

IRS Oversight Board

September 15, 2009
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IRS Oversight Board Focuses on IRS Human Capital, Technology

(Washington, DC) The IRS Oversight Board was pleased with a noticeable boost in participation in the IRS' 2009 employee survey. This year 72 percent of IRS employees took part in the survey, which asks employees about their attitudes and perceptions about their job experiences. Last year, 65 percent of employees participated in the survey. Overall, 74 percent of IRS employees are satisfied in their jobs; a slight lift from last year. Satisfaction has steadily increased from 51 percent when the survey began in 2001.

The results of the IRS employee engagement survey were discussed at the Oversight Board's September 3, 2009 meeting, which covered a variety of human capital issues.

Among them was the culmination of the IRS Workforce of Tomorrow initiative, in which a special task force worked with many IRS employees and managers on designing comprehensive strategies aimed at improving human capital issues, such as recruiting, hiring, professional development, and employee retention. The initiative was started last year.

Said Board Chairman Paul Cherecwich, "We commend the IRS for its Workforce of Tomorrow initiative. It addresses many longstanding issues in the agency's human capital program. It lays out a clear vision and roadmap of short and long term improvements in key areas such as streamlined hiring, growing future leaders, and retaining quality employees."

The Board also reviewed the IRS hiring plan status. Additional funding gave the IRS the opportunity to hire several thousand additional enforcement personnel. Ninety percent of the positions have been filled; more than half are revenue agents and officers.

"The Board is very pleased with the IRS' enforcement hiring initiative. Over time, these new revenue agents and revenue officers will more than pay for themselves in increased revenue collected. They will also provide a deterrent against those taxpayers thinking of straying across the line into noncompliance," commented Chairman Cherecwich.

The Board also received a briefing on the IRS collection function, which includes such key enforcement tools such as liens, levies, and seizures, as well as installment agreements and offers in compromise.

Board Monitors IRS BSM Plan Progress

Progress on the status of the IRS Business Systems Modernization (BSM) program was discussed. The IRS revised its development approach to the Customer Account Data Engine (CADE) project to complete a data model, develop a relational data base, and update taxpayer accounts on a daily basis. The IRS revised its approach to deliver key benefits to taxpayers earlier than was previously planned.

The Board committed to review CADE project progress at every Oversight Board meeting, and in greater depth than other programs, because of CADE's critical role in modernizing the IRS.

Jump in E-filing; Next Steps in Reaching E-File Goal Explored

This year's tax season saw a substantial jump in online filing. Almost 32 million taxpayers filed their returns electronically using a personal computer, a growth of 19 percent from the 2008 filing season. So far, 68 percent of returns have been filed electronically, an increase from last year's 60 percent.

The Board discussed e-filing progress during a discussion on the status of the Electronic Tax Administration (ETA)'s Advanced E-file Study. Work is underway on the study's second phase, which will assess the feasibility of options to boost e-filing. The options were outlined in the first phase of the study. The IRS Restructuring and Reform Act established a goal that 80 percent of individual tax returns be filed electronically by 2007; since then, efforts continue to reach the goal. The ETA feasibility study will be released by the IRS later this year.

Board Participates in IRS National Tax Forums

This summer, Board members and staff have participated in IRS National Tax Forums in Las Vegas, San Diego, Orlando, and New York City. Two more forums will be held in Dallas and Atlanta. Thousands of tax professionals attend the forums, which gives the Board the opportunity to meet with tax preparers and IRS employees and hear their views on tax administration and the IRS operations and performance.

The next Board meeting will be held December 2, 2009 in Washington, DC.

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