

**Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this important survey. Please complete this survey preview in advance of the telephone call from Russell Research and then have it available for that call. It will reduce the amount of time that the call takes. **Keep in mind that all of your responses will be completely anonymous.**

Please also keep in mind that this survey is focused only on Federal individual tax returns using the 1040 family of forms. State, business, and information returns are out of scope.

Note: the survey contains ALL-CAP INSTRUCTIONS to guide you in the completion of the survey. Please read each instruction carefully.

**General Information**

**1. First, please estimate the number of tax returns that your firm files by each of the following customer types.**

	# RETURNS
Taxpayers.....	_____
Tax Professionals who are not Franchisees.....	_____
Tax Professionals who are Franchisees.....	_____
White label customers (e.g., for others to brand as their own and resell).....	_____
Check the box to the right if your firm does not make or sell tax preparation software.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

**IF YOUR FIRM DOES NOT MAKE OR SELL TAX PREPARATION SOFTWARE, NO NEED TO CONTINUE. PLEASE NOTE THIS TO THE RUSSELL INTERVIEWER WHO CALLS TO COLLECT YOUR INFORMATION. THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP.**

**IF YOU ENTERED A “1” OR HIGHER FOR “TAXPAYERS” IN Q1, PLEASE ANSWER Q2. IF NOT, SKIP TO INSTRUCTIONS FOR Q3.**

**2. How do your taxpayer customers initially install your software? Please estimate the proportion of taxpayer software installed in 2010 by each of the following methods. Do not include subsequent software updates. (THE TOTAL OF ALL OF YOUR RESPONSES MUST EQUAL 100%.)**

	PERCENT
Online only (e.g., Software-as-a-Service/SaaS, web client).....	_____
Download and install onto user’s computer.....	_____
Install from physical media onto user’s computer.....	_____

**IF YOU ENTERED A “1” OR HIGHER FOR EITHER OF THE TWO “TAX PROFESSIONAL” ANSWERS IN Q1 ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER Qs 3 AND 4 BELOW. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO INSTRUCTIONS FOR Q5 ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

3. How do your tax professional customers initially install your software? Please estimate the proportion of tax professional software installed in 2010 by each of the following methods. Do not include subsequent software updates. (THE TOTAL OF ALL OF YOUR RESPONSES MUST EQUAL 100%.)

PERCENT

Online only (e.g., Software-as-a-Service/SaaS, web client)..... \_\_\_\_\_

Download and install onto user's computer..... \_\_\_\_\_

Install from physical media onto user's computer..... \_\_\_\_\_

4. In what ways does your firm's tax professional software allow users to transmit (e-file) their clients' returns? Can they...(CHECK OR ENTER ALL THAT APPLY.)

- Use your firm's transmission (e-file) capability built into the software.....
- Use another firm's transmission capability and if so, whose? \_\_\_\_\_
- Use your firm's software to create a return file but transmit it directly to IRS themselves.....
- Other (ENTER & CHECK ANSWER) \_\_\_\_\_

REGARDLESS OF YOUR PRECEDING ANSWERS, CONTINUE WITH Q5.

5. Following are some definitions which we would like you to keep in mind when answering subsequent questions. Please carefully review these definitions.

**Accuracy**....Software correctly applies tax law, correctly represents the taxpayer’s tax liability, and correctly formats return.

**Reliability**. .Software and transmission (e-file) systems are available and operating consistently.

**Security**....Reasonable safeguards protecting personally identifiable information (PII).

**Privacy**.....Appropriately use and disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII).

**Burden**.....Tax law, guidance, filing requirements, process, tools, and information present a challenge in bringing software to market.

**Based upon the above definitions, how would your firm rank the following risks to tax administration due to the use of tax software, where 1 is the greatest risk and 5 is the least? (RANK ORDER ALL ITEMS.)**

	<u>RANK</u>
Accuracy.....	_____
.....	
Burden.....	_____
Privacy.....	_____
.....	
Reliability.....	_____
.....	
Security.....	_____
.....	

**Security**

6. How does your firm manage its security program? Is it...(CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER.)

- Managed by designated security lead (e.g., Chief Information Security Officer).....
- Managed by committee (e.g., personnel from security, compliance and legal).....
- No security program.....
- Other (ENTER & CHECK ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_

7. How often do you review and update your internal security policies (e.g., standards, controls)? Do you...(CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER.)

- Update quarterly.....
- Update semi-annually.....
- Update annually.....
- Do not update.....
- Do not have security policies.....





14. What is the acceptable recovery time for unplanned service outages? Using the time scale below, please indicate the acceptable recovery time for each of the outage types below. (CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER ON EACH ROW.)

	2-6	1 or more	Less than	1-8	9-24
			1 hour	Hours	Hours
	<u>Days</u>	<u>Weeks</u>			
Preparation outage (i.e., customers can't use software to complete return).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Transmission outage (i.e., customers can't e-file completed returns with IRS).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Download outage (i.e., customers can't download software or updates).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Customer service outage (i.e., customers can't use online or phone help) .....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Accuracy

15. How many test cases do you run to validate software accuracy (e.g., correctly applies tax law, correctly represents the taxpayer's tax liability) for each of the following types of software? (ENTER A NUMBER FOR EACH ITEM, EVEN IF "0".)

	<u>NUMBER</u>
<u>Taxpayer</u> software.....	_____
<u>Tax professional</u> software.....	_____

16. For your preparation software, which of the following types of testing do you perform? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- Integration.....
- Performance.....
- Quality Assurance.....
- Regression.....
- System.....
- Unit/application.....
- Usability.....
- Other (ENTER & CHECK ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_
- Do not perform testing.....

17. For your transmission (e-file) capability, which of the following types of testing do you perform? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- Integration.....
- Performance.....
- Quality Assurance.....
- Regression.....
- System.....
- Unit/application.....
- Usability.....
- Other (ENTER & CHECK ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_
- Do not perform testing.....

**18. How do you notify customers of software updates? Do you...(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)**

- Email instructions on updating the software.....
- Post notice on the firm and/or product website.....
- Message through social media (e.g., Twitter).....
- Trigger the tax software to automatically install and activate update.....
- Prompt within the software to install and activate update.....
- Distribute software updates for scheduled installation.....
- Use remote access to install and activate update .....
- Stop accepting returns from older software products.....
- Other (ENTER & CHECK ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_
- Do not notify customers of product updates.....

**19. From January 15 to April 15, 2010, how many times did you update your software? (ENTER NUMBER BELOW.)**

NUMBER

Any reason (total number of updates)..... \_\_\_\_\_

IF YOUR ANSWER TO Q19 WAS "1" OR MORE, PLEASE ANSWER Q20. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO Q21.

**20. Given that a software update can be driven by more than one reason, how many of these updates were due to...(ENTER A NUMBER FOR EACH ITEM BELOW - EVEN IF "0". SINCE ONE UPDATE CAN BE DUE TO MULTIPLE REASONS, THE TOTAL OF YOUR RESPONSES MAY EXCEED THE NUMBER IN Q19 - BUT THE NUMBER FOR ANY ONE ITEM SHOULD NOT EXCEED THE TOTAL IN Q19.)**

NUMBER

- Final forms/instructions released by IRS..... \_\_\_\_\_
- Customer feedback (e.g., user interface design changes)..... \_\_\_\_\_
- New functionality..... \_\_\_\_\_
- Bug fixes to existing functionality..... \_\_\_\_\_
- Business rule updates (e.g., calculations)..... \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (ENTER OTHERS HERE AND THEN ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_
- Other (ENTER OTHERS HERE AND THEN ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_
- Other (ENTER OTHERS HERE AND THEN ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_

**Privacy**

**REGARDLESS OF YOUR PRECEDING ANSWERS, PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS FROM THIS POINT FORWARD.**

**21. How does your firm manage its privacy program? Is it...(CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER.)**

- Managed by designated privacy lead (e.g., Chief Privacy Officer).....
- Managed by designated security lead (e.g., Chief Information Security Officer).....
- Managed by committee (e.g., personnel from security, compliance and legal).....
- No privacy program.....
- Other (ENTER & CHECK ANSWER)\_\_\_\_\_

22. How often do you review and update your internal privacy policies (e.g., classifying PII, acceptable usage)?  
(CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER.)

Update quarterly.....

Update semi-annually.....

Update annually.....

Do not update.....

Do not have policy.....





Improper use or disclosure of PII due to internal cause (e.g., insider theft, destruction).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Improper use or disclosure of PII due to external cause (e.g., hacking and intrusion, malware, lost/stolen laptop).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of notice and consent (e.g., choice to opt in/out).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lack of transparency (e.g., written privacy policy).....	<input type="checkbox"/>				



Have tracking capabilities (e.g., incident ticket created and escalated)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Categorize incident (e.g., severity, assessment)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Use forensic techniques (e.g., system logs, intrusion detection logs)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Have physical resources (e.g., redundant storage, standby systems, backup services)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Document and preserve evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Notify proper external agencies (e.g., comply with federal and/or state security breach notification laws)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Assess damage and cost (e.g., valuation)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Review and update policies after incident	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**Burden**

31. How do you anticipate and accommodate the effects of late tax law changes in your software?  
Do you...(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- Code software to account for multiple legislative outcomes.....
- Quickly iterate software changes.....
- Consult IRS draft forms or instructions.....
- Contact IRS personnel for guidance.....
- Use information from industry and professional affiliations (e.g., CERCA, NACTP).....
- Use in-house legislative analysis.....
- Use third party legislative analysis (e.g., CCH, BNA).....
- Other (ENTER AND CHECK ANSWER).....

32. Consider the activities in the previous question. On average over the last two years, please estimate the full time equivalent hours directly associated with incorporating late tax law changes in your software. (CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER.)

- Less than 520 hours.....
- 520 to 1039 hours.....
- 1040 to 2079 hours.....
- 2080 to 4160 hours.....
- More than 4160 hours.....
- No hours.....

33. Using the scale provided below, please rate your agreement that the following are sufficient...(CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER PER ROW.)

		Strongly		Neutral	
	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Neutral
Bulletins.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tax forms, schedules, and instructions.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Transmission file requirements.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
E-file acknowledgements.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Error reject codes.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
E-file privacy and security standards.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Additional Feedback**

34. Please share any additional comments or concerns.

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## Closing

**Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. Please keep your completed survey handy for the telephone call from Russell Research. Having the completed survey available for that call will reduce the amount of time the call takes.**

Thank you for volunteering to participate in our survey. The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1432. The time estimated for participation is 8 minutes. If you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the, Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224.