



## **What activities are used to improve customer satisfaction?**

Over the last year the USPTO has taken steps to improve quality and customer service as indicated below. Customer Service increased by 11 points from FY 1999 to FY 2000 in the ACSI survey.

- The Office of Quality Management (OQM) and the Quality Council (QC) conducted research on complaint handling processes in federal government and private industry and used that information to assist in the development of a pilot for one of our Technology Centers. We expect to expand to other areas of the office based on the results of this pilot.
- A Quality Homepage on the Intranet and the Internet were created to provide quality information to our customers and employees and to provide a feedback mechanism from both the customer and the employee to the OQM staff. The Homepage provides a toolbox of varied information such as the business unit Balanced Scorecards, results of USPTO surveys, results of the USPTO Baldrige assessment, links to other quality sites, USPTO quality news, campus news and quality award information.
- The Office of Quality Management, with the support of the Quality Council, serves as a mechanism for USPTO internal best practices sharing, building strong quality networks across government and private industry to gather external best practices (Quality Consortium, Alliance for Business Excellence, etc.).
- USPTO has developed an in-process review program that has been in place for over a year with a goal of improving the quality of patents through improved examiner feedback and focused training.
- USPTO established an examiner interchange program between the Office of Patent Quality Review (OPQR) and the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences. This program provides additional training opportunities for Patent Quality Reviewers and has a goal of providing feedback to the Patent Corps so as to increase the consistency of patent practice and procedure.
- Technology Center 2700 and OPQR have developed a program to improve quality of business method patents.
  - USPTO has continued and expanded the many customer outreach efforts i.e., written surveys, telephone interviews, focus sessions, roundtables, partnerships, technology fairs.
  - USPTO is exploring the linkage between employee and customer satisfaction. Numerous initiatives have been implemented during the last year to also

improve employee satisfaction. Overall employee satisfaction has increased 10% during the last 2 years.

- The USPTO has introduced the electronic filing of applications in Patents and continues to receive increased electronic filings in Trademarks.
- The USPTO has split Technology Center 2700 (Communications and Information Processing) into TC 2100 and TC 2600 to better meet customer needs.

### **How do we know key managers are committed to improving customer satisfaction?**

Key managers have begun to be held accountable for customer satisfaction through their annual performance plans and also through balanced scorecards which have a customer satisfaction element in them. Since becoming a performance based organization in the early part of 2000, customer satisfaction is tied to many key managers' annual performance bonus. The tie in to the performance bonus serves as an incentive for managers to get personally involved in improving customer satisfaction within their organizations.

### **What other information is available concerning customer satisfaction?**

The USPTO conducts an annual customer satisfaction survey in order to assess customer satisfaction with its products and services in both the Patent and Trademark Organizations. The results of these surveys can be found on the USPTO web site under the Quality Home Page [http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/oqm/uspto\\_surveys.htm](http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/oqm/uspto_surveys.htm). The USPTO also produces an Annual Customer Satisfaction Report which looks at customer satisfaction data since 1995 and takes a look at the most recent initiatives and improvements with USPTO products and services.

### **Who to contact for more information?**

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