Q&A with Dave Hess, New Director of the Bureau of Audits

Q: Can you share a bit about your professional background and experience?

I graduated from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1992 with a dual major in Economics/Industrial Management and supplemented that education with additional accounting courses before earning my CPA credentials in 1997.

I have been with the DOR Bureau of Audits for my entire 30-year career. I started as an audit trainee in the Harrisburg Regional Office sales tax program in 1995. In 1999 I was promoted to a leadership role as Harrisburg Regional Audit Specialist and in 2003 became an Audit Supervisor of sales tax and fuels taxes. In 2013 I moved into the role of Harrisburg Regional Manager and in 2022 become the Bureau of Audits Field Operations Manager.

I have experience with Sales and Use Tax, Motor Fuel Taxes and IFTA, and Corporate Net Income Tax as well as Gross Receipts. One special focus is working in unison with our talented Audits' management team across the Commonwealth toward a shared vision of successful leadership.

Q: What brought you to the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, and what excites you most about being here?

I grew up in Harrisburg and was well aware of Commonwealth employment opportunities where I could enjoy a reasonable work/life career balance. I'm most excited to work with energetic, positive-minded individuals who help to continuously improve our operations, build morale, and achieve results. Momentum is a great feeling!

Another aspect is realizing that our work makes a real difference for the businesses and taxpayers within our Commonwealth. I believe we should all feel a sense of responsibility to produce accountable results as a taxpayer return on investment.

Q: Looking back on your career, are there any experiences that really shaped your perspective or leadership style?

Wow, yes, many experiences over 30 years. Really the most important insight involved listening to others. Over the years I eventually realized that internal workplace conflict often descends from passionate employees with strong work opinions — and listening involves learning to patiently interact, hearing everyone out, valuing opinions, and arriving at the best solutions.

My leadership style involved evolving to learn that it's not about me but my team members. My philosophy is simply that if my team members succeed then I succeed.

Q: As you step into this role, what are some things you're hoping to focus on or explore?

I hope to continue building communications and fostering personal interactions across all levels and to explore interactive training methods that enhance job knowledge for all personnel. Knowledge is crucial. It equates to increased voluntary compliance, more accurate results, better ideas, and it enhances confidence throughout our Audit Team.

Q: What advice do you have for new employees at the Department of Revenue?

Get involved, COMMUNICATE meaningfully and professionally at all times, learn what proper Organizational Behavior looks like and practice it. Speak up and share ideas. Become a great team member who genuinely celebrates the achievements of others and not just your own. Finally, know, understand, and work to improve on personal weaknesses.

Q: Outside of work, what are some things you're passionate about or enjoy doing?

I enjoy bike riding with co-workers, friends, and my wife Susan (Suz) especially on the local rail trails around Mount Gretna or on vacation around Lewes/Rehoboth Beach; cheering on the Phillies and Chicago Bears; spending time with our extensive family and our pets (2 cats and 2 very spoiled dogs!).

Q: Is there anything about you — fun fact or otherwise — that might surprise people?

I enjoy reading with a diverse range from history to Anne Rice novels to economic principles to comic books!