Patent Public Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting

Patent Quality

Valencia Martin-Wallace
Deputy Commissioner for Patent Quality
May 14, 2015
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Office of Quality Management
Office of Quality Management

**Mission:** To optimize the quality of Patent products, processes and services to build a culture of process improvement and overall quality for the Patents organization.

**Functions:**
- Provide support and services to improve quality throughout Patents organization
- Train continuous improvement at all levels
- Prioritize improvement initiatives in alignment with the organization’s strategic goals
- Monitor improved processes and facilitate the replication of best practices
- Identify and facilitate cross-organizational improvement initiatives
- Identify trends (positive and negative) to improve or replicate processes
- Coordinate strategic steering committee to identify and prioritize opportunities for improvement
Office of Process Improvement

**Mission:** To improve the quality of Patents processes through facilitation of process identification, prioritization, analysis, measurement, monitoring, and socialization of best practices.

**Functions:**
- Provide the Patents-wide framework that enables processes for performance improvement.
- Coordinate and to create alignment between agency and Patents improvement measurement systems.
- Examine the identified organizational systems, programs, and proposes performance improvement alternatives to provide efficacy and effectiveness valuation of programs and/or organizations.
- Maintain continuous improvement expertise to ensure support and facilitate customer (internal) performance excellence initiatives and provide accountability to full and complete analysis and reporting.
- Increase transparency, availability and usefulness of performance improvement information that are common throughout Patent Quality Management organization.
- Monitor progress of performance/process improvement efforts and provide subject matter expertise when needed/requested.
- Coordinate organizational committees to identify and prioritize opportunities for improvement.
- Facilitate and support Patents teams during external audits i.e. IG and GAO.
Office of Patent Training

Mission: To sustain a quality examination process and product by providing administration and guidance of comprehensive training programs using innovative and progressive techniques.

Functions:
- Provide expertise and guidance in training development and delivery.
- Educate and train examiners in practice and procedures.
- Provide management and leadership training for Patents managers.
- Provide legal training for examiners and managers.
- Provide technical training to patent employees and managers.
- Provide Technical Support Staff training on technical as well administrative job functions.
- Responsible for maintaining materials, scheduling and delivery of CBTs, lectures and hands-on training.
- Manage and facilitate specialty training in technical, legal and administrative professional training.
Office of Patent Quality Assurance

**Mission:** To provide quality control and identify improvement opportunities as well as provide assistance in monitoring and reporting.

**Functions:**
- Provide timely, reliable, and meaningful indicators of patent examination quality and technical support quality.
- Identify and analyze trends in patent examination quality.
- Identify opportunities for improvement.
- Assist in improving quality in training within Patent Operations.
- Provide subject matter experts to support quality and pilot programs.
- Evaluate impacts of quality initiatives and pilot programs to patent examination quality.
- Measure the effectiveness of training and quality improvement initiatives.
- Administer internal and external surveys.
- Design, develop, and administer *ad-hoc* studies of patent examination quality.
- Prepare/conduct briefings and reports on USPTO's quality measurement system to external stakeholders, government entities and foreign IP offices.
- Maintain repository of historic and current quality metric reports.
- Maintain database of case reviews.
Office of Ombudsman and Stakeholder Outreach

**Mission:** To facilitate complaint-handling for pro se applicants and applicant’s representatives whose applications have stalled in the examination process in order to provide a quality customer experience.

**Functions:**
- Resolve issues to enable applications to effectively move through the patent examination process.
- Identify areas of best practices and areas of improvements.
- Educate the public on resources available to them.
- Track inquiries to ensure timely resolution.
- Provide feedback to patents management on trends.
Office of Quality Management

Office of Process Improvement
- Process Audits & Recommendations/Proposed Improvements
- Provide Coordinated Analysis and Monitoring
- Advise on Process Improvement
- Define Standards/Metrics

Office of Patent Training
- Provide Training Assistance
- Provide enhanced Practices/Procedure
- Recommend Corrective Action & Preventive Action as needed
- Review and Analysis Practice/Procedure to enhance their quality
- Analyze Trends
- Define Standards/Metrics
- Advance Legal and Technical Training

Office of Patent Quality Assurance
- Quality Review
- ISO Compliance
- Analyze Trends
- Define Standards/Metrics
- Feedback

Office of Ombudsman and Stakeholder Outreach
- Incident Management
- Complaint Handling
- Internal/External feedback
- Trend Analysis
- Define Standards/Metrics
- Feedback
- External Partnering/Engagement
Quality Initiatives
Internal Steps to Improve Patent Quality

Current Internal Initiatives

– Quality Assurance Specialist Details
– GS-14 Trainer Program Expansion
– Search Analysis Program
– Peer Interaction Meetings
– Review Quality Assurance Specialist Assistance in Technology Center
– Interview Specialists/Facilitators
– Conduct Quality Awareness Campaign and Training
  • 35 USC § 112(f)
  • 35 USC § 101
External Steps to Improve Patent Quality

Current External Initiatives

– Quality Webinar Series
– Ombudsman Hours by Time Zone
– Patent Quality Roadshows (Fall 2015)
– Federal Register Public Comments Analysis
– Patent Quality Summit Comments Analysis
Patent Quality Summit

Emerging Themes

• Providing a clear record throughout prosecution

• Differentiating between the measures of the patent process and the patent product

• The usefulness (necessity) of face-to-face interviews
Patent Quality Summit

- Federal Register Notice Comment Period
  - Deadline extended to May 20, 2015
- Comments and suggestions will be consolidated into database for consideration while planning future actions with regard to quality initiative
- Complete summit video available for viewing online
Quality Metrics
Quality Composite FY 2011 – FY 2015 Q2

FY 2011 was baseline year.
# Quality Composite

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Composite components are based on 12-month rolling averages collected on a quarterly basis, with the exception of the two survey items which are collected on a semi-annual basis and represent a snapshot of that particular period only.
Questions and Comments

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