

E-FILING TRANSFORMS WORK AT IRS 7



March 24, 2008

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PAY AND BENEFITS

TSP transfers down

Despite a volatile financial market, Thrift Savings Plan investors are making fewer inter-fund transfers. **Page 4**

Expanded coverage

The Office of Personnel Management has asked federal health insurance carriers to add hearing aids and other hearing-related services to coverage for federal employees. **Page 4**

TRAVEL

Bill targets hotel use

Legislation proposed by the General Services Administration would allow agencies to dictate which hotels federal travelers use. **Page 6**

AGENCY MANAGEMENT



Milestones slip

The Energy Department's Cleanup of contaminated nuclear waste sites is behind schedule because of inadequate funding, experts say. **Page 8**

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FEDERAL TIMES

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CONTRACTORS' CONFLICTS

GSA's Alliant exemplifies common problem

By ELISE CASTELLI

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When the General Services Administration hired a small consulting firm to conduct past-performance reviews on companies vying for awards on a \$50 billion information technology contract, it wasn't doing anything out of the ordinary.

It has become the norm in recent years for agencies like GSA to contract with private industry for pre-award acquisition support — such as for GSA's Alliant contract — to help shore up the burgeoning workload burdening short-handed acquisition offices. But with this growth in private-sector support on the decision-making side of contracting, more complaints about so-called organizational conflicts of interest are



'This type of thing does point out the appearance of a conflict of interest. It's a conundrum for companies who want to grow themselves and bring in revenue.'

Larry Allen

COALITION FOR GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

also cropping up.

While less than 5 percent of the 1,400 contract award protests the Government Accountability Office receives each year cite such conflicts as a grounds for the protest, GAO handles more conflict cases today than it did a decade ago, said Daniel Gordon, deputy general counsel for GAO.

The growth of organizational

conflict of interest corresponds with consolidation within industries serving government, particularly in the information technology and defense sectors, Gordon said. In addition, government is buying more from industry each year, including advice about what products to buy, he said. With fewer companies to buy from and

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Is your Web site up to snuff?

Government lags private sector in user satisfaction

By COURTNEY MABEUS

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When a book shopper surfs Amazon.com, he expects to find what he's looking for — maybe even a few extra items — and to place his order with no hassles.

In the age of instant gratification, visitors to e-government sites expect that same sort of easy interaction, whether they want to find a veterans benefits form or learn if a home is in a flood plain.

But government has failed to keep pace with the private sector in providing information and services online, according to a survey released last week.

Satisfaction with government sites declined for a third consecutive quarter and has fallen to its lowest rating since 2005, according to the University of Michigan's E-government Satisfaction Index for the quarter ending this month.

The falling score is "a wake-up call. ... It's slipping, and we need to do something about it," said report author Larry Freed.

Government Web sites and online services scored 72.4 points in customer satisfaction out of the possible 100 points. Meanwhile, the private sector ranked higher on two comparable surveys — 81.6 for e-commerce such as plane reservation and shop-

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Energy-saving Nevada site is model for the future

By TIM KAUFFMAN

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From the outside, the National Nuclear Security Administration's administrative office in Las Vegas looks like any other concrete building dotting the landscape of most American cities.

But inside a technological revolution has occurred, putting the 1980s building on a path to become the greenest facility in Nevada and one of the greenest in the country.

By using state-of-the-art automation to monitor and control lighting, heating, cooling and air quality — and making other ecologically smart choices, such as buying recycled office furniture and planting desert-friendly landscaping — the once-nondescript office building should serve as a model for energy-efficient building design across government.

"This is going to be what I consider a demonstration building. It's going to be one of the most technological buildings of its kind," said Gillian Silver-Rodis, community relations manager for National Security Technologies, the NNSA contractor that works out of the facility. NNSA's 3,000 contractor employees and 100 federal employees who work in Nevada manage the Nevada Test Site, a restricted-access location larger than Rhode Island where nuclear weapons were once tested and where experiments now are conducted on conventional

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