What makes a good representative?

In my time as a Revenue Officer, I dealt with the gamut of taxpayer representatives. Most were good at their job and really tried to help their clients. But many hurt the people they represented more than helping. Some of it was incompetence, some indifference and some were simply crooks, taking people’s money never intending to give more than necessary to get that money. Don’t believe the hype that some people advertise.

The truth is, there’s nothing they can do for you that you can’t do for yourself. The problem is you need to know “what” to do. You will find many of the IRS employees will even advise or help you. There are however a couple of issues to be aware of.

* The very definition of their job is to do what’s in “the best interest of the government”.
* A lot of times they don’t know the alternatives.
* They are constantly under a time crunch and simply want to close the case as quickly as possible.
* Most are overworked & underpaid (some overpaid & underworked)
* And, of course, you have those few who love the power.

A good representative is someone you

Trust – That’s hard to establish on an initial meeting but look for a willingness to spend the time to make sure they understand your unique situation, answer any questions, and does not promise you “favorable” resolution. Of course, they should try, but anytime someone is promising you a particular outcome, is simply trying to get your money or at the very least, they’re naïve.

Rapport – Do they talk easily with you, or do they need you to “fill out this form” and wait? Are they patient in the discussion or trying to interject an answer at every breath? Do they take the time to make sure they understand what you are saying and that you understand them?

Individual solutions – Offers more than “cookie cutter” resolutions. While many situations with the IRS are similar and can be handled with those “cookie cutters”, the fact that you are seeking someone else to handle it and willing to pay for that help indicates that you need something more.

Represent YOU – Just like the IRS employee’s job is to represent the “best interest of the government”, does this person want to represent “your best interests”? And, most importantly, are they handling things the way you would? After all, they are representing you as if they were standing in your shoes.

Doesn’t know it all – I once had a taxpayer leave a message on my voice mail, cussing me out. He said I could not do what I had done. He said he knows the Internal Revenue Code and what I did was wrong. When I called him back, I told him that if he knows the Internal Revenue Code, he needs to come up here, because none of us do.

The point is there really is no way anyone can know the tax system. You have to be learning every day because it changes faster than that.

*Internal Revenue Code is 10,000 to 11,000 pages long  
Internal Revenue Code Book Could Be Used as a Paperweight in a Tornado  
More than 5 times as many words as the King James Bible  
Since 2001 there have been almost 5,000 changes to the code.*