



Firebird 24

Reborn From Our Ashes

NTEU Chapter 24 Newsletter

Special Edition

Marred Wars

Episode II

The Phantom Measures

After NTEU's highly successful campaign to boycott Survey 2005, Internal Revenue attempted to go ahead with the results of the survey, breaking the law in the process. In response to this, NTEU National Office mobilized the local chapters and stewards; and the word went forth that if managers held meetings on the survey, they would be openly opposed by the attending stewards, and legal consequences would be in the offing. Understandably, no Survey 2005 results meetings were held.



But now, IRS is attempting to sneak in the backdoor, like a scurrilous child, by holding "Balanced Measures" meeting. Anyone who was around when the first discussions of "balanced measures" were held knows that the 3 pillars of "balanced measures" were Business Results, Customer Satisfaction, and Employee Satisfaction. Yet where is the balance in "balanced measures" when Internal Revenue is clearly and totally indifferent to its employee's satisfaction? If you have a three legged stool, and you rip away one of the legs, that stool will no longer balance; it will fall to the ground, becoming nothing but useless clutter, a danger to all.

Since this article was started, IRS has now openly thrown out **Employee Satisfaction**, and replaced it with "**Employee Engagement**." In his January 6, 2006, message, SB/SE Commissioner **Kevin Brown** stated, "**engagement** activities... address results and customer satisfaction priorities" [emphasis added]. In their joint memo of January 18, 2006, Deputy Commissioners **Dalrymple** and **Matthews** state, "We recognize that employee satisfaction has a tremendous impact on our ability to accomplish our mission." But, apparently, not enough to take any action as a result of previous surveys. Are we to find "satisfaction" through "engagement"? Yet, despite the boycott by NTEU, the complete lack of accountability as to the results of the survey (other than finding the silver lining within

the funnel cloud), and the complete unwillingness of IRS to negotiate with NTEU over any changes, IRS has the temerity to proclaim that there will be a survey 2006 that will, according to **Beverly Babers** in her January 4, 2006, letter to **Colleen Kelly**, "...afford all employees the opportunity to provide input about their employment with the Service." Unwilling to be duped, **Ms. Kelly** replied, "NTEU unquestionably wants an engaged workforce whose ideas, questions, and suggestions are listened to and acted on. Based on what we know of the IRS's intent for a 2006 Survey process, we do not believe that will happen."

"NTEU Withdraws Support of IRS Employee Survey For Second Year

Despite good-faith efforts to work with the agency, NTEU has notified the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that it will not support the 2006 Employee Survey. NTEU has repeatedly tried to get the IRS to make improvements to the survey process such as holding poorly-scoring managers accountable and rewarding those with a high level of employee satisfaction. Instead, the IRS has chosen to ignore the concerns of its workforce and NTEU, and is moving forward with employee meetings on the survey, slated to begin in the coming weeks.

While employees are obligated to attend these meetings, it is their choice as to how actively they participate in conversations. During survey meetings, employees have the right to share as much as they want and to refrain from answering questions unless they are ordered to by their managers. NTEU is continuing to press the IRS to fulfill its obligation to negotiate with NTEU on a process that encourages employees to voice their opinions on the agency's leadership and ensures management will follow-up and properly utilize the results.

NTEU first withdrew support of the annual employee survey last year when the IRS made unilateral changes to the process. These changes, which NTEU vehemently opposed, included removing write-in comments that allowed employees to anonymously express concerns, eliminating certain questions that helped identify specific problem areas and abolishing a requirement to hold group meetings to discuss the results. More than 30,000 IRS employees showed their dissatisfaction with the process and refused to take the survey."*

There is nothing new in all this. History is replete with ignominiously arrogant and/or obtuse leaders all too callous to reality, and the people beneath them. Now we are "engaged". The 30,000 Roman Legionnaires and their dependents that were slaughtered at the Battle of Teutoburg Forest were "engaged"—with the German barbarians. The 58,000 British casualties in the first day of the Battle of the Somme were "engaged" with the German Army—eventually, Britain was to suffer over 420,000 casualties in the "engagement." The 637 British soldiers killed in the Charge of the Light Brigade at the 1854 Battle of Balaclava were "engaged". As Lord Tennyson wrote, like the men of the Light Brigade, we are now invited to:

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death."

* Reprinted from NTEU e-Bulletin, January 24, 2006

Letters from Our Readers

Regarding IRS's new buzz phrase of "Employee Engagement" replacing "Employee Satisfaction," a Revenue Agent (and ex-US Army) writes,
"Engagement, Charge, Kill, Destroy."
The IRS should feel silly and ashamed.

Contest

In the December issue of Firebird 24, we announced a contest to win a free dinner for two for first prize, and a NTEU Chapter 24 travel mug for second prize. Contestants were asked to E-Mail Ron with the reason they joined NTEU. It's not too late to enter the contest! Send your entry to ["Ronald.E.Woytalewicz@irs.gov"](mailto:Ronald.E.Woytalewicz@irs.gov) Firebird 24 reserves the right to reprint any or all entries.

Firebird 24

Ronald Woytalewicz, President

Jeri Burger, Vice President

Marianne Gordon, Secretary

Henry Morrison, Treasurer

David Hauenstein, Editor

Chapter 24 Website, www.nteu24.org

Caroline Trinkwalder