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**NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR REINVENTING GOVERNMENT  
1999 EMPLOYEE SURVEY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY  
UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE (USPTO)**

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**KEY SURVEY FINDINGS**

**Areas Where PTO is Doing Well**

*PTO is ranked # 1 in the Federal Government in the following five areas:*

- 1) There are service goals aimed at meeting customer expectations. (90% favorable)*
- 2) Recognition and rewards are based on merit. (53% favorable)*
- 3) Employees receive training and guidance in providing high-quality customer service. (61% favorable) PTO showed an increase of 29% in this area from 1998.*
- 4) Corrective actions are taken when employees do not meet performance standards. (51% favorable)*
- 5) Are you clear about how "good performance" is defined in your organization? (48% favorable)*

**Area of Greatest Concern**

*PTO is most concerned about the following areas on the survey:*

- 1) My opinions seem to count. (39% favorable)*
- 2) Management and the union(s) work cooperatively on mutual problems. (34% favorable which is an increase of 17% over 1998)*

**IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

**Immediate Action Steps**

**Establishment of Employee Communication e-mailbox**

*USPTO leadership recognizes employees as a key asset. Accordingly, open lines of communication with employees are essential for the USPTO to achieve performance excellence. Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Dickinson has launched a series of on-line chats with employees in an effort to open lines of communication at the highest levels. During a recent on-line chat, Director Dickinson committed to opening an e-mail box for employees to communicate with leadership on an on-going basis. The Office of Quality Management at the PTO will take the leadership role in this initiative and expects to have the system up and running by April, 2000. Additionally, the Director has begun a series of chats with PTO customers that deal with issues of quality and customer satisfaction among other topics.*

*It should be noted that the concept of an Employee Communication Box supports and links several opportunities for improvement identified by the USPTO in its employee surveys, customer surveys and in a Baldrige self-assessment conducted in 1999 including:*

- *The need for an integrated complaint/suggestion handling system*
- *The need for a comprehensive feedback and action planning process for employee input (i.e., survey results)*
- *The need for comprehensive analysis of customer and employee complaints and suggestions for improvement*

### **Establish of a Quality Home Page on the USPTO Intranet**

*The Office of Quality Management and the USPTO Quality Council have taken the initiative in developing a USPTO Intranet home page devoted to quality. The goal of the home page is to provide USPTO employees with as much quality news as possible. Included is specific information on how the USPTO is meeting employee and customer expectations. Employees are provided with information about quality initiatives taking place throughout the USPTO with a link to quality programs throughout the government. Besides serving as a source of knowledge for USPTO employees, it is hoped that the Quality Home Page will encourage increased communication throughout the organization.*

### **Reestablishment of the PTO Labor Management Partnership Council**

*Director Dickinson realizes the importance of having a working relationship with each union and has made that goal a high priority. He has utilized face to face communications, contract advisors, and structured planning sessions in an effort to improve labor management relationships throughout the USPTO. Some achievements resulting from better labor relations include:*

- *Re-establishment of the USPTO Labor Management Partnership Council*
- *Improved communications on the move to the new Alexandria campus.*

### **PTO has a history of initiatives to improve the workplace for its employees, including the following:**

- ***Educational Opportunities for Employees: Innovative and Expansive.*** *The PTO offers employees innovative training programs:*

***PTO University. PTO-U was established in 1994.*** *PTO-U offers employees, particularly our technical support employees, opportunities for personal and professional growth through certificate and degree programs. Courses are offered free of charge during non-work hours at USPTO headquarters. Participating*

*institutions include the Northern Virginia Community College, Marymount College, and George Mason University. To date, PTO-U has graduated 592 students and currently has an enrollment of 270 students. PTO-U was the recipient of the Department of Commerce Gold Medal.*

***The Maxwell Program:*** *In cooperation with Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Public Administration, the USPTO offers senior managers the opportunity to participate in a novel MBA/MPA Certificate Program.*

***Patent Examiner Opportunities.*** *The USPTO provides patent examiners the appropriate training opportunities to further their knowledge and skills. In fiscal year 1999, our plan for training and development included over 130,000 hours of training for first year examiners as well as 30,000 hours of legal training, 50,000 hours of automation training, and 8,000 hours of technology training for experienced examiners. Our development program also includes tuition assistance to examiners for 'non-duty hour' legal studies (law school) and technical training (up to \$5,000 annually); one-on-one coaching; team building; opportunities to attend conferences focusing on emerging technologies; and partnering with industry in technological information sharing. In FY99 - we also provided Customer Service training to all Patent employees.*

- ***Work-At-Home Pilot Yields Great Possibilities:*** *Initial measurements show that participants in the Trademark Work at Home (TWAH) pilot program have increased their productivity. Based on initial positive results, the program will be expanded to include additional attorneys in the spring of 2000.*
- ***Proud and Diverse Employees:*** *The USPTO truly reflects the face of America. Cultural Awareness Programs at the USPTO include African-American Employment Program, Asian/Pacific American Employment Program, Federal Women's Program, Hispanic Employment Program, Native American Employment Program, Individuals / Veterans with Disabilities Program, and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transsexual Program. All of these programs provide cultural awareness activities throughout the year through such activities as community service, training events, conferences, and special events. The PTO annual Community Day is a celebration of diversity and has been recognized in both the public and private sectors as a unique and special gathering.*
- ***Space: Our New Frontier.*** *Beginning in 1989, the PTO, in cooperation with the Administration and the Congress, began preparations for a consolidated facility upon expiration of existing leases in the 1996-1997 time period. Now eleven years later, the General Services Administration has selected a developer to construct a consolidated, 2 million square foot leased facility for the PTO of the 21<sup>st</sup> century! For our employees, this means a state-of-the-art, automated facility of seven interconnected buildings, fully accessible to the disabled, with uniform grid layouts for workspaces and with far greater security options. Employee amenities will include a cafeteria, a day care center, a fitness center, a health unit, and multi-*

*purpose training and conference facilities. For our fee-paying customers, the USPTO will save \$72 million in costs over the 20-year lease period in comparison with remaining at the current site under current arrangements. A win-win for employees and our customers!)*

- ***Piloting a Maxiflex Work Schedule Program.*** *Beginning on March 27, 2000 and continuing for six months, two organizations within the USPTO will offer their employees the option of utilizing the Maxiflex Work Schedule. The Maxiflex Work Schedule is a truly flexible work schedule wherein a full-time employee has an 80 hour biweekly basic work requirement that allows an employee to determine his or her own schedule within broad limits including working anytime between 5:00 am and 8:00 PM Monday through Saturday with a maximum of 13 hours and 20 minutes per day.*

### **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

*“Our employees are our most important asset. More than any other factor, they will determine how successful we will be in achieving our agency’s strategic goals. As I have done in the past, I will continue to emphasize the importance of increasing employee satisfaction throughout the USPTO. We cannot have satisfied customers without having a satisfied workforce.”*

*Q. Todd Dickinson – Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office*

### **CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION AT THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

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