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If only the IRS were run like Microsoft

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(chuckle, taxes, bureaucracy)

"Government should be run like a business." We've all heard that chestnut. Here is how the Internal Revenue Service (nobody's favorite government agency) would be like, if only it were run like Microsoft Corp. (a successful private enterprise).

- The IRS, as always, announces new tax forms will be mailed the week before the new year. However it will follow Microsoft's example and actually ship them the following May.
- Responding to pressure from some large corporations and a users' group, some early copies of the tax forms will actually be released in March. The recipients must sign non-disclosure agreements.
- In June, the forms will be recalled because the IRS loses a suit for appropriating some other country's intellectual property.
- When you move, the IRS will continue to send mail to your previous address forevermore, just like Microsoft sends its product upgrade notices.
- When you upgrade from form 1040 EZ to 1040 A, and then to 1040, you will pay an upgrade fee each time. Also you need to send in a new registration card and get a new Social Security Number. In order to upgrade, you have to submit the original first page of your previous year's form.
- Like Microsoft, when you file a late or amended tax return the IRS will reject it on the grounds that the the prior year is no longer supported.
- The IRS telephone help will remain similar to Microsoft's, staffed by ill-trained, high-turnover personnel who sometimes give a correct answer, but the IRS will have to discontinue using a toll-free phone number.
- After struggling with reams of dense documentation of complex options and rules, you discover that you will need publication 3297, with a ten-word-long title, in order to answer (you hope) a single obscure question. The IRS, like Microsoft, will charge a minimum of \$40 for that publication.
- The IRS, like Microsoft, will continue to issue immense volumes of bug fixes, interpretations, and clarifications. However the tax-rule updates should be neither easily searchable nor well-indexed.
- Instead of three-ring binders containing complete sets of tax code bugs and interpretations, IRS rulings will be promulgated in a haphazard fashion by individual taxpayers via BBS, Usenet, and CompuServe. A for-profit publishing subsidiary would also be nice.
- The new all-powerful (and eccentric) Commissioner of Internal Revenue will jet around the country giving speeches and granting numerous interviews, but only to sycophantic reporters. Changes to the tax code will be at the whim of the Commissioner and largely kept secret until they are published.

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