How advisers can appeal to lower income taxpayers

General Features

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There are lots of taxpayers who fall outside the remit of the tax charities who need, and are willing to pay for, good value professional tax advice and assistance.

The types of issues that the tax charities help with include P800 problems (including 'employer error' cases), late filing penalties (often for tax returns incorrectly issued) and determinations/special relief, preparing tax returns for those in low-paid self-employment, tax debt issues (including helping to arrange payment plans or remission) and, more recently, worldwide disclosure.

However, the tax charities cannot help everyone. And no matter how much LITRG try and help people 'self-serve' in many instances (particularly where an issue has several strands or has 'snowballed'), there can be no substitute for having a tax professional speak with HMRC on your behalf.

LITRG already have a website page on getting 'paid help'. This encourages those who can afford to pay for their taxes to find professional assistance using the Find a CTA tool on the CIOT's website or the Find an ATT tool on the ATT's website. The guidance urges those seeking help to ask about the adviser's charges and whether they will have to pay anything for an initial discussion about their requirements. We will be giving some thought to what more we can do in this area during 2020.

In the meantime, there is clearly a need in the market and we are sure there are ATTs/CTAs out there who can help meet that need. If you are one of them, how can you make sure that, practically speaking, people can find you? We can offer you these top five tips:

- Make sure your details are up to date and displaying correctly in the 'Find an ATT/CTA tool'.

- Consider setting up a web presence if you do not have one already, so that people searching for information on the internet can find you.
- Put yourself in the shoes of someone on a lower income. Does your marketing/advertising material make you seem approachable/accessible?
- If you are happy to take on ad hoc, rather than recurring, work and/or can help individuals as well as businesses, tell people!
- Last but not least, it may be an obvious point (and indeed, is one covered by Professional Rules and Practice Guidelines), but people on lower incomes are likely to be price sensitive. Make sure your pricing structure is as clear as possible.