Office of Management and Budget
Clearance Package

Internal Revenue Service

Acquiring Taxpayer Feedback on the Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) Service

Small Business/Self-Employed (SB/SE) Research
Ft. Lauderdale/Greensboro
SB/SE Research Project 04.01.001.09 (FTL0100)
October 2009

Table of Contents

Introduction

Background

On August 11, 2000, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13166 requiring "each Federal agency to examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP [Limited English Proficient] persons can meaningfully access those services." In response to the order, then IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti established the Multilingual Initiative (MLI) and implemented an IRS policy that committed the IRS to assist LEP persons in meeting their tax responsibilities.

To support MLI, the IRS also established a Multilingual Initiative Strategy Office which initiated efforts to better serve LEP taxpayers. Key efforts included contracting for Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) services. The OPI services allow IRS employees to communicate with LEP taxpayers so that tax issues can be resolved in spite of language barriers and with minimal burden to the taxpayer.

SB/SE Research conducted pilot tests of OPI services between 2006 and 2008 to determine how effective OPI services were. SB/SE field compliance functions and Appeals functions participated in initial pilots, and additional functions from SB/SE participated in subsequent pilots in those years. SB/SE Research gathered employee opinion on the services to support an assessment of the service effectiveness. The majority of employees using the OPI services indicated that the services were efficient, helpful, and effective in resolving LEP taxpayer issues.

The MLI Strategy Office has currently contracted with Language Line Services for OPI services through fiscal year 2010. Language Line Services is the world's leading provider of interpretation services and provides services to nearly 90 percent of the nation's 911 call centers and more than 75 percent of Fortune 500 companies.

While employee feedback has been valuable in assessing OPI services and determining what services are needed, the MLI Strategy Office also requires feedback from taxpayers (and tax practitioners) who use the services, so that a complete assessment (to include the users' perspective) can be made. This assessment is necessary for determining whether service changes are needed or whether additional services are required.

Objective

The objective of gathering taxpayer feedback on OPI services is to help the IRS determine whether taxpayers are satisfied with the services and whether they feel that the services are effective in supporting LEP taxpayers as they resolve their issue(s) with the IRS.

Methodology

Research Design

We will gather feedback from randomly selected taxpayers (or from tax practitioners, as both may initiate calls) who use the OPI translation service. These taxpayers will be using the service as part of their requesting assistance from an IRS walk-in customer service or as part of their interacting with field compliance employees on their tax issues. IRS telephone interviewers will ask four questions to determine taxpayer opinions on the OPI services. Appendix A provides the interview script and questions.

During the administration period, the OPI service translators will provide services according to standard operating procedures. At the end of calls where Spanish was the required language, the OPI translators will transfer randomly selected calls to the IRS employees who will conduct the survey in Spanish and document all relevant information through a Data Collection Instrument (DCI), which will be a scannable feedback form.

Since approximately 95% of calls using the OPI services require Spanish translation, this user segment is considered a representation of OPI users.

Sample Design

For this study, SB/SE Research will use a sample of 385 LEP taxpayers. This allows for a 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of plus or minus 5%. The OPI service contractor will randomly select the calls on a daily basis to forward to the IRS telephone interviewers.

Data To Be Collected

The data to be collected consists of the opinions of taxpayers about their satisfaction with OPI services and their opinion on the effectiveness of the OPI services.   The following questions are those which will be asked of the callers: (Appendix A provides the telephone interview script and the questions below.)

1. Was the Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) Service helpful in allowing you and the IRS employee to understand each other?

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

2. Was the Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) Service necessary for the successful resolution of your IRS concerns?

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

3. Would you recommend that we continue with the Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) Service?

    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

4. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your experience using the Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) Service today? (on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied)

    - ☐ 01 Very dissatisfied
    - ☐ 02 Dissatisfied
    - ☐ 03 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
    - ☐ 04 Satisfied
    - ☐ 05 Very satisfied

Data Collection Dates

The collection of information will take place during the first two weeks of February. Based on historical volumes and call times, we expect the time period to be sufficient. If additional time is required to reach the sample size of 385, the completion date will be extended another week, or until the volume needed is acquired.

Who Is Conducting the Research and Where

The IRS' SB/SE Research Office (Ft. Lauderdale/Greensboro) will be conducting the research. The taxpayers who use the OPI services could be resident anywhere in the United States or Puerto Rico.

How Will The Data Be Analyzed?

SB/SE Research will compute the proportions of responses to each response choice, for each question. These proportions will serve as the primary measures on each question.

Expected Response Rate

The survey is expected to yield at least an 80% response rate. We expect at least 80% since the survey poses minimal burden, as it is short (four questions) and is part of a contact already initiated by the caller with the IRS. We feel that the callers will be receptive following use of a translation service provided by the IRS.

The telephone interviewer script in Appendix A shows the introduction that the interviewer will use to ask the caller to participate in the short question period. The script emphasizes the importance of the caller's feedback, as one way to encourage participation and maximize the response rate.

Non-response Analysis

The IRS and the OPI service do not maintain demographic or other data on the taxpayer callers. So, we will not be able to conduct a non-response analysis. If the response rate is less than 80%, we will use the results as anecdotal, and no decisions regarding the OPI services will be made solely on these results. These results will be used in conjunction with other research done on the service effectiveness.

Stipend

No monetary incentive will be provided to survey participants.

Cost of Study

There is no additional cost for the OPI service contractor to transfer the calls for the study. There is no additional staff cost for IRS telephone interviewers, as this is one of various MLI-related tasks that are considered normal duty for these employees.

Efforts to Not Duplicate Research

As standard practice in our research, we researched for previous studies, both internal and external to the IRS, concerning customer or taxpayer satisfaction with interpretation services. Primary sources on customer satisfaction surveys in general included SB/SE Research, Pacific Consulting Group, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), the Government Accountability Office (GAO), other IRS Research organizations, and our research customer organization (the MLI Strategy Office). We did not find efforts duplicating this study.

Burden Estimates

The collection will involve 385 participants. The survey is expected to yield an 80% response rate. The estimated time to complete the survey is 3 minutes (0.05 hours).

Estimated number of respondents (80% of 385)…..……….308
Estimated time to complete survey …………………………...0.05 hours
Estimated respondent burden……….…………………………..15.4 hours

Estimated number of non-respondents (20% of 385)……..…77
Estimated time to determine non-participation (1minute)….…0.02 hours
Estimated non-respondent burden……………………………..1.5 hours

<u>Total respondent and non-respondent burden estimate………16.9 hours</u>

Privacy, Security, Disclosure and Anonymity Requirements

SB/SE Research will ensure the privacy of those who participate in the survey and will ensure that security requirements are followed regarding the data obtained from the survey. SB/SE Research will follow security requirements according to the Internal Revenue Manual (IRM) and applicable federal guidelines, including the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA). The data will be stored on the SB/SE Research computer system located in a secured area. The data will be maintained in a restricted access folder, so that only those researchers conducting the analysis will have access to the data. Compliance with IRS research data standards will be certified by the Chief, SB/SE Research (Ft. Lauderdale).

The data SB/SE Research obtains from the survey will be used only for this project. Once the project is complete, the data will be archived for one year and then destroyed.

PRA Statement & OMB Control Number on Collection Instruments

The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement and the OMB Control Number will be provided (on the phone) to those who agree to participate in the study. They will also be provided the address where comments can be sent regarding the study.

Special Tallies and Other Information

We will provide a report on the survey results to the IRS' Statistics of Income Division, as required for their subsequent reporting to OMB on survey accomplishments. We will submit the report within 60 days after completion of our study, and it will contain the following:

1) **SOI Control #** (Not the OMB #):

2) Title of Study:

3) Purpose:

4) **Findings**: (Provide a brief summary (one or two paragraphs) of significant (important) findings that were evidenced in the survey results)

5) **Actions taken or lessons learned**: Provide a brief summary (one or two paragraphs) of any actions taken or lessons learned as a result of the survey findings.

6) **Total Number** (one number such as 842) **of requests (surveys sent or attempts for taxpayer participation):**

7) **Total Number** (one number such as 326) **of questionnaires returned or participants in focus group, etc.:**

8) **Date the data collection began** (date only)**:**

9) **Date the data collection ended** (date only)**:**

10) Response Rate:

11) **Actual Burden Hours:** (Grand Total in hours only-one number)

12) **Cost:** (Include reproduction costs, travel, overtime payments, stipends, and any other costs incurred as a direct result of the survey (do not include regular salaries of IRS employees or those of contractors).