

## SERVICE EFFORTS

One of the purposes of this report is to acquaint the reader with the activities (service efforts) of a key State agency or operation. In 1999, the Delaware Quality Consortium presented its prestigious "Merit Award" to the Delaware Division of

Revenue (DOR). Modeled on the widely recognized Baldrige Award, the Delaware Quality Consortium's awards are given to organizations meeting high standards of excellence.

The Division of Revenue began the Quality Award process in an attempt to improve customer service and agency operations. In 1997, after conducting a self-assessment, the Division began a process of internal improvement. By incorporating Quality Award criteria into the Department's Strategic Plan and using the assessment feedback to define administrative goals, the Division improved its customer focus and produced tangible results.

Because timeliness is an indicator of operational efficiency and effectiveness, improvement efforts in this area are key. Over the past five years, DOR has succeeded in cutting peak season (February-April) telephone waits from an average of 15 minutes to approximately one minute and reducing the average time for depositing funds by over 60%. Other measures, such as implementing outreach activities in local communities, simplification of tax forms, and the development of tax specialty groups to better answer customer questions have allowed the Division to better serve its customers.

Attempts to better manage operations also focused on the Division's tax processing responsibilities. In support of this duty, the Division has developed and administered sophisticated and technically advanced processing and imaging systems. Through the use of bar-codes, electronic, and Internet-filing, the Division has reduced an already prompt 14 day "paper" refund time by as much as 40%. The Division developed Internet-filing capability in-house without any additional investment of personnel or financial resources. On average, processing for filers using the bar-code systems takes approximately 8.5 days. The shift from manual to electronic filing improves service, yet reduces the Division's reliance on labor intensive work, increases productivity, and reduces costs.

A strong customer focus and strategic investments in technology enable the Division to successfully administer over 20 taxes and process over 1 million tax returns each year. Moreover, in spite of this sizable processing burden and the natural tendency of taxpayers to treat revenue collectors with skepticism, public responsiveness to DOR improvements has resulted in customer satisfaction ratings of 96% for refund time, 93% for speed of service, and 92% for quality of service.