

Chain tax preparers do not fare well in undercover investigation

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Raymond Chen

The Government Accountability Office paid nineteen visits to chain tax preparers, presented information on two hypothetical families, and asked for assistance in preparing the tax return. “Only two returns showed the correct refund amount, but both of those returns included errors.” The article goes into specifics of what sorts of mistakes were made. A Marketplace report added that mistakes with tax credits were particularly bad because messing them up can render you ineligible for claiming them in the future. Add to that the plans for the IRS to permit tax preparers sell information about their clients to marketers and the fact that major tax preparation firm H&R Block got its own taxes wrong [found a not-yet-404’d link – 2pm], and my decision to do my own taxes by hand doesn’t seem so kooky after all, now, does it... In other tax-day news, I will be heading to San Francisco on the 15th for a family event. I don’t have a precise agenda, but I left time to be a tourist on Monday the 17th. I’ll most likely take the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center tour at 10am, then head north to check out the Presidio (which was still a military base when I lived in the Bay Area). If you want to meet up, you can drop me a message today or tomorrow via the contact page. I won’t be checking my email much while I’m away (that’s why it’s called a “vacation”, see), but before I leave I’ll set up my voicemail to forward to my mobile phone. Call Microsoft Corporate Headquarters, press “2”, then say my name. (The voicemail lady will say, “Calling the office”. Don’t be alarmed.)

When talking to the voicemail lady, be careful to enunciate clearly, because there are also a Raymond Cheng and a Ray Chen at Microsoft. We get each other’s stuff occasionally but it usually gets sorted out without too much trouble since we each work on completely different projects. (Bonus trivia: When Raymond Cheng first arrived at Microsoft, I was his mentor!)

Raymond Chen

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