OMB SUPPORTING STATEMENT
FOR THE STUDY TO MEASURE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
OF IRS WAGE AND INVESTMENT FIELD ASSISTANCE CUSTOMERS
January 2009 – Ongoing
TIRNO-05-Z-00014

Introduction

IRS has replaced its traditional measures of accomplishment with a balanced measurement system consisting of business results, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction for the Wage & Investment (W&I) Division, an important service delivery channel, with 405 field offices serving walk-in customers. The overall goal of this task request is to provide meaningful feedback to managers and staff in those field offices.

The IRS has been measuring customer satisfaction in its Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TACs) since January 1998 using a survey card. Every taxpayer who requires a wait ticket from the Q-matic system is given a comment card. Taxpayers who are not assisted personally by an IRS employee are not given a comment card. Taxpayers are instructed to leave completed surveys in a drop box and the TACs mail them to the data collection subcontractor for processing. While this process has worked well in terms of generating a high volume of ratings, there are severe limitations with this current system:

- The survey administration process at the 405 TACs is highly decentralized and uncontrolled. A TIGTA audit report documents shortcomings in the implementation of the walk-in survey and says the statistical scores and comparisons imply more precision and accuracy than the data warrant.
- Many customers do not resolve their issues when they visit the TACs. For this reason, the typically high ratings may reflect their opinions of staff helpfulness; customer perceptions of the IRS's service performance often decrease as time elapses and their problems persist.
- The rating questions often leave doubts as to the specific nature of the customer's suggestion or complaint.

Addressing these issues with a tightly controlled sampling process would be very expensive, would be burdensome on IRS field employees, and could disrupt workflow in TACs. As a result of these issues, the IRS made a decision to change the basic character of the TAC Survey to a comment card-type of feedback mechanism. The goal of the Comment Card Survey is to provide specific qualitative feedback (i.e., comments) to sites. The comment cards still retain some rating questions, which will be tabulated and reported three times a year, but the emphasis would be on quick turnaround of comment card feedback to the offices where the comment took place. As experiences in the private sector have shown, successful comment card programs have the following features:

- ➢ easy for customers to use;
- ➢ a standardized distribution and data collection process; and,
- ➢ use of technology to distribute feedback to sites quickly and at minimal cost.

Comment Card Survey

The Comment Card Survey is attached. It is available in both English and Spanish. Completion of the comment card is expected to take approximately 1½ minutes.

The objective of the comment card will be to gauge customer expectations and perceptions about services offered at the Field Assistance offices. Every customer will have the opportunity to complete the customer comment card. The results should facilitate more effective management of W&I Field Assistance by:

- Providing insight from the customer's perspective about possible improvements.
- Providing useful input for program evaluation and execution at the programmatic and field office level of service delivery.

A new comment card was developed for 2007. The large number of returned cards should ensure the statistical reliability of the scores at these levels. At the TAC (site) level, the open-end comments will be used to provide continuous, direct feedback to the 405 sites. TAC managers will be able to access their TAC's comments on a monthly basis.

The comment card survey includes 7 ratings questions evaluating service delivery during the TAC visit, using a rating from 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied to 1 being very dissatisfied. There are an additional 7 multiple choice questions, and a blank space for writing in suggestions for improvement.

Comment card overall survey scoring for this contract will be based on the Customer Satisfaction Survey Score response average to the keystone question – "How would you rate your overall experience with field assistance services?" as well as several other satisfaction ratings questions. All comment card survey responses generated will be confidential. The vendor shall ensure that taxpayers responding to the comment card are guaranteed anonymity.

Design and Methodology

The comment card survey will be based upon approximately 9.4 million total taxpayers who visit TACs during a calendar year. The Comment Cards are continually available to taxpayers and it is the taxpayer's choice to pick up a comment card. The typical response rate ranges from 4% - 6% of the total walk-in volume (approximately 9.4 million taxpayers) If we find that more taxpayers than expected are taking the opportunity to complete the comment card, we will distribute additional cards to the TACs. The vendor will also complete a national-level report three times a year, which will summarize the findings. These reports will include detailed findings, an executive summary, and content analysis of the open-ended comments and recommendations for improvement priorities. The vendor will supply four files on a monthly basis including: the raw data set, comment file, percent satisfied and dissatisfied for Field Assistance as a whole; and means for all rating questions by Territory sorted by TAC. The Territories

will also receive a monthly CD containing images (pdf format) of all cards with comments sorted by OND number.

Data collection will begin January 2009. Reports of survey findings will be distributed to the IRS each on 3 times a year based on the planning periods for CARE. Each report will be delivered approximately seven weeks after the comment card cut-off date for the reporting period.

Evaluation

For the quarterly and national reports, the vendor will use basic and advanced statistical techniques including, but not limited to, analysis of variance and the prioritization of improvement priorities using vendor's established technique.

- Comment card counts and overall response rates for the customer. (This information will also be provided by territory in the quarterly national-level reports.)
- The overall level of customer satisfaction with services provided by the territory. (This information will also be provided by territory in the quarterly national-level reports.)
- Mean ratings for all customer satisfaction questions.
- Which areas of service, in priority order, the IRS should focus its resources to improve overall customer satisfaction.
- Trend Data based on past years of data warehoused.
- Cross tabulations of demographic variables, as applicable.
- Analysis of the relationship between comment card responses.

In addition, the vendor will transcribe and code a random sampling of the responses to the open-ended question on improvement suggestions (25 per TAC site per quarter). Every six weeks, the database housing these comments and their associated comment codes will be separated by site and then e-mailed to the respective sites. All of the actual comment cards will be forwarded to the respective manager after the contents have been entered into the database. The TAC managers will also have access to the comments for their site at any time through a dedicated website.

Estimates of the Burden of Data Collection

The comment card has been designed to minimize burden on the taxpayer. The time that a respondent takes to complete the card has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed. The average time of comment card completion is expected to be 1 1/2 minutes. The questions are generally one sentence in structure and on an elementary concept level.

We have made every attempt in designing this comment card to maximize response rate. Using the response rate of 5% percent of the total walk-in volume (9.4 million),

The total burden in hours is estimated to be 11,750 hours (470,000 surveys x 1 1/2 minutes / 60 minutes).

There are no burden hours for non-respondents.
The total number of burden hours is estimated to be 11,750 hours.

Other Information

The following information will be provided to the Human Capital Office within 60 days after the close of the comment card survey data collection:

- 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 comment cards

Cost

The estimated cost for administering this survey is $202,457.

Statistical Contact

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

Jennifer Schranz
Pacific Consulting Group
399 Sherman Avenue, Suite 1
Palo Alto, California 94306
(602) 371-8150