

Why doesn't HMRC think our opinions count?

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I was sent a report by HMRC yesterday on what it called its 'Stakeholder Research'. [You can find this here](#).

This is how the short report introduces itself:

Just a minute, I thought on reading this; since when have the stakeholders of HMRC - our national tax authority - been made up of corporates, politicians and journalists? What about you? Aren't you a stakeholder of HMRC? Why didn't they ask your opinion, I wondered?

But, just in case you had any doubt about who counts for HMRC's purposes I read a little further and found this:

This research was carried out by Ipsos MORI between 24th June and 7th August 2013.

That sounded good, I thought. I have an impression of them as an independent polling organisation. That sentiment lasted for seconds:

*These results are based on 128 quantitative interviews conducted over the phone and 24 qualitative interviews by phone and face-to-face. **The sample was provided by HMRC.***

I added the emphasis, partly to indicate my surprise on reading this and realising that HMRC are offering this as if it's objective research and yet they supplied the sample of people to be interviewed. Do they think we're stupid?

They go on to note that that there were three categories surveyed:

** fcorporate stakeholders (30 per cent are voluntary and community sector, 30 per cent are agents mainly representative organisations, 40 per cent are businesses, associations or industry groups)*

* *politicians (including Members of Parliament as well as members of devolved assemblies)*

* *journalists (both national and regional).*

There's no more clue as to who these people are than that. So, there is no hint as to the political affiliation of the politicians or which papers journalists might work for. And as for the 'corporate stakeholders' no indication is given as to who they are supposed to represent or why, but accountancy bodies and big business look to get a good look in - and we all know that big business gets by far the best service HMRC have to offer.

So the outcome was findings causing smug satisfaction to HMRC on its massively improved approval ratings in the year. I am sure anyone can pick a simple of interviewees to achieve that goal. This is PR from the Politburo era, it's so absurd.

But much more worryingly, it seems that HMRC does not think the public should have a voice on this issue. And that really troubles me, because they're here to serve us and have very obviously forgotten the fact.

Talk about a PR exercise backfiring; this one does, spectacularly.