

OMB SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Automated Collection System (ACS) Support
CY – 2009
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
WAGE AND INVESTMENT (W&I) DIVISION
Period of Performance – January 09 – 11/20/2010

Introduction

IRS has replaced the traditional measures of accomplishment with a balanced measurement system consisting of business results, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction, to assess how well it is achieving its mission and objectives. The Automated Collection System Support (ACS Support) Sections within the Compliance organization of Wage and Investment (W&I) is responsible for responding to customer technical and account inquiries, resolving customer account issues, providing account settlement (payment options), and working related issues. As an important customer interface for W&I, ACS Support will need feedback from customers (i.e., taxpayers) to continuously improve its operations.

ACS is an electronic inventory system that stores taxpayer delinquent accounts (TDA) and taxpayer delinquent investigations (TDI). Cases are stored on the ACS system. TDAs and TDIs are routed automatically to one of eight ACS call sites (Atlanta, Austin, Buffalo, Fresno, Jacksonville, Puerto Rico, Kansas City, and Seattle) for resolution if the taxpayer does not fully respond to notices. The customers served by the ACS Support sites would have previously received a written notice from the IRS regarding their account. Currently, we have two ACS Support sites (Kansas City and Fresno) to work any follow-up actions the call sites might need. There are two types of customers ACS Support services, correspondence customers and Collection Due Process (CDP) customers.

The support sites receive all incoming correspondence resulting from ACS Notices sent on taxpayer's accounts. It is the support sites' responsibility to review the correspondence and respond to the taxpayer with the appropriate solution to their inquiry. It is at this time of the response that the Support Staff input the case history, closing actions and/or system updates to the ACS database and Integrated Data Retrieval System (IDRS). When closing actions are taken or a taxpayer follow up is required, the Support employees issue correspondence notifying the taxpayer of the above information.

Another important area of support is Collection Due Process (CDP). In January 2002, the CDP work was consolidated into two campuses for W & I, Fresno and Kansas City. The CDP units process request for CDP hearings mailed by taxpayers. These cases are tracked using the CDP Tracking System (CDPTS). It is the job of the CDP units to process the request and contact the taxpayer, by phone or mail, and make every effort to resolve the account before sending it to Appeals. However, if the taxpayer still wants to appeal or no resolution is reached or the case requires "no taxpayer contact", the CDP unit will prepare a package of specific documents to be forwarded to Appeals for review. At this point the CDP "front-end" case is considered closed and the CDP group input case history, actions and/or system updates to the ACS database and Integrated Data Retrieval System (IDRS).

This project has four primary goals: 1) to identify customer expectations of ACS Support through focus group research; 2) to track customer satisfaction at two ACS Support sites located in Fresno and Kansas City, and 3) to identify improvement opportunities, and 4) to obtain actionable data in a timelier manner with a telephone approach.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

It was determined that Support customers could not distinguish ACS services from that of ACS Support. Therefore, IRS made the decision to survey the Correspondence customers only. A telephone approach will be used to administer the survey for the period of this task request. Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible. Based on the current ACS Support survey, a 60% response rate is anticipated.

Design and Methodology

Pacific Consulting Group will use the sampling plan already developed and randomly select survey participants. The sample data file will consist of; site code, business operating division code, taxpayer's name, address, telephone, date of birth, closing cycle of case, and case type indicator. If no telephone is available, the contractor shall perform telephone lookups. The database will contain cleansed survey responses and open-ended comments coded according to a coding scheme supplied by the contractor, all linked with the unique identifier. Common names of individuals shall not be used. The contractor will add the demographic data items from the survey to the data record for completed surveys. Of the two ACS Support sites, Fresno has 70% and Kansas City has 60% of customer telephone numbers. The current survey questions are to be used. The contractor shall conduct a pre-test of up to 9 interviews. The contractor shall conduct internal consistency checks to ensure the accuracy of the CATI system programming. The contractor will also conduct a field test of the questionnaire, with a minimum of 25 completed responses to ensure: 1) correct CATI programming; 2) good question flow and logic based on the ease of the respondent being able to follow the questioning; and 3) clarity of the questions and rating scales for the respondents. Based on the test, the contractor will make necessary changes approved/requested by W&I. If W&I considers changes to be significant, the contractor will conduct a 2nd field test of the revised questionnaire, again with a minimum of 25 respondents. Based on the test(s) the contractor will make final revisions as necessary and/or requested by W&I. W&I representatives will be on-site to observe field tests. The contractor will use standard procedures to obtain the highest response rate possible. A 60% survey response rate has been assumed.

Privacy, Security, Disclosure & Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be safeguarded. During the focus group and data collection process, participants will be identified to IRS personnel by their first names only. In addition, no participant's names will be mentioned in the focus group report. Participants will be advised that observers from the IRS may be behind the one-way mirror and that their comments will be audio and videotapes.

The survey will not contain tax return or taxpayer information. Survey 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.

We will control official access to the information and will not allow public access to the information. The demographic questionnaires will be destroyed when we have completed the project and there is not further need for the data. Tapes used to record focus group discussions will immediately be erased when we have completed the project and there is no further need for the data or after the information is transcribed.

We will apply fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all taxpayers. 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 taxpayer information as well as its release to authorized recipients.

Evaluation

The contractor 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. The contractor will, on a semi-annual basis, summarize the quantitative ratings and produce a national report showing customer satisfaction scores on all ACS Support survey items and overall improvement priorities. The contractor will deliver site-level reports annually. The contractor will include any relevant database variables in the analysis and weight the survey responses to reflect accurately the entire customer base and provide documentation of any weighting methodologies and formulas applied.

Simultaneously with the delivery of the reports, the contractor will provide designated IRS officials raw data files as well as files containing open-ended comments, annually. Verbatim and data files will be cleansed of any taxpayer and employee identifiers before delivery to vendors. Data files will include full variable names. Complete record layouts will accompany these files. Files will be delivered in Microsoft Excel format and cannot be write-protected. Delivery will be by mailing a CD-ROM to W&I, Filing and Payment Compliance, OPNS-ACSS; Stop 5035 R-3; Kansas City, MO. 64131, and to the Chief, Strategic Planning in W&I in Atlanta, GA. 30308. Documentation will be provided for all statistical techniques employed in producing the reports; the contractor will provide reports that include:

1. Leverage Analysis
2. Satisfaction mean scores of rating questions
3. Distribution of dissatisfied, neutral, and satisfied % of rating questions
4. Semi-annual comparisons with prior year data
5. Summary Page Word Document

Estimates of the Burden of Data Collection

The questionnaire will take approximately 6 minutes to complete and is comprised of 24 questions, one categorical question to describe the person completing the form, and one open-ended question. A total of 110 surveys per month (55 per site) will be conducted during the 12-month period. It is anticipated that 1,320 taxpayers will complete this survey for the year. The burden hours are 110 for the year (1,320 completed surveys x 6 minutes = 7,920 minutes or 132 hours).

Cost

The estimated cost for administering this survey is \$104,352.

Other Information

The following information will be provided to Human Capital Office 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
- Survey period

Statistical Contact

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

Elaine Lowitz
Pacific Consulting Group
399 Sherman Avenue, Suite 1
Palo Alto, California 94306
(650) 327-8108