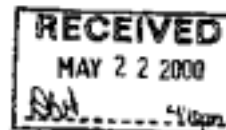




COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20224

May 22, 2000



MEMORANDUM FOR TREASURY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR
TAX ADMINISTRATION

FROM:

for Charles O. Rosotti *Bob Wenzel*
Commissioner of Internal Revenue

SUBJECT:

Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration
(TIGTA) Draft Report – Walk-In Customer Satisfaction Survey
Results Should Be Qualified if Used for the GPRA (Audit No.
199910107)

I am writing in response to the recommendations in the above-referenced report. We appreciate that your review highlights some of the weaknesses in our Customer Satisfaction Survey procedures. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is firmly committed to improving customer service and helping taxpayers comply with the tax laws. We have already made improvements to how we administer the survey and will continue to do so.

Please note the National Director, Education, Walk-In and Correspondence Improvement Division is responsible for the Walk-In Survey Program and the corrective actions identified below, rather than Strategic Planning. The National Director, Education, Walk-In and Correspondence Improvement Division, working with the Director, Strategic Planning and Budgeting, will also be responsible for the disclosure of survey limitations for the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

We believe the survey results are valid indicators of customer satisfaction for IRS Walk-In service based on the advice of IRS statisticians. The survey results also help us improve how we manage the Walk-In Program. We will continue to better administer these surveys, increase the response rates, and analyze the survey results. We will also continue to stress to tax assistants the importance of making the Customer Satisfaction Survey available to taxpayers that are helped.

Our corrective actions address the recommendations suggested by TIGTA and identify steps that have been or will be taken. Our next program guidance memorandum, which will be sent to field offices in July, will provide direction to management on establishing controls to protect survey forms, the integrity of the data, and the survey results.

IDENTITY OF RECOMMENDATION/FINDING

Establish controls to ensure the survey form is offered to all taxpayers that receive assistance during a survey week.

ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE

Every taxpayer is not given a survey form and asked to participate in the survey during survey weeks. Managers and employees are unclear on whether they should make the survey forms available: to all taxpayers, only to taxpayers they personally assist, or only to taxpayers who visit the Walk-In office.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

We have conducted conference calls with regional analysts to stress the importance of providing the Customer Satisfaction Survey to all taxpayers who are helped. We will continue to stress this during subsequent conference calls. During upcoming Continued Professional Education (CPE) training classes for taxpayer assistants, we will reinforce the need to provide surveys to taxpayers who have been helped. Our next program guidance memorandum will be updated to include instructions for management to monitor assistants for adherence to this procedure.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

PROPOSED: August 1, 2000

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

National Director, Education, Walk-In and Correspondence Improvement Division

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

During our Readiness, Quality Review, and District Office visits we will monitor for compliance.

IDENTITY OF RECOMMENDATION/FINDING

Establish controls to protect the survey forms, the integrity of the data, and the survey results.

ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE

The current management control process is not adequate to ensure the Walk-In Customer Satisfaction Survey is administered properly. Without a reliable survey process and system of internal controls, the IRS may not collect data essential for accurate and reliable survey results, have results that represent all customers who interact with Walk-In offices, and have given all customers the opportunity to participate in the survey.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Our next program guidance memorandum will require management to maintain control of survey forms during non-survey week. Management will be instructed to provide locked drop boxes for taxpayers to leave completed survey forms. Managers will be responsible for designating an individual to remove the surveys from the drop box and return them to the vendor.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

PROPOSED: August 1, 2000

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

National Director, Education, Walk-In, and Correspondence Improvement Division

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

During our Readiness, Quality Review, and District Office visits we will monitor for compliance.

IDENTITY OF RECOMMENDATION/FINDING

Develop and conduct training for Walk-In personnel on how the survey should be implemented.

ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE

National Office has provided survey procedures. However, Walk-In coordinators, managers, and our tax assistants interpreted and applied the procedures differently.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

We will determine the level of employee understanding of the survey process and provide additional training through CPE. Instructions in IRM 21.10.1 (dated January 1, 2000), Customer Service Quality Review Program, provide guidance to taxpayer assistants when offering the survey to taxpayers. We recognize that all IRM procedures are not being followed. However, our next program guidance memorandum, coupled with CPE training, will help us increase tax assistants awareness of the need to adhere to instructions in the IRM for survey procedures. In addition, we will continue to provide written guidance to field management to ensure a full understanding of and support for the survey process.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

PROPOSED: August 1, 2000

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

National Director, Education, Walk-In, and Correspondence Improvement Division

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

During Readiness, Quality Review, and District Office visits we will monitor for compliance.

IDENTITY OF RECOMMENDATION/FINDING

Emphasize in the Walk-In Program Letter and action plan the importance of conducting the survey to meet GPRA requirements.

ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE

In February 1998, the IRS Executive Officer for Customer Service issued a memorandum on "Implementation of Customer Satisfaction Survey for Walk-In Offices." The IRS has not provided any follow-up guidance or formal training on the Walk-In Customer Satisfaction Survey since its inception in 1998.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The Walk-In Operations Section will revise the program guidance memorandum to emphasize the importance of conducting the survey to meet GPRA requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

PROPOSED: August 1, 2000

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

National Director, Education, Walk-In, and Correspondence Improvement Division

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

During Readiness, Quality Review, and District Office visits we will monitor for compliance.

If you have any questions regarding our response to this report, please contact me at (202) 622-9511 or your staff may call Robert Wilkerson, Assistant Commissioner (Customer Service), at (202) 622-5044.