the survey respondents. We will apply the fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all survey respondents. The criterion for disclosure laid out in the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act, and section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code provides for the protection of information as well as its releases to authorized recipients.

Other Information

The following information will be provided within 60 days after the close of the survey data collection operations:

- Findings: A brief summary of significant findings that were evidenced in the results.
- Actions taken or lessons learned: A brief summary of any action taken or lessons learned as a result of the findings.
- Number of completed surveys.
- Dates on which the data collection began and ended.
- Cost (excluding regular salaries of IRS employees).

The estimated cost associated with this study is \$0

Statistical Contact

For questions regarding the study, questionnaire design, or statistical methodology, contact:

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