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Volunteer Day 2010

The day the office went dark and we went on a mission



June 18, 2010 was an important date for SPS. Our entire staff took an early lunch before we closed the offices. You may wonder if this was a wise thing for a vibrant firm like SPS to do, but it is historically a quiet time of year and we all had a very important thing to do that day.

It was the first annual Volunteer Day for SPS. The staff journeyed to the City of Vernon to work at the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank (www.lafoodbank.org). It was a natural fit since one of the foodbank's biggest supporters is the Goodman Family Foundation. The family is a long time client of SPS, and over the years they have shared with us the foodbank's good work in the community.

The LA Regional Foodbank was founded in 1973 and operates from a 96,000 square foot facility. It provides food for nearly 900 member agency sites including abused and abandoned children homes, battered women shelters, senior centers, local food pantries, soup kitchens, AIDS hospices and more. In 2009, they distributed 54 million pounds of food for the hungry in Los Angeles County.

The SPS team attended an orientation and then spent the day sorting and cleaning food. The challenging physical labor made Volunteer Day a rewarding, enriching experience for all. The firm also made a donation on behalf of staff and clients to support this essential work.

We intend to turn this into an annual Volunteer Day. If you have any suggestions for charitable work we can take on in the future, please let us know. Photos of our Volunteer Day are available in the online version of this newsletter, found at www.spscpa.com.

You're not alone!

When official looking documents come in the mail, call us!



You know what it's like when those documents with an official-looking seal and title arrive in the mail. There's that little nervous twinge in your stomach. Your mind starts racing about the drama that may be entering your life. Fortunately, you can relax, review the contents and give us a call.

You may receive documentation about business licenses, mortgages or taxation. It could be from the city, state, county or federal government. Regardless, we can take a look at it and advise you on what action needs to be taken, if any.

We should also point out that there are a number of scams out there that we can help you avoid. One recent example is a document that appears to be an official State of California notice for information and payment. It's actually from a company that fills in the information you provide, completes a form on your behalf and remits it to the State for a charge of about \$200. In this case, you would only need to check a box on the official State form if no information has changed, mail it in yourself and save the \$200 for something else, perhaps even a donation to the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank.

The important thing to remember is that we are here to help sort out the real from the not so real and share our thinking on the best way to proceed.

Green is a color of many shades

Some ideas on removing paperwork from your life



When it comes to going green, we don't all have to be perfect to make a difference. The challenge is knowing what we can do effectively and how to implement the change. You may have seen an earlier article in SPSQ on how we've made some changes here at the office. Now we have some ideas on creating a paperless environment in your home.

Of course, the easiest way to manage your file cabinets from overflowing with paper is to become one of our Business Management clients, where we take care of all your financial and bill-paying needs. For everyone else, here are some things to consider...

Mailbox management

Find out if companies you do business with offer e-statements. Most of their websites have a paperless preference for your account. Keep a list or e-reminders of when the statements are due so you don't miss a payment. One tip is to create a folder in your email inbox to collect all statements so they don't get lost or neglected. You can also set up auto payments on your bank website for recurring payments that don't change. And whether you go paperless or not, why not reduce junk mail by going to OptOutPreScreen.com?

Making file cabinets redundant

The general rule is to keep records for up to seven years, though there are exceptions. Make sure to check with us before you start shredding records. If you do turn your paper documents into PDFs (portable digital format) you will not only save space and trees, you'll also be better protected in the event of fire, flood or other natural disaster. You will need a scanner and shredder. Organize paper statements and invoices by subject or payee and in chronological order. Then create folders on your computer to drop scanned docs into. When your paper docs are safely stored as PDFs, simply shred and recycle...and remember, never throw unshredded docs into the trash.

Keeping electronic documents safe and secure

You will need to keep a back up copy of your documents off site in case something happens to your computer such as fire or theft. Back up once a week or more in either a portable, external drive that you keep off site or use a reputable web-based resource such as Carbonite, Windows Live SkyDrive or Mozy.

This may all seem daunting to implement but you can do it and we're happy to help walk you through it. You will be helping yourself by clearing away all of that paper and helping the environment at the same time.

Federal and California tax matters update

A follow-up to the recent letter we sent



Sometimes letters can fall through the cracks. We hope that anything arriving at your house or office with a Sobul, Primes & Schenkel logo on it will be treated with reverence. But we're realists and know that you may not always read what we send you. A recent letter, dated August 18, 2010, was filled with important updates on Federal and California tax matters. Here's a quick summary:

- The Health care act includes several federal tax provisions that become effective in 2010, with additional provisions through 2018.
- The Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act (HIRE) has two key federal tax provisions to consider.
- There may be higher federal taxes in 2011 if the federal government does not make any changes to current law that resets important federal tax provisions to their 2000 levels.
- Starting in 2011, non-compliance of California electronic payment requirements will have penalties assessed for individuals required to pay their taxes electronically. Businesses that are required to pay California tax electronically are already subject to these penalties.
- While there is no federal estate tax for 2010, legislation may be coming to revise this retroactively to the beginning of the year and change the estate tax for the future. Stay tuned.

To see the full update, please visit www.spscpcpa.com or call and we will be happy to send you a copy. And as always, please call us with any questions, issues or concerns you may have so we can help you plan for any upcoming changes!