



Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration Office of Audit

IMPROVED TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE SERVICES SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR TAXPAYERS TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE DURING A CORRESPONDENCE AUDIT

Issued on August 17, 2012

Highlights

Highlights of Report Number: 2012-30-093 to the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner for the Small Business/Self-Employed Division.

IMPACT ON TAXPAYERS

The Intelligent Contact Management System is a toll-free call routing system that the Small Business/Self-Employed (SB/SE) Division incorporated into its correspondence audit process to make it more responsive and less burdensome from the taxpayer's point of view. However, the SB/SE Division is not consistently returning telephone calls to taxpayers and needs to take action to increase the likelihood of achieving the expected benefits of the new telephone system.

WHY TIGTA DID THE AUDIT

This audit was initiated at the suggestion of the IRS to determine the progress that the SB/SE Division is making to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Intelligent Contact Management System. Under the old telephone system, the IRS reported finding that 70 percent of the calls to examiners were answered by voicemail, and 39 percent of these calls were not promptly returned. Moreover, 62 percent of the taxpayers were repeat callers. Also, the customer satisfaction survey results suggested that the IRS needs to make it easier to get through to the IRS on the telephone for assistance.

WHAT TIGTA FOUND

The numerous benefits the Intelligent Contact Management System offers represent a substantial change from the prior capabilities that the old toll-free call system provided to taxpayers involved in a correspondence audit. For example, one major change was replacing the geographically based routing system with a nationwide skill-based routing network that distributes calls to the next available IRS telephone assistant. This change makes it easier for taxpayers to reach examiners and receive needed information on their first call.

TIGTA also found that examiners are trained and monitored to ensure they provide accurate information to taxpayers, but they do not consistently return calls when requested by or promised to taxpayers. TIGTA identified 20 calls during which the taxpayer either requested a return call or was promised one from a statistical sample of calls the SB/SE Division received from October 31 through December 9, 2011. For 14 of the 20 calls, there was no evidence that the call was returned.

WHAT TIGTA RECOMMENDED

TIGTA recommended that the IRS modify quality review procedures to include a requirement that quality reviewers and first-line managers evaluate if examiners are returning calls. In addition, the IRS should ensure that quality reviewers and first-line managers are knowledgeable of how the Correspondence Examination Automation Support System can be used for evaluating whether examiners are returning calls.

The IRS agreed with both recommendations and stated it has completed implementation of the necessary corrective actions to address the problems TIGTA identified.

READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full IRS response go to:

<http://www.treas.gov/tigta/auditreports/2012reports/201230093fr.pdf>.