OMB # 1545-1349

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
Clearance Package

Modification for W&I SPEC Partners Survey
National Partner Focus Groups

Internal Revenue Service

Wage and Investment Division
October 30, 2008

OMB SUPPORTING STATEMENT
STUDY TO MEASURE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
W&I SPEC National Partners 2009 - Focus Groups
December 8, 2008 through February 28, 2009

A. Introduction

Background/Overview

The 2008 SPEC National Partner Customer Satisfaction Survey had one particularly notable finding. Overall satisfaction for partners who had not been surveyed in 2007 was split between 13 partners who were Very Satisfied (a rating of 5) and the remaining 6 partners who were Neutral (a rating of 3). This indicated that some new partners were at risk of feeling less than satisfied during the initial stage of their relationship with SPEC. In addition, partners who had worked with SPEC for more than 4 years were highly satisfied with SPEC products and services while partners who had worked with SPEC for between 2 and 4 years were less satisfied. This trend was present in 2007 as well. There was no additional data from the survey to shed light on the reasons why a new partner might be somewhat less than satisfied with their relationship with SPEC.

Objectives of Data Collection

The current study calls for two focus groups—one with experienced SPEC national partners and the other with inexperienced SPEC national partners. Key objectives of both focus groups are to:

- Better understand the service expectations of national partners
- Understand partner needs in developing a positive relationship with SPEC
- Identify critical intervention/communication points for SPEC relationship managers
- Seek partner ideas on how SPEC can improve the relationship management experience for partners

Findings from these focus groups should help lay the groundwork for actions which would increase satisfaction with relatively new partners.

B. Methodology

Study Design

The vendor, Macro International Inc. (Calverton, MD), will conduct two one-hour focus groups of SPEC National Partners in a professional focus group facility (TBD) in Washington, D.C. One group will consist of 8-10 "experienced" partners—those with more than four years tenure representing their organization with SPEC. The other group will consist of "inexperienced" partners—those with less than four years experience. The moderator will follow the attached Moderator's Guide for the groups.

<u>Data to be Collected</u>
This study will gather the personal opinions and observations of national partners regarding the level of service provided them and their organizations by SPEC. Specifically, questions will address:

- The national partner experience
- Service expectations of national partners
- Identification of critical intervention/communication points for SPEC relationship managers
- Changing expectations over time
- Partner needs in developing a positive relationship with SPEC

<u>How Data will be Collected and Used</u>
This feedback will be collected through moderated focus groups and will be used for improving service levels to SPEC national partners.

Macro will produce a draft report of the focus groups. The report will:

- Summarize the results of the sessions, noting recurring themes
- Compare and contrast the results of inexperienced and experienced partners
- Offer conclusions about the steps SPEC should take to improve the relationship with experienced and inexperienced partners

Macro will hold the identities of respondents private. Macro will not provide the IRS with data or status updates that are linked to individual respondents. Upon completion of fielding, Macro will provide anonymous focus group data to the IRS, without any individually identifying information such as name, address or organization.

<u>Data Collection Dates</u>
Recruiting for the focus groups will begin in December, 2008. The focus groups will be held in January, 2009.

<u>Cost of Study</u>
Macro contract: $24,262.

There will be no stipends paid to participants.

<u>Recruitment Efforts</u>

Sample will be provided by the IRS for approximately 40 SPEC national partners whose organizations are located in the greater Washington, D.C. area. Macro will recruit and schedule the groups using the attached Participant Screener.

<u>Location-Region/City and Facility</u>
Focus Group Facility: Washington, D.C.
Data extract: SPEC Partners-IRS Database, Washington, D.C.
Analysis: Macro Headquarters, Calverton, MD

<u>Methods to Maximize Response Rate</u>
The following procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible:

- SPEC will make the initial announcement and invitation to participate through a letter to each potential participant from the Director of the National SPEC organization. (Draft Announcement Letter attached.)
- Each potential participant will be contacted in a follow-up phone call by their SPEC Relationship Manager to further encourage their participation.

<u>Efforts Not to Duplicate Research</u>
This study is a unique follow-up study, and the only qualitative research conducted by the IRS to measure customer satisfaction of SPEC national partners.

C. Privacy, Disclosure, Security Issues

All participants will be subject to the provisions of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II during this study and Macro will ensure that all participants are treated fairly and appropriately.

The security of the data used in this project and the privacy of taxpayers will be carefully safeguarded at all times. Security requirements are based on the Computer Security Act of 1987 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130, Appendices A & B. Physical security measures include a locked, secure office. Notes are stored in locked cabinets or shredded.

The IRS will apply and meet fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure privacy protection of all taxpayers. This includes criteria for disclosure—laid out in the Privacy Act of 1974, the Freedom of Information Act, and Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code—all of which provide for the protection of taxpayer information as well as its release to authorized recipients.

The focus group notes and report will not contain any tax return or taxpayer information. Participants will not be identified in any of the documents or files used for this project. 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.

PRA Statement and OMB Control Number
The OMB Control Number for the study and all required information will be provided to participants at the end of the focus group.

D. Burden Hours

This study has been designed to minimize burden. Each focus group is scheduled for 60 minutes, plus 2 minutes to read the pre-notification letter and 3 minutes for the recruiting call/confirmation call. Burden estimates are based on a 50% response rate.

Burden

Pre-notification Letter:	40 x 2 min = 1.33 hrs
Recruiting/Confirmation call:	40 x 3 min = 2.00 hrs
Travel time for participants:	20 x 40 min = 13.33 hrs
Focus Group:	20 x 60 min = 20.00 hrs

TOTAL BURDEN = 36.66 hours

E. Vendor Contact

For questions regarding this study, contact:

Mr. John Hurley
Senior Consultant
Macro International Inc.
11785 Beltsville Drive, Suite 300
Calverton, MD 20705
Telephone: 301-572-0482
E-Mail: john.f.hurley@macrointernational.com

F. Attachments

- DRAFT Announcement Letter
- DRAFT Participant Screener
- DRAFT Moderator’s Guide

IRS Letterhead

(Name)
(Organization)
(Address)

Dear (Name of National Partner):

The IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education, and Communication (SPEC) Program is committed to continually improving our level of service to all of our National Partner organizations.

In the past, you have been very helpful in giving us your feedback on how SPEC can improve our services to you—for instance, through our annual customer satisfaction survey of National Partners. Now, we would like to ask your help in gaining even further feedback. We plan on conducting focus groups in the Washington, DC area with our National Partners. The purpose is to explore more fully some of the feedback we heard in last year's survey so that we can fine-tune the ways we assist you in your mission.

These lunch-time focus groups, tentatively scheduled for the week of January xx, 2009, will be conducted by an outside consulting firm, Macro International, to ensure objectivity. You will be contacted soon by Macro to invite you to participate in one of the focus groups.

When you are, I warmly encourage your participation. The benefits to you are the opportunity for your voice to be heard directly, and the enhanced level of service that we hope to be able to provide you as a result of what we hear.

Your SPEC Relationship Manager will be following up on this letter to see if you have any questions about the focus group. In the meantime, if you have any immediate questions about the focus groups, please contact (Ron Deaett?/Cassandra Ward?) at (phone number.)

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

Carol Barnett
Director
SPEC National Partner Program