

Phone Survey

OMB Supporting Statement IRS Automated Underreporter Improvement Project AUR Online Tool & EQ Measures Phased Rollout Customer Satisfaction Intercept Survey April 2010

Background

As part of its Balanced Measurement System, the IRS has been measuring customer satisfaction since 1998. The Operating Divisions including Small Business/Self Employed (SB/SE) and Wage & Investment (W&I) have been measuring customer satisfaction since they were formed in 2000. Although Automated Underreporter (AUR) customer satisfaction results have tended to be higher than those for other IRS enforcement activities, these results have shown little variation over time. Similarly, improvement priorities identified as part of the survey contractor's reports, have not changed from quarter to quarter or year-to-year.

In order to address these concerns, SB/SE and W&I formed an improvement team to research and implement potential actions to improve customer satisfaction with the AUR program. This project is building an enhanced capacity for customer satisfaction improvement in AUR by guiding a project team through a disciplined process of improvement, providing specialized analyses and improvement expertise in support of the teams, and diffusing the learnings that accrue from this experience throughout the organization. This project is based on experiences from other improvement projects conducted since FY 2004 in other program areas within SB/SE and other areas of the IRS.

As part of this improvement project, the AUR improvement team will be implementing a phased rollout of new online tools and processes designed to improve the phone service for callers to AUR. The phased rollout will include a customer satisfaction intercept survey to measure the effectiveness of the AUR online tool and associated internal measures of quality. This phased rollout will be conducted at two AUR sites. To determine the success of this phased rollout, a phone survey will be administered to a random sample of taxpayers whose calls are handled by the phased rollout group at each site and to a random sample of taxpayers whose calls are handled by a control group at each site for comparison.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The phone survey (attached) will be administered by AUR administrative employees to taxpayers who call the AUR phone line. Completion of the survey takes approximately four minutes. The questionnaire covers the following areas: reason for calling, satisfaction with the service, and resulting case status. A comparison of the results of the phased rollout customers and the control customers will help determine whether the online tool is successful and therefore should be implemented more widely.

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All survey responses generated will be kept anonymous.

Design and Methodology

The survey will be conducted for a two week period during the phased rollout at the two different AUR sites. Each of the two sites will have a phased rollout group and a control group, for a total of four separate survey segments. For each of the four survey segments, we will obtain approximately 400 completed surveys for an overall total of 1600 completed surveys. A precision margin of 5% and confidence interval of 95% is expected.

Sampling will be performed continuously by IRS quality control monitors in the sites according to the procedures developed by the improvement team.

An IRS administrative employee at each site will administer the survey by phone to respondents who have called the AUR line regarding their AUR case, selected according to the sampling plan. Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible.

Data Collection Timeframe

The survey will be administered by telephone in April, 2010.

The AUR Improvement Project Team is aware that this taxpayer survey would be running concurrently with the U.S Census. The team believes that this survey would not pose additional burden or confusion on the taxpayer population for two key reasons. First, the number of taxpayers involved in the survey is a very limited. And second, the taxpayers involved would be those who have initiated contact with the IRS by calling the AUR toll-free number and not taxpayers who would be independently approached for the survey. The survey is specific to the service received from the IRS during the call.

Who is Conducting Research

Pacific Consulting Group (PCG) and the IRS will conduct this research. AUR administrative employees will conduct the telephone survey. PCG will oversee the data collection, conduct analysis and produce all reports.

Evaluation

The contractor will use basic and advanced statistical techniques including, but not limited to, means, frequencies, and t-tests to provide:

- Survey counts and overall response rates.
- Overall level of customer satisfaction, comparing phased rollout versus control.
- Averages and frequencies for all rating questions, comparing by phased rollout versus control.
- Analysis of open-ended comments

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The methodology will be discussed with and approved by the IRS.

Stipend

No payment or gift will be provided to survey respondents.

Efforts to Avoid Duplicating Research

This is the only survey that provides a comparison of the phased rollout and control groups for the AUR improvement project.

Privacy, Security, Disclosure, Anonymity

The IRS will ensure compliance with Taxpayer Bill of Rights II. All participants will be treated fairly and appropriately.

We will limit and control the amount of information we collect to those items that are necessary to accomplish the research objectives. The security of the data used in this project and the privacy of participants 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 A7B. Physical security measures include a locked, secure office. Data security at the C-2 level is accomplished via the Windows NT operating system. Systems are password protected, users profiled for authorized use, and individual audit trails generated and reviewed periodically.

The IRS will apply and meet fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure privacy protection of all participants. This includes criterion 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.

Anonymity will be safeguarded. No participant names will be mentioned in the reports or data files. Anonymity is assured by virtue of agency policy. The terms of IRS's contract with Pacific Consulting Group requires that the anonymity of any data be maintained.

Estimates of the Burden of Data Collection

The survey interview has been designed to minimize burden on the taxpayer. The time that a respondent takes to complete the phone survey has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed. The average time of survey completion is expected to be 4 minutes. The questions are generally one sentence in structure and on an elementary concept level.

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

Respondents: 1,600 completed surveys x 5 minutes (1 minute invitation to the survey and 4 minute questionnaire) = 133 hours

Non-respondents: 1067 individuals x 1 minute invitation to the survey = 18 hours

Survey burden hours = 151

Other Information

The following information will be provided to OMB IRS liaison office SOI 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.
- Taxpayer participation (number of requests for taxpayer participation and number of interviews completed).
- Dates on which the data collection began and ended.
- Cost (excluding regular salaries of IRS employees).

Cost

The cost for this survey is \$6,888.

Statistical Contact

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

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