

IRS Public Information Officers

By Sovereign Dave



In Nazi Germany Joseph Goebbels' title was "Minister of Propaganda and *Public Information*". Identified in the attachment is the IRS's admission of the existence of *Public Information Officers*. Aside from the EXACTNESS in names, the IRS officers bear a striking functional resemblance to those of Goebbels' Public Information.

From the attachment, one can ascertain that these IRS PIO's are making great strides at the "publicity-side" of enforcement. In a word, this is propaganda. Now most people assume propaganda to be connected just with lies. However, propaganda can be both truth and lie: the major defining element is simply "control" in the interests of furthering some particular ideology. Any such control is anti-liberty, anti-freedom, anti-truth, anti-happiness and lastly anti-American. Any such actions conducted by government—no matter what the agenda—is a violation of the trust the People placed in government to guarantee a free informational society.

"Propaganda is ... the deliberate attempt by some individual or group to form, control, or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of instruments of communication, with the intention that in any given situation the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist." Qualter

Societies that are heavily propagandized are easy to recognize but...bear in mind the extent might be subject-specific:

- For the subject, is the society dominated by largely one viewpoint?

- Does the media grant access to an opposing viewpoint on the subject?
- Are opposing viewpoints ridiculed?
- Is there a vested interest by commercial or money-making entities for the propaganda?
- Who is the target audience? Most propaganda is largely marketed to the masses and ill-informed.
- Is government involved with an agenda [e.g. money, control] or policy?

Think about this: Goebbel's aptly defined propaganda as "background music for government policy." Propaganda itself is easy to recognize—especially when used by government:

- Does the press release label? Does it target an individual offender of its policies?
- Does a pamphlet mention "opinions" favorable and no opposing viewpoints?
- Does the pamphlet or release mention an authority figure using words of authority such as Judge or General [aka attorney]?
- Does the release invoke FEAR as a means of closing its sale?
- Does the release seek compliance for its government slavery policies?

MOTIVE and NEED: In the attached piece take note of several elements. First let's "set the stage" with the example of 35 indictments and 130 open criminal investigations for "abusive trusts." There were far less indictments for individual income tax evasion. Now think: 300 Million people in the US. From a statistics standpoint one has better odds at getting struck by lightning than getting an indictment for tax evasion or an abusive trust. Can you see WHY the IRS needs this propaganda? Yet with this few number of indictments, is this a *national problem*?

THE MESSAGE: "A National Compliance Problem" --In section III one can see the "strategy" of the propagandists. The focus is not on the individual but rather on a "national compliance problem". It's: (1) fear that is "recycled" to reach those who are "tempted" to stop volunteering and (2) "Public Confidence Instilled" amongst the remaining slaves that their slave owners are insuring equality of all slaves.

STEERING THE PRESS: In section IV one can see where the reporters are "steered" to information regarding convictions. I wonder if this "steering" involves verbal conversations with reporters where certain facts are

distorted. For example in the case of Walt Maken, the newspaper article somehow stated Walt was given a 30 year conviction when it was 30 months. In all newspaper accounts of convictions I've only seen distortions favorable to the propagandists. In addition labels such as "tax protestor" that were outlawed by usage by government somehow resurface in these articles. Could one imagine that these 35 agent-ministers of "information" are above such actions when their title is so close to that of Goebbel's?

MARKETING TO PARTNERS: Perhaps the most hideous aspects of the IRS propagandists are visible in the last paragraph of section IV. I'll highlight them:

- Since when does a department that is supposed to be about Justice need to "market" convictions? Is government supposed to be in the business of marketing....especially convictions?
- To whom do they market? National periodicals and professional tax preparers. And who are these parties? Perhaps the most ignorant section of the population on tax laws! The courts have stated that "...even lawyers have scant knowledge of income tax laws." So what does that say about accountants and tax preparers? Answer: Less than scant is a very small amount of knowledge! NOTE: A propagandist ALWAYS markets to segment of the population with the smallest knowledge. Why? Because they are the easiest to sway with a slick presentation such as "Why I must pay taxes."
- Tax Preparers and National periodicals are "PARTNERS" with the IRS! No wonder why no press will carry tax honesty papers. Tax preparers have an "economic interest" in "SPREADING INFORMATION". [Hint: If these preparers have less than scant knowledge of income tax laws then what smelly substance are they really spreading? Manure.]

BAR ASSOCIATION PART AND PARCEL: Around the last paragraph of page 2 you will see that "the information [aka propaganda] ...would have been useful to us in our practice."

After you've read the IRS piece highlighting such words as "steering", "spreading", "partners", "marketing", "public confidence", "strategy", etc. then closely examine these select quotes by Goebbels:

"The effective propagandist must be a master of the art of speech, of writing, of journalism, of the poster, and of the leaflet. He must have the gift to use the major methods of influencing public opinion such as the press, film, and radio to serve his ideas and goals, above all in an age of advancing technology."

"Propaganda is a means to an end. Its purpose is to lead the people to an understanding that will allow them to willingly and without internal resistance devote themselves to the tasks and goals of a superior leadership."

"The people should share the concerns and successes of their government. Its concerns and successes must therefore be constantly presented and hammered into them so that the people will consider the concerns and successes of their government to be their concerns and successes."

has written and lectured extensively on a variety of topics related to criminal law and procedure.

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criminal tax prosecutions at the Justice Department's Tax Division. He also served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and as Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division in the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of New York. He has served in other governmental positions as Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Enforcement at the Treasury Department and as Special Assistant to Director William H. Webster at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency.✉

New IRS Publicity Strategy

Mark E. Matthews
Chief, Criminal Investigation

I. Introduction

Before becoming Chief of Criminal Investigation, I spent over ten years as a federal prosecutor, both as an AUSA and then as the Deputy Assistant Attorney General responsible for criminal tax matters in the Tax Division. In both of those positions, I was frustrated by the fact that dollar for dollar, tax cases did not seem to garner the same media attention (and hence deterrence value) as similar white collar fraud cases. As a result of (a) the IRS reorganization effort last year; (b) additional resources devoted to our publicity efforts; and (c) a major overhaul of our media strategy, I am pleased to report that we have developed the tools that are already dramatically improving the length, placement and targeting of media stories about criminal tax cases. The key elements are the creation and training of thirty-five Special Agent Public Information Officers ("PIOs"), the dramatic expansion of our website, our institutional commitment to become more open and to provide more comprehensive information about our

enforcement efforts and, lastly, a press strategy that links individual cases in a systematic way to larger compliance issues and enforcement programs. The website allows us to "recycle" tax cases — generate multiple press stories nationwide about particular cases — and to target our enforcement efforts to particular media outlets or other specialized websites that reach key audiences. This entire effort is accomplished with maximum fidelity to taxpayer disclosure laws and in cooperation with United States Attorneys' Offices and the Tax Division.

II. Background

As part of modernization, the Internal Revenue Service commissioned Roper Starch Worldwide, Inc. to conduct a study among the general public to determine their attitudes toward income tax and the IRS, in particular. The results showed that the majority of taxpayers make an honest effort to file accurate and timely tax returns. The survey also showed that those honest taxpayers wanted to know that everyone else pays his/her fair share of taxes — in fact, the survey said that taxpayers believe that they end up paying the "tax" bill for those who cheat.

Some of the other findings included the belief by 88% of those polled that major tax indiscretions should be punished. The survey also asked "From the following list of people, how likely would you be to read a newspaper or magazine article or watch a TV news story about their indictment or conviction for tax evasion?"

	Very Likely	Some-what Likely	Not at all Likely
National celebrity	21%	33%	23%
Local business person such as your local gas station owner	28%	39%	15%
A neighbor or person in your town	44%	35%	10%
A neighbor or person in your town who is also indicted or convicted of money laundering	47%	34%	9%
A political figure, such as your congress-person	56%	28%	9%

Someone who has the same occupation or works in your industry or profession	49%	30%	10%
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These results told us several important things. First, we need to focus our publicity on specific audiences – or market segments, because the respondents said they wanted to know about someone in their local area or someone who had a similar occupation. Second, we learned that in order to enhance compliance (reach those who are tempted to cheat or evade their tax obligations) and to instill public confidence in the integrity of the tax system (reach those who believe that THEY pay the price for others who cheat), we needed to do a better job of publicizing our enforcement efforts.

Historically, when we work a case in IRS Criminal Investigation, we put 99% of our effort into the lengthy, complex investigation, from initiation to sentencing, yet we don't even spend 1% of our time obtaining publicity on that case. We realized that we needed to reallocate resources given the fact that IRS CI faces the largest general deterrence mission in all of federal law enforcement. We have to reach over 200 million Americans who encounter the tax system each year — both to deter the potential cheaters and assure the vast majority who are honest that the IRS is investigating those who intentionally evade their obligations.

When I came on the job last year, many practitioners, members of the American Bar Association, and industry leaders kept asking me, "Mark, when is CI going to do something about abusive trusts? When are you going to bring some criminal cases in this area?" My reply was, "Did you know that we had thirty-five indictments last year and that we have 130 open criminal investigations in the area of abusive trusts?" Of course, the common answer was, "No, and why are you keeping it a secret? That information would have been useful to us in our practice." Consequently, we started looking at what we did

with those cases. We found that we were taking standard press items from Criminal Investigation indictments and/or convictions, writing up a short press release and dropping it in the court house regular press box for courthouse reporters. We did not pay attention to whether those reporters or their readers were interested in tax stories. Our stories got viewed in isolation, focused only on the individual defendants, and often wound up being buried in the Metro or Business section of the papers.

III. Compliance Strategy Linked to Media Strategy

Several features of the modernized IRS are helping us solve our problems. One is that we are actually developing a comprehensive compliance strategy throughout the IRS. That strategy will be combined with a more comprehensive and more sophisticated media strategy. The goal is to allow us to provide reporters with more comprehensive information about our enforcement efforts and to place an individual prosecution in the context of a larger compliance problem. The idea is that an individual case then becomes the fresh, newsworthy element in a story that focuses on a national compliance problem and the IRS and Justice Departments' responsive efforts. Using our related web pages and the efforts of the local Public Information Officer, we are beginning to provide reporters with information about similar convictions around the country, "recycling" those convictions and sentences and allowing the media to provide a more comprehensive "trending" story. Of course, we are doing all of this within the confines of Internal Revenue Code Section 6103 (Disclosure of Tax Information).

IV. IRS CI Website and U.S. Attorney Press Releases

A significant part of our media strategy was the development of a website, <http://www.treas.gov/irs/ci>, that provides compliance-related enforcement activity information to the public. Our website includes fraud alerts in areas involving Employment Tax Fraud, Non-filers, and Abusive Trusts. We will be expanding the fraud alerts in the future to include Return Preparers and other key areas of non-compliance and other programs such as money

laundering and narcotics related cases. By doing this, the media is able to obtain the most current, factual information about legal actions taken by the Department of Justice on CI investigations. To use abusive trusts as an example, we provide a description of the foreign and domestic schemes that are occurring in the abusive trust area. We also provide information about the number of indictments, the number of open investigations, and the number of sentences and the average sentence. Toward the end of the website material on trusts, we list the five or six biggest, most significant cases (we call it "bundled" news). We also provide the text from the IRS brochure, *Should your financial portfolio contain Too Good To be True Trusts*, a really good example of things that the public should be looking for when considering a trust.

This is a new approach for the IRS, but it does a very effective job of reaching various market segments and certainly gives the media a wealth of information that was previously not available to them from the IRS. Now, every time we get a new conviction in a particular program, we steer the reporters to the relevant webpage. We tell the reporter, "Here's a press release on a conviction regarding an abusive trust, and if you want more information for your story, here is the website for additional background information and cases." We are extremely pleased that several U.S. Attorneys' Offices have begun to include our web address in press releases on our cases, giving both the public and the media access to this comprehensive enforcement data. It is particularly useful in a press release involving a guilty plea when the vast majority of the case-specific information may still be protected by disclosure laws.

In addition to the website, our national press office has a very active program in marketing Justice Department convictions and sentences to the professional tax preparation community and their national periodicals. This audience is a particularly important audience for tax-related prosecutions. Not only are they our partners in our compliance efforts, they have an economic interest in spreading information about con artists and their tax scams. I have even been told by one practitioner that he keeps copies of the

convictions from our abusive trust webpage to hand to clients who ask him about such schemes.

V. Public Information Officers

CI now has thirty-five special agents serving as full or part-time Public Information Officers, one for each field office. The PIOs work directly for the Special Agent-in-Charge and in cooperation with public information officers in U.S. Attorneys' offices. They have received IRS disclosure training, which can be a valuable resource to the United States Attorneys as they draft their press releases. Both the Special Agent-in-Charge and the PIOs have received media training as well. One of the key responsibilities for the PIOs is to work with the Offices of the United States Attorneys to ensure that key information is provided for press releases and press conferences regarding CI's investigative and enforcement efforts. Since October 2000, when the PIOs were selected, the publicity on CI enforcement activity has increased significantly. I am confident that the primary reason for this increase is a result of the positive support they have received from the Offices of the United States Attorney.

With the support of Department of Justice Tax Division, the United States Attorneys and the newly trained special agent PIOs, this new media strategy is going to have a significant impact on compliance with the tax laws. By leveraging the general deterrence impact of our enforcement actions, it also provides the taxpayers with a better return on their investment in our enforcement program. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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