

2016
Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey
Results

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Customer-focused service is one of the Department of Revenue's (Department) five goals. This goal is important in order to meet our customers' needs, expectations, and to provide the highest level of service possible.

Surveys are one means by which we collect data from our customers to measure progress and identify customer needs and expectations. The 2016 Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey provides a fresh opportunity to see the Department as our customers see us, and gives us a roadmap to meet their expectations.

BACKGROUND

In 1992, the Department conducted its first Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey (survey). Currently, the Department conducts the survey every two years. In the past, the Department partnered with Washington State University's Social & Economic Sciences Research Center to conduct the survey. In 2016, to reduce costs, the Department decided to administer the survey using an online tool.

A cross-divisional team of employees called the Customer Feedback Workgroup developed the 2016 survey (see Appendix A), using the 2014 survey as a baseline. They review the survey results and make recommendations for improvement.

TRENDS, CHANGES, AND SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATIONS

Taxpayers continue to prefer using the agency website or email (including secure messaging) to interact with or obtain information from the Department.

When asked if taxpayers had contacted the telephone information center in the past year, the 2016 survey saw an increase in the percentage responding yes. In 2014, only 34.3 percent of the responses indicated they had contacted the telephone information center in the past year. For the 2016 survey, the percentage rose to 43 percent.

Respondents continue to indicate a desire for increased education information including webinars. In the 2014 survey, many comments included mention of more webinar (online) trainings. This year, the survey included a question directed at how useful it would be to participate in online training. More than 64 percent said online training would be "very useful" or "useful."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Publicize mobile apps

Taxpayers responding to the survey are not using the Department's sales tax lookup or the business lookup mobile apps. Of those responding, 89.5 percent answered they have not used either of the mobile apps.

Increasing usage of our mobile apps will help promote correct and timely reporting of taxes by our taxpayers. Targeting certain industry groups - such as construction or other mobile type businesses rather than all businesses - would ensure awareness among those most likely to benefit from their use.

Supports Strategic Business Plan

Goal: Deliver customer-focused services

Objective: Increase responsiveness to the changing needs of customers

Continue with improvements to dor.wa.gov

One of the 2014 survey recommendations from Customer Feedback Workgroup was to improve clarity and accuracy of information on the Department's website. While the Department is working toward launching a new user-friendly website, the Customer Feedback Workgroup recommends that improvements continue after launch of the new site. This includes the following continued improvements:

- Improving search tools
- Simplifying publications and forms
- Creating more industry specific information

Supports Strategic Business Plan

Goals: Deliver customer-focused services & Promote correct, timely reporting and payment of taxes

Objectives: Increase responsiveness to the changing needs of customers & Provide taxpayer education

Expand educational information

The 2014 survey highlighted significant interest from taxpayers in more educational opportunities such as webinars and industry specific publications. An effort to develop a data-driven educational framework started after the 2014 survey.

The current survey continued the trend of requests asking for more online training opportunities on specific topics along with publications. The 2016 survey included a question directed at finding out how useful it would be to participate in online training:

- More than 64 percent responded they would find it "very useful" or "useful" to participate in online training
- 58.3 percent were small businesses
- 67.3 percent have done business with the Department for more than five years

Supports Strategic Business Plan

Goal: Promote correct, timely reporting, and payment of taxes

Objective: Provide taxpayer education

Improve call center processes to reduce wait times

Between the 2014 survey and the 2016 survey, the "strongly agree" response to the question "My call was answered quickly" dropped from 55.1 percent to 23.1 percent. Overall, the numbers remained very positive for this question; however, taxpayers did not agree as strongly as they have in the past.

The workgroup recommends looking at the process for peak call times and how the Department reacts to fluctuations in call volumes.

Supports Strategic Business Plan

Goals: Deliver customer-focused services & Administer programs and services efficiently and effectively

Objectives: Increase responsiveness to the changing needs of customers & Increase organization performance

NEXT STEPS

The Customer Service Advocate will:

- Identify the affected division(s) and units
- Refer the recommendations to the affected division(s) and units for implementation
- Monitor progress toward goals
- Issue a report on the results of changes made

SURVEY PROFILE

Purpose

The Department conducts the Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey every two years. The purpose of the survey is to seek feedback about services provided by the Department. Information from the survey is used to make improvements.

Method

The survey employed a stratified random sample of selected Washington taxpayers. The population was stratified by industry, size, and location. Eight industry strata were defined by NAICS codes (2012 North American Industry Classification System codes). The eight industry sectors are:

- Construction, NAICS 23;
- Manufacturing, NAICS 31 – 33;
- Utilities, Transportation, and Warehousing, NAICS 22, 48 – 49;
- Wholesale Trade, NAICS 42;
- Retail Trade, NAICS 44 – 45;
- Financial, Insurance, and Real Estate, NAICS 52 – 53;
- Information, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, NAICS 51, 54, 55, 56, 61, 62;
- All Other Services, NAICS 71, 72, 81

Washington Gross Business Income (GBI) defined the “size” strata for each industry sector. All taxpayers above the sector’s median GBI were classified as “Large” while the rest were “Small.” The demarcation between large and small differed greatly across industries. Large taxpayers were over sampled in some industries because skewed distributions resulted in a very small number of taxpayers in the sample.

Taxpayers were also stratified by the location of the business headquarters. There were three location categories: “East,” “West,” and “Out of state.” Out of state taxpayers were those with headquarters outside Washington state, while “East” and “West” denoted taxpayers with headquarters in Washington. Taxpayers located within, or east of, the counties of Okanogan, Chelan, Kittitas, Yakima, and Klickitat were denoted “East” while the rest were “West”.

Therefore, the population and sample were divided into a total $8 \times 2 \times 3 = 48$ strata or cells, eight for industry, two for size, and three for location.

The selected taxpayers received a notice through the Department’s My Account application. Out of 349,000 active taxpayers, 3,970 were selected to participate in the survey. Overall, the Department received 603 survey responses for a response rate of 15.2 percent.

Timeframe

The Department conducted the survey between September 21, 2016 and November 1, 2016.

RESULTS

Q1. Where is your business headquarters located?

	Responses	Percent
Western Washington	300	49.9%
Eastern Washington	153	25.5%
Out of State	148	24.6%
Answered	601	100%
Skipped	2	
Total	603	

Q2. My business' estimated annual gross income is (translated to small or large business)

	Responses	Percent
Small business	362	61.1%
Large business	230	38.9%
Answered	592	100.0%
Skipped	11	
Total	603	

Q3. Are you the person who fills out the tax return?

	Responses	Percent
Yes	547	91.3%
No	52	8.7%
Answered	599	100.0%
Skipped	4	
Total	603	

Q4. Which of the following best describes your position?

	Responses	Percent
Business owner (or spouse/partner)	152	25.5%
CPA or other tax professional (i.e. bookkeeper)	71	11.9%
In-house tax or accounting department employee (i.e. controller, CFO, accountant)	340	56.9%
Other (Please describe)	34	5.7%
Answered	597	100.0%
Skipped	6	
Total	603	

Q5. How many years have you personally interacted with the Department of Revenue?

	Responses	Percent
Less than 2 years	59	10.0%
2-5 years	118	20.0%
More than 5 years	413	70.0%
Answered	590	100.0%
Skipped	13	
Total	603	

Q6. How satisfied are you with the overall quality of service you receive from the Department of Revenue?

	Responses	Percent
Very satisfied	258	43.9%
Satisfied	316	53.7%
Dissatisfied	6	1.0%
Very dissatisfied	8	1.4%
Answered	588	100.0%
Skipped	15	
Total	603	

Q7. How do you currently interact with the Department of Revenue? Rank the following items based on your highest method of communication (9) to your lowest method of communication (1).

	1 = Lowest Rating					9 = Highest Rating				Responses	Rating Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
In person (local office)	61	37	34	27	28	27	13	15	16	258	3.88
Telephone	25	47	42	25	22	46	74	82	52	415	5.72
US mail (letter)	24	19	28	58	47	72	54	21	8	331	5.02
Department of Revenue website	57	10	19	10	12	16	36	60	262	482	7.1
Email or secure message	24	48	33	17	23	36	63	104	77	425	6.08
Live Chat	28	27	40	46	44	41	20	11	6	263	4.31
Department of Revenue mobile app (tax rate lookup or business lookup)	31	43	52	29	34	15	19	22	14	259	4.19
Department of Revenue's Twitter account	103	45	21	10	9	4	9	16	29	246	3.32
Webinar (online training)	36	21	24	48	63	31	22	8	7	260	4.32
										Answered	567
										Skipped	36
										Total	603

Q8. We provide a telephone information center. How long are you willing to wait to speak to a customer service representative on the phone?

	Responses	Percent
Less than 2 minutes	128	22.4%
2 to 5 minutes	302	52.8%
5 to 10 minutes	100	17.5%
10 minutes or longer	42	7.3%
Answered	572	100.0%
Skipped	31	
Total	603	

Q9. Did you contact our telephone information center during the last year?

	Responses	Percent
Yes	244	43.0%
No	323	57.0%
Answered	567	100.0%
Skipped	36	
Total	603	

Q10. Please tell us about your experience with our phone center.

	Responses	Percent
A. My call was answered quickly		
Strongly agree	57	23.1%
Agree	159	64.4%
Disagree	26	10.5%
Strongly disagree	5	2.0%
Total	247	100.0%
B. I was treated with courtesy and respect		
Strongly agree	143	57.7%
Agree	100	40.3%
Disagree	3	1.2%
Strongly disagree	2	0.8%
Total	248	100.0%
C. I was provided with clear and useful information		
Strongly agree	128	51.6%
Agree	102	41.1%
Disagree	15	6.0%
Strongly disagree	3	1.2%
Total	248	99.9%
D. I was able to resolve my question(s) or issue(s)		
Strongly agree	122	49.4%
Agree	109	44.1%
Disagree	13	5.3%
Strongly disagree	3	1.2%
Total	247	100.0%
Answered	248	
Skipped	355	
Total	603	

Q11. How many times during the last year did you visit a Department of Revenue office?

	Responses	Percent
Zero	544	94.9%
1-5 times	19	3.3%
6-10 times	3	0.6%
11 or more times	7	1.2%
Answered	573	100.0%
Skipped	30	
Total	603	

Q12. Please tell us about your experience when you visited a Department of Revenue office.

	Responses	Percent
A. I was treated with courtesy and respect		
Strongly agree	9	37.5%
Agree	15	62.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	24	100.0%
B. I was helped quickly		
Strongly agree	8	33.3%
Agree	14	58.3%
Disagree	2	8.3%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	24	99.9%
C. I was provided with clear and useful information		
Strongly agree	9	37.5%
Agree	14	58.3%
Disagree	1	4.2%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	24	100.0%

D. I was able to resolve my question(s) or issue(s)

Strongly agree	9	36.0%
Agree	15	60.0%
Disagree	1	4.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	25	100.0%
Answered	25	
Skipped	578	
Total	603	

Q13. How would you rate our website for each of the following?

	Responses	Percent
A. Easy to use		
Excellent	233	41.3%
Good	266	47.2%
Fair	60	10.6%
Poor	5	0.9%
Have not used	6	
Total	570	100.0%
B. Clear information		
Excellent	199	35.4%
Good	276	49.1%
Fair	80	14.2%
Poor	7	1.2%
Have not used	6	
Total	568	100.0%
C. Sufficient information		
Excellent	203	36.1%
Good	286	50.8%
Fair	66	11.7%
Poor	8	1.4%
Have not used	6	
Total	569	100.0%

D. Current information

Excellent	245	43.8%
Good	261	46.7%
Fair	51	9.1%
Poor	2	0.4%
Have not used	10	
Total	569	100.0%
Answered	571	
Skipped	32	
Total	603	

Q14. How useful do you find each of these in preparing your Washington State Excise Tax Return?

	Responses	Percent
A. Local Sales, Use Tax Rates and Changes flyer		
Very useful	300	63.4%
Somewhat useful	123	26.0%
A little useful	41	8.7%
Not useful at all	9	1.9%
Have not used	78	
Total	551	100.0%
B. Industry guides and/or Tax Topics articles		
Very useful	150	38.9%
Somewhat useful	152	39.4%
A little useful	71	18.4%
Not useful at all	13	3.4%
Have not used	157	
Total	543	100.0%
C. Special notices detailing specific tax applications		
Very useful	172	42.9%
Somewhat useful	155	38.7%
A little useful	62	15.5%
Not useful at all	12	3.0%
Have not used	141	
Total	542	100.0%

D. Excise Tax Advisories (ETA)

Very useful	121	35.9%
Somewhat useful	139	41.2%
A little useful	68	20.2%
Not useful at all	9	2.7%
Have not used	203	
Total	540	100.0%

E. Department's administrative rules (WACs)

Very useful	130	33.0%
Somewhat useful	160	40.6%
A little useful	91	23.1%
Not useful at all	13	3.3%
Have not used	150	
Total	544	100.0%

F. Washington Tax Decisions (WTDs)

Very useful	90	27.5%
Somewhat useful	143	43.7%
A little useful	79	24.2%
Not useful at all	15	4.6%
Have not used	215	
Total	542	100.0%

G. E-file on-screen help

Very useful	199	46.1%
Somewhat useful	160	37.0%
A little useful	63	14.6%
Not useful at all	10	2.3%
Have not used	115	
Total	547	100.0%

H. Online workshop videos

Very useful	41	20.1%
Somewhat useful	89	43.6%
A little useful	62	30.4%
Not useful at all	12	5.9%
Have not used	333	
Total	537	100.0%

I. Secure message or email with Department staff

Very useful	262	55.7%
Somewhat useful	154	32.8%
A little useful	48	10.2%
Not useful at all	6	1.3%
Have not used	74	
Total	544	100.0%

J. Last period's tax return

Very useful	284	58.1%
Somewhat useful	168	34.4%
A little useful	32	6.5%
Not useful at all	5	1.0%
Have not used	55	
Total	544	100.0%

K. Local office assistance

Very useful	85	36.0%
Somewhat useful	92	39.0%
A little useful	41	17.4%
Not useful at all	18	7.6%
Have not used	298	
Total	534	100.0%

L. Telephone Information Center (1-800-647-7706)

Very useful	174	46.0%
Somewhat useful	141	37.3%
A little useful	57	15.1%
Not useful at all	6	1.6%
Have not used	167	
Total	545	100.0%

M. Live Chat

Very useful	45	26.0%
Somewhat useful	73	42.2%
A little useful	48	27.7%
Not useful at all	7	4.0%
Have not used	360	
Total	533	100.0%

Answered	555
Skipped	48
Total	603

**Q15. How much do you agree with each of these statements about the
Department of Revenue and its services?**

	Responses	Percent
A. Online filing and payment application (e-file) is user-friendly		
Strongly agree	315	57.0%
Agree	224	40.5%
Disagree	12	2.2%
Strongly disagree	2	0.4%
N/A	4	
Total	557	100.0%
B. Tax forms and instructions are easy to understand		
Strongly agree	188	34.6%
Agree	301	55.3%
Disagree	49	9.0%
Strongly disagree	6	1.1%
N/A	10	
Total	554	100.0%
C. Changes in tax laws and rules are communicated timely		
Strongly agree	179	34.4%
Agree	300	57.7%
Disagree	37	7.1%
Strongly disagree	4	0.8%
N/A	30	
Total	550	100.0%
Answered	558	
Skipped	45	
Total	603	

Q16. If you attended a New Business Outreach (NBO) Workshop, how would you rate the content/presentation?

	Responses	Percent
Excellent	9	31.0%
Good	16	55.2%
Fair	4	13.8%
Poor	0	0.0%
Have not attended	519	
Answered	548	100.0%
Skipped	45	
Total	603	

Q17. How useful would it be to participate in online training (Webinar) that teaches you about taxes?

	Responses	Percent
Very useful	124	22.6%
Useful	228	41.5%
Slightly useful	117	21.3%
Not useful at all	80	14.6%
Answered	549	100.0%
Skipped	54	
Total	603	

Q18. To what extent do you agree we make it easy to give suggestions or submit feedback.

	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree	75	13.6%
Agree	236	42.7%
Disagree	21	3.8%
Strongly disagree	6	1.1%
No opinion/don't know	215	38.9%
Answered	553	100.0%
Skipped	50	
Total	603	

Q19. The State of Washington has a Taxpayer Bill of Rights (Revised Code of Washington 82.32A.020). Click here to view taxpayer rights. To what extent do you agree that we respect your rights as a taxpayer?

	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree	105	19.0%
Agree	281	50.8%
Disagree	8	1.4%
Strongly disagree	3	0.5%
No opinion/don't know	156	28.2%
Answered	553	100.0%
Skipped	50	
Total	603	

Q20. We currently have two mobile apps available for iPhone and android phones. The Sales Tax Lookup app and the Business Lookup app. How useful are these mobile apps?

	Responses	Percent
Very useful	13	22.4%
Useful	22	37.9%
Slightly useful	16	27.6%
Not useful at all	7	12.1%
Have not used these apps	497	
Answered	555	100.0%
Skipped	48	
Total	603	

Q21. We continue to evaluate opportunities to provide new services for mobile devices. How useful would a mobile app for the following services be to you?

	Responses	Percent
A. E-file (electronic tax filing and payment)		
Very useful	78	14.4%
Useful	83	15.3%
Slightly useful	80	14.8%
Not useful at all	300	55.5%
Total	541	100.0%

B. Renew a business license

Very useful	91	16.9%
Useful	122	22.7%
Slightly useful	65	12.1%
Not useful at all	260	48.3%
Total	538	100.0%

C. Reseller Permit Lookup/Verification

Very useful	118	22.0%
Useful	108	20.1%
Slightly useful	58	10.8%
Not useful at all	252	47.0%
Total	536	100.0%

D. Renew my organization's non-profit property tax exemption

Very useful	47	9.0%
Useful	71	13.6%
Slightly useful	56	10.7%
Not useful at all	349	66.7%
Total	523	100.0%

E. Pay a balance due

Very useful	88	16.4%
Useful	109	20.3%
Slightly useful	73	13.6%
Not useful at all	268	49.8%
Total	538	100.0%
Answered	541	
Skipped	62	
Total	603	

Q22. Please tell us how the Department of Revenue can improve our service to you.

	Responses	Percent
Answered	140	23.2%
Skipped	463	76.8%
Total	603	100.0%

