Hey, this video is about our updated systems for q and a with you, our clients, during the tax return preparation process. We have not had consistent guidelines that we used in that q and a process in the past, and we've observed some issues as a result of that. So we're shoring up our systems. Our goal in doing this is to create a smooth running tax preparation process. We want to create smooth running process for ourselves internally that helps pace the work through tax season helps reduce stress through tax season, but it's also for you because your tax return preparation is likely to be done in a more timely manner and more consistent timelines for completing tax returns. So our goal here is a smooth running tax preparation process both for us and for you.

What we've observed in the last couple of years, we have observed a pattern, and we're seeing more and more of it in longer and longer delays in clients answering our questions or providing the items that we need to prepare their tax return.

Now this is not everybody, let me just be really clear. Many of you are very responsive to us. Thank you. That makes it so much easier for us to do our job. However many of you are not, and I get it, taxes are not your favorite thing in the world. That's why we're here! I know it's really hard to make it a priority to dig up those last three numbers for us or to get that last question answered or find one last form.

But the problem is when we have long delays in getting those items back or questions answered, it creates problems both for our team and for our other clients. It creates delays and backlogs for clients who have actually answered those questions in a really prompt way or submitted everything on time. And so we really want to be fair to all of our clients as well as for our team.

In general with our clients, those who are ready and submitting everything first, they're served first and they go through the tax preparation process - first in first served. Pretty simple. However, when we have folks who come in early but the tax file is not complete, or we ask a lot of questions and we only get some of those answers back, then they start holding up the line for those who are being more responsive. And frankly, it's just not fair to all of our clients to run things that way, as well as for our team. We want to be fair to our team internally. Our job is to prepare accurate, optimized for your tax strategy, timely tax returns. And our job is not to go hunt you down and force you to give us the information we need to do our job, right? Our job is the tax preparation.

So we want to be fair to our team so they're spending their time really doing what we do best and not trying to get the data we need to do what we do best. So in an effort to create a better smooth running tax preparation process for our team and for our clients, we are setting in place some timeline policies around q and a in the tax preparation process.

As you know, when we're preparing a tax return, the accountant who's drafting your return sends you questions via email, and I'll let you know as a side note in our new portal system and watch the video on that because there's a lot more detail in there in our new portal system. If you install the app for the system on your phone and turn on notifications, when we send you an email, you will get an immediate notification. So you'll know right away that we've asked questions or there's items that we need. So that's just a side note, that's not required, but definitely we'll facilitate the process.

When we start preparing a tax return, we almost always have questions that we send out in the preparation process because we like to be thorough and optimize your return. So we send you questions. If we don't hear back or we don't get all the questions answered. Maybe we get some of them, but not all of them. We send a follow up email. If we go for a while, we haven't heard from you, then we call you. And usually somewhere in that process we're texting you as well.

In the past, that timeline was super flexible. It was an accordion, it could be short, it could be long. It just followed the timeline of our client.

From here forward, we really need to be consistent in that timeline. And so that process from the first q and a email we send out with follow up emails, text messages, and phone calls. If 14 days have passed, it’s a two week window, if 14 days have passed in total and we don't have all of those questions answered or the items that we've requested to prepare your return, at that point, we will file an extension for you and we will reschedule your tax preparation for after the main season, after the filing deadline, and we'll start working on those returns in May. And depending on how many of them they may go into June for preparation. We are going to give you every opportunity to work with us on this, right? We're going to send you emails, we're going to send you reminders, we're going to send you text messages, we will call you even on the phone but ultimately you have to work with us.

Now again, many of you are very, very prompt in this kind of communication. Great, keep doing that. Thank you. For those of you who are not always prioritizing your communication with us. This is really important to keep our season moving smoothly.

Now, a couple of notes about this. If those two weeks pass, we file an extension for you. We've rescheduled your tax preparation or after the deadline in May, and then a couple weeks later or anytime really before the filing deadline, you come back to us and say, oh, now I have them for you. Can I still get filed on time? The answer is no. We've already filed the extension, we've rescheduled your preparation for May. Because if we say yes, what that means is we're giving you priority treatment over those who have been timely in responding to us and that really doesn't feel fair to our other clients.

Now we do have one exception to this. If you want to pay a rush processing fee, then our team will stay after hours, work overtime and complete the return on time. Assuming we still have time to do that, we're not talking April 14th. That's what we do with files who come in after our intake due date. So for clients who submit their information to us after their intake due date, but they still want it filed on time, we charge a rush processing fee because it means our team is working extra overtime, after hours and we need to compensate them for that obviously. And so we need to charge more to do that. So we charge a 45% rush processing team for clients whose files come in after our intake due date, but still want to be filed on time.

That will be the case for clients who come in on time, we send out q and a, two weeks pass without getting those items that we need, and then they come to us after that two week window and request on time filing. So I just want to be really clear about that. You'll have the option to keep the extension and file in May or pay a rush processing fee to get it done on time.

I want to be really clear this does not apply to things outside of your control. I know some of you are freaking out about this right now. You're going, oh my gosh, but I always get a K-1 every year and it's always late and I don't have any control over that. That's okay. We are not going to penalize you for things you have no control over. The two most common scenarios here are K-1 forms and combined 1099 statements from brokerage firms. Sometimes those are issued and say “figures are not final” and then another one comes later.

So if these items are outside of your control, no, you're not going to be penalized. You have whatever time is needed to get those because you have no control over that. I'm talking about everything else, which is like 98% of the questions we ask or information we request is within your control. So that's what I'm talking about.

One other note about this process and timelines in the preparation process, we need to know upfront at the beginning of the season if you have a time sensitive need for your tax return to be completed. So examples of this, often we have folks who are buying a home and they need to qualify for their loan and they need their tax return to do that, or maybe they're refinancing their home. We'll probably see a little less of that with interest rates going up, but we still see it every year. Sometimes we have clients who are submitting a final financial aid application for their child's school or you're scheduled to be traveling out of the country and it's not going to be very easy to handle signing your tax return and paying your invoice and all of that stuff.

We all have stuff that comes up in life, we can have time sensitive needs for the tax return. So we need to know that upfront at the beginning of the season so that we can meet that need for you. We have added a question to the questionnaire asking you about this. I actually was surprised we had a lot of situations last year where this information came to us at the very last minute. We were in process with preparing a return or was in the queue for review and we have a client call us and say can I get my return done today? Because in two days I'm leaving the country - or my lender really needs it by Friday, otherwise my loan's not going to close on time and I can't buy my house.

We don't have a problem helping you meet those needs and those deadlines, we just need to know upfront so that we can schedule the timeline of preparing your tax return without jeopardizing the timeline on our other client's returns. So if we're learning about this at the last minute and we have to drop everything, that means dropping other returns who have been in communication with us and prioritizing yours over them. And again, that doesn't feel fair to them. So I'm not comfortable doing that anymore.

We have a question about this in our questionnaire now. We'll ask you to disclose any time sensitive needs you have for your tax return. If we don't have that information up front and it comes up later, just like the two week window, we will charge a rush processing fee to complete your tax return, to meet your deadline if we have to prioritize you over other clients who are in line in front of you. So heads up about that. Watch for that question on the questionnaire. Give it some thought. Really think about the whole season right through April 15th. You might not be thinking about that trip you're taking in April. So look at your calendar or look at your whole situation for the next couple events and let us know if you have a time sensitive need. If we know that upfront, we absolutely can accommodate it. It's not hard for us to do that with proper planning.

All of this, this is a lot, but all of this, the purpose here is a smooth running tax preparation process. This helps reduce the stress for our team in an already very intense season. And it helps to keep things fair for all of our clients and keep our tax preparation process moving smoothly so that tax returns are completed in a timely manner and a more consistent turnaround time for our clients. So thank you in advance for working with us on this. Again, we will give you every opportunity to stay within that timeline so we don't have any issues, but sometimes other things truly are a priority for you. And that's okay. We just want be really clear upfront so that you know what to expect. We may be in a situation of extending your return and rescheduling it for May or charging a rush fee.

Like all of these videos, if you have any questions, please contact us, and thanks for working with us on this.