

H&R Block Offers Steps to Finding the Right Tax Professional

January 22, 2009 1:23 PM ET

Evolving Tax Code Makes Ongoing Training, Expertise Critical

KANSAS CITY, MO, Jan 22, 2009 (MARKET WIRE via COMTEX) -- The federal tax code has more than one million words, is several thousand pages long, and in 2008 alone, there were 500 changes to the code, or more than one per day*. More than ever, Americans need the counsel of trusted tax professionals to decipher the complex tax code and apply it to their unique financial situations.

"The tax code is like a thousand-page instruction manual that's always changing. Reading, interpreting and applying this technical document is no easy feat for the untrained eye," said Amy McAnarney, executive director of The Tax Institute at H&R Block. "In this tough economic climate, taxpayers can't afford to leave money on the table. So, they should only work with a tax advisor who's up-to-date on the latest tax law changes."

H&R Block (NYSE: HRB) offers six tips to help taxpayers find the right tax professional:

1. Ask about experience. Inquire about the tax preparer's years of experience and continuing education. Does the preparer have the tax knowledge to accurately represent your interests? Many Americans don't realize how important up-to-date training is when selecting a tax advisor. A recent survey from The Tax Institute at H&R Block found 76 percent of participants failed to list "knowledge of current tax laws" as an important trait when picking a tax professional**. One of the top traits survey participants chose? Location.

"Convenience is important but when it comes to taxes, knowledge can translate into dollars saved," said McAnarney. "The tax code is always changing, so it's critical taxpayers select a tax professional who receives ongoing education and training."

2. Know their area(s) of expertise. A sick patient wouldn't see an orthopedic doctor for a head cold, and a small business owner shouldn't use a tax preparer who's not an expert on the Schedule C. Use a tool such as the H&R Block Tax Professional Finder to find a preparer whose expertise and training match your needs.

3. Protect sensitive data. Tax professionals review earnings statements, investment records, Social Security Numbers and other private information. Make sure you trust the tax preparer to review and protect your confidential data.

4. Do a background check. Investigate the tax preparer's history with the IRS Office of Professional Responsibility. If the organization has a complaint against the tax professional, think twice before using his or her services.

5. Understand availability. While taxes are typically prepared January - April, the IRS corresponds with taxpayers throughout the year. So, it's important to select a tax company that's available after April 15.

6. Only claim what's legal. Avoid tax preparers who say they can obtain larger-than-average refunds. Refund estimates should be based on deductions and credits taxpayers are legally permitted to claim. Report tax preparers who claim inflated or false deductions to the IRS by completing Form 3949-A.

Regardless of who prepares the return, the taxpayer is legally responsible for the information on the return. Researching the best tax professional now can prevent significant financial and legal harm later. For more information about tax season 2009, visit www.hrblock.com.

*The Wall Street Journal, Jan. 8, 2009, "Confusing Tax Rules Under Fire."

**Conducted Nov. 6-9, 2008. A nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults ages 18 and older residing in the U.S. were surveyed by telephone. Results are considered accurate within + or - 3.1 percentage points.

About The Tax Institute

The Tax Institute, a division of H&R Block, is a national leader in providing unbiased research, analysis and interpretation of

federal and state tax laws. Staffed by enrolled agents, CPAs and attorneys, The Tax Institute provides industry expertise for matters related to taxes and the professional tax preparation industry.

About H&R Block

H&R Block Inc. (NYSE: HRB) is the world's preeminent tax services provider, having served more than 400 million clients since 1955 and generating annual revenues of \$4.1 billion in fiscal year 2008. H&R Block provides income tax return preparation and related services and products via a nationwide network of approximately 13,000 company-owned and franchised offices and through TaxCut(R) online and software solutions. The company also provides business services through RSM McGladrey. For more information visit our Online Press Center at www.hrblock.com/press.

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