



Report of Findings From The Free File Marketing Focus Groups



Report Of Findings From The Free File Marketing Focus Groups

Task Order #17

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Introduction

Research Caveats:

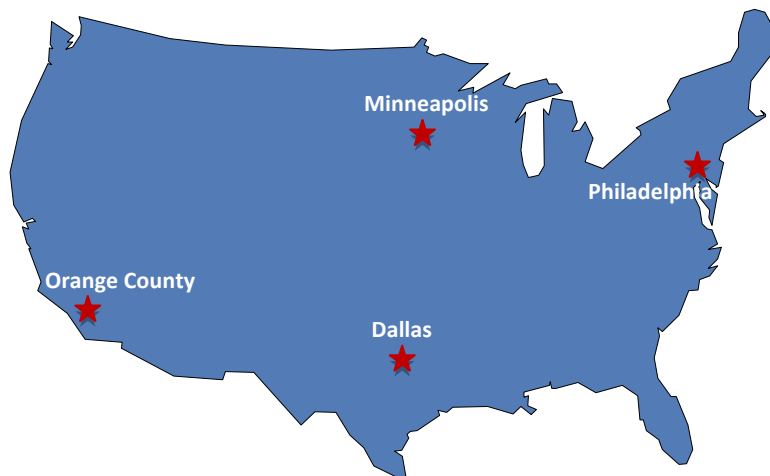
First Caveat: Qualitative Research is designed to understand the beliefs, perceptions, and motivations that drive target audience actions. This methodology is executed by speaking with a small number of people who have common interests, orientations, or circumstances. Such was the case in this study; therefore results here are qualitative in nature and cannot be considered representative or predictive of the larger target audience.

Second Caveat: In addition, learning from the study applies only to specific segments of Taxpayers (as described later) and not to the larger universe of ALL Taxpayers.

Research Objectives & Target Audiences

- The IRS wanted to develop additional learning and knowledge about Free File in the wake of the 2010 Filing season – which saw use of Free File decline an estimated 6% over the previous year (a slower decline than the prior year, but still concerning). Securing feedback from Free File-Eligible Non-Users as well as Users would help IRS refine and craft its messaging to mitigate further declines, increase awareness, and generate new use/users.
- To meet its information needs, the IRS wanted to have Eligible Non-Users (specifically, Paper Filers and V-Coders) and a smaller sample of Users...
 - Evaluate a description of and talk about the Free File Program in order to secure a better sense of the saliency of the Program among those considered most likely/eligible to take advantage of the core offering – specifically, how they describe the Program or, if they are not aware of the Program, how they respond to the Free File idea when it is described to them. In addition, the IRS wanted to learn what kind of language Non-Users and Users use when talking about the Program – which allows development of messaging that speaks in the customer’s voice.
 - In addition, the IRS wanted Non-Users and Users to evaluate several potential Free File Messaging Concepts prior to materials development and launch of the next season’s campaign.
- To address these objectives, qualitative research was conducted – specifically, a series of 8 focus groups that were comprised and distributed as shown on the next page.

Methodology: 8 Focus Groups Allocated Across 4 Cities



Philadelphia, PA August 30, 2010	Dallas, TX August 31, 2010	Minneapolis, MN September 1, 2010	Orange County, CA September 2, 2010
<p>2 Groups of Taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 group of <u>FF Users Ages 18-24</u> (8 Participants) 1 group of <u>Paper Filers Ages 25+</u> (8 Participants) <p><i>Recruited 13 participants per group</i></p>	<p>2 Groups of Taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 group of <u>V-Coders Ages 25+</u> (8 Participants) 1 group of <u>Paper Filers Ages 25+</u> (8 Participants) <p><i>Recruited 13 participants per group</i></p>	<p>2 Groups of Taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 group of <u>V-Coders Ages 25+</u> (8 Participants) 1 group of <u>Paper Filers Ages 18-24</u> (8 Participants) <p><i>Recruited 13 participants per group</i></p>	<p>2 Groups of Taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 group of <u>FF Users Ages 25+</u> (8 Participants) 1 group of <u>V-Coders Ages 18-24</u> (8 Participants) <p><i>Recruited 13 participants per group</i></p>
<p>8 Groups In Total:</p> <p><u>6 With Non-Users</u> (3 <u>V-Coder</u> Segment Groups – 1 Younger & 2 Older; and 3 <u>Paper Filer</u> Segment Groups – 1 Younger & 2 Older) And <u>2 With Users</u> (1 Younger & 1 Older)</p>			

Stimuli Tested In Focus Groups

- For the Free File Program evaluation, the description of the Program embedded to the right was used as stimuli in the groups. Click on icon.



- In the Messaging Concepts evaluation, the following storyboards were tested:

“Daddy’s Not-So-Little Girl”



“What About Me?”



“On To Something”



“Really?!”



“Legit Pitch”



Key Findings And Implications & Recommendations

Overall Findings

- **In the evaluation of the overall Program Description, it was apparent that most of the Non-Users in the study were unfamiliar with Free File – although, after reading about it, many of them felt that it was something that they would be interested in.**
 - Many of the focus group participants liked the idea of being able to file for free, particularly those who were already familiar with e-file (mainly those in the two groups of Free File Users).
 - There was a group of participants in each Segment who were wary of entering their “personal information” online.
 - There were also a few participants who had difficulty believing that filing would be free, although most of these participants were confusing State filing with Federal filing.
 - Most participants felt that there would be real “value” in Free File, but they tended to equate that value with convenience and time saving rather than a monetary savings.
 - The Users seemed more involved in and proactive toward filing taxes (and finances in general). They were also generally more willing to engage with the IRS and less distrusting of its motives.
- **Reaction to the storyboard-based Messaging Concepts showed clear discrimination with a general hierarchy of preference across the five Concepts. These are presented in order of appeal/acceptance in the pages that follow, with User and Non-User reaction and reaction across Segments being very similar for each Concept.**

“Daddy’s Not-So-Little Girl”

- This Messaging Concept generated significant interest across all of the discussion groups.



- The kitchen table setting and interpersonal dynamic made this Concept highly relatable and a good introduction to Free File, in that participants interpreted it as a “warm and inviting” situation that “everybody is familiar with”.
- Participants felt that this Concept communicated that they could “trust” Free File because it was “recommended by somebody you know”.
- It also created the expectation that Free File would make filing easier, “without the stacks of paper or a calculator”.
- This Messaging Concept also conveyed that the IRS is improved and beginning to “keep up with technology,” with acknowledgment that there was need for improvement and that the IRS is moving toward that.
- However, while well-liked, the Concept generated some discussion of the dialogue being “not natural” or “hokey”.

“What About Me?”

- This Messaging Concept also generated positive response, but tended to be thought of as the best-of-the-rest when compared to “Daddy’s Not-So-Little Girl”.



- The main message participants took away from this execution was that Free File was for everyone and that “anyone can do this”.
- The digital stamp” clearly communicated that “even I can Free File” (with the implied corollary of “even if I cannot do some other things in life as well as I would like”).
- Many of the Non-User participants found it easy to project themselves into this execution and see how they could use Free File.
- There was an issue for a number of focus group participants that this Concept did not connect very directly to paying taxes and they were left wondering about the purpose of the ad until reaching the end of the storyboard.
- For some, there was also an issue that, compared to other executions, there was not enough information about using Free File for them to understand if it was for them or not (i.e. specifics about online, need for a computer, etc).

“On To Something”

- In reaction to this Messaging Concept, participants easily understood the message that Free File was “fast, safe, and free,” although this execution made a number of them feel uncomfortable about the IRS.



- Many felt that the intent was to make it seem like the IRS has developed the Free File program for a reason and that it made an assumption that everyone who saw it felt it would be beneficial to use.
- A number of participants liked the idea that the IRS would actually investigate the program with Taxpayers and seek out their reaction, rather than just saying “this is the only way”.
- However, and in a bit of irony, several participants had an issue with the Concept’s portrayal of IRS employees watching from behind the glass, making them feel uncomfortable about the IRS and its motives.
- And a few indicated that the whole setting felt “too staged” to be believable or make any lasting impact, expecting that the actors “were told to be positive” about Free File.

“Really?!”

- This message communicated in this Messaging Concept easily communicated that Free File could save filers money – specifically, \$129.



- Most participants who saw this execution felt it was “refreshing” to see that the IRS understood that people did not want to hear from them, giving them the feeling like “they (the IRS) understand”.
- A number also liked the “Bill” character in the ad because he was “passionate” about Free File and that he was “more relaxed” with a loose tie and friendly demeanor.
- However, Taxpayers had difficulty with the “oddly specific” price put on the value of Free File.
 - Many said that they are now paying only the “cost of a few stamps” and could not believe saving the amount stated in this Concept.
 - Others were skeptical because the number seemed arbitrary and the execution had not “explained how they came up with the number”.

“Legit Pitch”

- **Though disliked for its “infomercial” format, this execution communicated that Free File was “fast, safe, and free” and indicated that “it is not too good to be true”.**



- **Most participants understood what the execution was trying to communicate, but had difficulty seeing it as anything other than “an annoying infomercial” and many did not think they would watch it.**
- **But, for a few, this was clearly intended to be a humorous spoof on the typical infomercial and they felt that it had the potential to be “funny like an SNL skit”.**
- **Most participants had difficulty with the depiction of the female IRS employee (seated in front of the Treasury seal), feeling that she brought to the Concept many of the negative associations they already have with the IRS.**
- **And a number of participants interpreted this as “high pressure sales” – i.e., trying to “sell” them on Free File.**

Implications and Recommendations

- **The “Daddy's Not-So-Little Girl” Messaging Concept communicated concrete reasons to use Free File and appeared to motivate participants at least to investigate.**
 - The central messages of making filing taxes easier resonated with the Taxpayers in these groups and made a number of them feel like it was something they could do.
 - This Messaging Concept also seemed to signal a change in the IRS from “making us do something” to developing programs that “helps us” file taxes.
 - However, we recommend that IRS explore “more realistic” dialog between the characters, as the current exchanges sounded “corny” and too “Leave It To Beaver” for a number of participants.
- **“What About Me?” communicated that Free File was something everyone could use, but the lack of references to taxes or program details was problematic for participants.**
 - This execution clearly conveyed the idea that Free File was for people in all different stages of their lives, and indicated that the process would not be difficult.
 - But, many participants felt that it was unclear what the vignettes had to do with tax preparation and left a number confused until very late into the execution.
 - We recommend that IRS explore the possibility of more clearly establishing the tax setting, beyond the single copy line, and adding key details of Free File (i.e., that it is online, etc.).

Implications and Recommendations

- **The remaining Messaging Concepts each had significant issues that would need to be overcome, including...**
 - **For “On To Something”**: while the idea of the IRS responding to Taxpayers’ desires was positive, reinforcing the idea that the government was “spying” on citizens was problematic for many.
 - **For “Really?!”**: the acknowledgment that the IRS understands how the public really sees them was powerful to many, but the idea of having the IRS knock on individuals’ doors was not what most participants wanted to even imagine. One bright spot in this Concept was the “Bill” character, who was considered “friendly”, “relaxed”, and “passionate about his product”.
 - **And for “Legit Pitch”**: in addition to participants not recognizing the spoof nature of the execution, the depiction of the “stern” female IRS employee with the Treasury seal behind her was off-putting.
 - **We do not recommend moving forward with these three executions.**
 - **Nonetheless, there is a possible important point of learning for future communications development in these three non-recommended Messaging Concepts – all of them incorporated IRS employee characters in some way and the one that depicted an IRS employee in the most accessible, friendly manner (“Really?!” with its “Bill” character) had the greatest acceptance of the three, while the IRS employee depictions in the other two Concepts generated negative responses and were disadvantages for those executions.**

Detailed Findings

Overall Reaction To Free File

Six of the eight groups were with **Non-Users** (three with V-Coders and three with Paper Filers) and the majority of these were not familiar with Free File but were interested in the idea, especially those already familiar with e-file. Convenience and time savings were seen as the more “valuable” benefits, but with some skeptical of it really being “free” and concerned about online security (with some concern about this among Users as well).

Benefits

Appealing, especially to Users

- “Anything that’s free is good, but I want to make sure it’s safe,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “Everyone pretty much is familiar with e-file. Free File would be synonymous to that,” Users (18-24), Phil.

Biggest “value” is convenience and time

- “For me, it’s not even the free part. I know it’s correct, that it’s going to be faster, and that I’m going to get a fast return,” Users (25+), OC
- “Saves me time. It saves me from figuring it out on paper myself or having to sit with someone to figure it out,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “Math is done for you. You don’t have to add. You don’t have to subtract,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

Hesitations

Nothing’s free

- “I don’t think anything is free. If I didn’t hear from my family about it being completely free going online. I wouldn’t trust it,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “I don’t trust the IRS to begin with. It’s free but the time you hook to those services, it’s not truly free. There are a little catches to it,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas

Wary of security

- “I don’t trust that. I have to be in-person in order to do it. There’s too much information online,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “You can’t generally trust anything that you download that’s free from the Internet...my first thought would be virus,” Users (18-24), Phil.

Confusion between State and Federal filing

- “Should be labeled “Free Federal Filing”. Free Filing alone suggests to me the whole, state and fed,” Users (25+), OC

Differences Among Groups

Overall, the reactions to Free File and to the Messaging Concepts were similar across all groups (and all Segments). The most noticeable differences were that a few of the older Non-Users (mainly Paper Filers) considered themselves “computer illiterate” while others preferred to have a physical copy of their filings.

Some are less adept at using computers

- *“I’m not computer literate. I’m not going to sit in front of that machine and waste all that time trying to plug in numbers and then they ask me questions and I don’t know where on the keyboard to do it,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Phil.*
- *“I haven’t really gotten to the computer age thing,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Phil.*
- *“I never tried the computer. I just keep doing with what I know, that’s why,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Phil.*
- *“I don’t fool with the computers at all,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Phil.*

For some, having a physical copy makes them feel secure

- *“I print mine out with a hard copy. I like to know that I have the actual form,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas*
- *“I print it out and I usually have things I write off. I have receipts and things I write off and that’s why I send a hard copy so I can send it and then address it and put it in the mail,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas*
- *“You feel that you gave them the item and that I got proof that I actually mailed the thing,” Makes me feel secure,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas*
- *“I like to keep a double record,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Phil.*

“Daddy’s Not-So-Little Girl”

Participants were able to identify with the setting in relation to doing their taxes. The family dynamic was also seen as realistic. The recommendation of Free File between family members was seen as an important “recommendation” that contributed to this Messaging Concept’s success.

Family recommendation equates to trust

- “The trust with your daughter or your father is not going to lead you the wrong way, but into the right direction,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “It’s somebody I know and she’s teaching me how to do something new for me. She loves me. She’s not going to make me do something that is not safe,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas



Relatable setting and dynamic

- “It’s a family in the kitchen. I feel like I could be there with them,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “My mom was trying to do my sister’s taxes, she had all this stuff spread out everywhere. This does happen,” Users (25+), OC
- “We always do the taxes in the kitchen. Me on my laptop, my dad, a stack of paper, calculator, everything sprawled out. It’s just like the picture,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

Easier “without paper or a calculator”

- “It’s simple and free. No stress at all, no paper work,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “It’s the most efficient way, the newest way to do it,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper Minn.
- “I don’t want to fill it out on paper. I like going online,” Users (18-24), Phil.

Improvements from the IRS

- “IRS is keeping up with the time. They’re going online...high tech,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “This is the new way of doing things, internet..it’s 21st century..it’s new technology,” Users (25+), OC

“Unnatural” dialogue

- “They’re not going to read the step-by-step instructions..seems too scripted,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “It just felt really unnatural ...wording is very not usual,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “It sounds really cheesy when you say my little girl is all grown up,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

“Daddy’s Not-So-Little Girl” (Cont’d.)

Many participants saw themselves as “teaching someone a new way” and a number also some saw themselves as the character who needed to be taught. Free File came across as easier and more streamlined, and the Concept indicated to many that IRS was improving – “keeping up with technology”.

POSITIVES

- Setting and interaction were realistic, relatable, familiar
- Recommendation communicated “trust”
- Expectation – easier without paper
- Indicates improvements in IRS

NEGATIVES

- Dialogue somewhat awkward and not realistic to some participants

- Most found the scenario “familiar” and felt they could relate to doing taxes in the kitchen, with family members helping each other. This was appealing and caught attention.
- The idea that Free File was being recommended was important and valuable. Participants felt that a recommendation indicated it was something they could “trust” which was important when it came to filing personal information.
- Most expected from this that Free File would be easier and was an improved service coming from the IRS that indicated the organization was keeping up with technology.

NET: Generated significant interest, was most relatable, and communicated trust, ease and Taxpayer-oriented improvements from the IRS.

“What About Me?”

This Messaging Concept clearly communicated that Free File was for anyone. The varied people represented and the digital stamp supported this message. However, a number of participants felt that this Concept did not connect with taxes until the end and did not provide enough information about Free File to interest them.

“Digital Stamp” indicates for everyone

- “The stamp makes it clear that this is for every type of tax bracket,” Users (25+), OC
- “Everybody can use it..they reiterate that with the stamps,” Users (18-24), Phil.

Illustrates realistically how they would use Free File

- “It’s relatable because they’re showing simple common people who aren’t special or anything. They’re making jokes about their flaws, and [saying] anybody can file,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “It shows different types of people..most people would fit into one of those categories,” Users (25+), OC



Anyone can do this

- “For everyone, all ages, all classes, all socioeconomic,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Dallas
- “Anyone can do it no matter how smart or dumb you are,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “Any income bracket. There’s no little rich kid, they’re a family, the others are retired, etc.,” Users (25+), OC

Not enough information to evaluate

- “It wasn’t enough information. It still has to deal with a lot of questions,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “It just says it’s for everybody and it is free. They don’t even really drive home and say what this is,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Dallas

Subject of tax-filing not immediately clear

- “Family and the kid playing piano and then somebody cooking ...random pieces that do not make any sense,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “I just don’t understand why there would be a family. It doesn’t have to do with taxes really?” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “It was like, what’s this about? It wasn’t connected ...it basically jumped around,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas

“What About Me?” (Cont’d.)

Overall, this execution was received positively and resonated with most. Its main takeaway was that Free Filing was something anyone can do. Most participants could see from this how they would use Free File, though some felt that compared to the other Concepts, it was missing valuable information about usage.

POSITIVES

- Communicated “for everyone”
- Most could identify with scenarios, resonated
- Digital stamp supports message

NEGATIVES

- Difficult to quickly identify the connection with taxes
- Less specific information on how to use it and benefits than other executions

- The array of people and scenarios communicated that anyone can use Free File.
- Many could identify personally with the scenarios and saw how Free File could benefit them,
- The digital stamp was additional support for the message that Free File was “for everyone”.
- There was some confusion about the execution, as some could not easily relate it back to taxes.
- Many felt there was information missing in this execution that was important to evaluate the benefits.

NET: Scenarios resonated with most, communicated that everyone can use Free File, could provide more information.

“On To Something”

There were a number of participants who liked the idea of the IRS using Taxpayer feedback, but there were others who were more skeptical and questioned the motives of the IRS. The IRS watching Taxpayers highlighted their general skepticism of IRS/the Government. In addition, a few felt it was too “staged” to be believable.

“Fast, Safe, Free” easily understood

- “It’s simple. It’s fast. It’s safe. It’s free and there’s the website,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “It does the hard work for you,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

Skeptical of IRS

- “It seems like a classroom and then when you get down to it, it’s a classroom by the government,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “They’re trying to get you into some sort of taxes and then behind it all is the IRS. They still get the final say, so you better be careful of what you’re saying to them,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas



IRS viewing raises questions

- “It’s not inviting. You have these authority figures that are controlling everything in the back,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “It’s kind of like ‘Okay, so the IRS is watching me,’ kind of thing. It was kind of a weird Big Brother moment,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “One of my first reactions was, ‘Why is the IRS spying on me?’” Users (25+), OC

IRS working with Taxpayers appealing

- “You’re supposed to talk to the customers. The customer is always right,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “Looks like there’s a team effort between the IRS and the public. Let’s build something together that will help you guys,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Dallas

“Staged”, not believable

- “It’s from the IRS...it didn’t look like the real thing,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “That focus group is not reality. It’s like the movies in Hollywood..Who are they? I don’t care who they are,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coders, Minn.

“On To Something” (Cont’d.)

The message that Free File was “fast, safe, and free” was clear. Participants had mixed reactions to the portrayal of the IRS investigating the program with Taxpayers. Some appreciated their attention to Taxpayers while others questioned the IRS’s motives.

POSITIVES

- Clear message – “fast, safe, free”
- Appreciated IRS investigating options, showed interest in Taxpayers

NEGATIVES

- Questionable IRS motives based on idea of IRS employees watching
- “Staged” didn’t seem realistic > not believable

- The attributes of Free File were clearly communicated.
- The IRS looking for Taxpayer feedback was appreciated.
- Some who had incoming distrust in the IRS were uneasy about the IRS watching the Taxpayers and felt that this confirmed a negative perception, like “Big Brother.”
- A few felt that the execution was not believable, just “actors.”

NET: Clear message about Free File attributes, however mixed reactions to portrayal of IRS investigation, and skepticism of IRS emerged.

“Really?!”

That Free File would save the participants money was clear, even though some were hesitant to believe the exact dollar amount. The IRS calling attention to how they are normally received was appreciated and indicated that they understand Taxpayers. “Bill” was well liked and helped many relate to the idea.

“Oddly specific” price, hard to believe

- “Why \$129.00?” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “I don’t ask them why the average is \$60.00 to \$70.00 for anybody else. That’s a little high to say that much savings to providing software,” Users (25+), OC
- “Reminds me of the progressive commercials. You can save all this money but you don’t necessarily always get that,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.



“Refreshing” to see that IRS understands how they are viewed

- “He’s getting all these bad reactions that you would expect especially with the IRS,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “It personalizes the IRS. You don’t think of them as the government then. It gives them a face,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “They understand that they might not have the best first connotation for people so they can joke about it in this commercial,” Users (18-24), Phil.

“Bill” character was likeable, made it more personal

- “His collar is undone...he had a hard day at work...it makes you feel like he’s not as uptight,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “It’s the person offering this not just the big government agency,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

Clearly communicated saving filers money

- “You can save \$129.00 from doing your taxes,” Users (18-24), Phil.
- “You might save more than \$129.00. That looks meaningful,” Non-Users (25+)/Paper, Phil.

“Really?!” (Cont’d.)

This Concept had a distinct message that Free File saves money. The IRS intimating negative responses to the Service meant that the IRS understands how people feel about them, and this was liked by many. The “Bill” character was likeable and helped the image of the IRS. A few had issues with the specific price, though.

POSITIVES

- Clear message – saves money
- IRS understands Taxpayers
- “Bill” character was likeable

NEGATIVES

- Specific price of \$129.00 was a point of contention – skeptical, arbitrary number

- The message about saving money was clear. The exact amount was not believable to all.
- The execution communicated that the IRS understands Taxpayers and their general reputation, and this was realistic and appreciated.
- The “Bill” character was seen as realistic, someone who they liked and could relate to.

NET: Clear message that Free File saves money, but the exact monetary value led to skepticism.

“Legit Pitch”

“Fast, safe, and free” was clearly communicated, and many felt that the execution supported the claims. While some found this a funny spoof, a number felt too much like the IRS was “selling” Free File and this reminded them “too much” of a “typical infomercial.”

Communicated “fast, safe, and free” was not too good to be true

- “Work is done for you for free,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “It’s quick for all that just dread the tax season and dread actually doing it,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.
- “Throw away the calculator and the checkbook,” Users (25+), OC



“Annoying infomercial”

- “Another boring infomercial like what I see on TV,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “It’s dried out. Over used. The whole slogan at the bottom... reminds me of some boring news channel,” Users (18-24), Phil.

A humorous spoof on typical infomercial

- “I love parody. Cheesiness is kind of really good. For me, it would be funny,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

IRS employee emphasized negative associations

- “Fear. The IRS agent flashed through with IRS symbol up there... it’s never good when you see that,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “I was picturing Billy Mays when I saw him and him moving his arms. He was obnoxious,” Non-Users (18-24)/Paper, Minn.

High pressure sales, trying to sell Free File

- “It’s a sales pitch and they’re trying to sell something,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas
- “[Actor was] like a used car salesman,” Non-Users (25+)/V-Coder, Dallas

“Legit Pitch” (Cont’d.)

Finally, this Concept communicated the Free File message “fast, safe, free” and the validity of this message. The idea of a spoof of an infomercial was funny to some, irritating or not understood by others.

POSITIVES

- Clear message – “fast, safe, free”
- Support for claim – “not too good to be true”
- Humorous for those who interpreted it as a spoof

NEGATIVES

- Infomercial style was irritating
- IRS employee reinforced negative perceptions of IRS
- Trying too hard to “sell”

- There were mixed reactions to the infomercial set-up. The concept of a spoof on infomercials was appreciated and humorous to some, while others found it boring or irritating.
- The execution supported the claims that Free File was “fast, safe and free”, seemed believable based on execution.
- The portrayal of the IRS employee reinforced negative perceptions of the IRS.
- Some felt that the execution overall was trying too hard to sell them on Free File and this was not appreciated.

NET: Clear message about Free File attributes. Infomercial setup funny to some, not understood or not liked by many. Too “salesy”.