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# *Content of the Report (cont.)*

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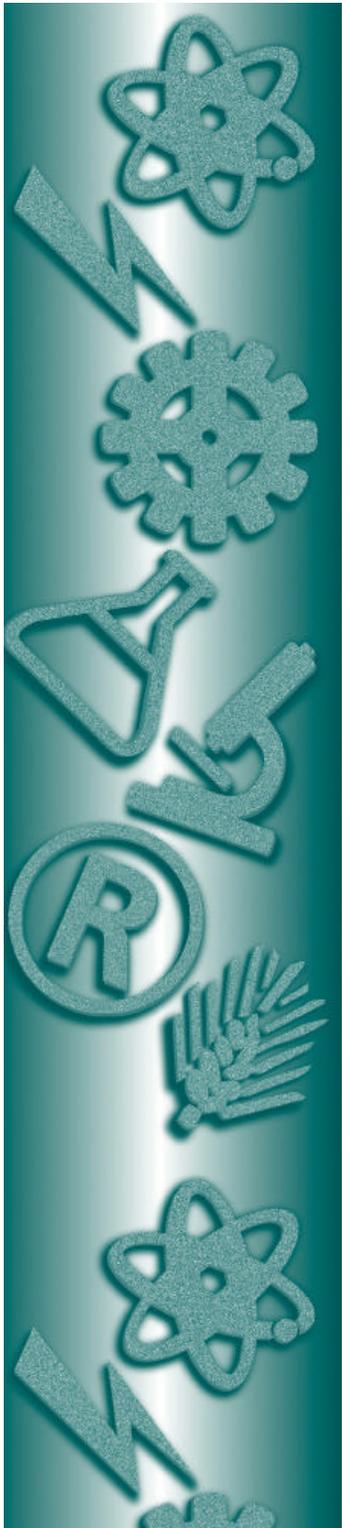
# *Content of the Report (cont.)*

## Appendices

- ◆ **Appendix A: Procedures and Methodology**
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# *Methodology*

# *Methodology\**

**Purpose:** Assess satisfaction with PTO process and standards

**Survey Items & Scales:** Some redesign, but wanted to maintain comparability with previous administrations

## Summary of Changes in 1999 Survey:

- More specific questions on problem resolution
- Added an open-ended item on types of problems encountered
- Asked about different topics in the change in service section
- Some items that were not utilized in analysis or that were difficult for respondents to understand were deleted from the survey
- New items added
  - ◆ How to represent patent processing time and reasonable goals for processing time
  - ◆ Efficiency of the examination process

\*Appendix A describes the methodology in more detail.

## *Methodology (cont.)*

### **Survey Items & Scales: (cont.)**

#### **Adjustment to Scales:**

- **Changed the response choices in the section on patent standards (11 questions) to be comparable to the rest of the satisfaction questions**
  - ◆ **Moved from a 3-point satisfaction scale to a 2-point satisfaction scale with a neutral mid-point**
  - ◆ **Using statistical analysis, adjusted 1998 survey satisfaction numbers on the comparable questions to be able to show % change in satisfaction for effected questions**

# *Methodology (cont.)*

## **Survey**

**Administration:** From May 14, 1999 to August 4, 1999

### **4 mailings:**

- Advance letter – May 14
- Initial survey packet (cover letter, survey return envelope) – June 4
- Reminder Postcard – June 16
- Second mailing to nonrespondents (cover letter, survey, return envelope) – July 2
- Closed data collection – August 4

## **Response**

**7,565** Surveys mailed

## **Rates:**

**2,472\*** Surveys returned complete

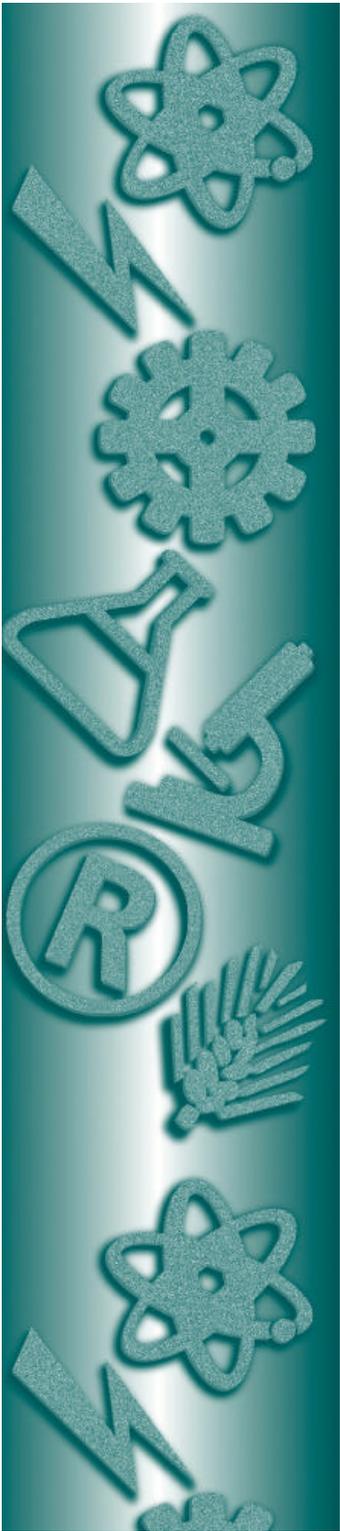
**35%** Overall patent response rate

## **Results:**

- Weighted percents are used throughout this report
- Unweighted N's are provided for some selected analyses

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\* After the close of data collection, about 120 additional completed surveys were received. These data are included in the above response rate calculations but are not included in the data analysis.

A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the slide, featuring a teal-to-white gradient. It contains several stylized, embossed icons: a lightning bolt, an atom, a gear, a flask, a registered trademark symbol (R), a bundle of reeds, and another atom.

# *Sampling and Weighting*

# Sampling and Weighting\*

- Sample Files:** 7 separate files (one for each technology area) were pulled from the Patent Application Locator & Monitoring System (PALM).
- File Cleaning:** Deleted duplicate records to get one respondent per address. Deleted records with incomplete address information.
- Sample Selection:** Goal was to sample approximately 1,250 respondents in each technology area. Targeted number of completed surveys in each technology area was 500. This assured appropriate representation for each technical area.

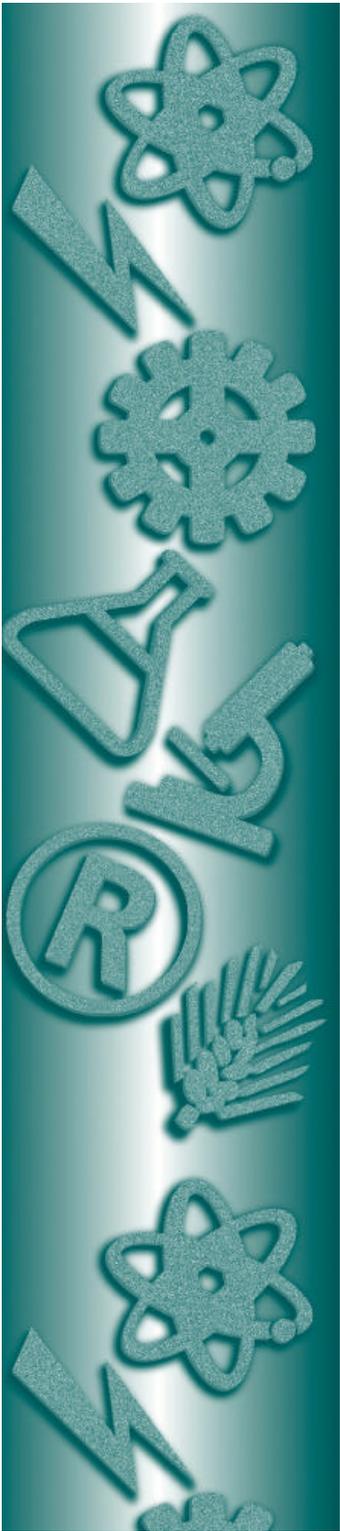
<b><u>Sample Sizes:</u></b>	<b>Technology Area</b>	<b>Patent Filer Population</b>	<b>Mail-Out Size</b>	<b>Number of Completes</b>
Biotech. & Organic Chem.	(1600)	10,078	966	302
Chem. & Mtrls. Eng.	(1700)	15,429	1,096	315
Communications & Info. Proc.	(2700)	13,904	1,099	312
Physics, Optics, Semiconductors, etc.	(2800)	17,192	1,097	319
Designs	(2900)	9,658	1,098	356
Transport., Construction, Agr., etc.	(3600)	13,254	1,097	318
Mech. Eng., Mfg, & Products	(3700)	18,073	1,112	428

\*Appendix B presents more detail regarding the sampling and weighting procedures employed.

## *Sampling and Weighting (cont.)*

### Weighting:

- **Each respondent was assigned a weight based on sampling rate and nonresponse adjustment. Minimized errors resulting from nonresponse differences.**
  - **Between technology areas**
  - **Between rare, occasional, and frequent patent filers**
  - **Replaced the use of a small telephone nonresponse follow-up**
- **Weighted survey results provide unbiased estimates for:**
  - **Entire patent filer population**
  - **Each technology area**



# *Who Were the Respondents?*

## *A Demographic Profile of Participants*

## A1. What is your affiliation? (Fill in all that apply)\*

	1999 %	1998 %	1996 %	1995 %
** Federal government agency (n=43)***	2	2	1	1
University or college (n=21)	1	1	1	3
Large business (n=383)	16	18	30	34
Small business (n=183)	7	6	1	2
Law firm (n=1,470)	64	67	48	39
Individual inventor (n=263)	11	8	18	31
Other (Specify) (n=123)	5	3	6	6

\* Percents may sum to more than 100% because more than one response could be chosen.

\*\* Response categories changed from 1995/1996 to 1998/1999. The question is still comparable from year to year.

\*\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**There was very little change from the 1998 affiliation profile. Law firms continue to make up about two-thirds of the survey population.**

***A2. How often did you contact the PTO for products or services over the past year?***

	1999 %	1998 %	1996 %	1995 %
Never (n=48)*	2	2	4	6
Only once (n=56)	2	2	5	4
Rarely (n=95)	4	3	4	5
Occasionally (n=440)	19	13	16	17
Often (n=1,705)	73	80	71	68

\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**There was a slight decrease in respondents “often” contacting the PTO. This is closer to the 1996 profile of frequency of contact. The slight increase in occasional contact could be due to the slight increase in the number of individual inventors.**

### A3. *What is your relationship with the PTO?\**

	1999 %	1998 %	1996 %	1995 %
Not a customer (n=8)**	0	0	2	2
A former customer (n=17)	1	0	2	2
A one-time customer (n=65)	3	2	5	5
An occasional customer (n=154)	6	5	10	10
A frequent, but not continuous customer (n=155)	7	3	5	7
A continuous customer (n=1,941)	83	90	76	74

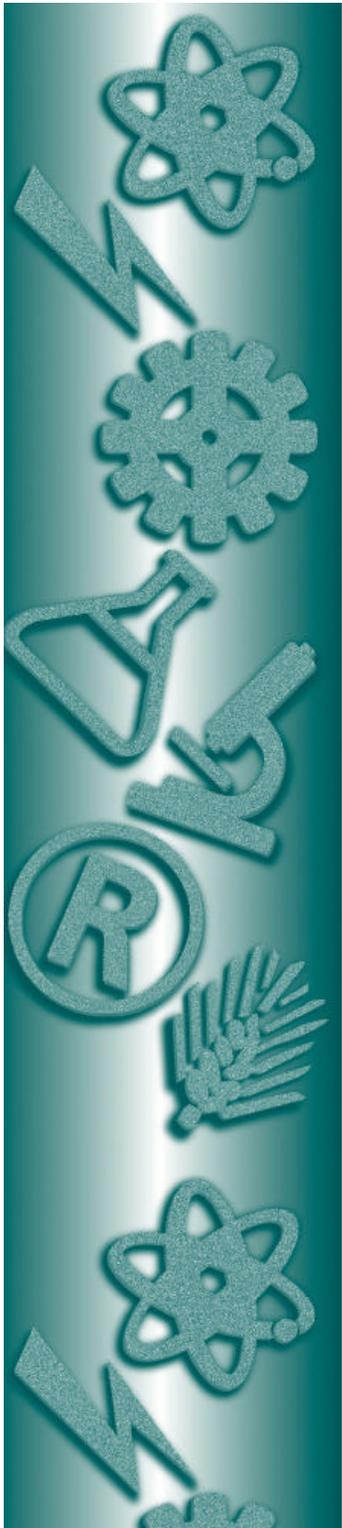
\* Question wording changed slightly from 1998 to 1999. The question is still comparable from year to year.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**There was a decrease in the number of customers with a continuous relationship with the PTO. Still, 90% comprise frequent and continuous customers.**

## *Demographic Profile – In Summary*

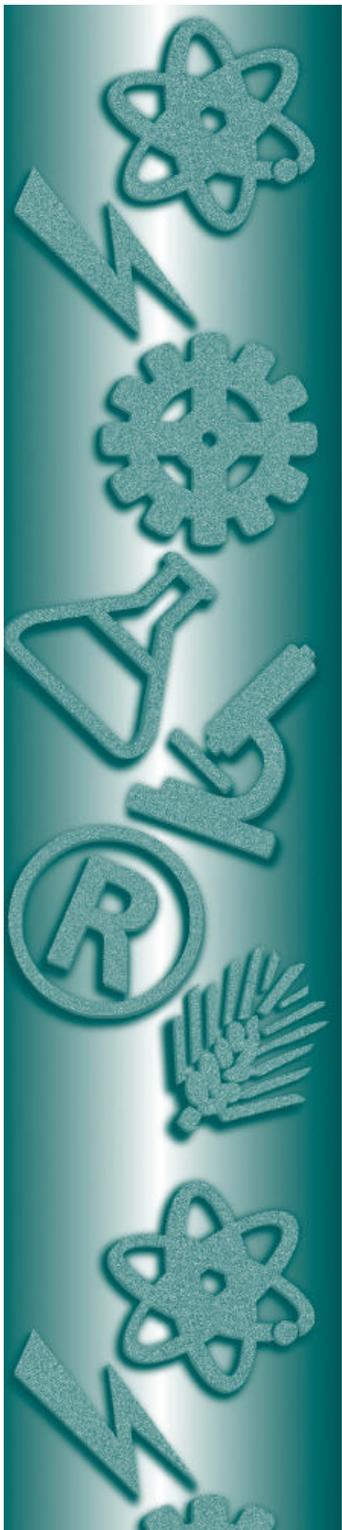
- **About two-thirds of the respondents are from law firms, followed by large business (16%). Individual inventors make up 11% of the survey population.**
- **About three-quarters of the respondents often contact the PTO during the year. There was a slight shift from often to occasional contact between 1998 and 1999.**
- **Over 80% of the respondents are continuous customers and another 7% are frequent customers. There was a 7% decrease in the number of continuous customers from 1998 and 1999.**



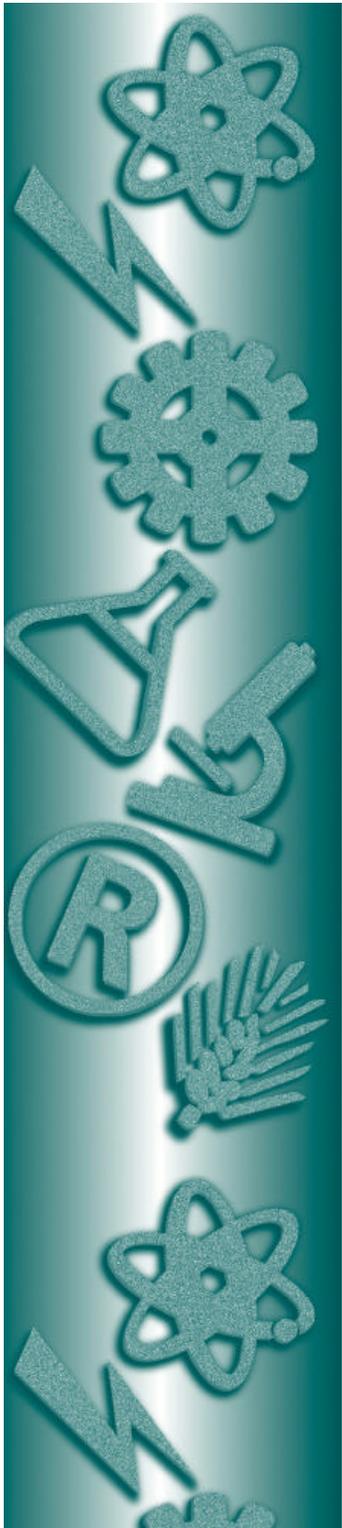
## *What the Data Shows*

## *A Review of Results By:*

- **Most and Least Satisfied Questions**
- **Most Dissatisfied Questions**
- **Major Changes from 1998 Data**
- **Questions Grouped Into Five Factors**
- **Questions Pertaining to the Overall Patent Process**
- **Questions Having the Greatest Impact on Overall Satisfaction (Key Drivers)**
- **Demographic Differences**
- **Results by Technology Areas**

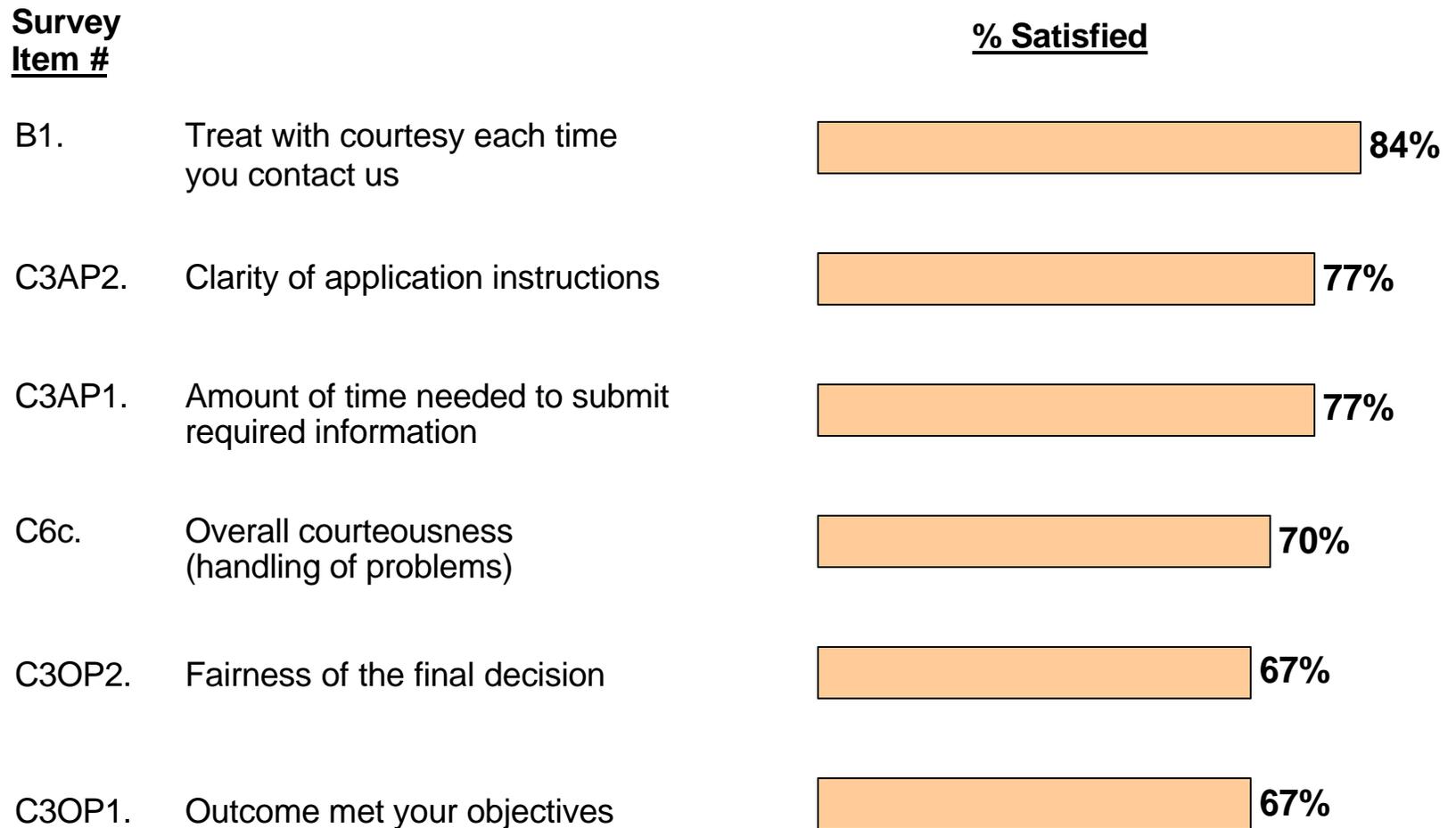


# *An Absolute View of Results*

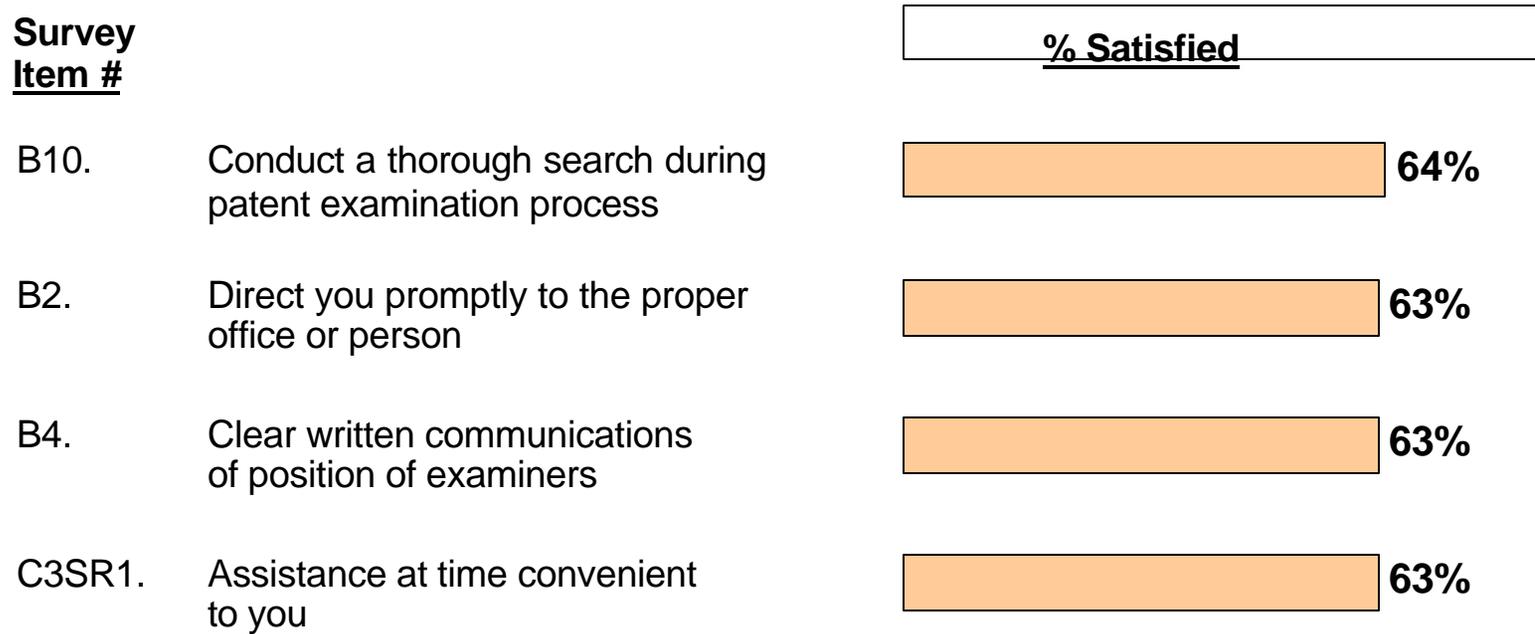


# *Most and Least Satisfied Questions*

## *What Respondents Were Most Satisfied With*

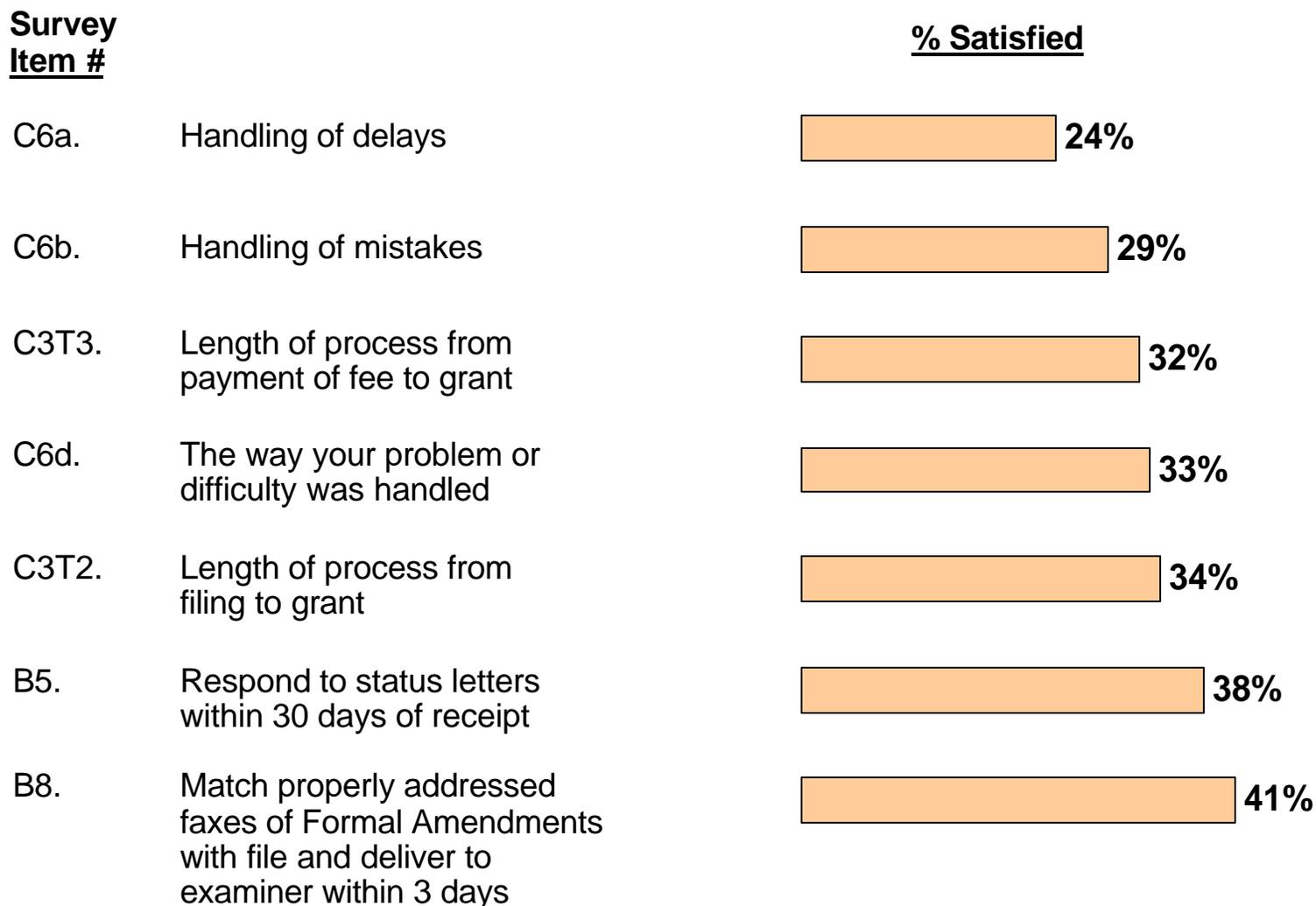


## *What Respondents Were Most Satisfied With (cont.)*

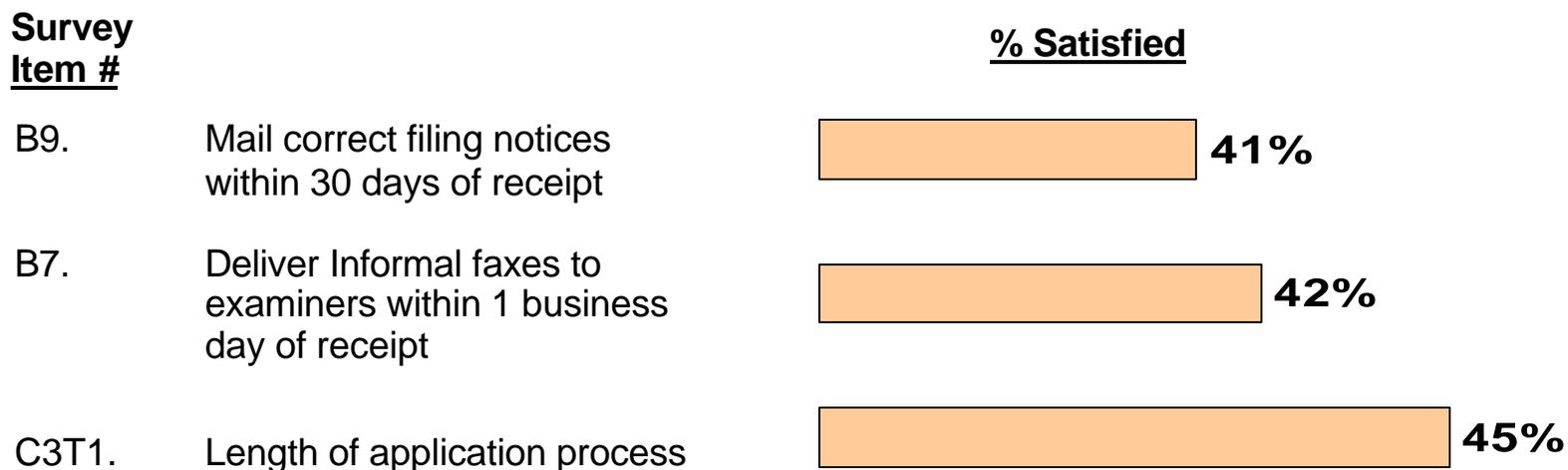


**Respondents were most satisfied with key aspects of service, including courtesy of the PTO staff, the application process, outcome of the examination process, and examination quality.**

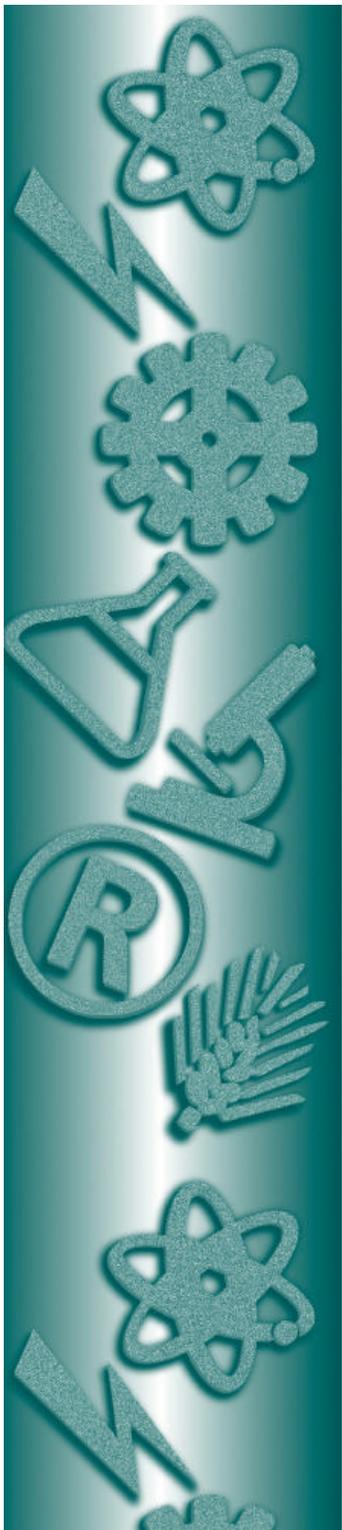
## *What Respondents Were Least Satisfied With*



## *What Respondents Were Least Satisfied With (cont.)*

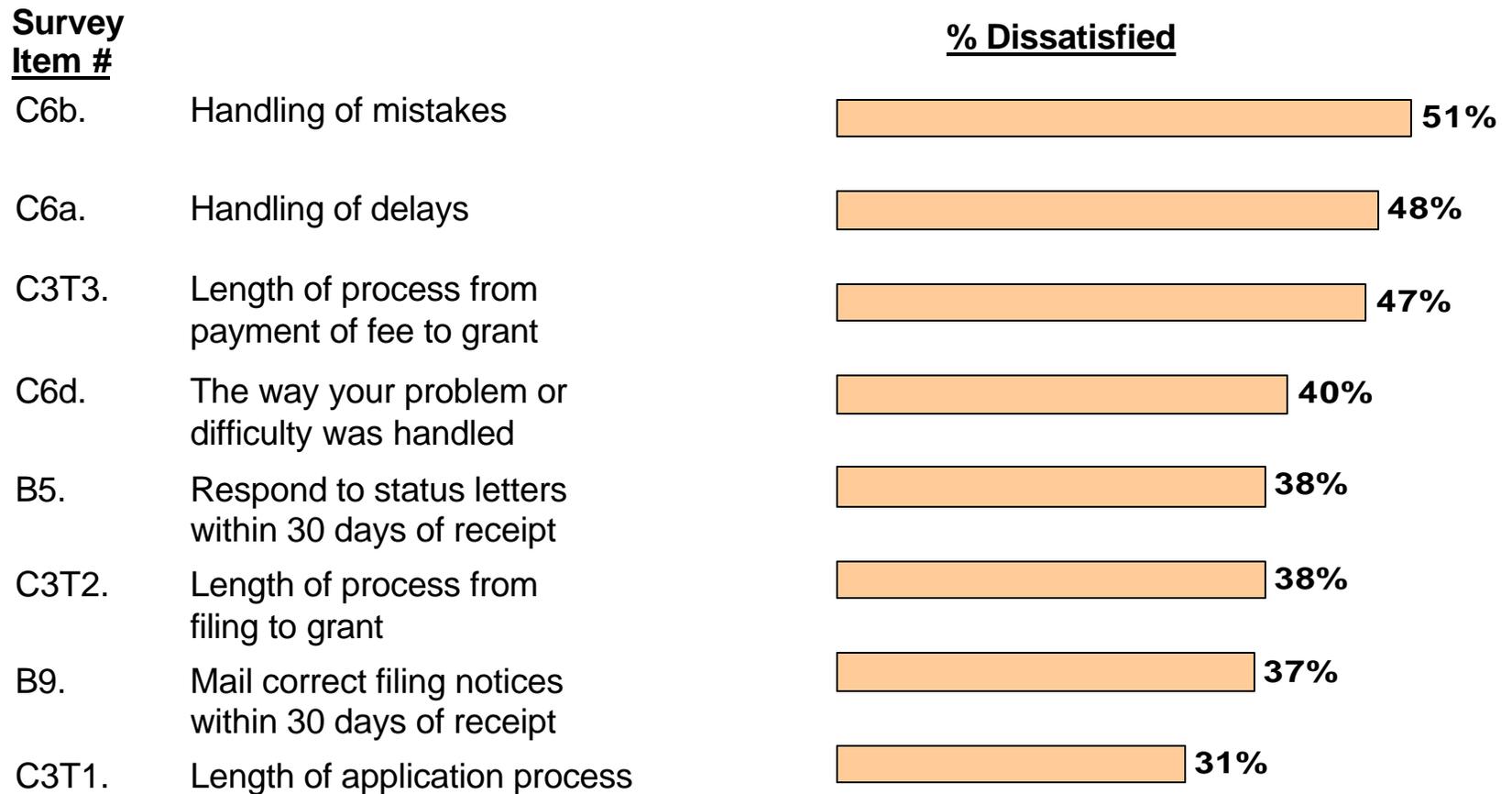


**Respondents were least satisfied with the handling of problems, timeliness of the process, and certain process time standards (status letters, faxes, and filing notices).**

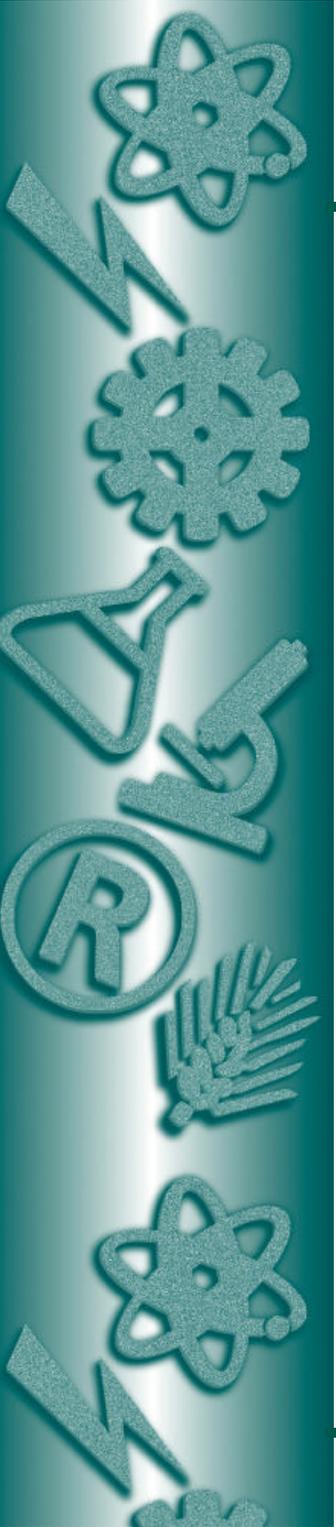


# *Most Dissatisfied Questions*

## *What Respondents Were Most Dissatisfied With*



**There were high levels of dissatisfaction with the handling of problems and timeliness of the process. The two items on delivery of faxes appear on the least satisfied list but are not on the most dissatisfied list.**



# *Absolute View of Results – In Summary*

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## **Most Satisfied**

- **Courteous Service**
- **The Application Procedures**
- **Examination Quality**
- **Outcome of the Process**

## **Least Satisfied**

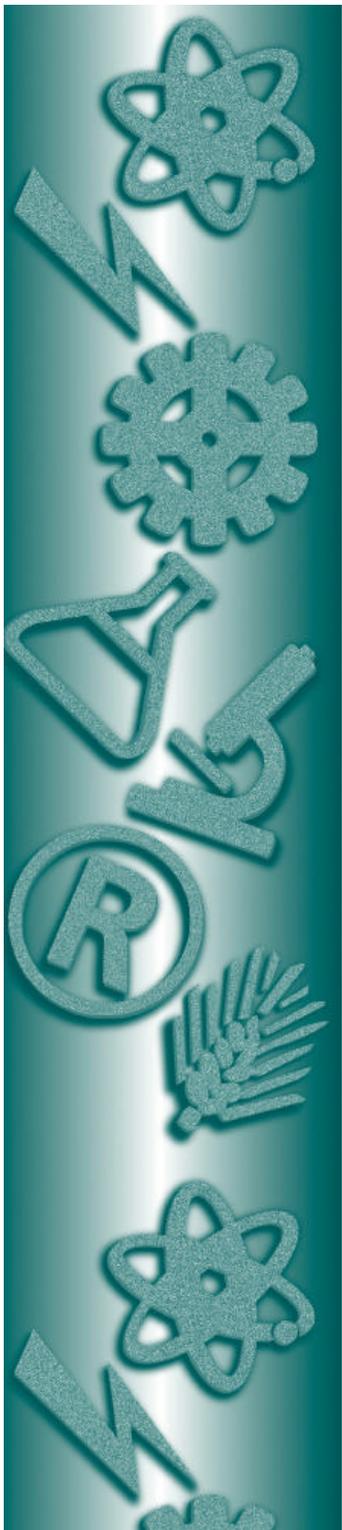
- **Problem Resolution**
- **Timeliness of the Process**
  - **From payment to grant**
  - **From filing to grant**
  - **Length of application process (filing receipt issued)**
- **Process Time Standards**
  - **Status information**
  - **Internal standards on fax submissions**
  - **Filing notices**

## *Absolute View of Results – In Summary (cont.)*

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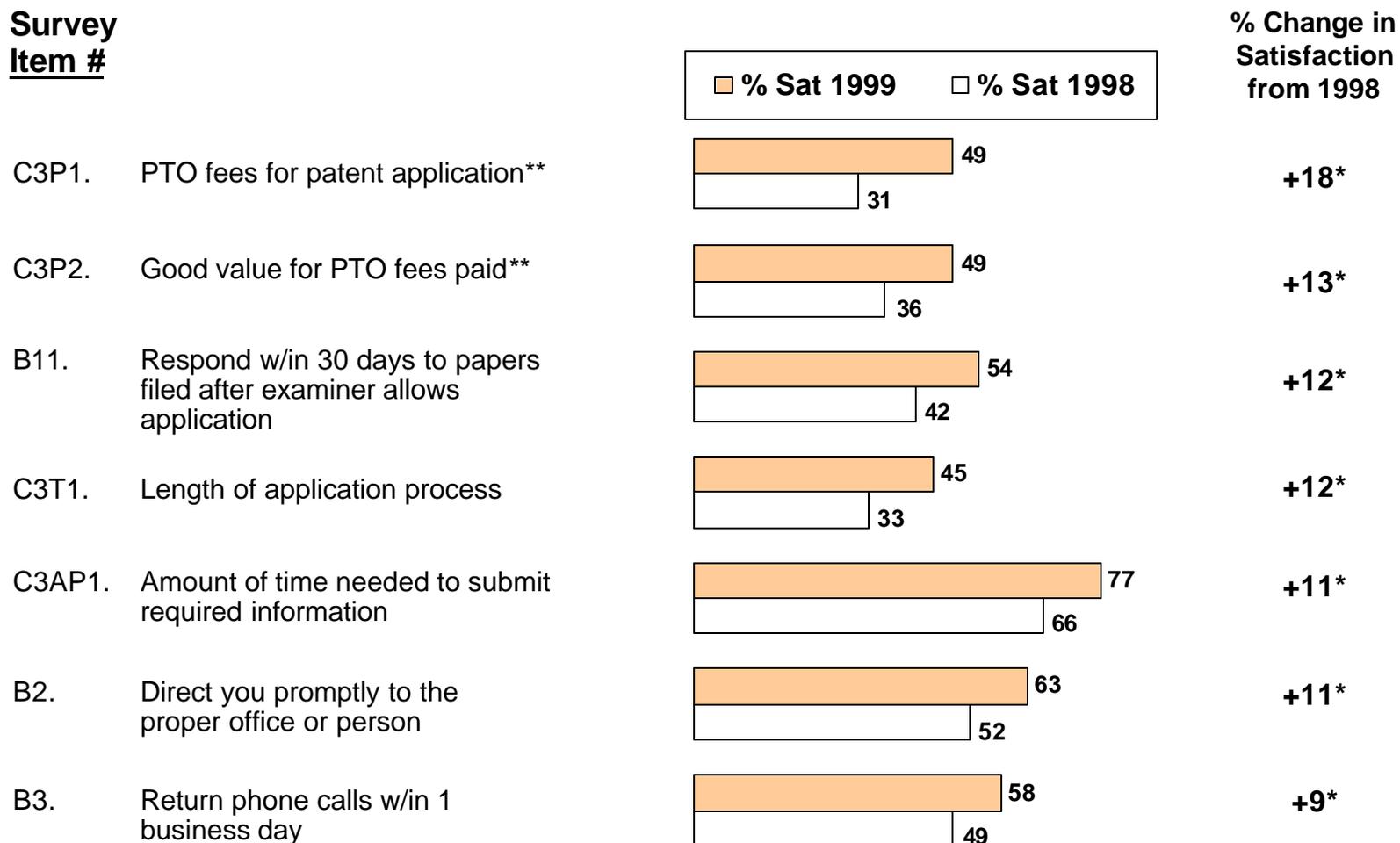
### **Most Dissatisfied**

- **Problem Resolution**
- **Timeliness of the Process**
- **Meeting Process Standards on Status Letters and Filing Notices**



# *A Comparison with 1998 Results*

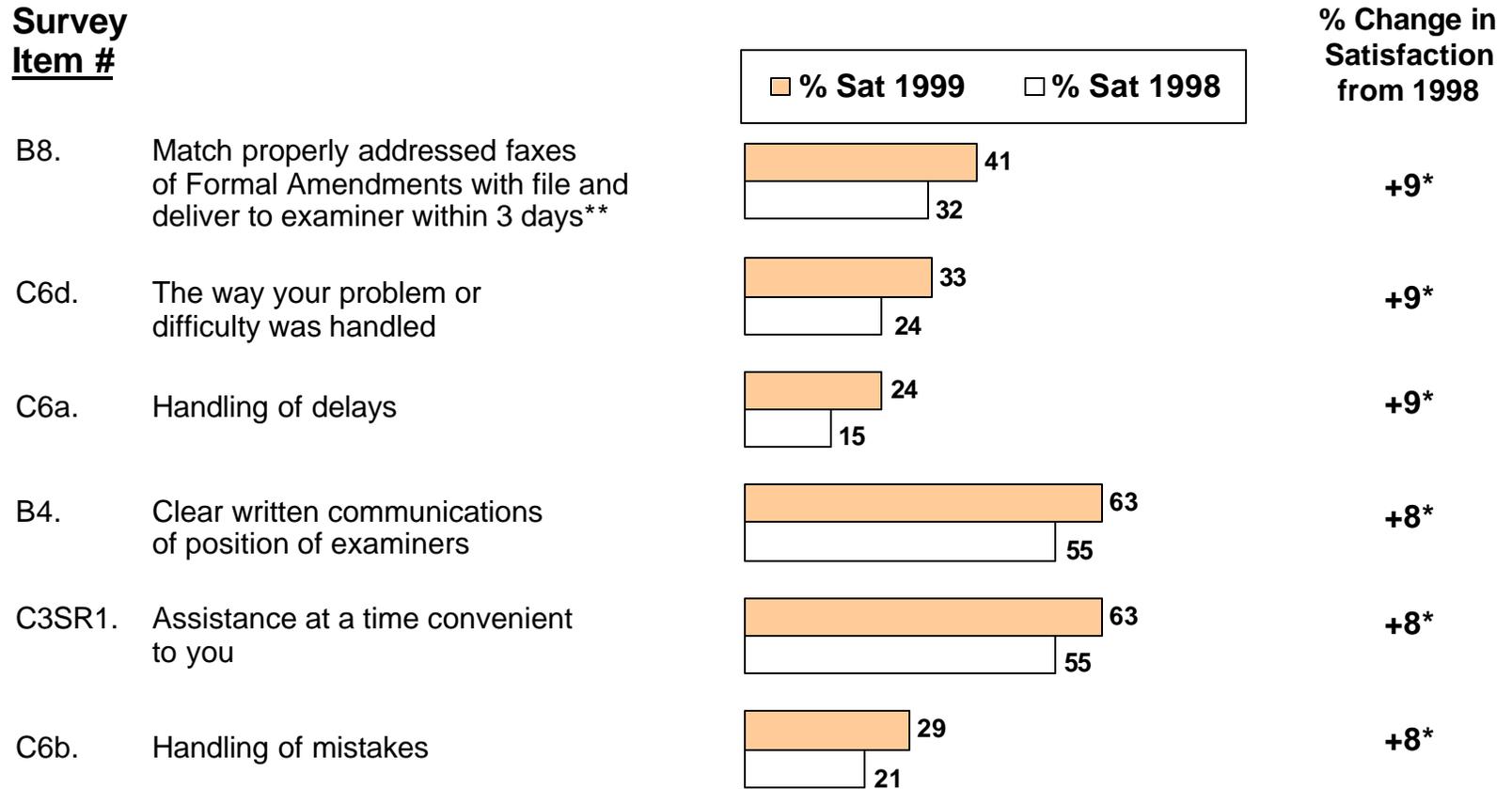
## *Major Improvements from 1998 (8% or more) Ranked by % Change*



\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* Question wording changed slightly from 1998 to 1999. The questions are still comparable to 1998.

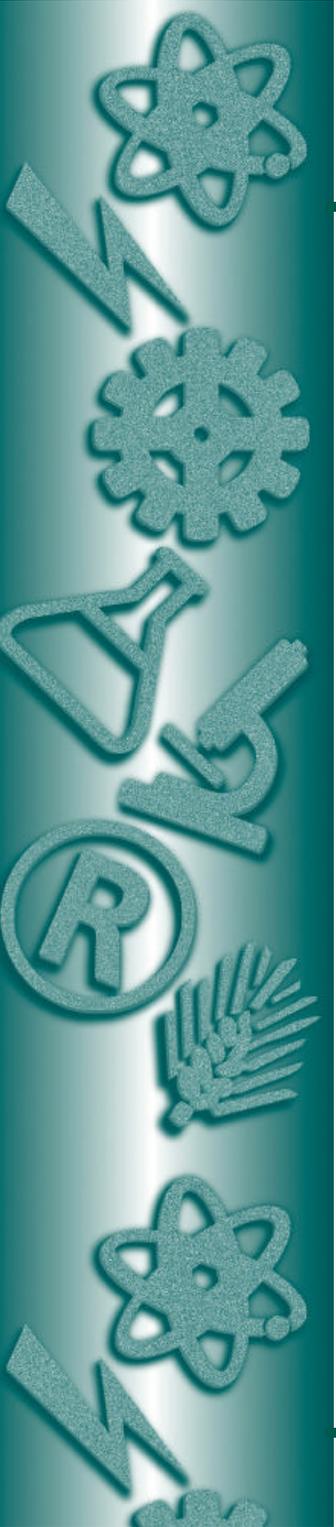
## *Major Improvements from 1998 (8% or more) Ranked by % Change (cont.)*



\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* Question wording changed slightly from 1998 to 1999. The questions are still comparable to 1998.

**Major improvements were made in perceptions about fees paid, key telephone service issues, length of the application process (filing notices), and responding to papers filed after application allowance.**



## *Major Improvements from 1998 – In Summary*

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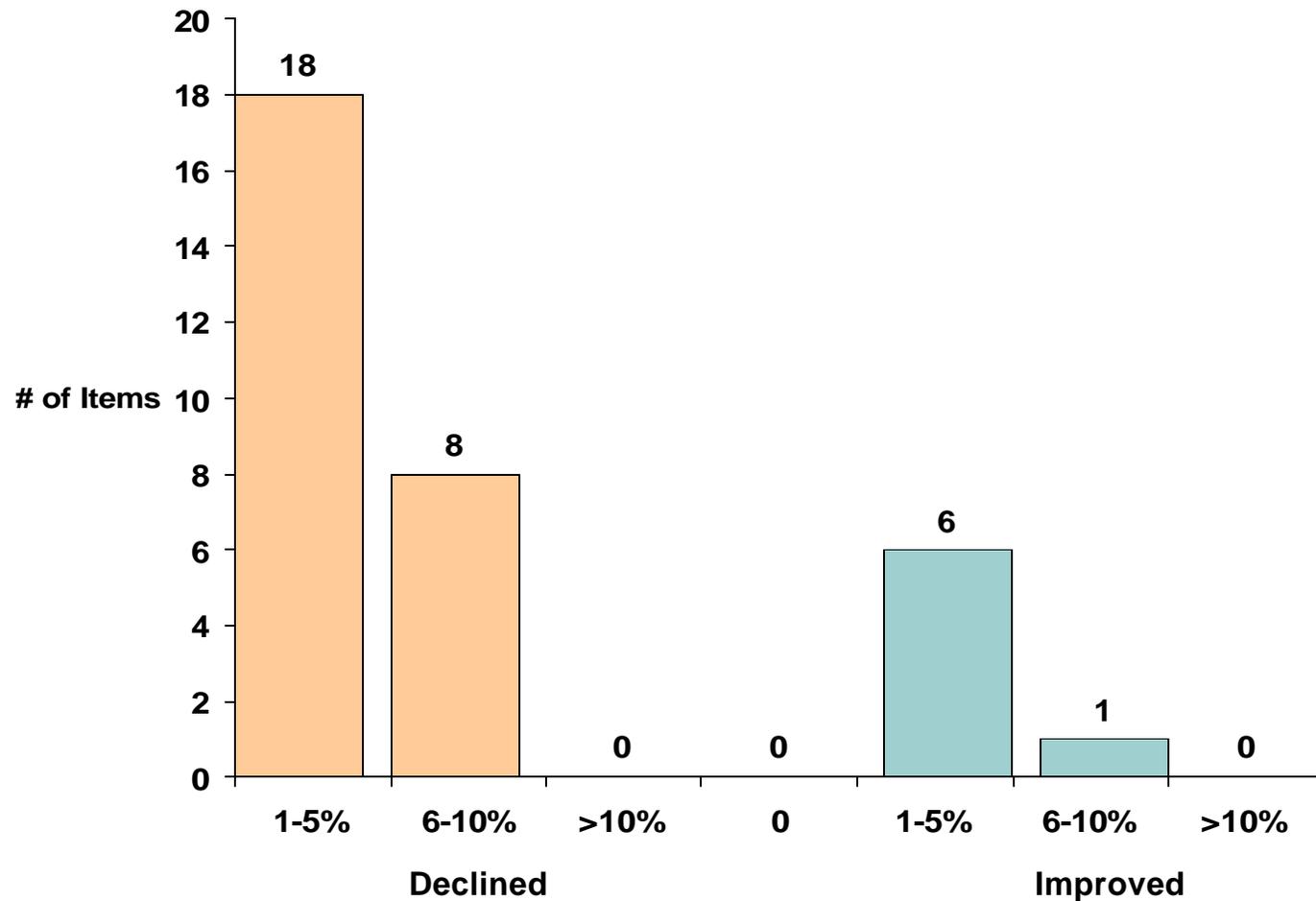
- **The largest improvement was in satisfaction with fees for patent applications. Good value for fees paid also showed a high level of improvement.**
- **The length of application process covering issuance of filing receipts was a problem area last year and improved by 12% this year**
- **Telephone service in terms of directing calls promptly to proper office or person and returning calls continues to improve**
- **The handling of delays and mistakes, while still very low, showed some improvement**

## *Declines from 1998*

- **There were no major declines from 1998 to 1999**
- **The only area that declined at all was length of process from payment of issue fee to patent grant (C3T3). The decline was only 2%.**

## *Trends 1995 to 1996*

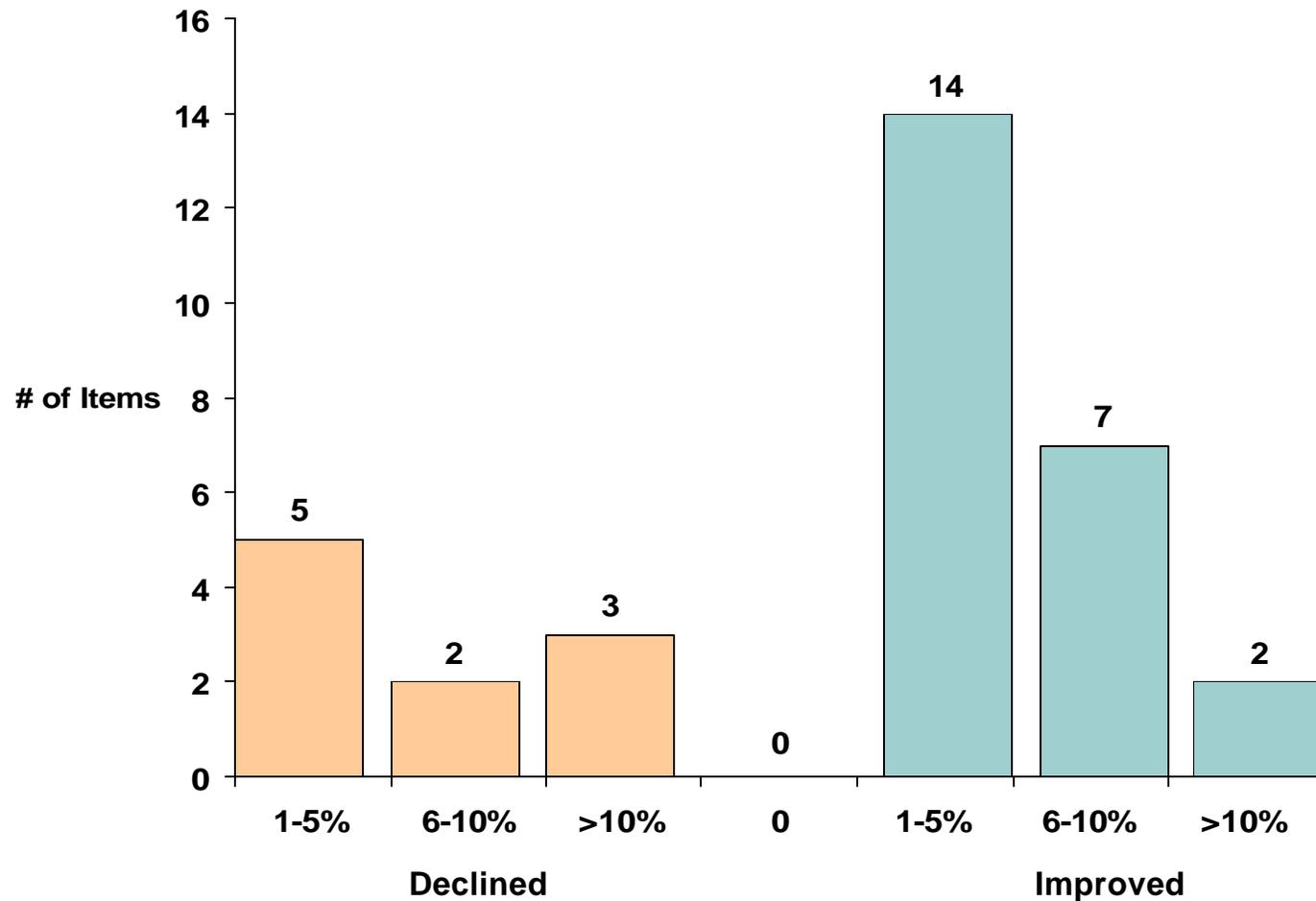
*(33 comparable items - differences in % satisfied)*



**Responses to only 7 of the 33 items improved from 1995 to 1996.**

## Trends 1996 to 1998

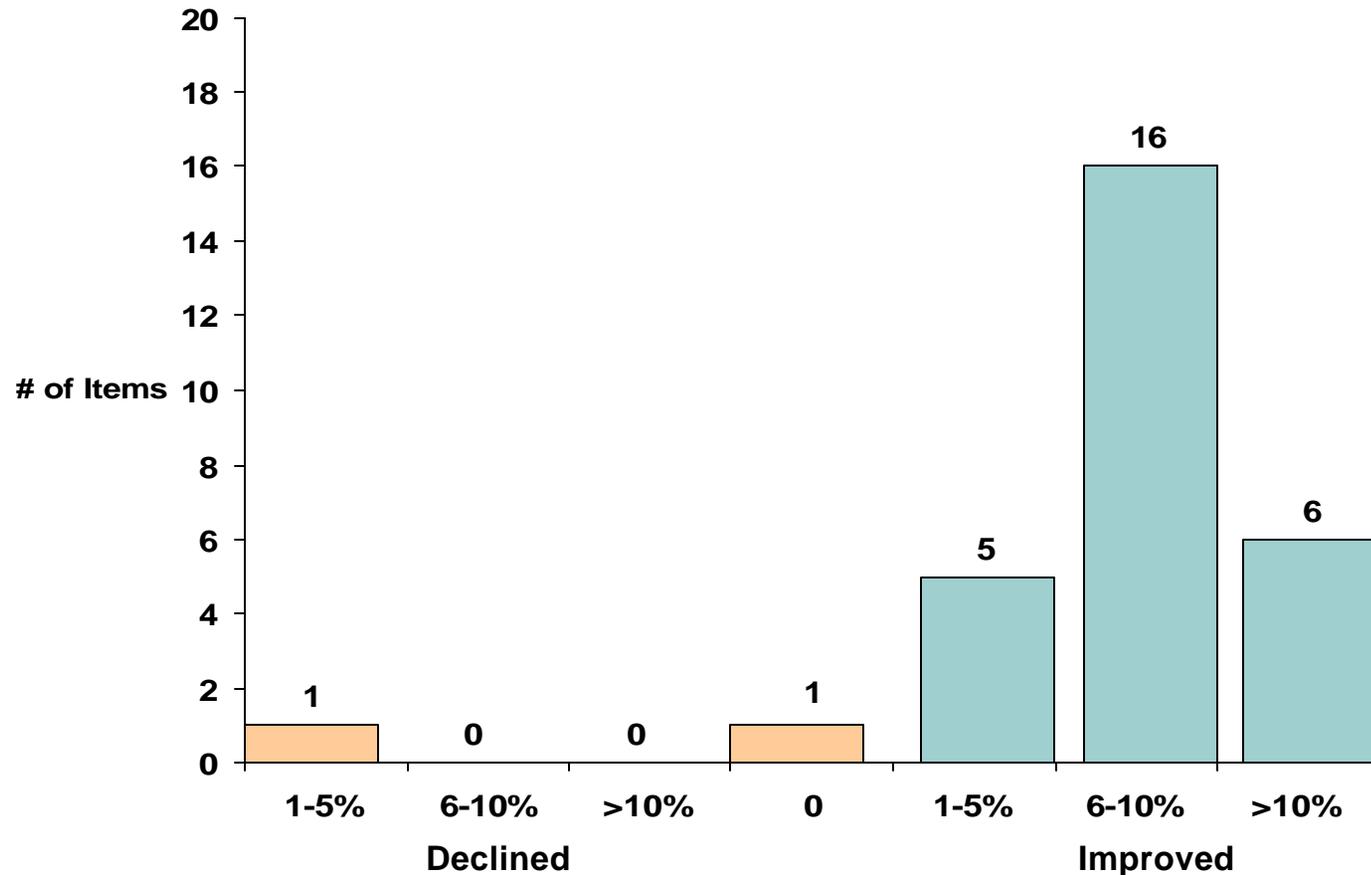
(33 comparable items - differences in % satisfied)



Responses to 23 of the 33 items improved from 1996 to 1998.

## *Trends 1998 to 1999*

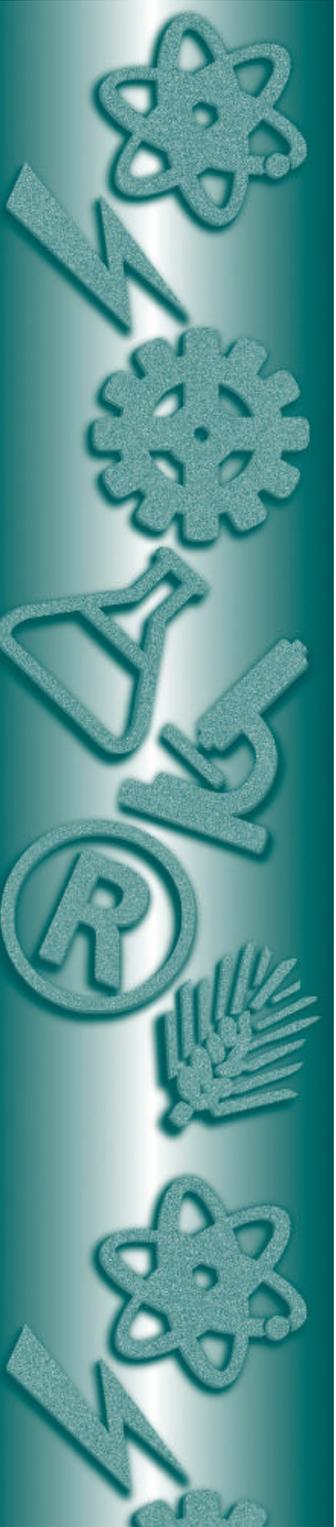
*(29 comparable items - differences in % satisfied)*



**Responses to 27 of 29 items improved from 1998 to 1999. Only one item declined (2%) and one remained the same. Unlike last year, the majority of improvements are in the 6-10% range.**

## *Major Changes from 1998 – In Summary*

- **There was only one minor decline in comparable items from 1998 to 1999**
- **Major improvements from 1998 include:**
  - ◆ **The length of time until the filing receipt is issued**
  - ◆ **Perceptions about fees**
  - ◆ **Customer service areas (direct calls to proper office/person and returning calls, assistance at a time convenient to customer)**
  - ◆ **Examination quality**
  - ◆ **Handling of mistakes (still very low)**
- **Most of the improvements were in the 6 to 10% range**



# *What Did the Survey Measure?*

## *A Summary of the Factor Analysis Results\**

**\* Appendix C provides a description of the analytic procedures.**

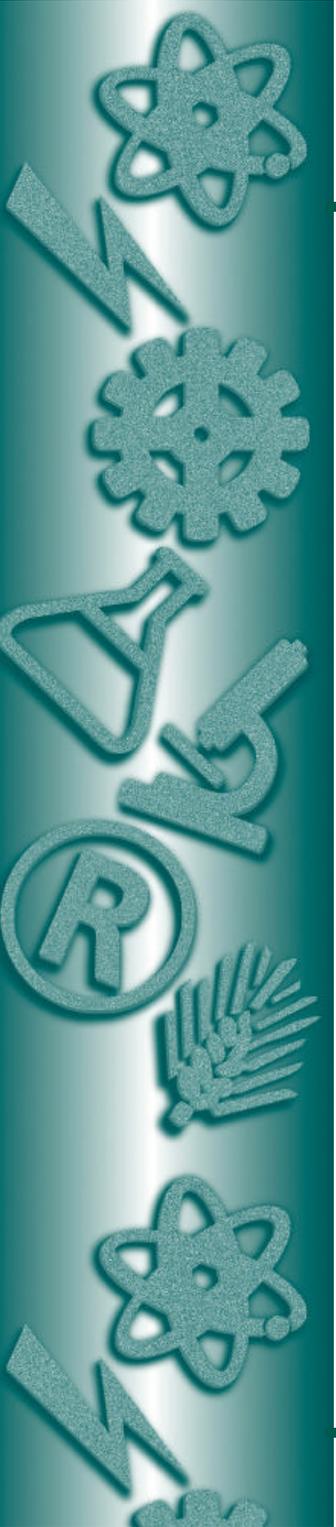
# *The Five Factors*

- **Application and Examination Process**
- **Customer Service**
- **Timeliness**
- **Problem Resolution**
- **Change in Service**

# *Application and Examination Process*

## Survey Item #

- B4**            **Clear written communications of position of examiners**
- B10**           **Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process**
- C3AP1**        **Amount of time needed to submit required information**
- C3AP2**        **Clarity of the application instructions**
- C3OP1**        **Outcome met your objectives**
- C3OP2**        **Fairness of the final decision**
- C3OP3**        **Efficiency of the examination process**



# *Customer Service*

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## Survey Item #

- B1**      **Treat you with courtesy each time you contact us**
- C3SC1**    **Ability to provide accurate answers to questions**
- C3SC2**    **Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service**
- C3SR1**    **Assistance at a time convenient to you**
- C3SR2**    **Prompt and helpful service**
- C3SR3**    **Flexibility in trying to address your needs**
- C6C**      **Overall courteousness (handling of problems)**

# *Timeliness*

## Survey Item #

- B2**      **Direct you promptly to the proper office or person**
- B3**      **Return phone calls within 1 business day**
- B5**      **Respond to status letters within 30 days of receipt**
- B6**      **Disseminate information on changes in practices and procedures before effective date**
- B7**      **Deliver Informal faxes to examiners within 1 business day of receipt**
- B8**      **Match properly addressed faxes of Formal Amendments with file and deliver to examiner within 3 days**
- B9**      **Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt**
- B11**     **Respond within 30 days to papers filed after examiner allows application**

## *Timeliness (cont.)*

### Survey Item #

**C3T1 Length of application process**

**C3T2 Length of process from filing to grant**

**C3T3 Length of process from payment of fee to grant**

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### Additional Relevant Questions\*

**C1 How should the PTO represent patent processing time?**

**C2 What is a reasonable goals for processing time?**

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**\* These questions were not included in factor analysis because they do not specifically ask about satisfaction.**

# *Problem Resolution\**

## Survey Item #

**C6a Handling of delays**

**C6b Handling of mistakes**

**C6d The way your problem or difficulty was handled**

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## Additional Relevant Questions\*\*

**C4 Have you experienced any problems or difficulties with PTO services over the past year?**

**C5 Was your problem resolved?**

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**\* Includes only customers who experienced a problem or difficulty over the past year.**

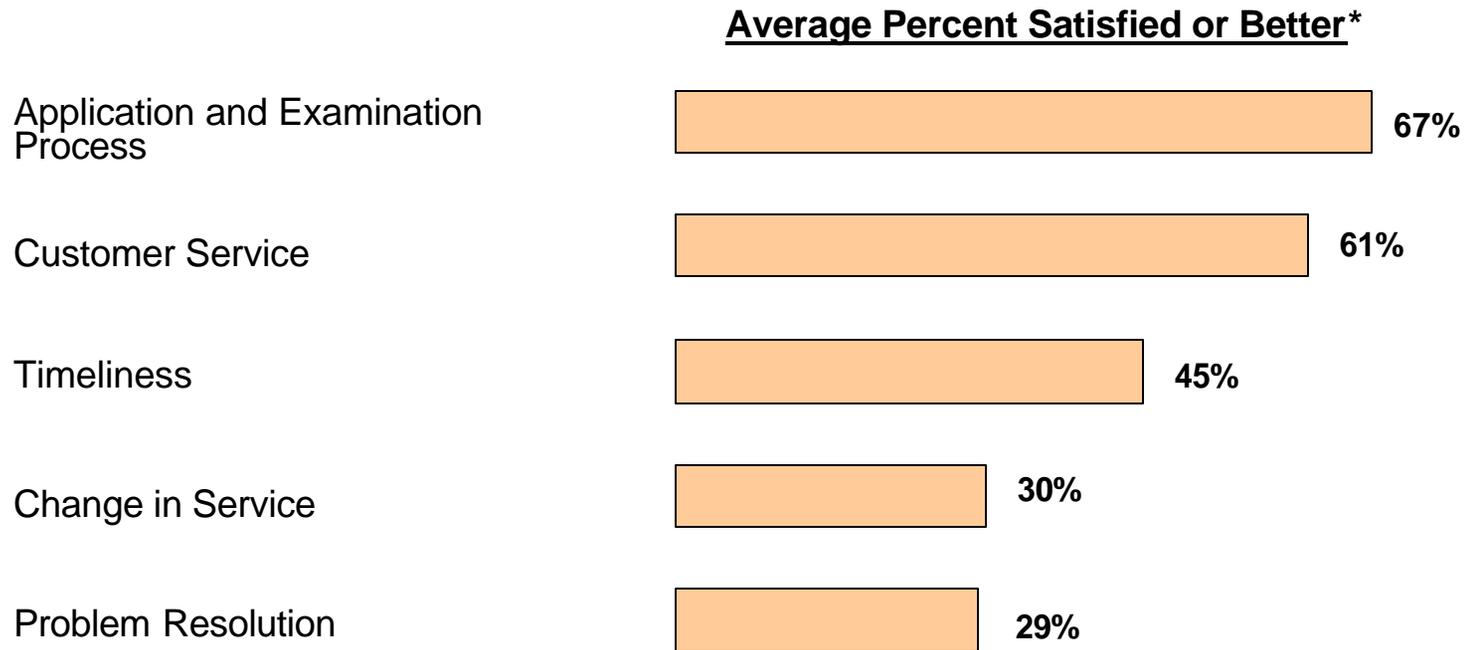
**\*\* These questions were not included in factor analysis because they do not specifically ask about satisfaction.**

# *Change in Service*

## Survey Item #

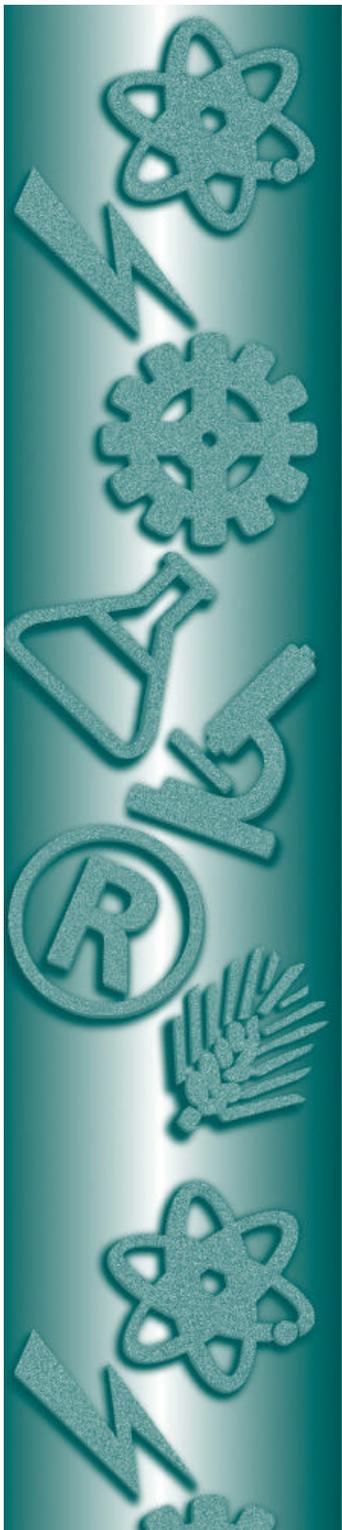
- C8a Handling of problems/complaints compared to previous filings**
- C8b Timeliness of patent grant compared to previous filings**
- C8c Quality of patent search compared to previous filings**
- C8d Written communications compared to previous filings**
- C8e Proactive individualized service compared to previous filings**
- C8f Timely filing receipts compared to previous filings**
- C8g Accurate filing receipts compared to previous filings**
- C8h Phone calls returned w/in 1 day compared to previous filings**
- C8i Directed promptly to proper person compared to previous filings**

# How Well Did PTO Do On Each Factor?

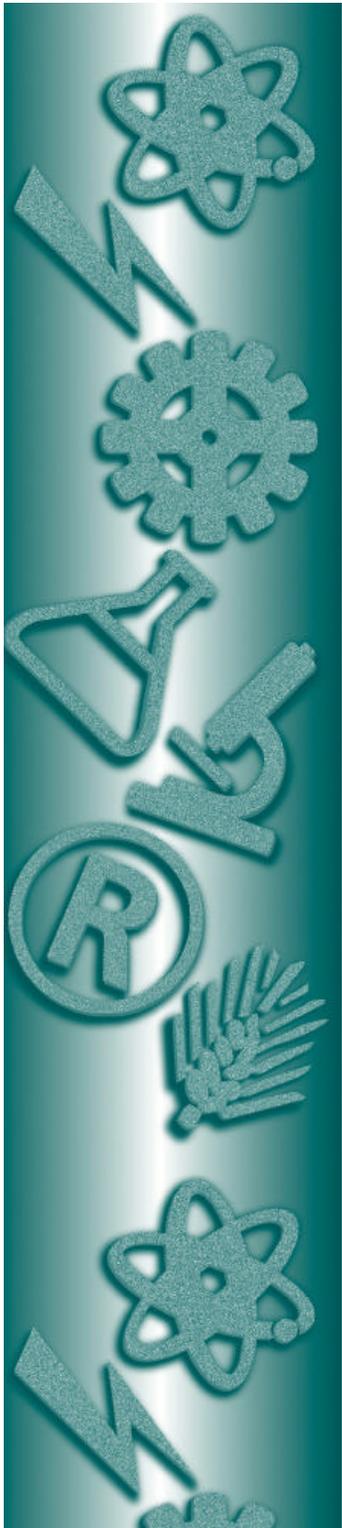


\* For each respondent, average percent satisfied is calculated by summing the number of items for which a person responded 4 (satisfied) or 5 (very satisfied) then dividing by the total number of items answered and multiplying by 100. For the change in service factor, a 4 or 5 indicated a response of better or much better, respectively.

The application and examination process factor is the most positive and the problem resolution factor the least positive. The average percent better for the items in change in service is 30%.



# *A Review of Results by the 5 Factors*



# *Application and Examination Process*

# *Application and Examination Process Ranked by % Satisfied*

<u>Survey Item #</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> % Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> % Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> % Satisfied			% Change in Satisfaction from 1998
C3AP2. Clarity of the application instructions	5	18	77	+6*
C3AP1. Amount of time needed to submit required information	4	19	77	+11*
C3OP2. Fairness of the final decision	9	24	67	+6*
C3OP1. Outcome met your objectives	8	25	67	+5*
B10. Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process	16	20	64	+7*
B4. Clear written communications of position of examiners	17	20	63	+8*
C3OP3. Efficiency of the examination process	23	26	51	**

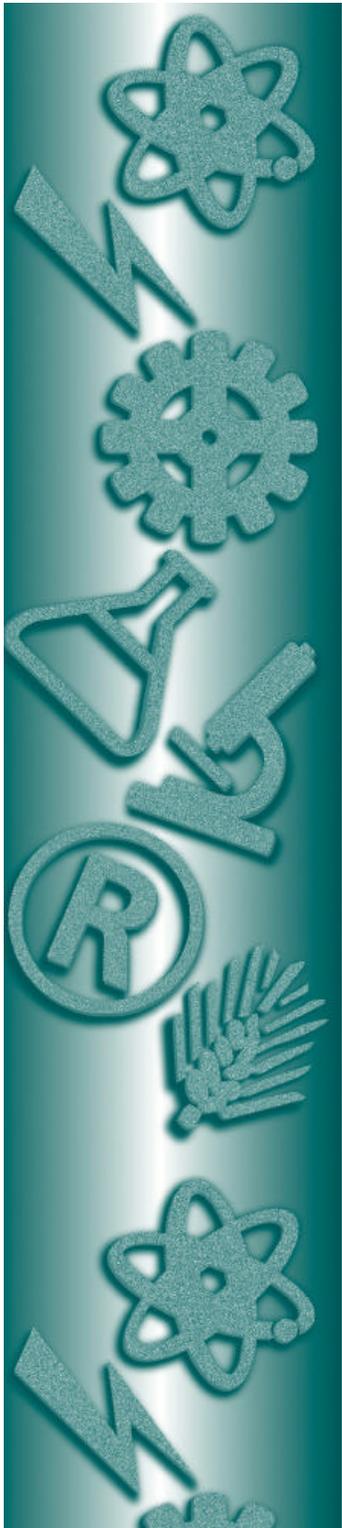
\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* New question for 1999.

**Respondents are positive about the application submission procedures and examination quality. Both areas showed improvement over 1998 levels. About one-half are positive about efficiency of the process. Satisfaction about the time needed to submit required information showed the highest positive change from 1998.**

## *Application and Examination Process – In Summary*

- **Customers continue to have a positive view about the application submission procedures**
  - ◆ **There was an impressive 11% improvement over 1998 results concerning the amount of time needed to submit required information**
- **Over two-thirds of customers believe the outcome met their objectives and the final decision was fair. These items increased by 5% and 6%, respectively, over 1998 levels.**
- **Examination quality (questions B4 and B10) continues to improve and close to two-thirds of the respondents gave satisfactory ratings**
- **Just over one-half are satisfied with the efficiency of the examination process (new question). Close to one-quarter gave negative ratings.**



# *Customer Service*

# Customer Service Ranked by % Satisfied

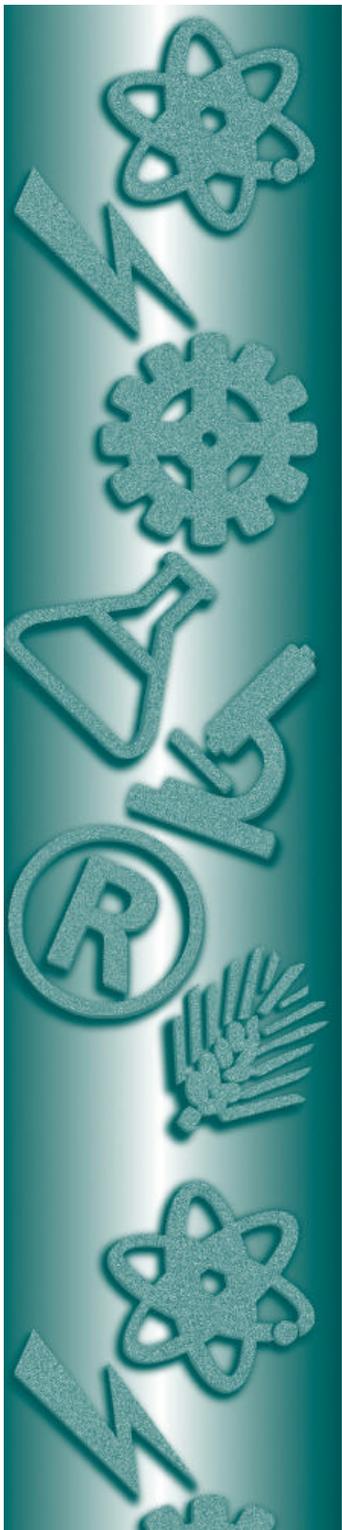
<u>Survey Item #</u>		<input type="checkbox"/> % Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> % Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> % Satisfied	% Change in Satisfaction from 1998
B1.	Treat you with courtesy each time you contact us		+6*
C6c.	Overall courteousness (handling of problems)		+6*
C3SR1.	Assistance at a time convenient to you		+8*
C3SC1.	Ability to provide accurate answers to questions		+5*
C3SR2.	Prompt and helpful service		+6*
C3SR3.	Flexibility in trying to address your needs		+7*
C3SC2.	Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service		+7*

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Courtesy to customers and assistance at a time convenient to customers are the most positive. All areas of service showed improvements of 5% or more over 1998 levels.**

## *Customer Service – In Summary*

- **All areas of Customer Service showed improvements of 5% or more over 1998 levels**
- **Courtesy of PTO staff to customers continues at high levels of satisfaction**
- **Most respondents believe that assistance is provided at a time convenient to the customer**
- **While many aspects of Customer Service (e.g., genuinely committed, flexibility, prompt and helpful service) still have satisfaction levels under 60%, they all showed improvement from 1998 levels**
- **All items under Customer Service have less than one-quarter dissatisfied**
  - ◆ **In 1998, three areas of Customer Service had dissatisfaction levels of 25% or more (flexibility in addressing need, genuinely committed to service, and providing accurate answers)**



# *Timeliness*

# Timeliness

## Ranked by % Satisfied

<u>Survey Item #</u>		<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Dissatisfied <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #fff; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Neutral <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Satisfied			% Change in Satisfaction from 1998
B2.	Direct you promptly to the proper office or person	18	19	63	+11*
B3.	Return telephone calls w/in 1 business day	24	18	58	+9*
B6.	Disseminate info on changes in practices and procedures before effective date	17	27	56	0
B11.	Respond w/in 30 days to papers filed after examiner allows the application	18	28	54	+12*
C3T1.	Length of application process	31	24	45	+12*
B7.	Deliver Informal faxes to examiners w/in 1 business day of receipt	27	31	42	+7
B9.	Mail correct filing notices w/in 30 days of receipt	37	22	41	**

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* Standard changed from 19 days in 1998 and is not comparable to 1999 question.

## *Timeliness (cont.)*

### *Ranked by % Satisfied*

<u>Survey Item #</u>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Dissatisfied <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #fff; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Neutral <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Satisfied			% Change in Satisfaction from 1998
B8. Match properly addressed faxes of Formal Amendments with file and deliver to the examiner w/in 3 days**	28	31	41	+9*
B5. Respond to status letters w/in 30 days of receipt	38	24	38	+3
C3T2. Length of process from filing to grant**	38	28	34	+1
C3T3. Length of process from payment of fee to grant**	47	21	32	-2

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* Question wording changed slightly from 1998 to 1999. The questions are still comparable to 1998.

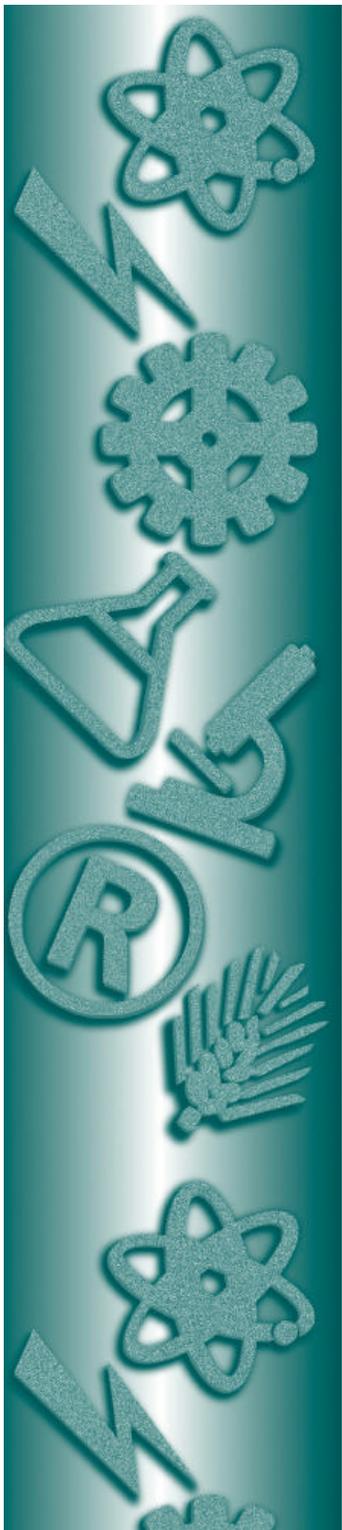
**Telephone service and disseminating information about procedural changes are the most favorable. Timeliness of the process, meeting quality/time standards for filing receipts and fax deliveries, and status inquiries are the least favorable.**

# *Timeliness – In Summary*

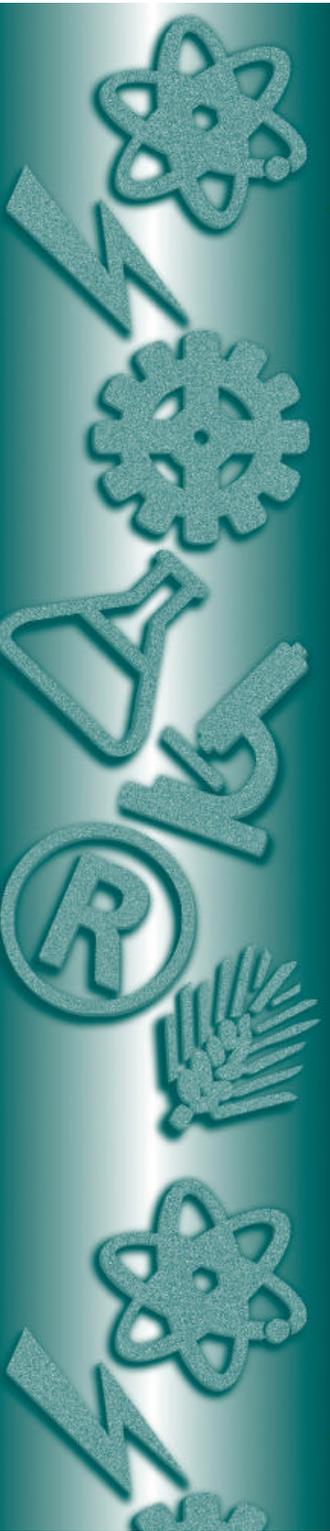
- **Telephone service standards, in terms of directing customers promptly to the proper office or person and returning calls within one business day, are the most positive and continue to show improvement. Customers are also satisfied with information on changes being disseminated before effective date.**
- **Process time in terms of length of time from filing to grant, and from issue fee payment to grant, have the highest levels of dissatisfaction. Close to one-half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the time from payment of fee to grant. This is also supported by numerous write-in comments about the delays between payment of fee and grant, and by a decline of 2% from 1998.**
- **Meeting time standards concerning responding to status letters and mailing correct filing notices,\* as well as length of the application process have dissatisfaction levels over 30%**
- **Improvements of 10% or more in satisfaction from 1998 levels occurred in directing customers promptly, responding to papers filed, and length of the application process**

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\* Consider separating question B9 (mailing correct filing notices within 30 days) into two questions in order to collect responses for accuracy and timeliness separately.



***How Should the PTO  
Represent Patent  
Processing Time?***



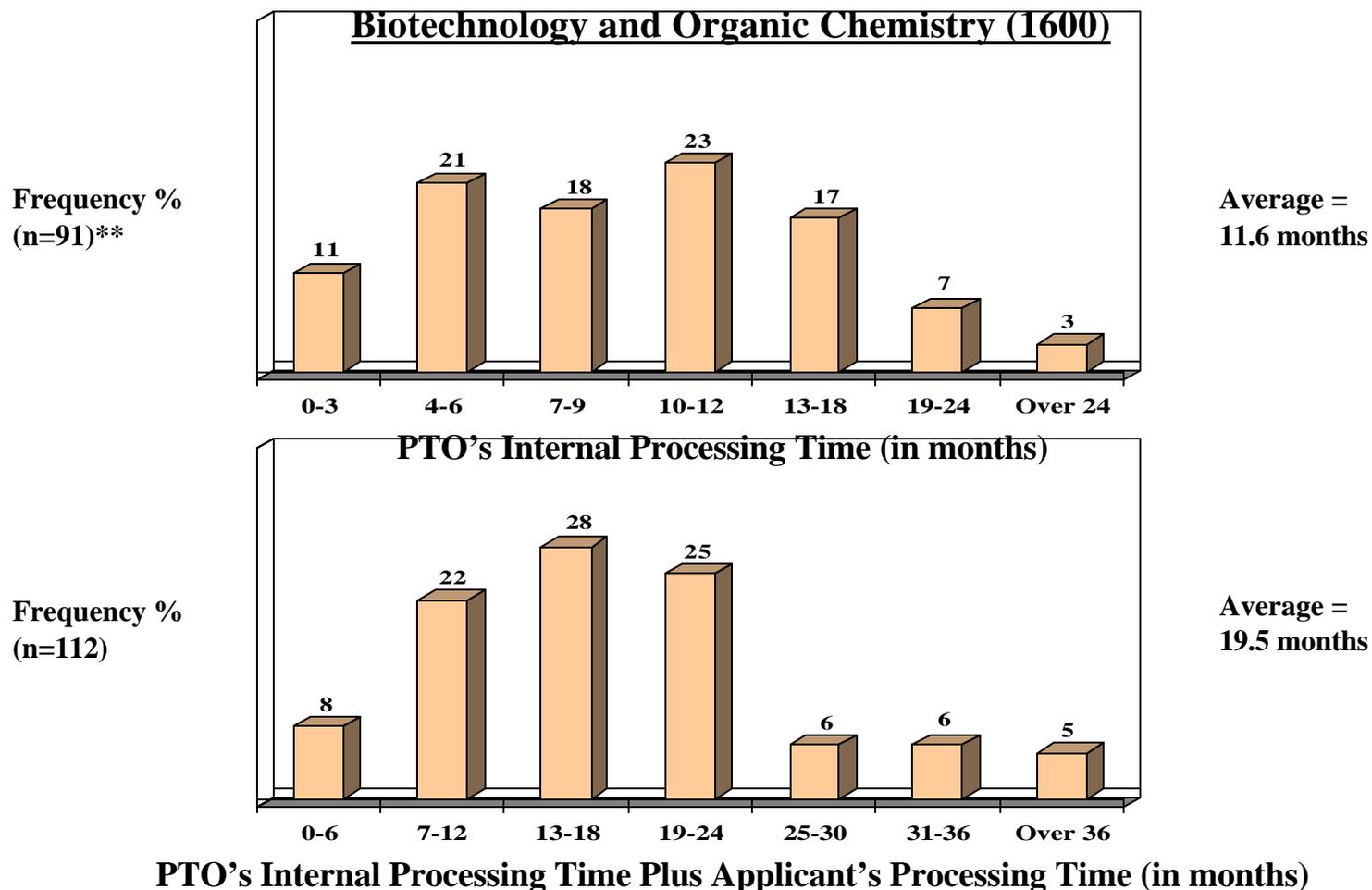
***C1. From your perspective, how should the PTO represent patent processing time?***

<b>PTO's internal processing time</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>PTO's internal processing time plus applicant's processing time (application receipt date to patent/abandonment)</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Other*</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>No opinion</b>	<b>22%</b>

\* Other responses included "both 1 and 2" and miscellaneous responses.

**The most frequent response was PTO's internal processing time plus applicant's processing time. It should be noted that 22% had no opinion.**

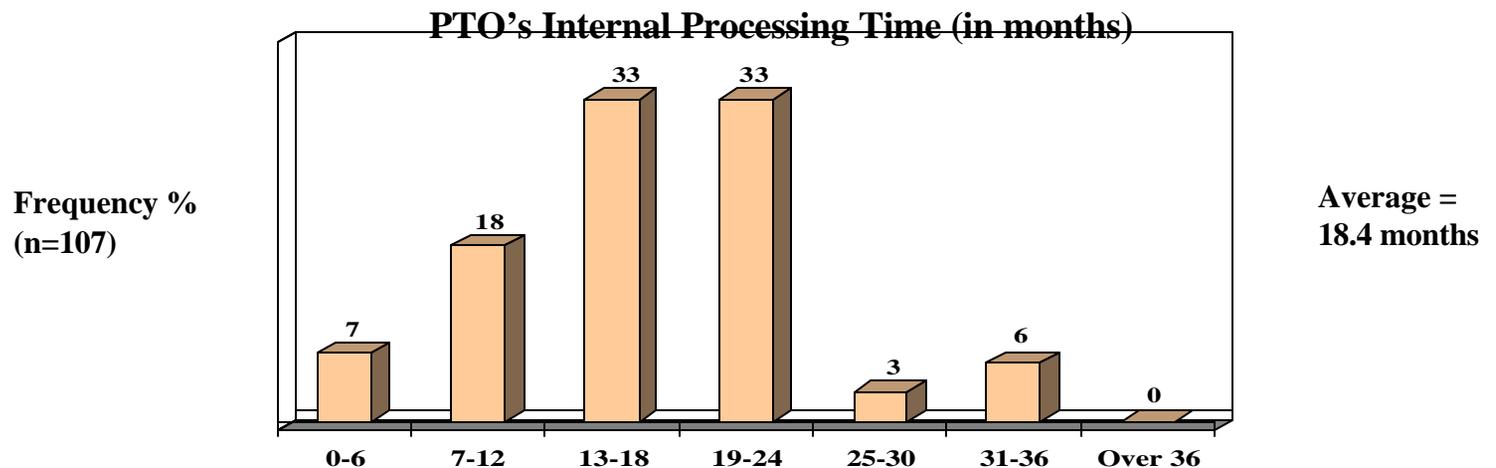
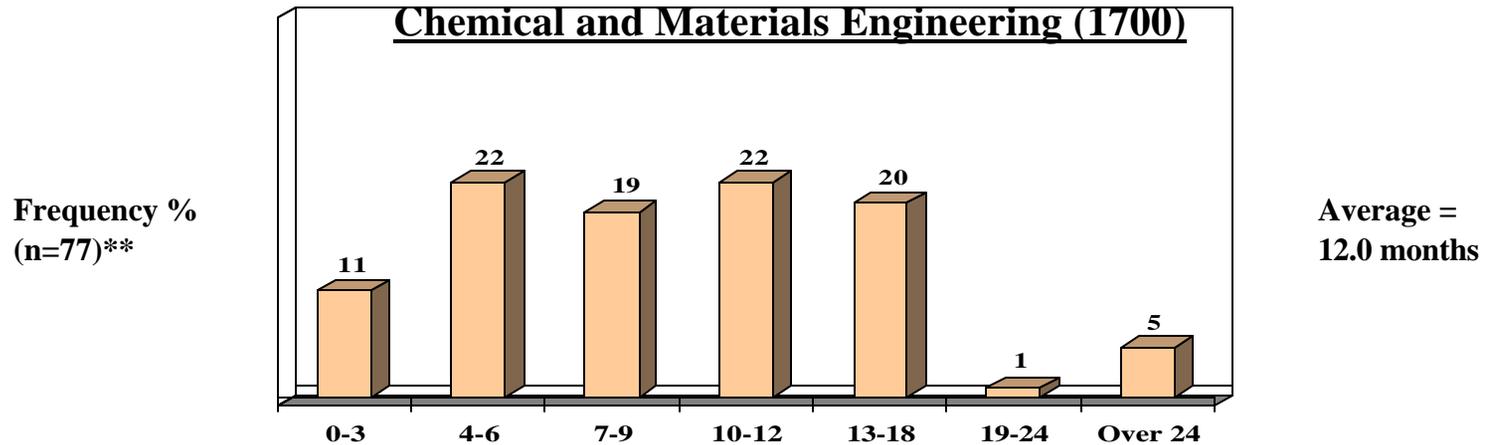
**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***



\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***

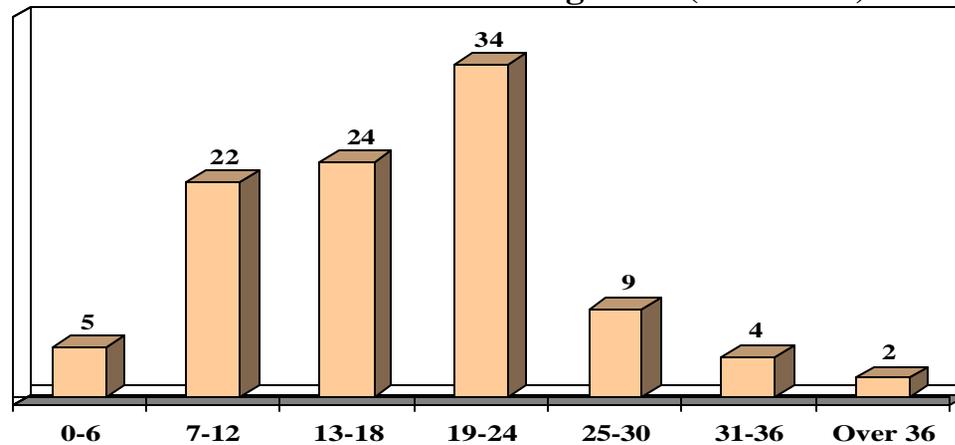
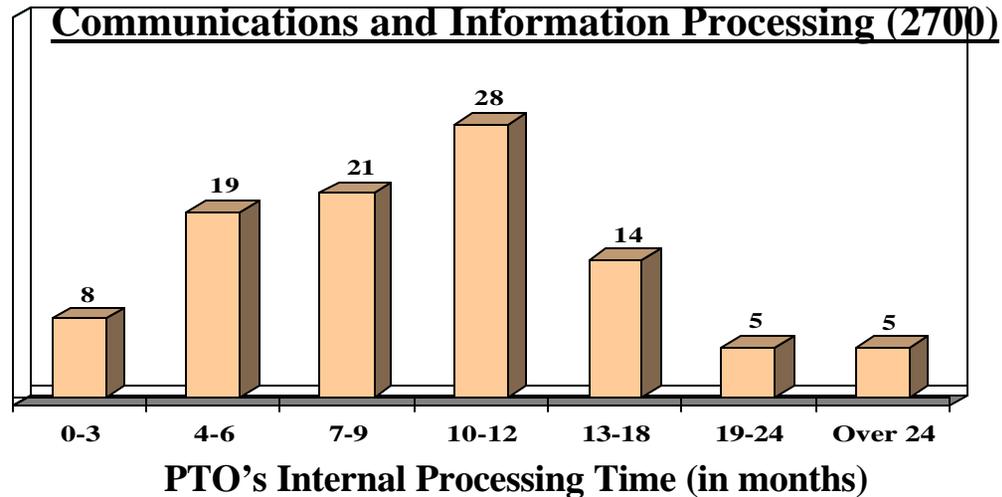


**PTO's Internal Processing Time Plus Applicant's Processing Time (in months)**

\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***



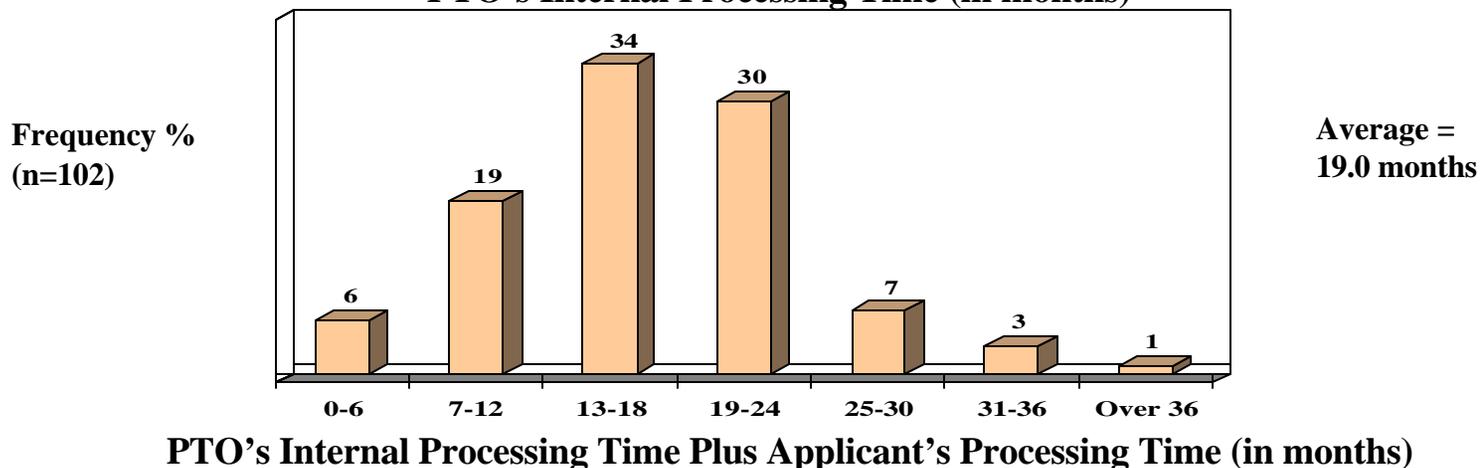
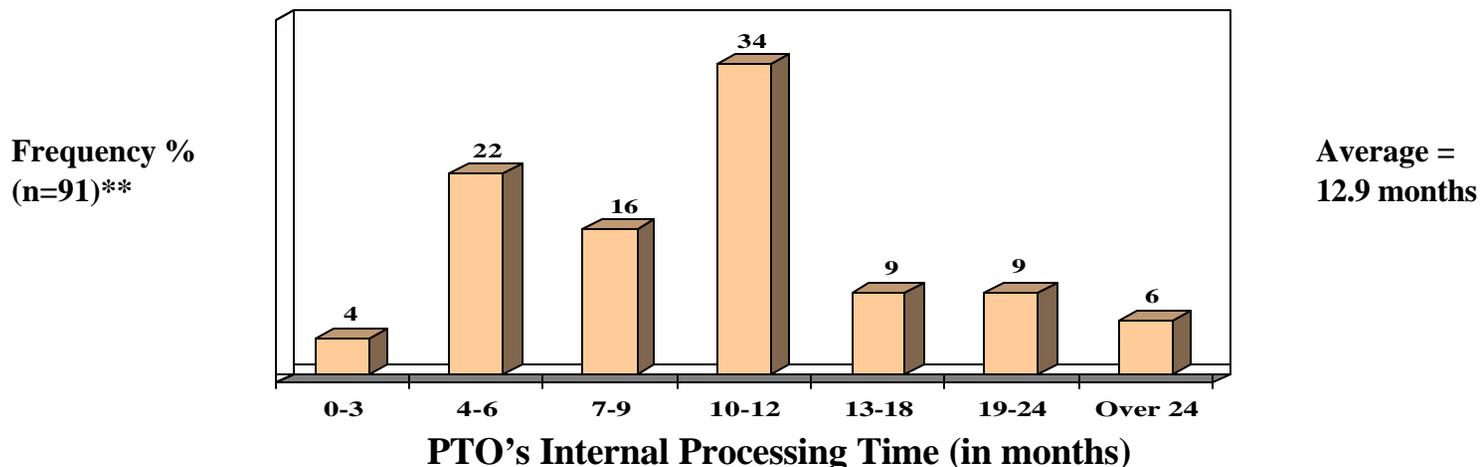
**PTO's Internal Processing Time Plus Applicant's Processing Time (in months)**

\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***

**Physics, Optics, Semiconductors, and Electrical Engineering (2800)**

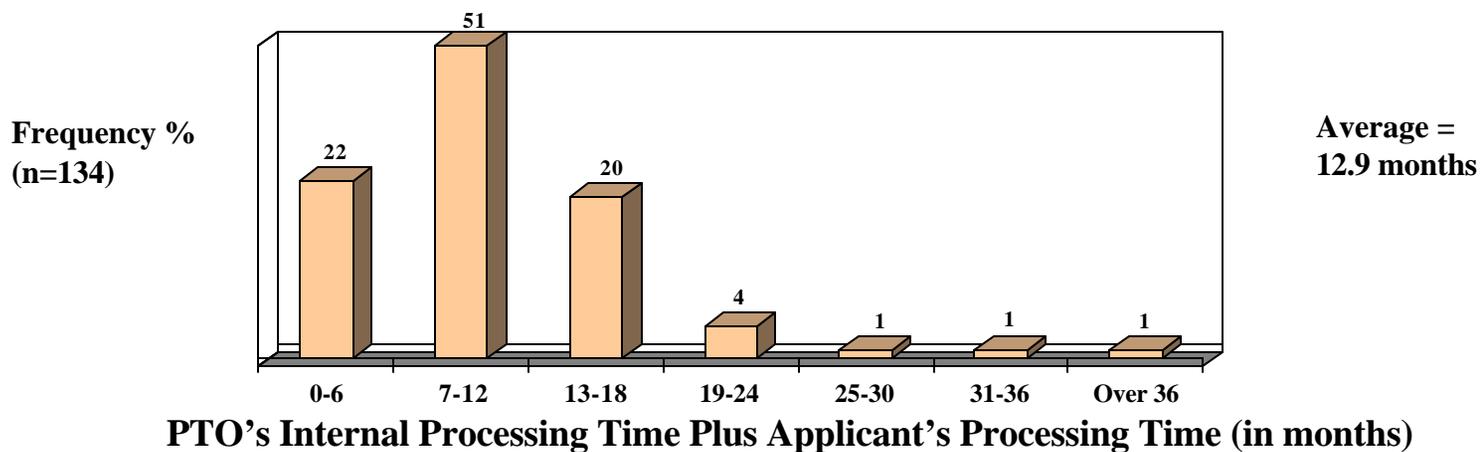
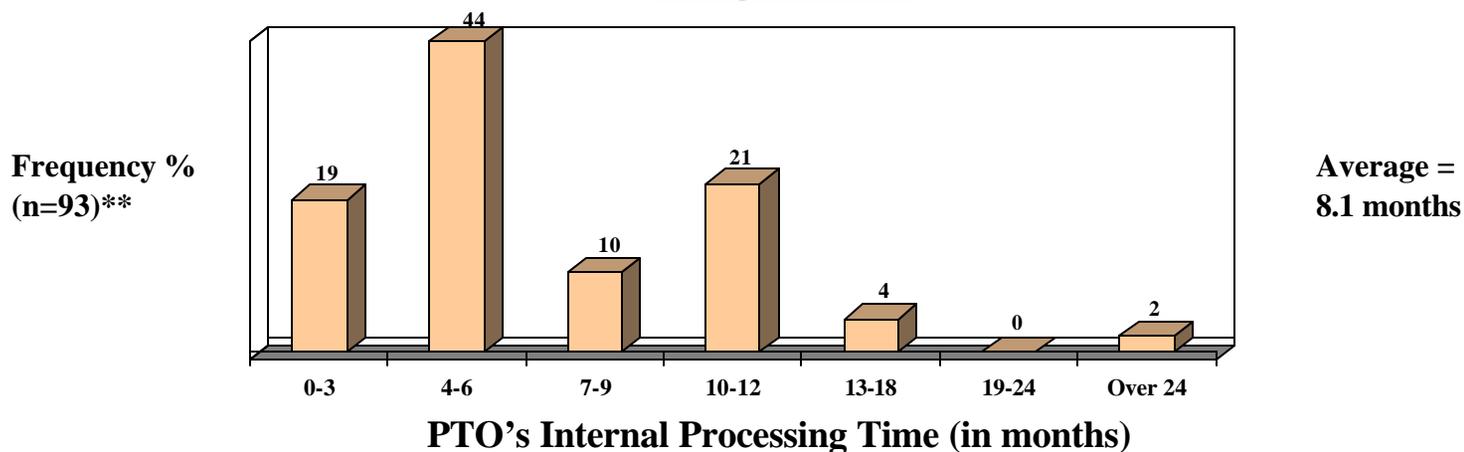


\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***

**Designs (2900)**

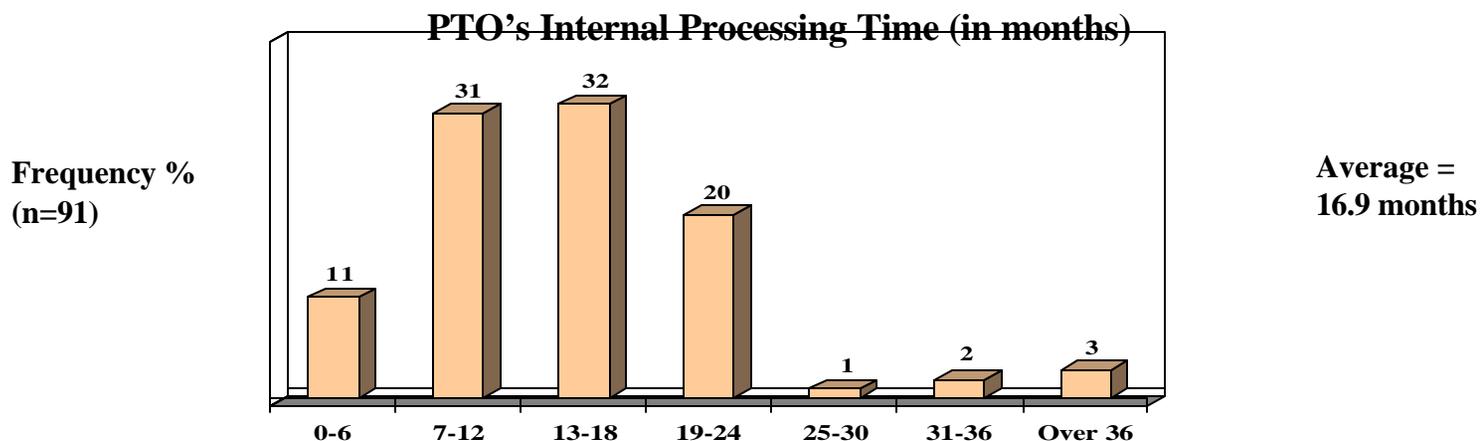
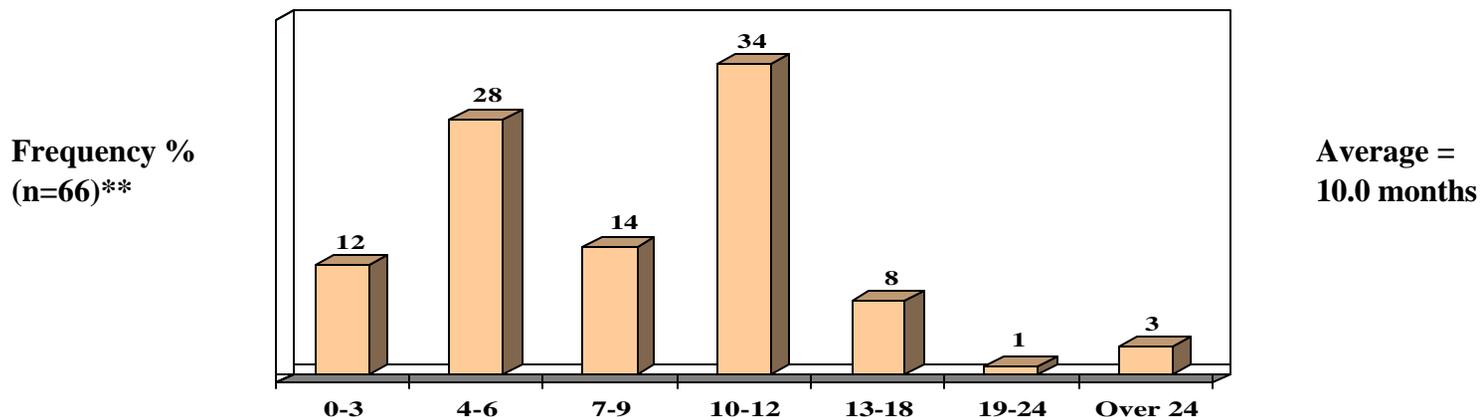


\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***

**Transportation, Construction, Agriculture, and Security (3600)**



**PTO's Internal Processing Time Plus Applicant's Processing Time (in months)**

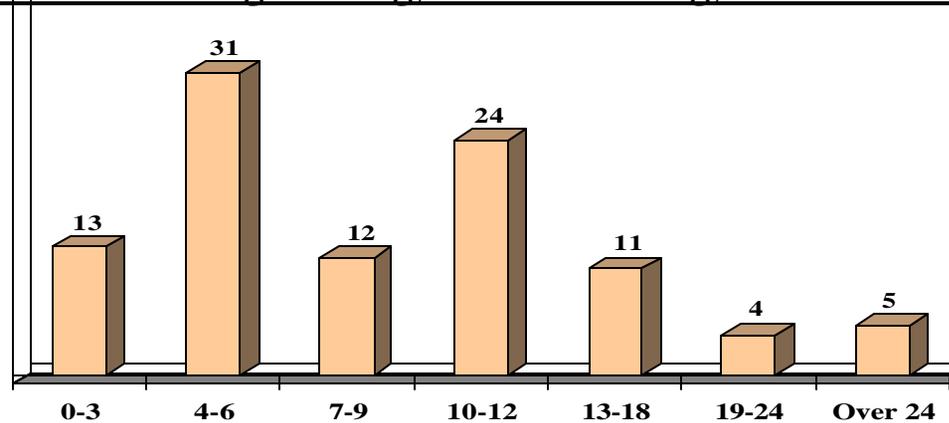
\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

**C2. For the processing time you selected in C1, what is a reasonable goal (in months) for each technology area that you selected in A4?\***

**Mechanical Engineering, Manufacturing, and Products (300)**

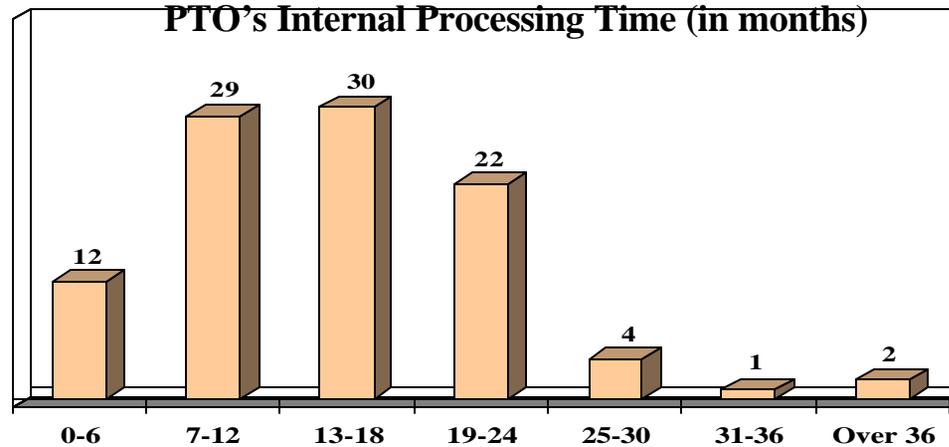
Frequency %  
(n=125)\*\*



Average =  
12.2 months

**PTO's Internal Processing Time (in months)**

Frequency %  
(n=139)

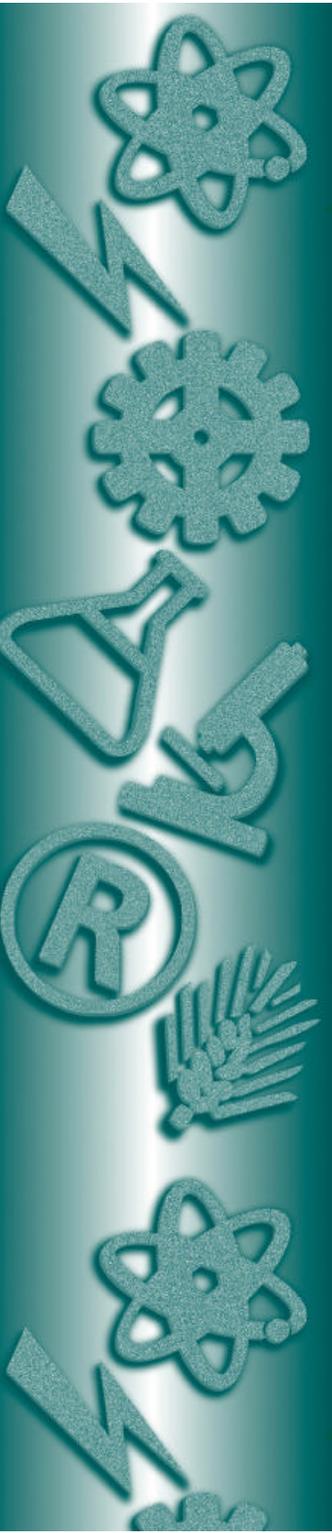


Average =  
17.0 months

**PTO's Internal Processing Time Plus Applicant's Processing Time (in months)**

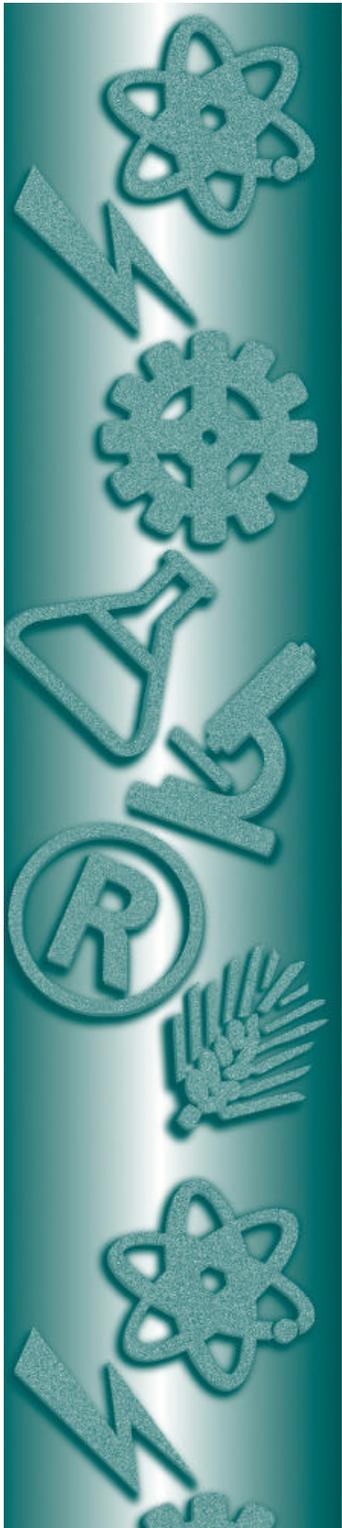
\* Results shown are only for those responding in the same technology area for which they were selected to respond to the survey.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.



## *How the PTO Should Represent Patent Processing Time – In Summary*

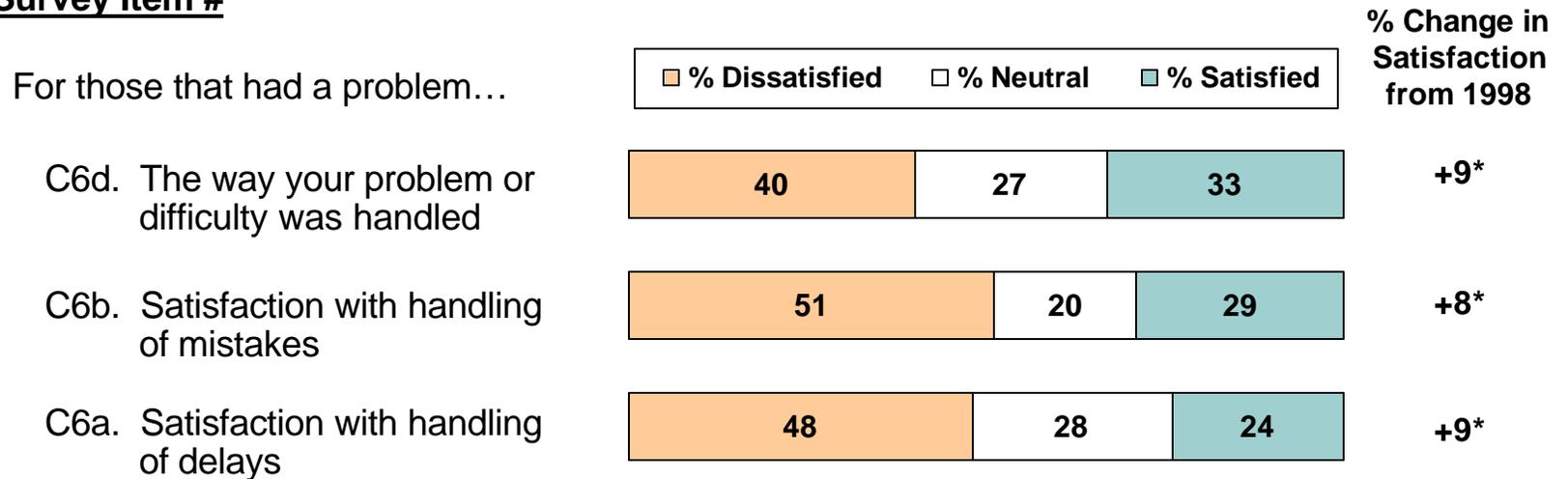
- **The most frequent response given was that patent processing time should be represented as PTO's internal processing time plus the applicant's processing time (application receipt date to patent/abandonment). Note that 22% had no opinion.**
  - ◆ **The average reasonable goal for total processing time (C2) by technology area ranges from a low of 12.9 months for Designs (2900) to a high of 19.9 months for Communications and Information Processing (2700). Two other technology areas (1600 and 2800) are also in the 19 month range and two are in the 17 month range (3700 and 3600).**
- **The average reasonable goal for PTO's internal processing time ranges from a low of 8.1 months for Designs (2900) to a high of 12.9 months for Physics (2800). Except for Transportation (3600), which is at 10 months, all of the other technology areas are in the 12 month range.**
- **Overall, the average internal processing time is about 12 months and internal time plus applicant's processing time is just over 18 months (excluding designs which is much lower for both).**



# *Problem Resolution*

# Problem Resolution Ranked by % Satisfied

## Survey Item #



\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Problem resolution, while showing improvement over 1998 levels, continues to have high levels of dissatisfaction.**

# *Time to Resolve Problem Impacts Perceptions About Overall Problem Handling*

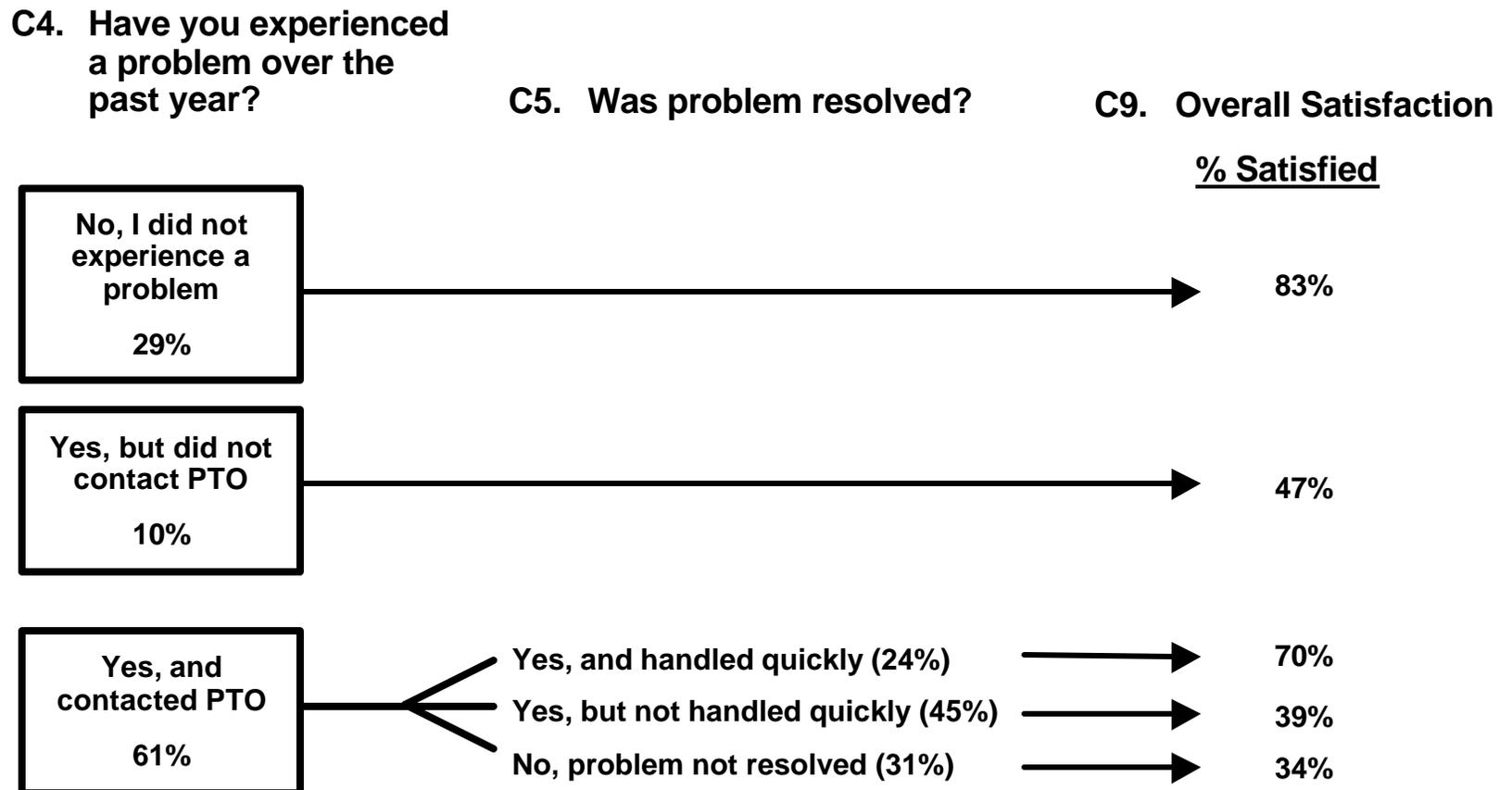
Of those who had a problem...

C6. Handling of Problems

C5. Was Problem Resolved?	(a) Handling of Delays (% Sat)	(b) Handling of Mistakes (% Sat)	(d) The Way Problem Was Handled (% Sat)
Yes, and handled quickly	53%	66%	75%
Yes, but not handled quickly	14%	18%	25%
No, problem not resolved	16%	13%	9%

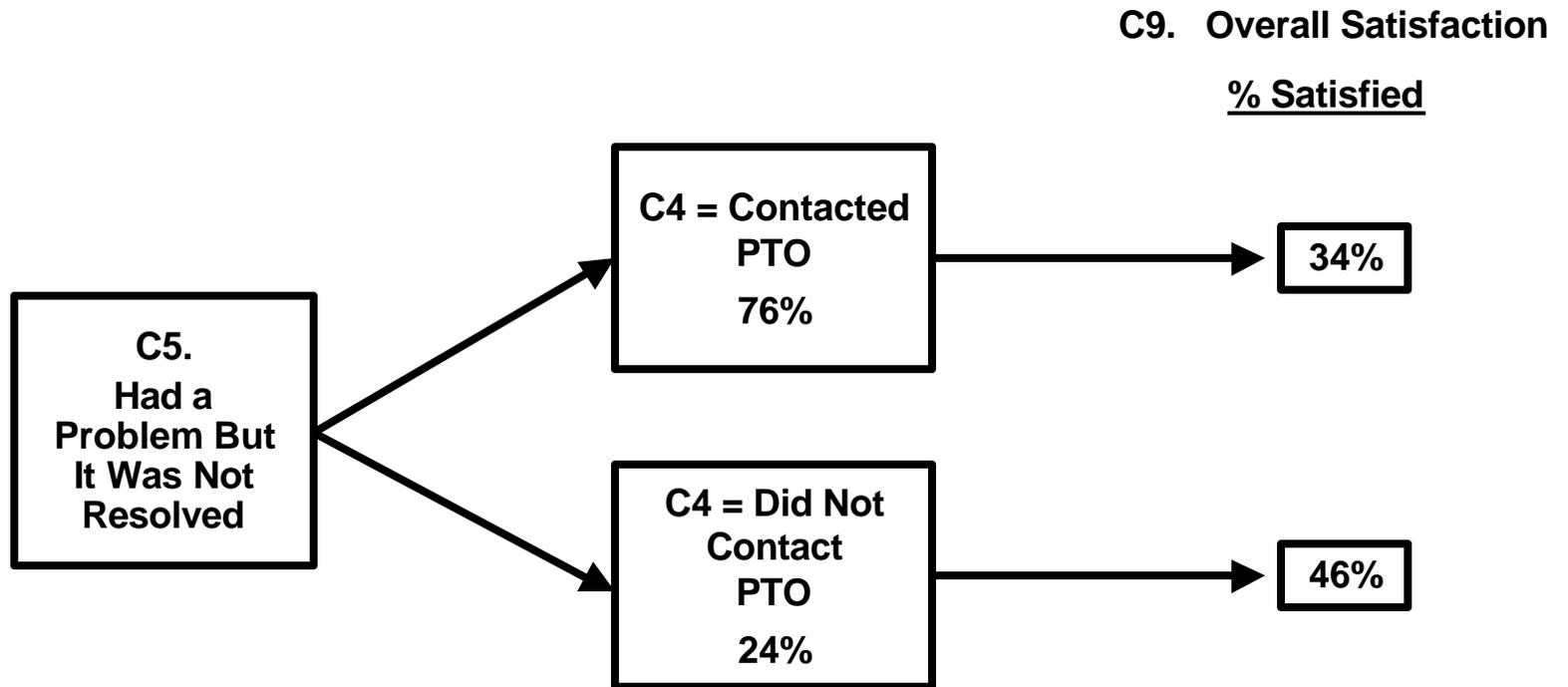
**Handling problems quickly strongly impacts perceptions about overall problem handling.**

# Impact of Problem Handling on Overall Satisfaction



It is important to handle customer problems quickly. Not handling a problem quickly has about the same impact as the problem not being resolved. Those that had a problem, contacted the PTO about it, and had it handled quickly, had an overall satisfaction rating of 70%. Compare that to those who had a problem, contacted the PTO about it, and did not have it handled quickly (39%) or those who did not get their problem resolved at all (34%).

# *Impact of Not Resolving Problems on Overall Satisfaction*



Of the 76% that had a problem and contacted PTO, but the problem was not resolved, 34% were satisfied overall. Compare this to the 24% that had a problem but did not contact PTO about it (46% satisfied overall). Respondents are more frustrated when they contact PTO about a problem and it is not resolved than when they have a problem and do not contact PTO at all.

## *Impact of Handling of Problems on Customer Service*

Of those who had a problem...	<u>% Satisfied</u>		
	C3SC2 Genuinely Committed to Providing Best Service	C3SR2 Prompt and Helpful Service	C3SR3 Flexibility in Trying to Address Needs
<b>C6d. Satisfaction with Handling of Problem</b>			
Satisfied	70%	80%	76%
Neutral	38%	42%	39%
Dissatisfied	26%	27%	20%

**Handling of problems impacts perceptions about customer service. For example, of those who are satisfied with problem handling, 70% are satisfied with the PTO being genuinely committed to providing the best service.**

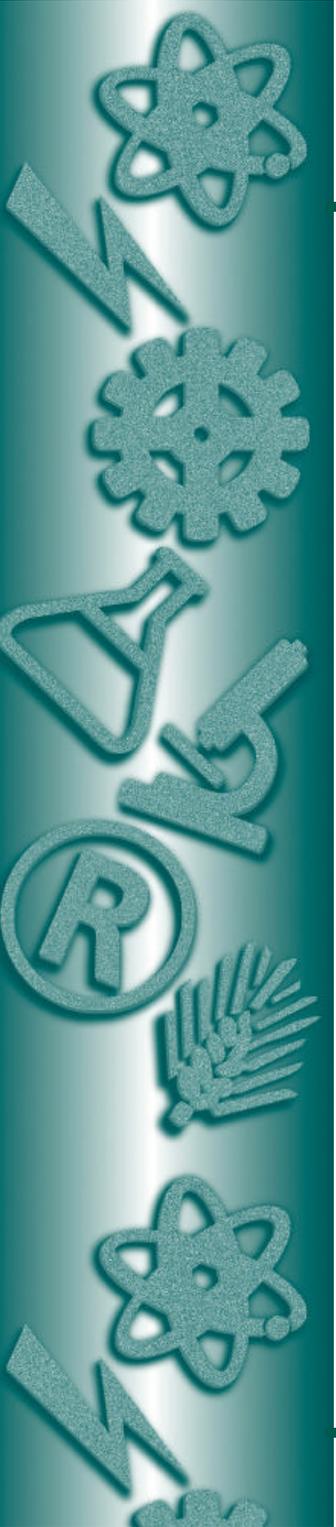
## *Problems/Difficulties with PTO Services Over Past Year by Affiliation*

Affiliation	C4(1) Yes, and contacted someone	C4(2) Yes, but did not contact someone	C4(3) No, did not experience problem
Federal Agency	56%	20%	24%
University/College	45%	14%	41%
Large Business	59%	11%	30%
Small Business	57%	6%	37%
Law Firm	66%	10%	24%
Individual Inventor	34%	7%	59%

Most of the problems encountered are by law firms, large businesses, and federal agencies. For example, just over 75% of law firms encountered problems compared to only 40% of individual inventors.

# *Problem Resolution – In Summary*

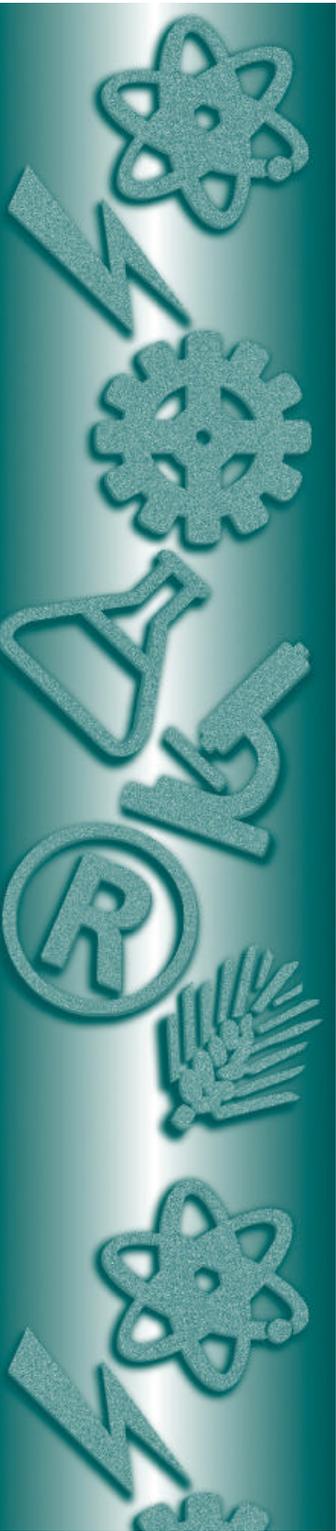
- **The area of problem resolution continues to be a major opportunity for improvement**
- **Over 70% of the respondents experienced problems or difficulties with PTO services over the past year (about the same level as 1998). Only 10% that had a problem did not contact PTO about it.**
- **The handling of delays, mistakes, and problems, while showing some improvement over 1998, continues to have dissatisfaction levels of 40% or more**
- **Handling a problem quickly has a major positive impact on perceptions about the way the problem was handled (C6c) and overall satisfaction (C9). Not handling it quickly has about the same level of impact on overall satisfaction as not resolving the problem at all. It should be noted that 31% of the respondents who contacted PTO about a problem do not have it resolved.**



## ***Problem Resolution – In Summary (cont.)***

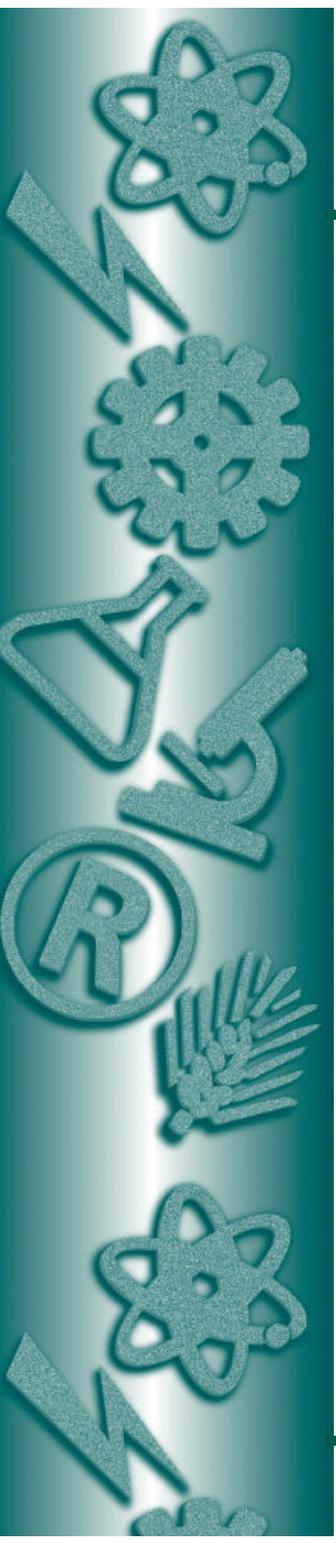
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- **Handling the problem quickly also has a major positive impact on perceptions about the way delays, mistakes, and problems are handled. For example, of those that had their problem resolved quickly, 75% were satisfied with the way the problem was handled compared to only 25% when the problem was not resolved quickly.**
- **The way the problem is handled also has a major impact on perceptions about customer service (genuinely committed to service, prompt and helpful service, and flexibility)**
- **Customers appear to be more frustrated when they contact PTO about a problem and it does not get resolved compared to those having a problem and not contacting PTO about it at all**



*What are the Most Frequent  
Problems that Customers  
Encounter?*

*(Write-In Comments)*



## ***Q7. What are your most frequently encountered problems?***

**Respondents were asked to write in their most frequently encountered problems. These responses were coded into the following categories.**

<b><u>Problem Area Category</u></b>	<b><u>Percent in Category*</u></b>
<b>Misplaced or Lost Paperwork (files, drawings, correspondence, amendments, faxes)</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Filing Receipts</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Patent Examination/Examiner Issues</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Administrative/Clerical Issues (change of address, typos, administrative changes, delay of mail, fax service)</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>General Processing Delays (correcting errors, drawings, etc.)</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Deposit Accounts / Fees / Refunds</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Telephone Service (returning calls, voice mail, transfers)</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Getting Status Information</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Delays in Office Actions</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Delays in Issuance</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Not applicable (i.e., irrelevant to question)</b>	<b>1%</b>

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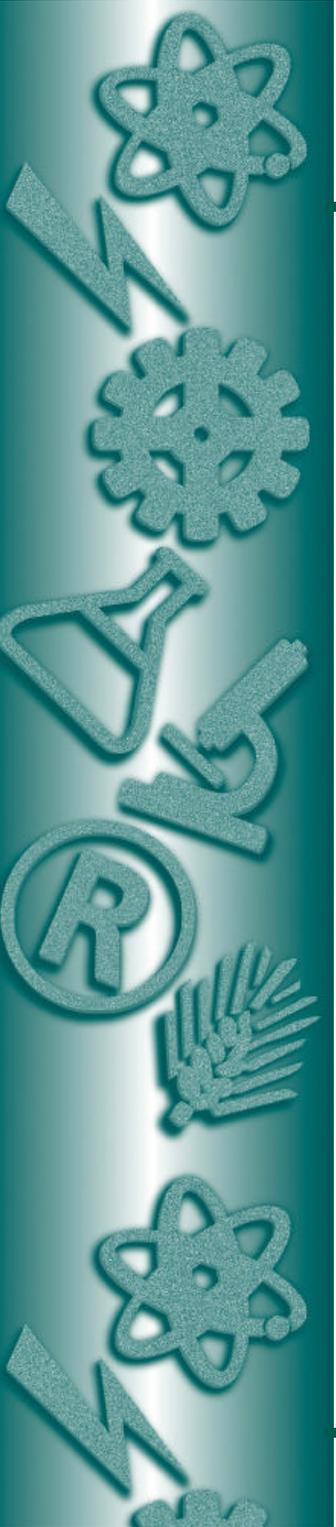
**\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.**

## *Question 7—Some Verbatim Comments*

- **“Files get lost between divisions of the office. Nobody seems to know where they are. The only answer you get is ‘the computer says it left XYZ. I can’t tell you anything more.’ How about someone having the job of finding files.”**
- **“No responses to status inquiries; multiple mistakes in filing receipts; loss of entire files (within past year, had to forward paperwork for 2 files that were lost); and papers filed with the PTO not acknowledged or matched up with their respective files.”**
- **“Virtually impossible to correct deposit account errors.”**
- **“One application had a two year delay from payment of issue fee to issue. A second application had over a one year delay.”**
- **“The most common problem is getting amendments after allowance entered. They don’t get to the examiner for several months.”**
- **“Filing receipts are not accurate on a regular basis and take a long time to fix and PTO caused the mistake.”**
- **“Poor examination report, clearly inadequate effort to identify issues. Examiner often gets serious only after appeal brief filed.”**

## *Question 7—Some Verbatim Comments (cont.)*

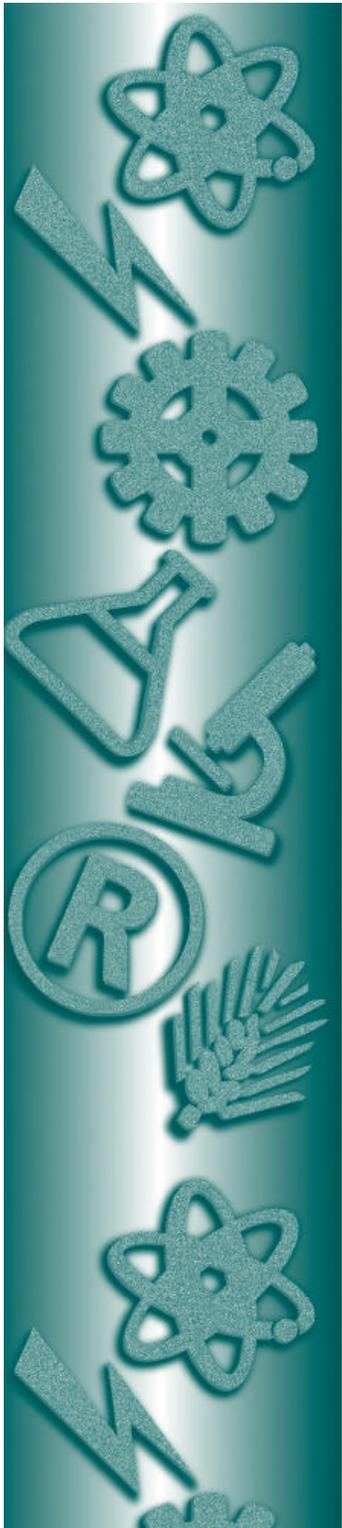
- **“A big problem is that virtually every filing receipt we receive has some error by PTO in it that we must correct.”**
- **“First Office Action should be sent within 6 months. Our experience is that we are getting it 2 years after filing.”**
- **“Examiners who don’t know the law, and thereby make improper rejections, then refuse to listen, have to go to appeal at least 20% of the time. Big waste of time and money.”**
- **“Once a problem arises it is very difficult to get the problem corrected, e.g., filing receipts containing errors, continuation applications sent to wrong file, etc.”**
- **“The Drawing Review Branch does a poor job matching drawings to the file. The Publications Branch does not always print the patent with the correct drawings.”**
- **“No response to status inquiries.”**
- **“When I leave voice mail with someone other than one examiner, I rarely receive a return telephone call. This is particularly true when I have status questions.”**



## *The Most Frequent Problems that Customers Encounter – In Summary*

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- **Lost files/papers and errors in filing receipts are the most common problems that customers encountered**
- **These are followed by examiner-related and administrative-related problems**
  - ◆ **These types of problems encountered follow a pattern similar to last year**

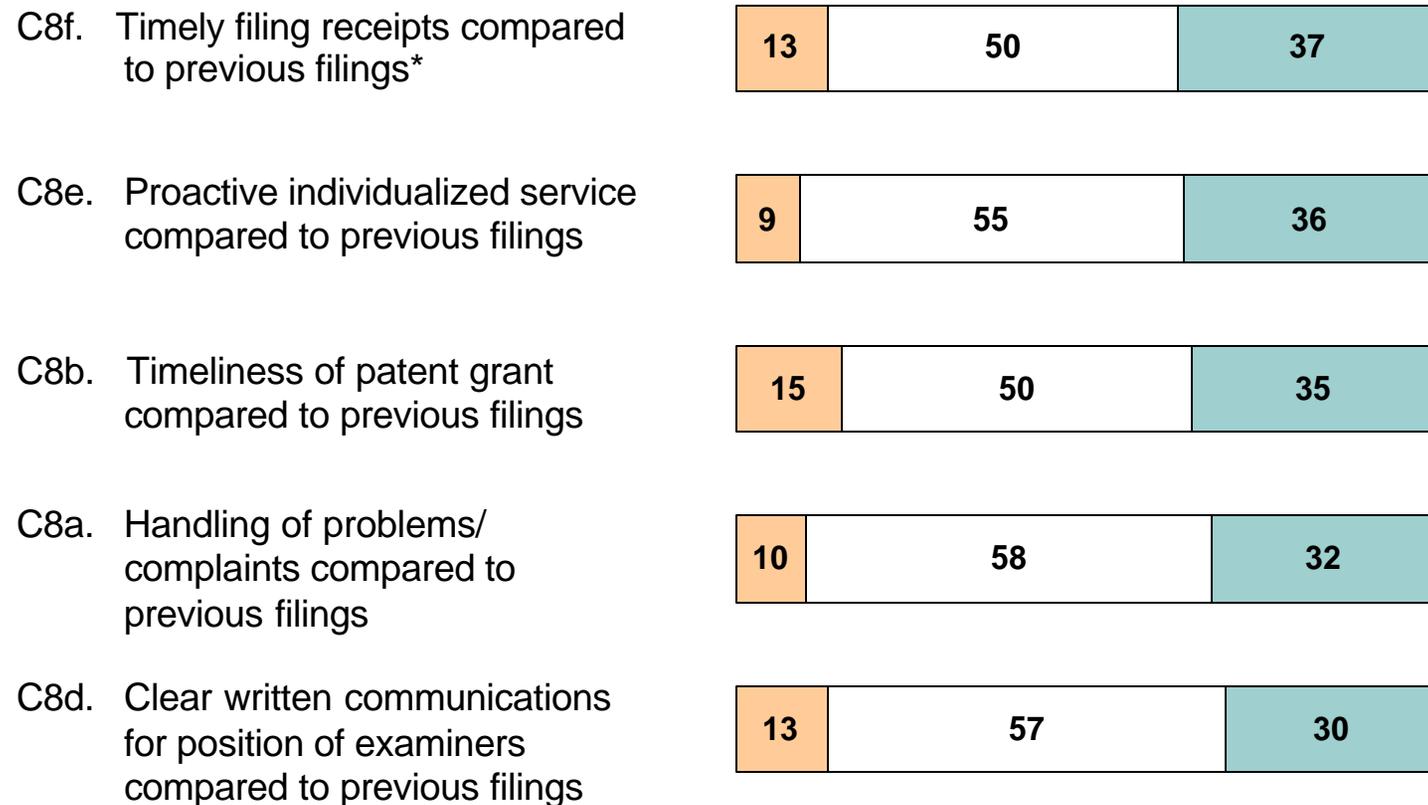


# *Change in Service*

# Change in Service Ranked by % Better

## Survey Item #

% Worse   
  % Same   
  % Better



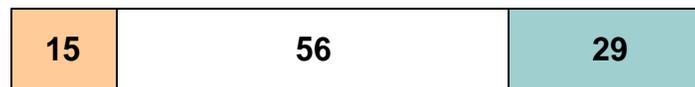
\* Customer Service standard changed from 19 days to 30 days in 1999.

## *Change in Service (cont.) Ranked by % Better*

### Survey Item #

% Worse    
  % Same    
  % Better

C8h. Phone calls returned w/in 1 day compared to previous filings



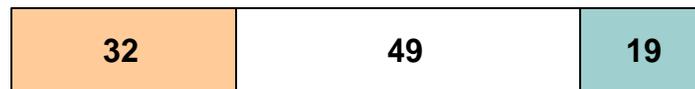
C8i. Directed promptly to proper person compared to previous filings



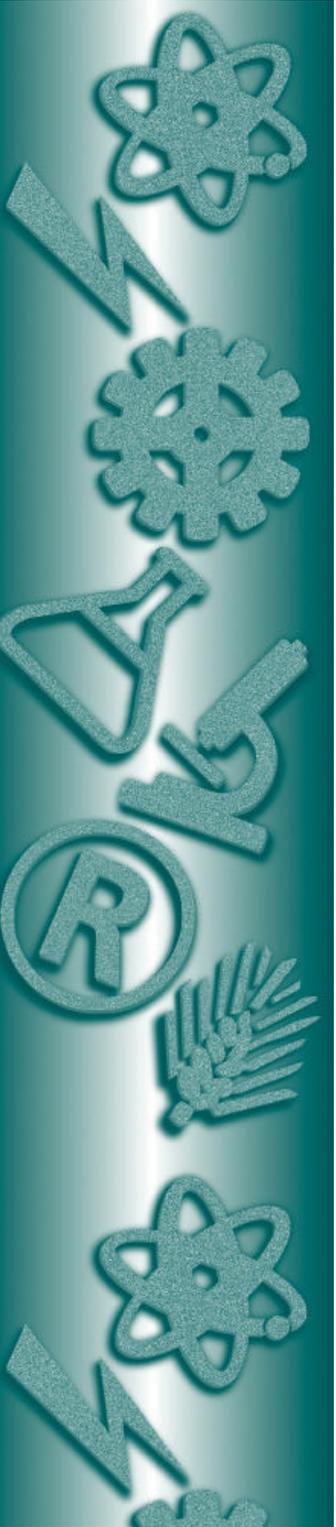
C8c. Quality of patent search compared to previous filings



C8g. Accurate filing receipts compared to previous filings



**Over one-third of respondents report better service in timely filing of receipts, proactive individualized service, and timeliness of patent grant compared to previous filings. The only area in which about one-third reported worse service was in accurate filing receipts.**

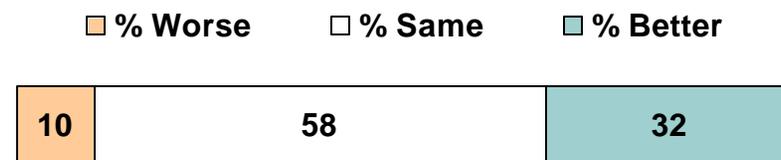


*How Do Changes in Most  
Recent Experience Compare  
with Results from 1998?*

# Change in Handling of Problems/Complaints Comparison with Problem Resolution Questions

## Handling of Problems/Complaints

C8a. Handling of problems/  
complaints compared to  
previous filings



### Change in % Satisfied from 1998 to 1999

C6a. Handling of delays	+9*
C6b. Handling of mistakes	+8*
C6d. The way your problem or difficulty was handled	+9*

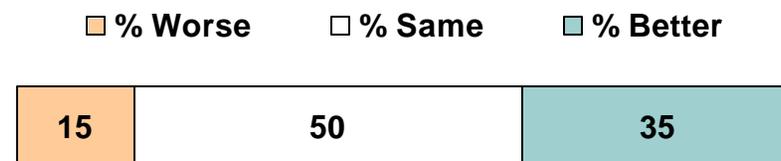
\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**All items show improvement in handling of problems compared to previous filings and to 1998 levels. However, levels of satisfaction are still very low.**

# Change in Timeliness of Patent Grant Comparison with Timeliness Questions

## Timeliness of Patent Grant

C8b. Timeliness of patent grant compared to previous filings



### Change in % Satisfied from 1998 to 1999

C3T1. Length of application process	+12*
C3T2. Length of process from filing to grant**	+1
C3T3. Length of process from payment of fee to grant**	-2

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

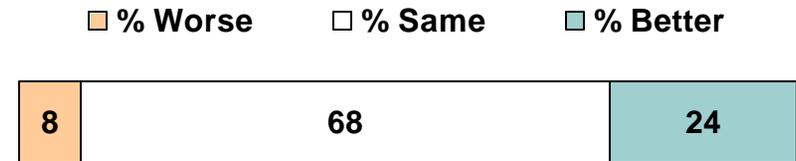
\*\* Question wording changed slightly from 1998 to 1999. The questions are still comparable to 1998.

**Over one-third believe timeliness of patent grant is better than previous experiences. However, satisfaction levels compared to 1998 show only a 1% increase in satisfaction with length of process from filing to grant and a 2% decrease in satisfaction with length from payment to grant.**

# Change in Quality of Patent Search Comparison with Search Questions

## Quality of Patent Search

C8c. Quality of patent search compared to previous filings



Change in % Satisfied from 1998 to 1999

B4. Clear written communications of position of examiners

+8\*

B10. Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process

+7\*

C30P2. Fairness of the final decision

+6\*

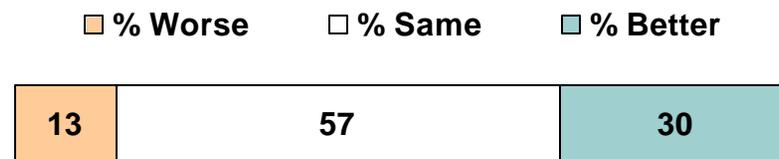
\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**All indicators show improvements in the quality of the patent search. Only 8% believe it is worse compared to previous filing and 24% believe it is better.**

# Change in Written Communications Comparison with Written Communications Questions

## Written Communications

C8d. Clear written communications for position of examiners compared to previous filings



Change in % Satisfied  
from 1998 to 1999

B4. Clear written communications of position of examiners

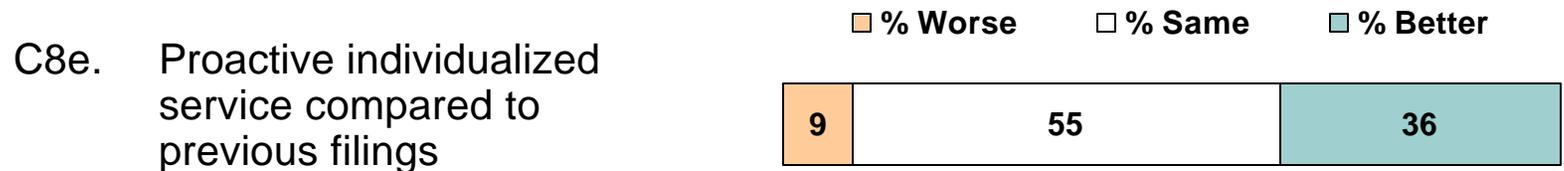
+8\*

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Clear written communications setting forth the position of examiners also shows improvement with close to one-third believing it is better than previous filings and an 8% improvement over 1998 levels.**

# Change in Proactive Individualized Service Comparison with Service Questions

## Proactive Individualized Service



### Change in % Satisfied from 1998 to 1999

C3SR1. Assistance at a time convenient to you	+8*
C3SR2. Prompt and helpful service	+6*
C3SR3. Flexibility in trying to address your needs	+7*
C3SC2. Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service	+7*

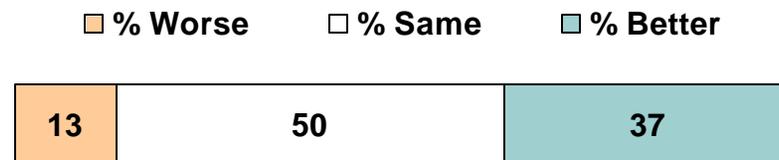
\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Over one-third believe proactive individualized service is better compared to previous filings. Also, customer service items show improvement from 1998 levels of over 5%. Assistance at a time convenient to you shows about two-thirds are satisfied.**

# Change in Timely Filing Receipts Comparison with Filing Receipt Questions

## Timely Filing Receipts

C8f. Timely filing receipts compared to previous filings



Change in % Satisfied  
from 1998 to 1999

B9. Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt\*\*

\*

C3T1. Length of application process

+12\*\*\*

\* Standard changed from 19 days in 1998 and therefore is not comparable to 1999.

\*\* Comparisons cannot be made between C8f and B9 since B9 asks about both accuracy and timeliness.

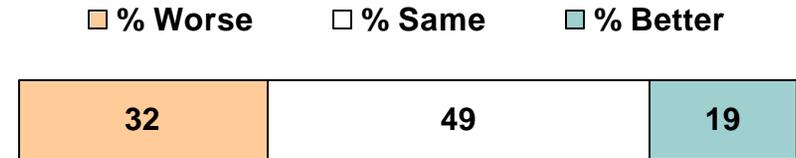
\*\*\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Over one-third believe timely filing receipts are better and there was a 12% improvement in satisfaction levels in length of application process compared to 1998.**

# Change in Accurate Filing Receipts Comparison with Filing Receipt Questions

## Accurate Filing Receipts

C8g. Accurate filing receipts compared to previous filings



Change in % Satisfied  
from 1998 to 1999

B9. Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt\*\*

\*

\* Standard changed from 19 days in 1998 and therefore is not comparable to 1999.

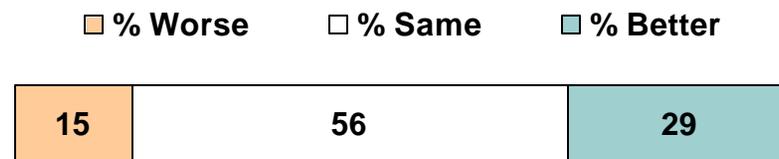
\*\* Comparisons cannot be made between C8g and B9 since B9 asks about both accuracy and timeliness.

**The accuracy of filing receipts is the only area where more respondents believe it is worse now than better, compared to previous filings.**

# Change in Returned Phone Calls Comparison with Returned Phone Calls Questions

## Returned Phone Calls

C8h. Phone calls returned w/in 1 day compared to previous filings



Change in % Satisfied  
from 1998 to 1999

B3. Return phone calls within 1 business day

+9\*

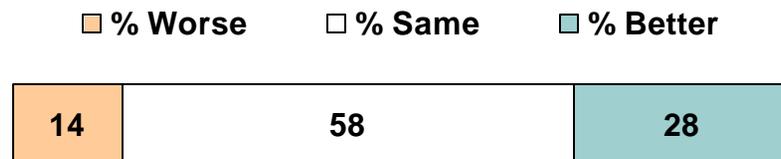
\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Returning telephone calls within one day continues to show improvement both in terms of previous filings and compared to 1998 satisfaction levels.**

# *Change in Directing Customers Promptly Comparison with Directing Customers Promptly Questions*

## Directing Customers Promptly

C8i. Being directed promptly to proper person compared to previous filings



Change in % Satisfied  
from 1998 to 1999

B2. Direct you promptly to the proper office or person

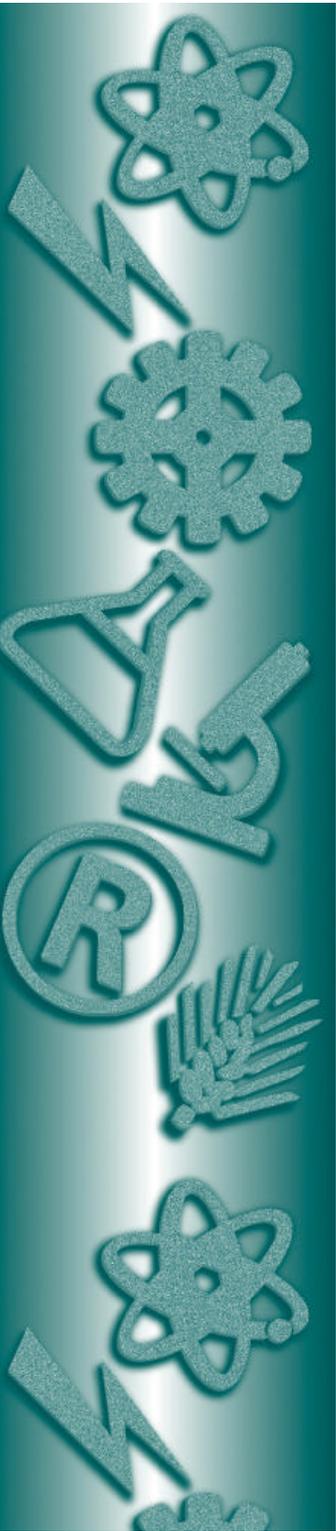
+11\*

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Close to 30% believe being directed promptly is better now and there was an 11% increase in satisfaction compared to 1998.**

## *Change In Service – In Summary*

- **Except for one area, all other aspects of service covered in the survey show that more customers believe service is better now compared to previous filings. For timely filing receipts, proactive individualized service and timeliness of patent grant, more than one-third believe it is better now. This is supported by the comparison of similar items from the 1998 results.**
- **Even in the handling of problems and complaints, 32% believe it is better now**
- **Telephone service and examination quality items show improvements both in comparison with previous filings and with the 1998 results**
- **Accurate filing receipts is the only area where more customers believe it is worse (32%) than better (19%). This is an area needing improvement.**
- **Except for accurate filing receipts, these improvement trends are impressive and important to build on in enhancing overall satisfaction**



*Questions Pertaining to the  
Overall Patent Process  
(Overall Questions)*

# *Overall Questions*

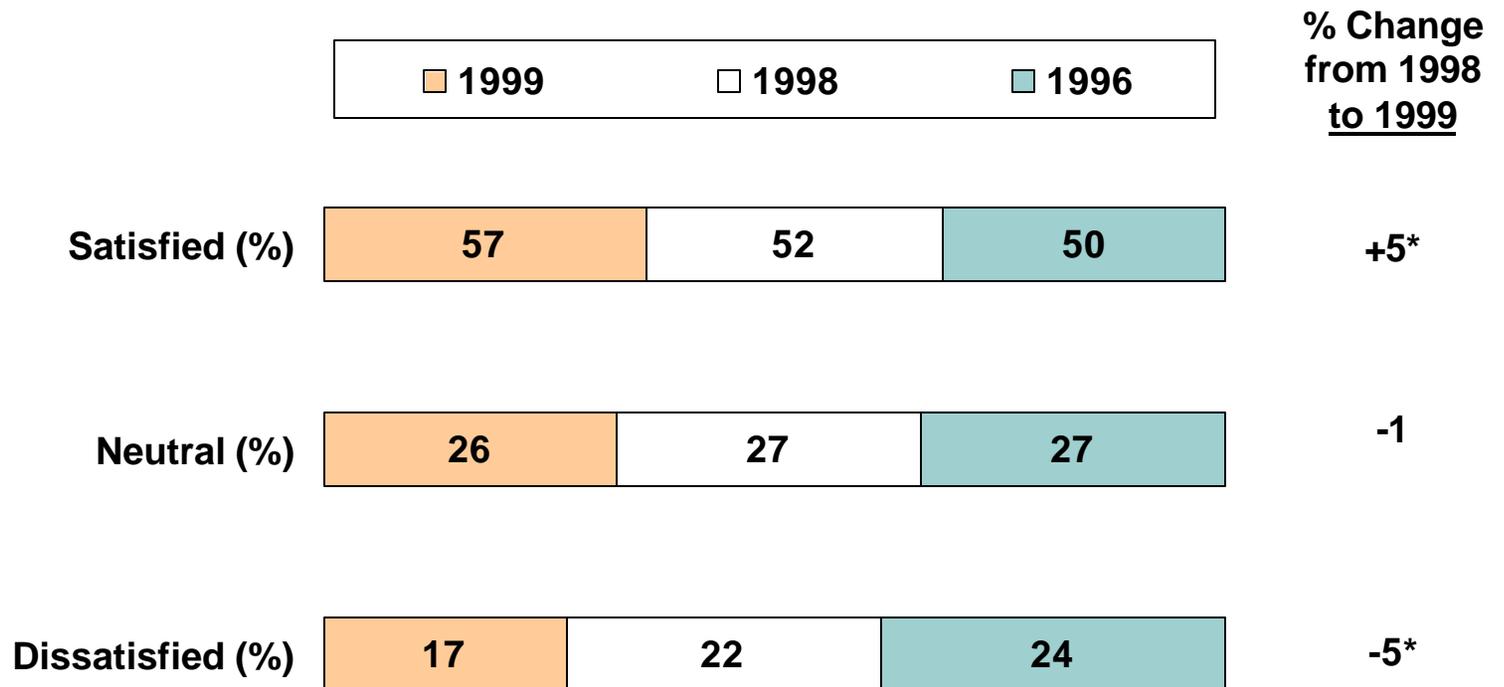
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## Survey Item #

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>C9</b>   | <b>Overall satisfaction</b>            |
| <b>C3P1</b> | <b>PTO fees for patent application</b> |
| <b>C3P2</b> | <b>Good value for PTO fees paid</b>    |

# Overall Question - Overall Satisfaction

C9. Considering all of your experiences with the PTO patent process, how satisfied are you OVERALL?

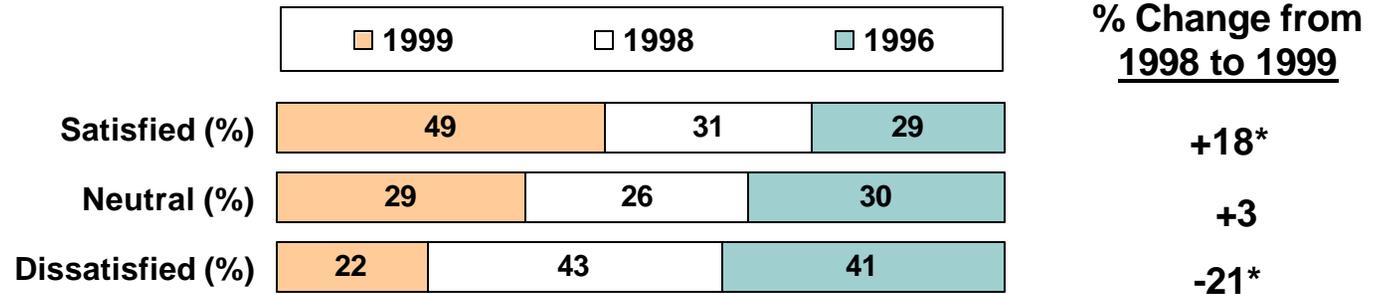


\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

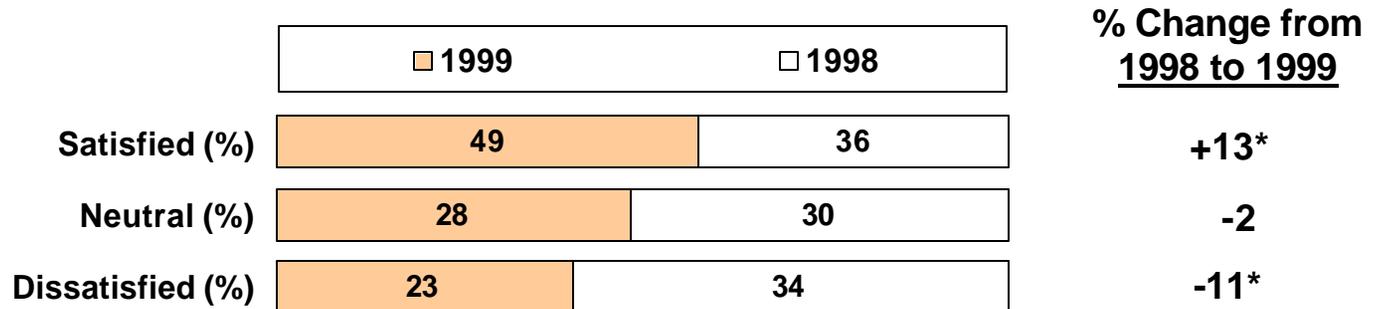
**Overall satisfaction increased 5% and dissatisfaction declined 5% over 1998 levels.**

# Overall Questions - Fees and Value

## C3P1. PTO fees for patent application\*\*



## C3P2. Good value for the amount of PTO fees paid\*\*

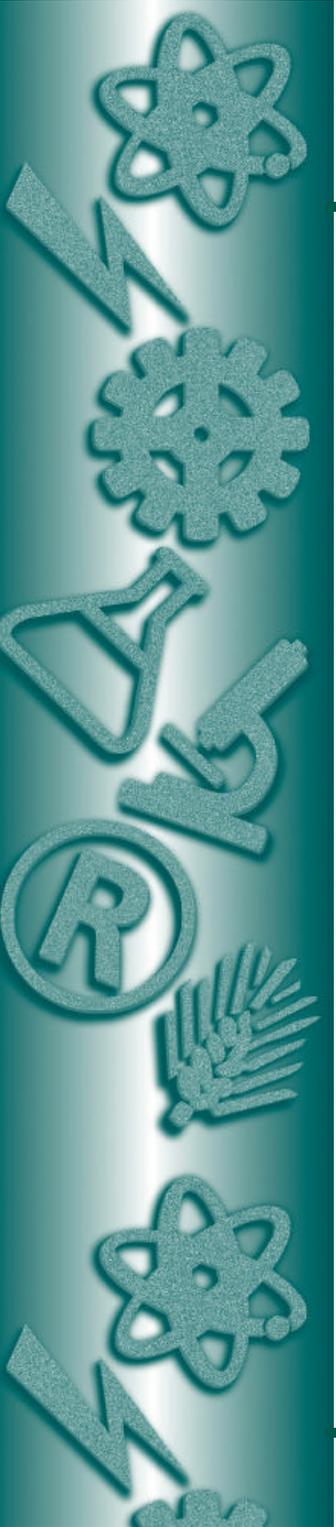


\*\*\* This question was not asked in 1996.

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* In 1999, the term "fees" was used instead of "costs."

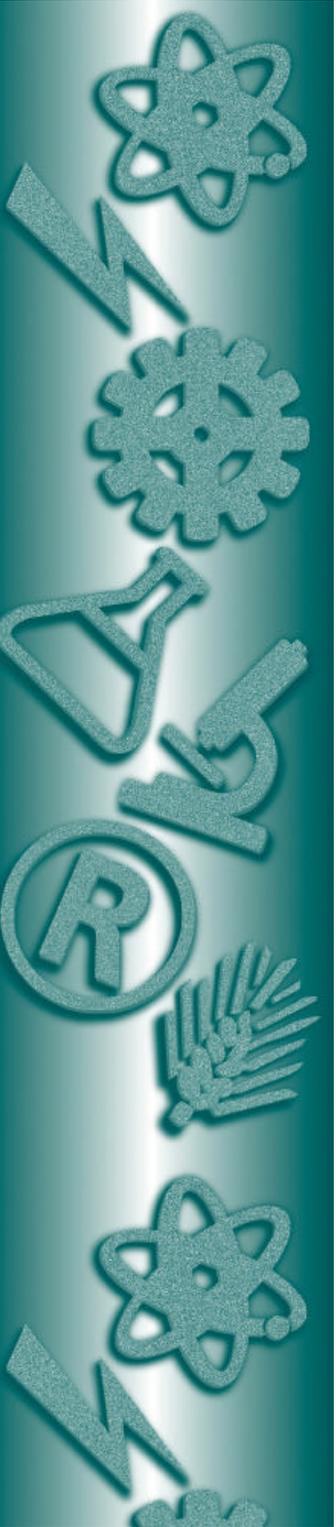
There are improvements of over 10% in satisfaction with fees paid and good value for the amount of fees paid compared to 1998 levels. There was also a considerable reduction in dissatisfaction levels.



## *Overall Questions – In Summary*

---

- **Overall satisfaction improved by 5% compared to 1998 levels. Just as positive is the fact that the percent dissatisfied decreased (5% fewer dissatisfied in 1999).**
- **Satisfaction with fees for patent application and value for the amount of fees paid is close to 50%. While still fairly low, these items improved by over 10% compared to 1998 levels. Levels of dissatisfaction also declined proportionately. (Please note that the term “fees” was used this year instead of “costs.”)**
- **There are positive trends in overall questions. In addition, there are lower absolute and relative (to 1998) levels of dissatisfaction, especially in overall satisfaction, where dissatisfaction is less than 20%. Focus should continue on those respondents in the neutral category.**



***Do Outcomes of the Process  
Impact Perceptions About Value  
and Overall Satisfaction?***

***(Comparing Total Respondents  
with Individual Inventors)***

# *Relationships Between Process Outcomes, Value, and Overall Satisfaction*

Since individual inventors pay for fees out-of-pocket, are their perceptions about outcomes and value different than the total sample overall (consisting mostly of law firms)?

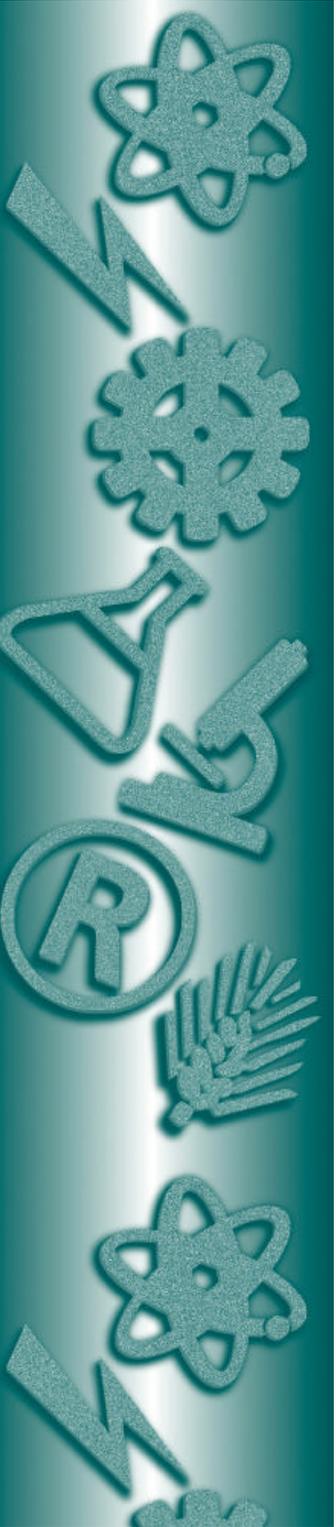
		<u>% Satisfied</u>	
		<u>C3P2 Good Value for Amount of Fees Paid</u>	<u>C9 Overall Satisfaction</u>
<u>For Respondents Satisfied with:</u>			
<b>C3OP1 Outcome met your objectives</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>60%</b>
	<b>Individual Inventor</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>C3OP2 Fairness of the final decision</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>58%</b>
	<b>Individual Inventor</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>C3OP3 Efficiency of the examination process</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>65%</b>
	<b>Individual inventor</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>59%</b>

## *Relationships Between Process Outcomes, Value, and Overall Satisfaction (cont.)*

Since individual inventors pay for fees out-of-pocket, are their perceptions about outcomes and value different than the total sample overall (consisting mostly of law firms)?

		<u>% Satisfied</u>	
		<u>C3P2 Good Value for Amount of Fees Paid</u>	<u>C9 Overall Satisfaction</u>
<b><u>For Respondents Dissatisfied with:</u></b>			
<b>C3OP1</b>	<b>Outcome met your objectives</b>		
	Total	8%	27%
	Individual Inventor	12%	23%
<b>C3OP2</b>	<b>Fairness of the final decision</b>		
	Total	9%	30%
	Individual Inventor	10%	17%
<b>C3OP3</b>	<b>Efficiency of the examination process</b>		
	Total	23%	31%
	Individual inventor	15%	14%

Satisfaction with outcomes has greater impact on overall satisfaction than satisfaction with value. The perceptions about value by the individual inventors are similar to the total population when they are satisfied with the outcome. However, when individual inventors are dissatisfied with the outcome, they are more negative about value than all respondents together.



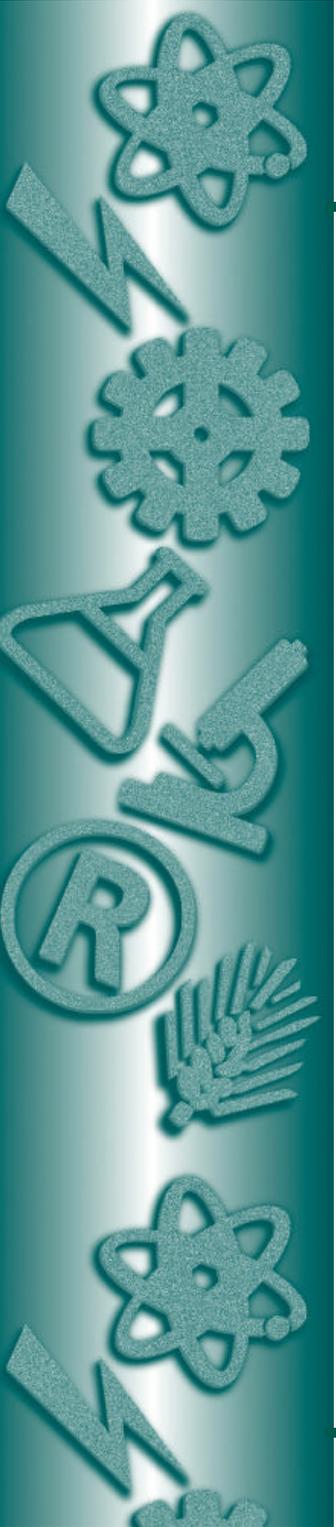
*How Do the  
Five Factors Relate  
to the Overall Questions?*

# Ranking of How Factors Relate to Overall Questions

Factor	Overall Questions		
	C9 Overall Satisfaction	C3P2 Good Value for Amount of Fees Paid	C3P1 Fees Paid for Patent Application
Customer Service	2*	2	3
Timeliness	5	3	2
Change in Service	3	4	4
Application and Examination Process	1	1	1
Problem Resolution	4	5	5
R <sup>2</sup> **	.551	.186	.112

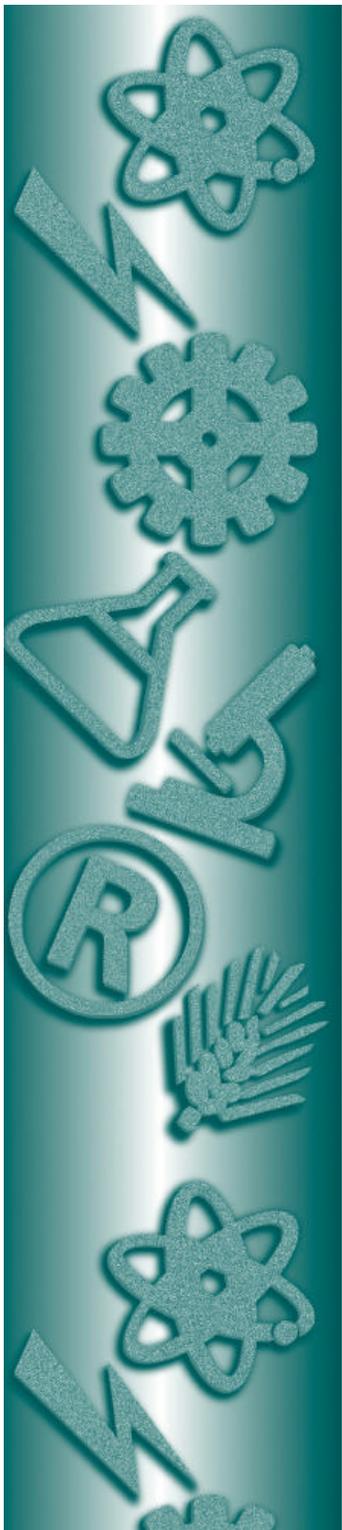
\* Numbers indicate rankings, with 1 being the most important predictor and 5 being the least important predictor of the outcome measure.

\*\* R<sup>2</sup> is an estimate of the proportion of the variance in each overall question accounted for by the factors. As an example: .551 or 55.1% of the variance in overall satisfaction is accounted for by the factors. (An R<sup>2</sup> value less than .30 indicates the factors, as a group, have low explanatory power (e.g., they do not do a very good job of predicting that question).



## *Impact of the Five Factors on Overall Questions – In Summary*

- **The five factors, as a group, are good predictors of overall satisfaction. They have an impact on overall satisfaction and they help to explain differences in overall satisfaction levels.**
- **The Application and Examination Process factor is the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction followed by the Customer Service factor**
- **All of the factors have minimal impact on perceptions about value and fees paid. That is, the factors do not help to explain differences in perceptions about value and fees paid, and none of the factors are good predictors of value and fees paid.**



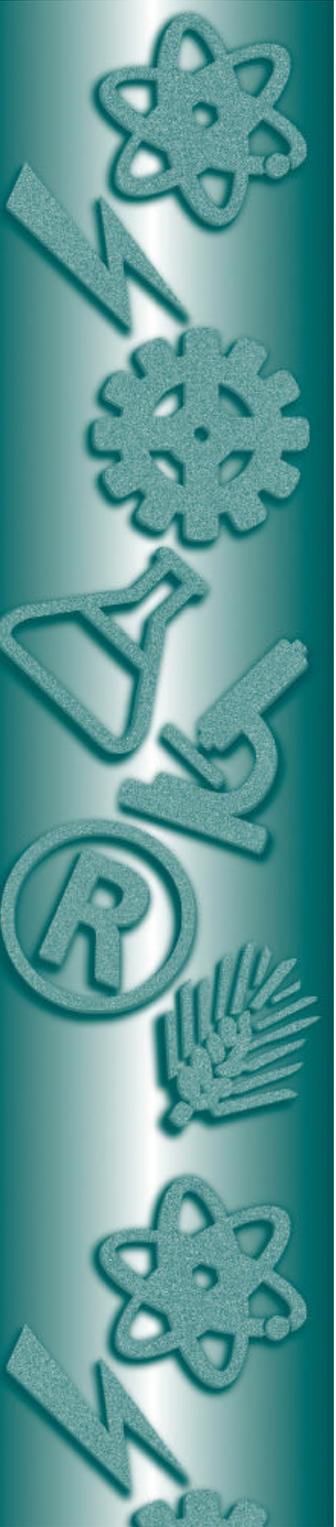
## *Key Drivers:*

*Questions That Have the  
Greatest Impact on Overall  
Satisfaction*

# *Key Driver Analysis*

**In order to assure that the key drivers are properly identified and prioritized, three key driver analyses were performed:**

- **Identification of key drivers separately for Service Standards and Patent Process items. This analysis is comparable to the 1998 key driver analysis.**
- **Key drivers overall, combining the Service Standard and Patent Process items (excluding problem resolution items)**
- **Key drivers overall, combining the Service Standard and Patent Process items, plus problem resolution items (the first two analyses did not include items on problem resolution)**



*Identification of Key Drivers  
Separately for Service Standards  
and Patent Process Items*

## *Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction – Separately by Service Standards and Patent Process (In Order of Impact)*

<u>Service Standards</u>		<u>% Satisfied</u>	<u>Patent Process</u>		<u>% Satisfied</u>
B4.	Clear written communications of position of examiners	63%	C3SR3.	Flexibility in trying to address your needs	51%
B8.	Match properly addressed faxes with file and deliver within 3 days	41%	C3OP3.	Efficiency of the examination process	51%
B2.	Direct you promptly to proper office or person	63%	C3OP1.	Outcome met your objectives	67%
B9.	Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt	41%	C3SC2.	Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service	51%
B10.	Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process	64%	C3T1.	Length of the application process	45%
B3.	Return phone calls within one business day	58%	C3SR2.	Prompt and helpful service	55%

**Examination quality, telephone and fax service, filing receipts, and specific aspects of customer service represent the priority areas.**

## *Comparison of 1999 Key Drivers to 1998 Key Drivers Service Standards*

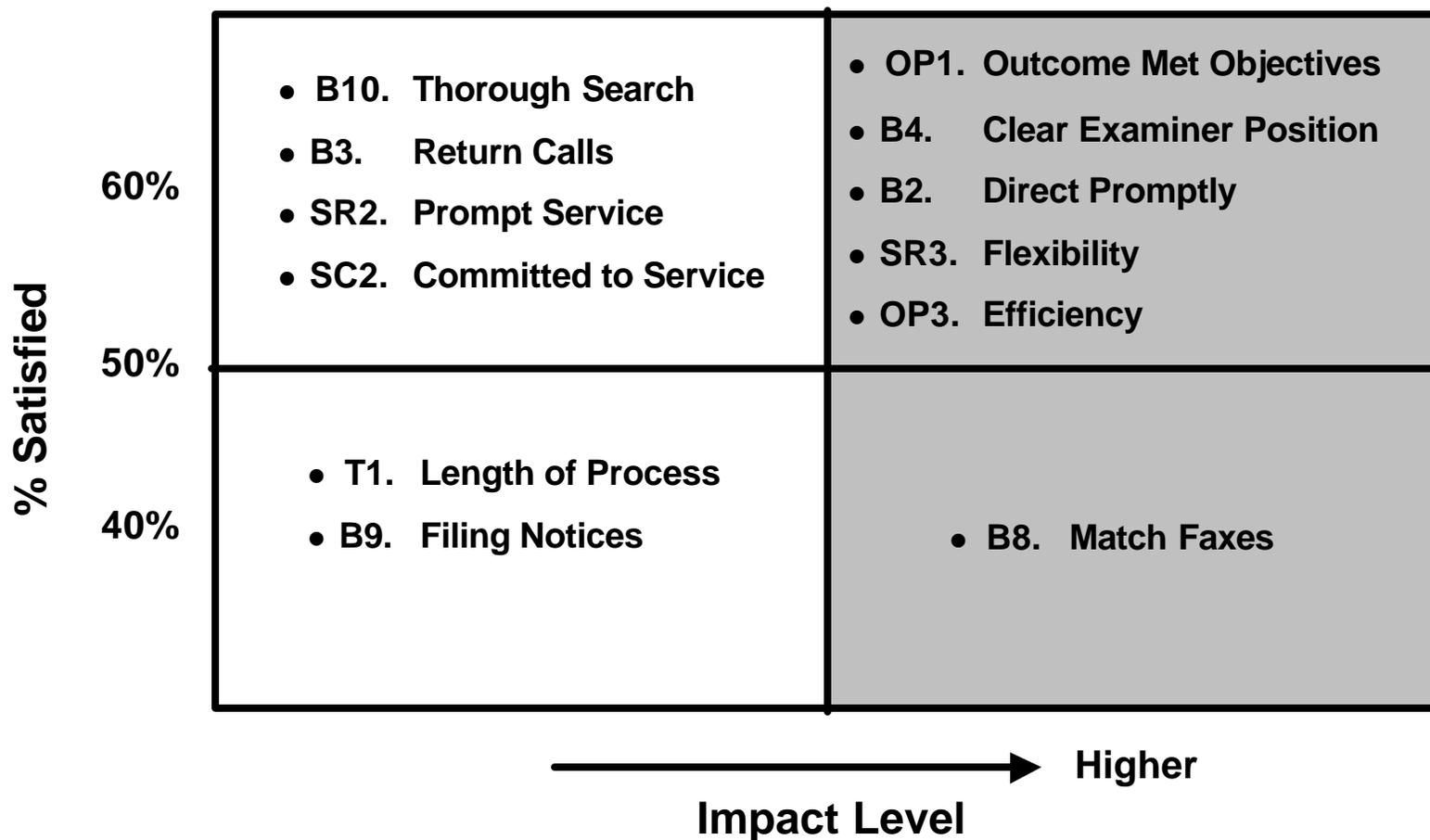
1998	1999	
<u>1998 Key Drivers</u>	<u>1999 Comparison</u>	<u>New This Year</u>
B12. Respond within 30 days to papers filed after allowance	B11. Not in top six	B8. Match properly addressed faxes with file and deliver within 3 days
B11. Conduct thorough search	B10. Key Driver	B9. Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt
B4. Clear written communications of position of examiners	B4. Key Driver	
B2. Direct you promptly to proper office/person	B2. Key Driver	
B3. Return calls within one business day	B3. Key Driver	
B6. Respond to status letters within 30 days	B5. Not a Key Driver	

## *Comparison of 1999 Key Drivers to 1998 Key Drivers (cont.) Patent Process*

1998	1999	
<u>1998 Key Drivers</u>	<u>1999 Comparison</u>	<u>New This Year</u>
C3AP2. Effort needed to prepare required information	-- Not asked on 1999 Survey	C3OP3. Efficiency of the examination process
C3SC1. Ability to provide accurate answers	C3SC1. Not a Key Driver	C3OP1. Outcome met your objectives
C3DP3. Quality of feedback provided	-- Not asked on 1999 Survey	C3SR2. Prompt and helpful service
C3SR3. Flexibility in trying to address your needs	C3SR3. Key Driver	
C3SC4. Genuinely committed to service	C3SC2. Key Driver	
C3T2. Issuance of product in timely manner	C3T1. Key Driver*	

\* Slight wording change from 1998. No footnote was used in 1999.

*Key Drivers – Separately for Service Standards and Patent Process Items  
Impact Level vs. % Satisfied*



**Priorities are faxes and filing receipts, followed by efficiency of the examination process and customer service commitment.**

## *Example: Impact of Timeliness Items on Overall Satisfaction and Customer Service*

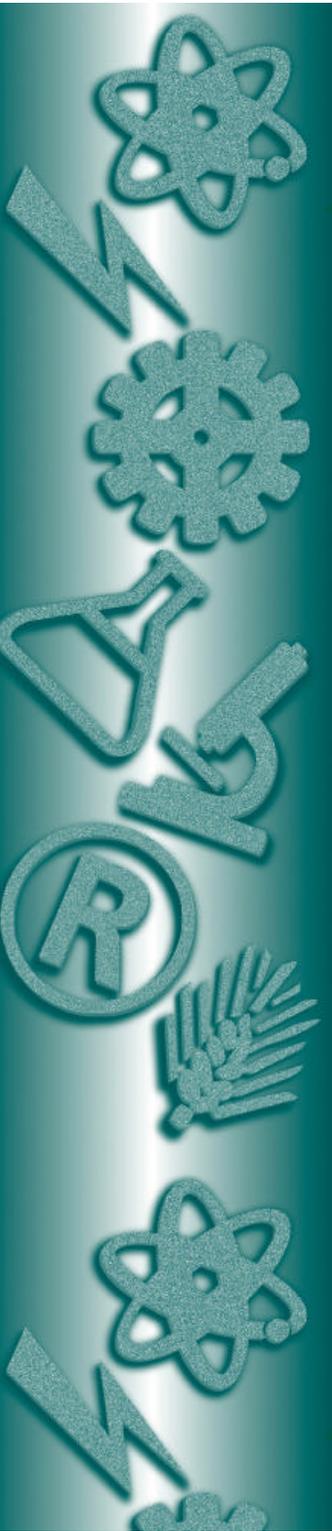
			<u>% Satisfied</u>	
			<u>C9.</u> Overall satisfaction	<u>C3SC2.</u> Genuinely committed to best service possible
B8.	Match properly addressed faxes with file and deliver within 3 days	Satisfied	79	70
		Dissatisfied	21	31
B2.	Direct you promptly to proper office or person	Satisfied	73	65
		Dissatisfied	18	20
B9.	Mail correct filing notices w/in 30 days of receipt	Satisfied	76	69
		Dissatisfied	33	33
B3.	Return phone calls within one business day	Satisfied	75	65
		Dissatisfied	21	27
C3T1.	Length of the application process	Satisfied	74	66
		Dissatisfied	35	37

Improving these timeliness key drivers significantly impacts customer perspectives on overall satisfaction and satisfaction with service commitment.

## *Example: Impact of Examination Process Items on Overall Satisfaction and Customer Service*

			<u>% Satisfied</u>	
			<u>C9.</u> Overall satisfaction	<u>C3SC2.</u> Genuinely committed to best service possible
B4.	Clear written communications of position of examiners	Satisfied	71	62
		Dissatisfied	18	20
B10.	Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process	Satisfied	70	62
		Dissatisfied	25	25
C3OP3.	Efficiency of the examination process	Satisfied	82	74
		Dissatisfied	19	23

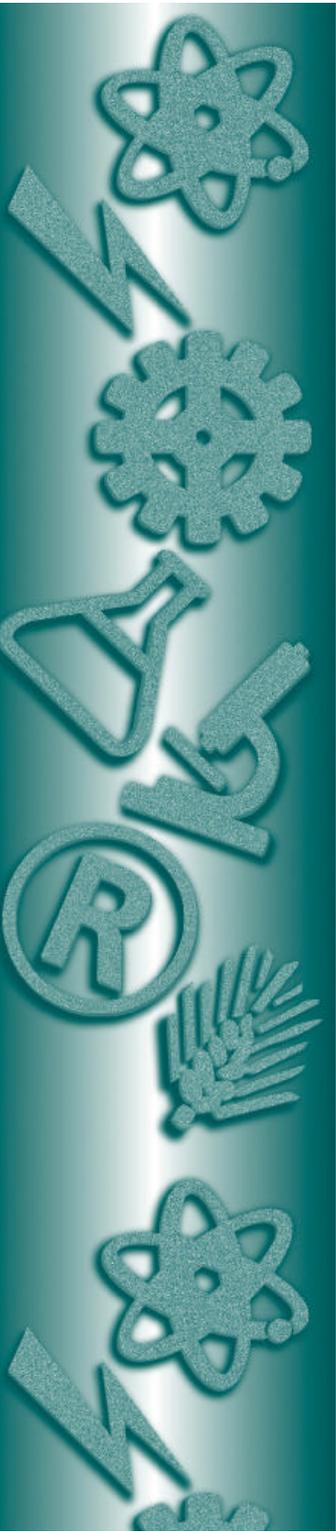
Improving examination quality and efficiency significantly impacts overall satisfaction and satisfaction with customer service commitment. Note the impact of examination process efficiency on overall satisfaction and satisfaction with customer service commitment.



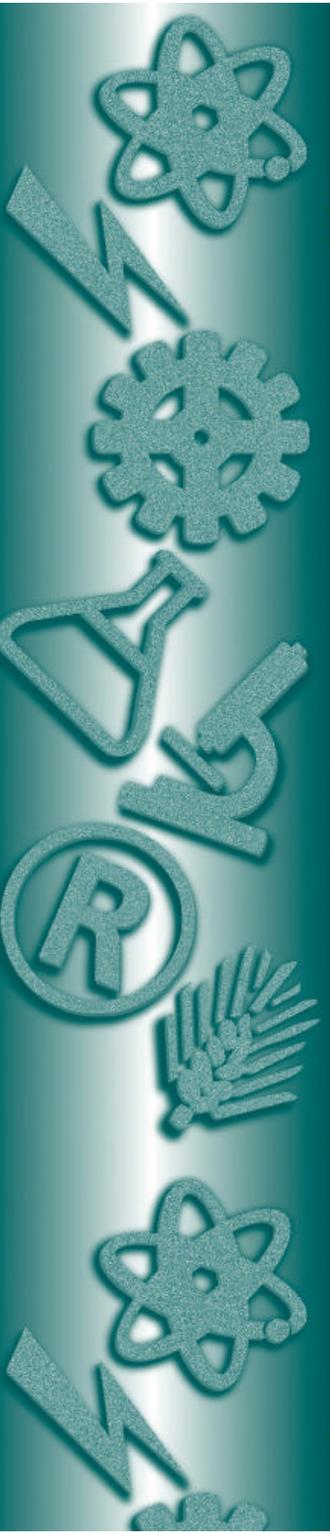
## ***Key Drivers – Separately by Service Standards and Patent Process – In Summary***

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- **For the Service Standards, examination quality, telephone service, fax delivery, and timely mailing of correct filing notices are the key drivers**
- **For the Patent Process, aspects of process outcomes, timely delivery of filing receipts, and customer-focused service are the key drivers**
- **Those key drivers that are below the 50% satisfied level include delivery of faxes and mailing correct filing notices in a timely manner. These are priority areas. This finding is supported by the write-in comments.**
- **Efficiency of the examination process and customer-focused service are just above the 50% satisfied level and should also be given attention. To better understand what items relate to these drivers, see the section on Creating Composite Ratings presented next in this report.**



***Key Drivers Overall, Combining  
the Service Standard and Patent  
Process Items (Excluding Problem  
Resolution Items)***

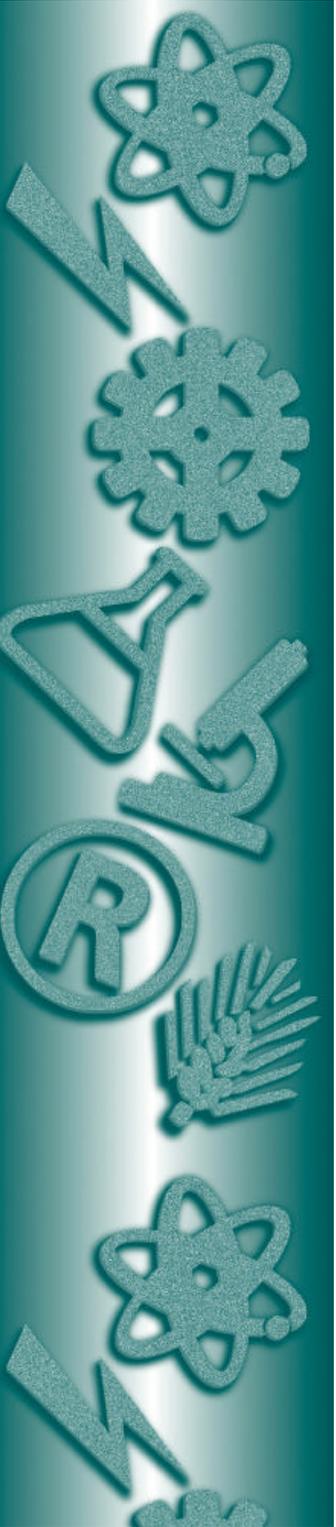


***Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction – All Items Combined,  
Excluding Problem Resolution Items  
(In Order of Impact)***

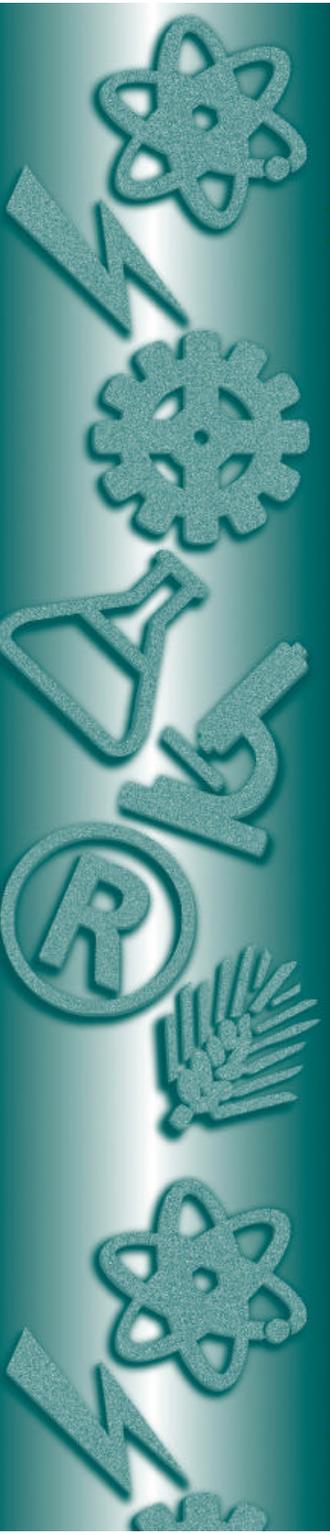
		<b><u>% Satisfied</u></b>
<b>C3OP1</b>	<b>Outcome met your objectives</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>C3SC2</b>	<b>Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>B4</b>	<b>Clear written communications of position of examiners</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>B3</b>	<b>Return phone calls within one business day</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>C3OP3</b>	<b>Efficiency of the examination process</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>B8</b>	<b>Match properly addressed faxes of Formal Amendments with file and deliver to examiner within 3 days</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>B2</b>	<b>Direct you promptly to proper office or person</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>B9</b>	<b>Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt</b>	<b>41%</b>

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**Note: C3OP3 and B8 have equal impact.**



***Key Drivers Overall, Combining  
All Items (Including Problem  
Resolution Items)***



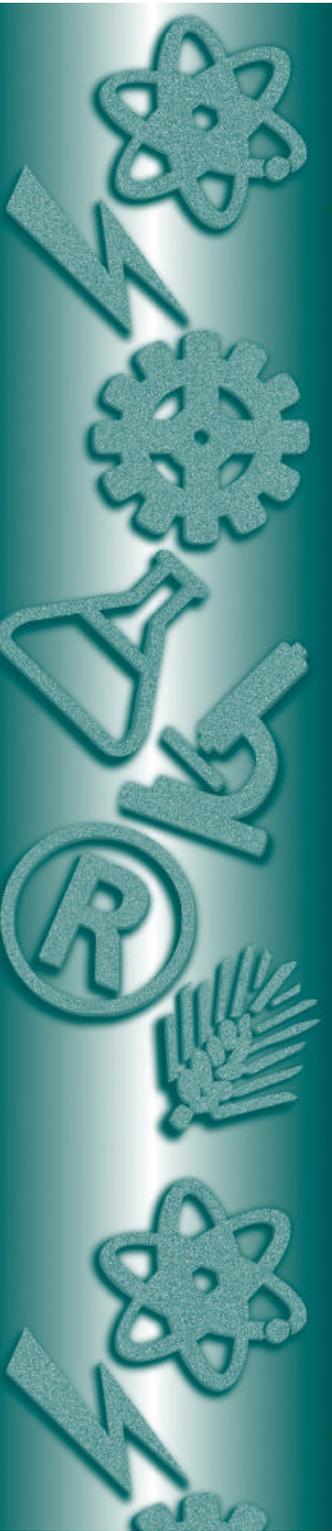
***Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction – All Items Combined,  
Including Problem Resolution Items  
(In Order of Impact)***

***Covering Only Respondents with Problems***

		<b><u>% Satisfied</u></b>
<b>C3OP1</b>	<b>Outcome met your objectives</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>C3SC2</b>	<b>Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>B8</b>	<b>Match properly addressed faxes of Formal Amendments with file and deliver to examiner within 3 days</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>B4</b>	<b>Clear written communications of position of examiners</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>C6a</b>	<b>Handling of delays</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>C3T1</b>	<b>Length of the application process</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>C6d</b>	<b>The way your problem or difficulty was handled</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>B3</b>	<b>Return telephone calls within one business day</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>C3OP3</b>	<b>Efficiency of the examination process</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>B2</b>	<b>Direct you promptly to the proper office or person</b>	<b>63%</b>

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**Note:** C6a and C3T1 have equal impact.



## *Overall Summary of the Three Key Driver Analyses*

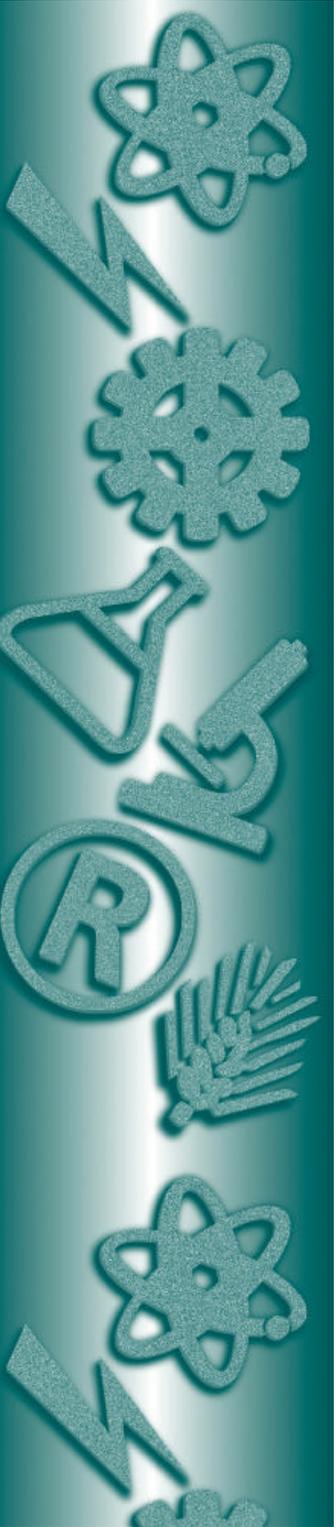
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**In reviewing all three Key Driver analyses, there is a consistent pattern of items:**

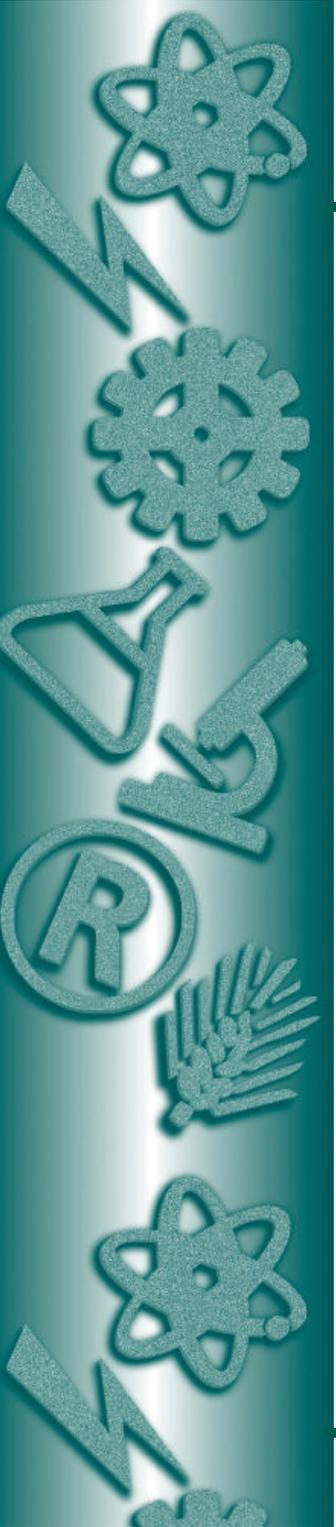
- ◆ **Examination quality (C3OP1, B4)**
- ◆ **Telephone service (B2, B3)**
- ◆ **Commitment to providing the best possible service (C3SC2)**
- ◆ **Delivery of faxes (B8)**
- ◆ **Filing receipts (B9, C3T1)**
- ◆ **Efficiency of the examination process (C3OP3)**

**And for those having problems (71% of respondents):**

- ◆ **Problem resolution (C6a, C6d)**

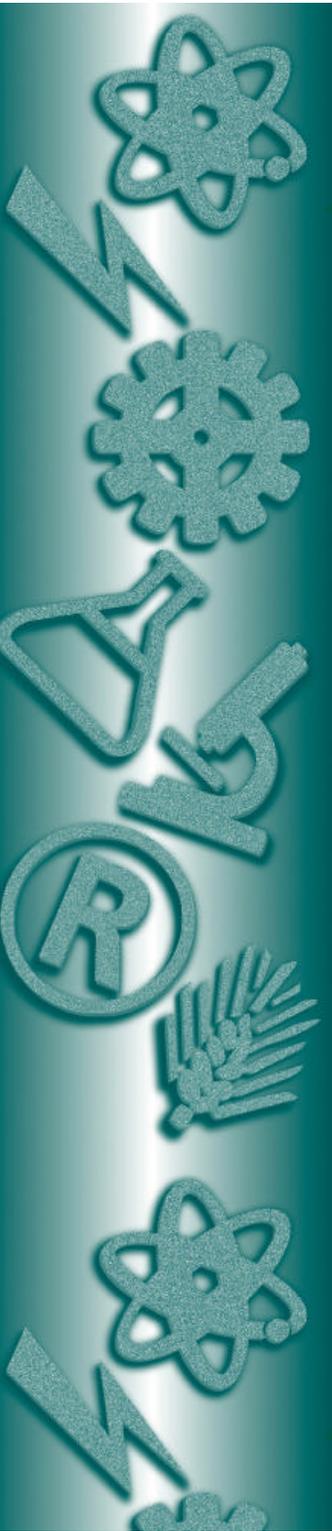


***Moving Customers From  
Neutral to Satisfied in  
Overall Satisfaction***



## *Moving Customers From Neutral to Satisfied in Overall Satisfaction*

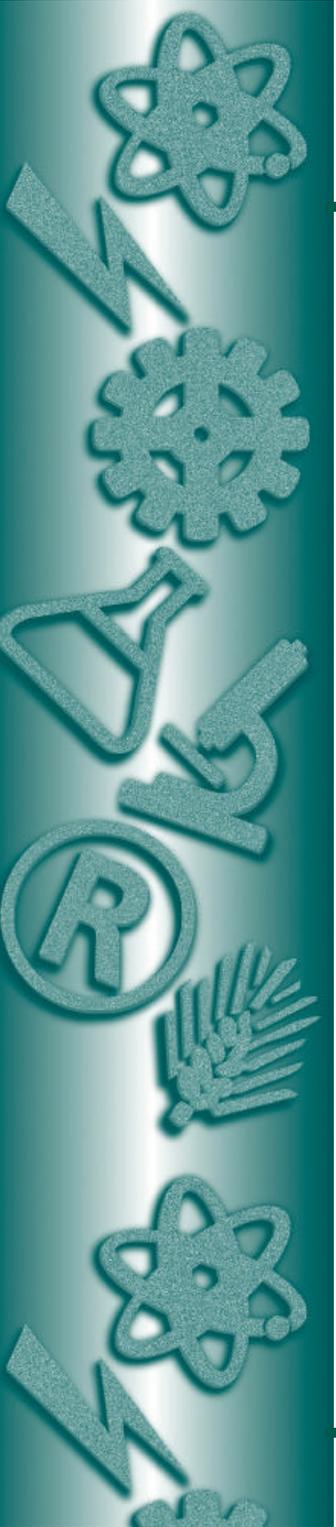
- **Since experience shows that it is easier to move customers from neutral to satisfied than from dissatisfied to satisfied, an analysis was done on those customers responding neutral to the overall satisfaction question (C9)**
- **It was determined how those responding neutral to the overall satisfaction question responded to the key driver items. This was compared with how those responding satisfied to the overall satisfaction questions responded to the key driver items.**
- **Those key driver items that had the biggest differences in percent satisfied between the neutral group and the satisfied group are presented next**



## ***Largest Differences Between Neutral and Satisfied Groups (In Order of Impact)***

		<b><u>% Difference in Satisfaction</u></b>
<b>C3OP3</b>	<b>Efficiency of the examination process</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>C3SR2</b>	<b>Prompt and helpful service</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>C3SR3</b>	<b>Flexibility in trying to address your needs</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>B2</b>	<b>Direct you promptly to the proper office or person</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>B3</b>	<b>Return telephone calls within one business day</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>C3OP1</b>	<b>Outcome met your objectives</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>C3SC2</b>	<b>Genuinely committed to providing the best possible service</b>	<b>38%</b>

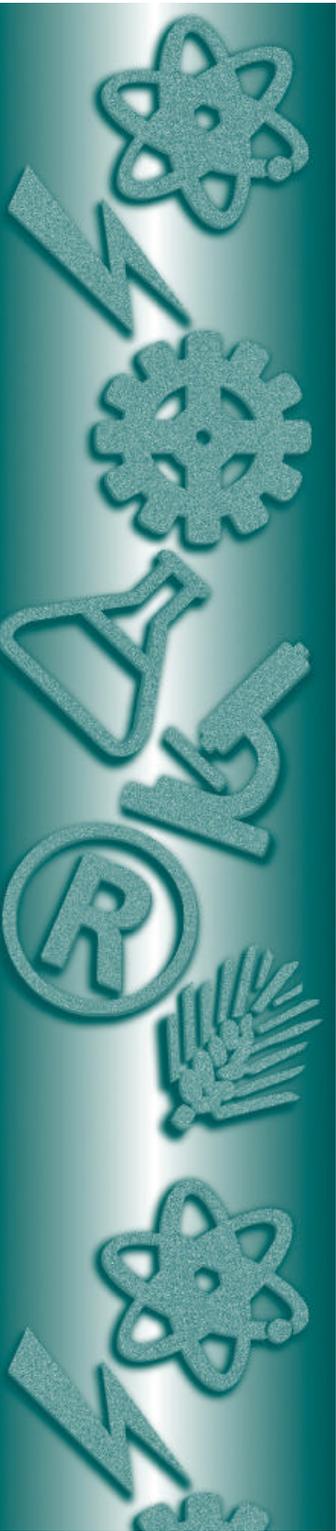
**Efficiency of the process, customer service (including telephone service), and process outcome have the biggest differences.**



## ***Moving Customers From Neutral to Satisfied in Overall Satisfaction – In Summary***

- **Those key driver items in which the neutral group had the lowest percent satisfied include:**
  - ◆ **Problem resolution (20%)**
  - ◆ **Matching and delivery of faxes (24%)**
  - ◆ **Mailing correct filing notices (27%)**
  - ◆ **Providing the best possible service (26%)**
  - ◆ **Efficiency of the examination process (28%)**

**Key areas in moving the neutral group to the satisfied group are overall customer service and efficiency of the examination process**



*Creating Composite Ratings  
to Better Understand  
Two Key Drivers*

# *Creating Composite Ratings*

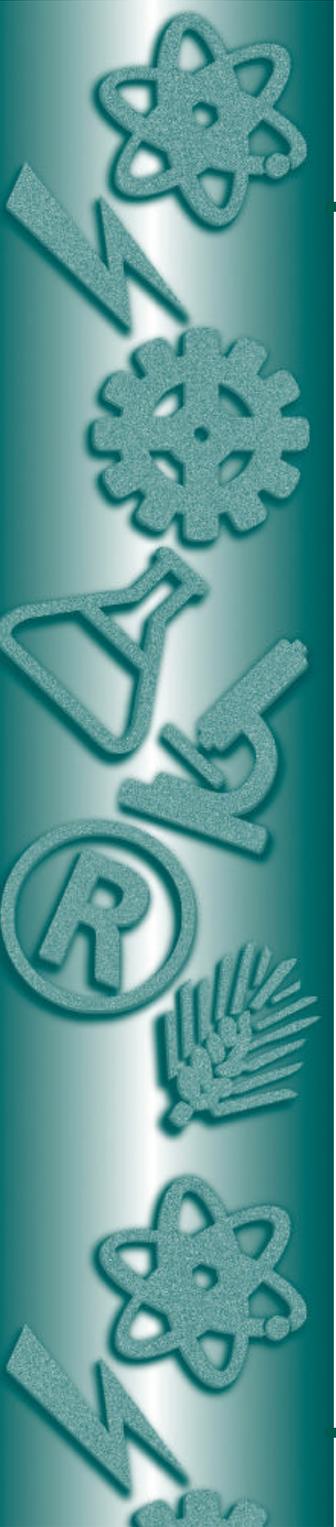
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**There are two key drivers which are broad in scope:**

**C3OP3. Examination process efficiency**

**C3SC2. PTO being genuinely committed to customer service**

**To better understand what survey participants mean when they respond to these two broad key driver questions, we identified those items that are strongly related to the two questions.**



## ***C3OP3. Efficiency of the Examination Process***

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**Those items that have the greatest relationship with perceptions about efficiency of the Patent Process are (in order of relationship):**

**C3OP2 Fairness of the final decision**

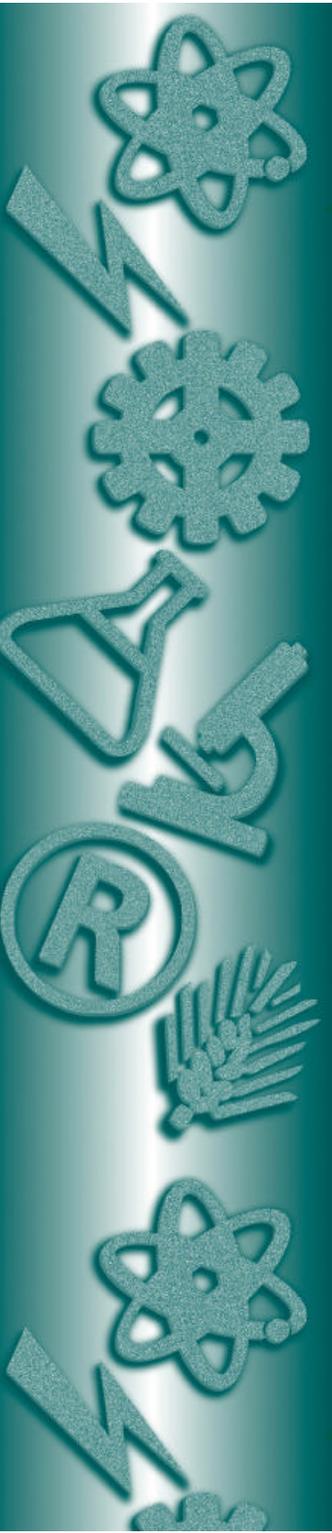
**C3OP1 Outcome met your objectives**

**C3T2 Length of process from filing to grant**

**B4 Clear written communications of position of examiners**

**B10 Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process**

**Fairness, timeliness, and examination quality help define examination process efficiency.**



## ***C3SC2. Genuinely Committed to Providing the Best Possible Service***

**Those items that have the greatest relationship with perceptions about PTO providing the best possible service are (in order of relationship):**

**C3SC1 Ability to provide accurate answers to questions**

**C3SR3 Flexibility in trying to address your needs**

**C3SR2 Prompt and helpful service**

**C3SR1 Assistance at a time convenient to you**

**B1 Treat you with courtesy each time you contact us**

**B2 Direct you promptly to the proper office or person**

**C6d The way your problem or difficulty was handled**

**These items help define the important aspects of customer service to the patent customers.**

# Creating Composite Ratings

## Composite Rating for Process Efficiency (B4, B10, C3T2, C3OP1, C3OP2)

■ % Dissatisfied   □ % Neutral   ■ % Satisfied



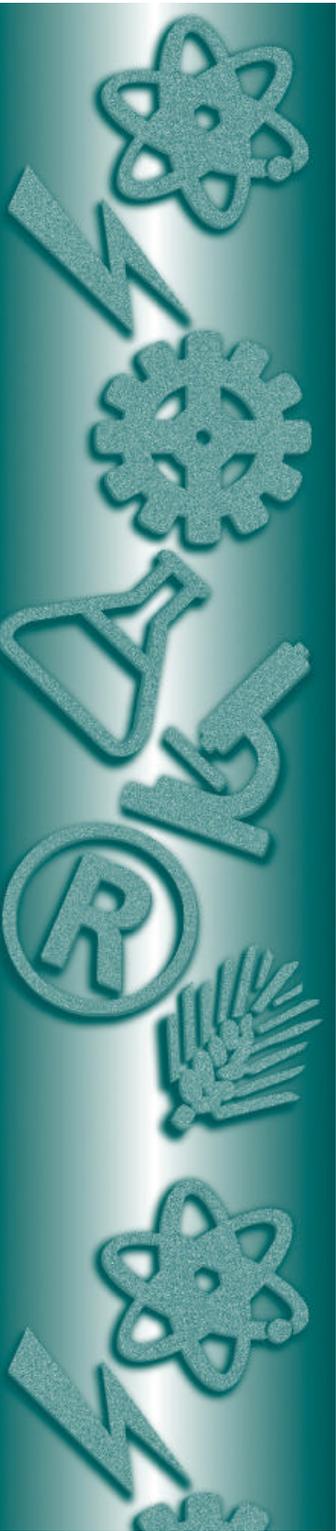
## Composite Rating for Customer Service (B1, B2, C3SC1, C3SR1, C3SR2, C3SR3, C6d)

■ % Dissatisfied   □ % Neutral   ■ % Satisfied



## *Creating Composite Ratings – In Summary*

- **It appears that efficiency of the examination process is strongly related to items on examination quality, timeliness of the process, and fairness of the final decision. This set of items could be called “process efficiency/effectiveness.”**
- **Perceptions about PTO being genuinely committed to providing the best possible service is strongly related to some customer service items (providing accurate answers, flexibility, prompt/helpful service, courtesy, and problem resolution). This set of items could be called “customer service.”**
- **PTO should consider using these two sets of items as composite ratings to track customer-focused performance (efficiency/effectiveness and customer service)**



# *Demographic Differences*

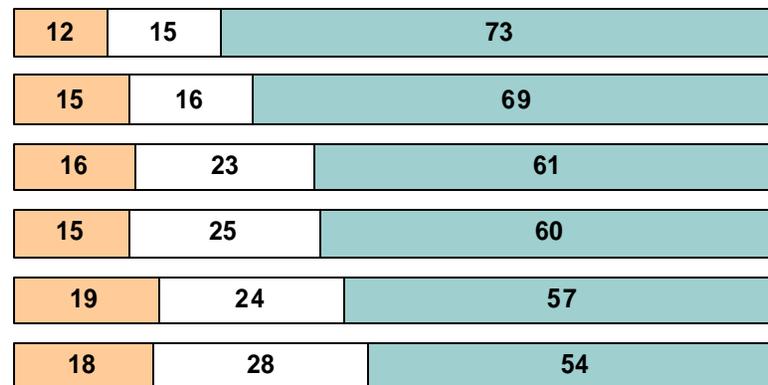
# Overall Satisfaction – Differences by Demographics\* (Ranked by % Satisfied)

## A1. Affiliation

Federal Government Agency (n=43)  
 Individual Inventor (n=256)\*\*  
 Other (n=121)  
 Small Business (n=178)  
 Large Business (n=376)  
 Law Firm (n=1,447)

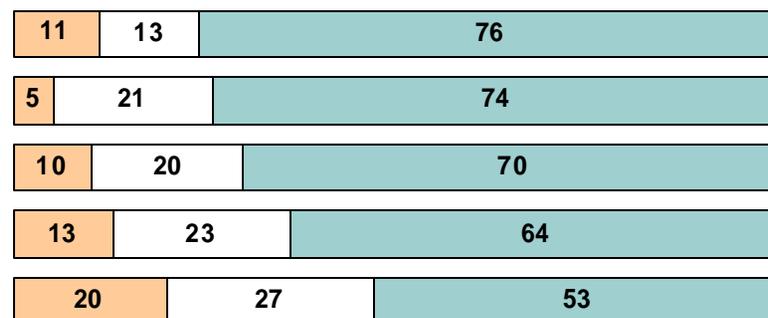
### Overall Satisfaction

□ % Dissatisfied   □ % Neutral   □ % Satisfied



## A2. Frequency of Contact

Only once (n=54)  
 Rarely (n=93)  
 Never (n=46)  
 Occasionally (n=430)  
 Often (n=1,677)



\* Demographics accounting for less than 1% are not shown.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.

## Overall Satisfaction – Differences by Demographics\* (cont.) (Ranked by % Satisfied)

### A3. Relationship with PTO

A one-time customer (n=62)\*\*

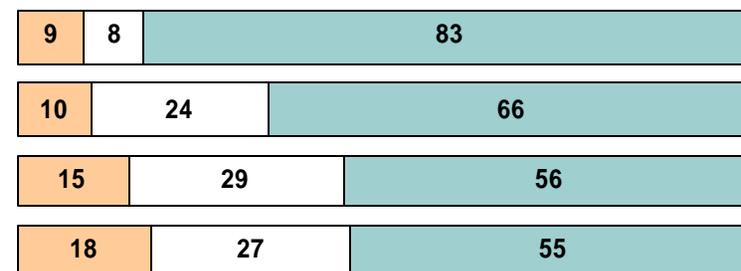
An occasional customer (n=149)

A frequent, but not continuous customer  
(n=150)

A continuous customer (n=1,911)

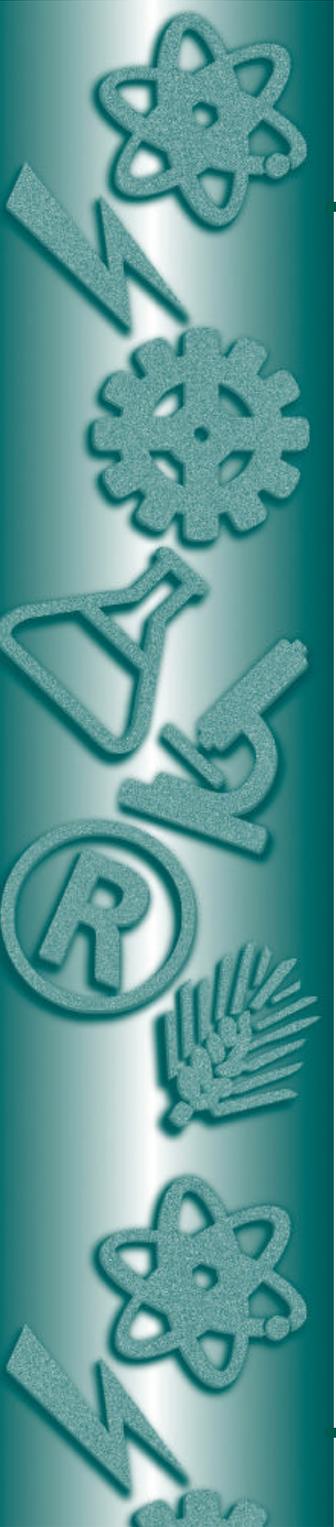
#### Overall Satisfaction

■ % Dissatisfied    □ % Neutral    ■ % Satisfied



\* Demographics accounting for less than 1% are not shown.

\*\* Numbers in parentheses are unweighted N's for 1999 survey results.



## *Demographic Differences in Overall Satisfaction – In Summary*

- **Law firms and large businesses have the lowest levels of overall satisfaction, while individual inventors and federal agencies have the highest levels (there were only 43 federal agency respondents). Levels of dissatisfaction for all affiliations were below 20%.**
- **The more frequent the contact, the less the overall satisfaction levels. There are differences of 10% or more between often and occasionally and between occasionally and rarely.**
- **One-time and occasional customers have higher levels of overall satisfaction than frequent and continuous customers**
- **Levels of overall dissatisfaction are low across all demographic groups**

## *Frequency of Contact During the Year, by Affiliation*

### Ranked by Most Frequent Contact (A2)

Affiliation (A1)	% Often	% Occasionally	% Rarely	% Only Once	% Never
Law Firm	83	13	3	1	0
Large Business	79	17	4	0	0
Other*	68	23	5	3	1
Federal Government	66	31	0	3	0
University or College	60	35	5	0	0
Small Business	44	38	8	6	4
Individual Inventor	25	41	10	11	13

\* Other affiliations specified were mostly Patent Agents and Sole Practitioners.

**Law firms and large businesses have the most frequent contact and individual inventors and small businesses had the least frequent contact.**

## Demographic Differences by the 5 Factors

Overall Patent Data*	<u>Average % Satisfied</u>				<u>Avg. % Better</u>
	Application & Examination Process	Customer Service	Timeliness	Problem Resolution	Change in Service
<b>A1. Affiliation</b>					
Individual Inventor	<b>73 **</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>56</b>	31	35
Small Business	67	64	44	<b>34</b>	32
Other***	64	61	36	23	31
Federal Government Agency	72	65	52	30	<b>41</b>
Large Business	65	60	45	28	35
Law Firm	66	60	44	29	28
<b>A2. Frequency of Contact</b>					
Never	74	64	47	--	32
Only once	<b>77</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>38</b>	32
Rarely	74	67	55	34	32
Occasionally	74	68	51	33	<b>37</b>
Often	64	59	43	28	28

\* Demographics accounting for less than 1% are not shown.

\*\* Numbers in bold represent the high % Satisfaction or % Better for the factor.

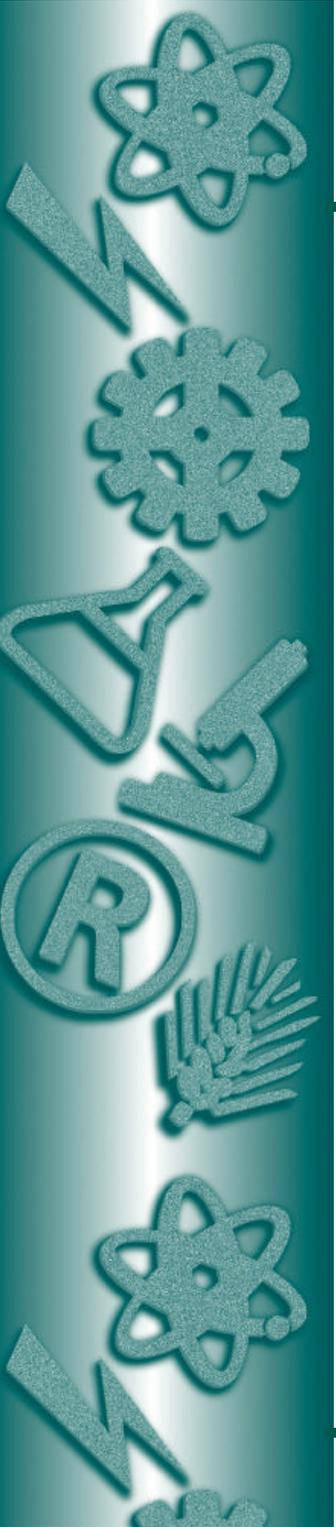
\*\*\* Other affiliations specified were mostly Sole Practitioners and Patent Agents.

## Demographic Differences by the 5 Factors (cont.)

Overall Patent Data*	Application & Examination Process	Average % Satisfied			Avg. % Better
		Customer Service	Timeliness	Problem Resolution	Change in Service
<b>A3. Relationship with PTO</b>					
A one-time customer	<b>80 **</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>42</b>	--
An occasional customer	75	69	53	32	<b>33</b>
A frequent, but not continuous customer	68	66	48	33	<b>33</b>
A continuous customer	65	60	44	29	29

\* Demographics accounting for less than 1% are not shown.

\*\* Numbers in bold represent the high % Satisfaction or % Better for the factor.



## *Demographic Differences by Factors – In Summary*

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- **Except for the Change in Service factor, large businesses and law firms are among the least satisfied. For the Change in Service factor, law firms were the least positive about service being better.**
- **The individual inventors are the most positive on the Application and Examination Process, Customer Service, and Timeliness factors. Small businesses are the most positive on the Problem Resolution factor.**
- **For the Change in Service factor, federal agencies (2% of the sample) were the most positive followed by individual inventors and large businesses. This is the only factor where there was a difference between law firms and large businesses. Large businesses were more positive about service being better than in previous filings.**
- **Those customers that contacted PTO only once over the past year are the most satisfied on all factors except for Change in Service. Those that contacted PTO occasionally during the year are the most positive about service being better. Those that contacted PTO often are the least positive across all factors.**
- **The longer the relationship with PTO, the less positive customers are across all factors**

## *Demographic Differences by Factors – In Summary (cont.)*

- For the most part, demographic differences followed the same pattern as last year. Some changes from last year include:
  - ◆ Federal agencies are more positive across the factors this year compared to last year
  - ◆ There is a large gap this year in satisfaction with Timeliness between individual inventors and small businesses, with small businesses being much less satisfied. Last year they were about the same.
  - ◆ The one-time and occasional customers are more positive about Timeliness than last year. Last year their perceptions about Timeliness were lower than the frequent and continuous customers.
- In reviewing the differences, remember that around 80% of law firms and large businesses have frequent contact with PTO throughout the year, while only 25% of individual inventors have frequent contact
- The demographic differences again show that there are two distinct customer segments:
  - ◆ Law firms/large businesses and individual inventors/small businesses

# Selected Key Driver Questions by Customer Segment

## Two Distinct Customer Segments – Selected Key Driver Questions

**C3SC2. Genuinely committed to providing best possible service**

■ % Dissatisfied   □ % Neutral   ■ % Satisfied

Large Business/Law Firms

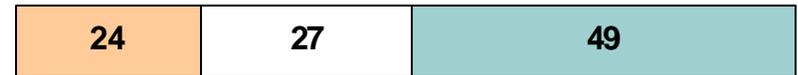


Small Business/Individual Inventors



**C3OP3. Efficiency of the examination process**

Large Business/Law Firms



Small Business/Individual Inventors



Differences of this type between the two customer segments are typical throughout the survey items. Recall that there is a 15% difference in overall satisfaction between individual inventors and law firms.

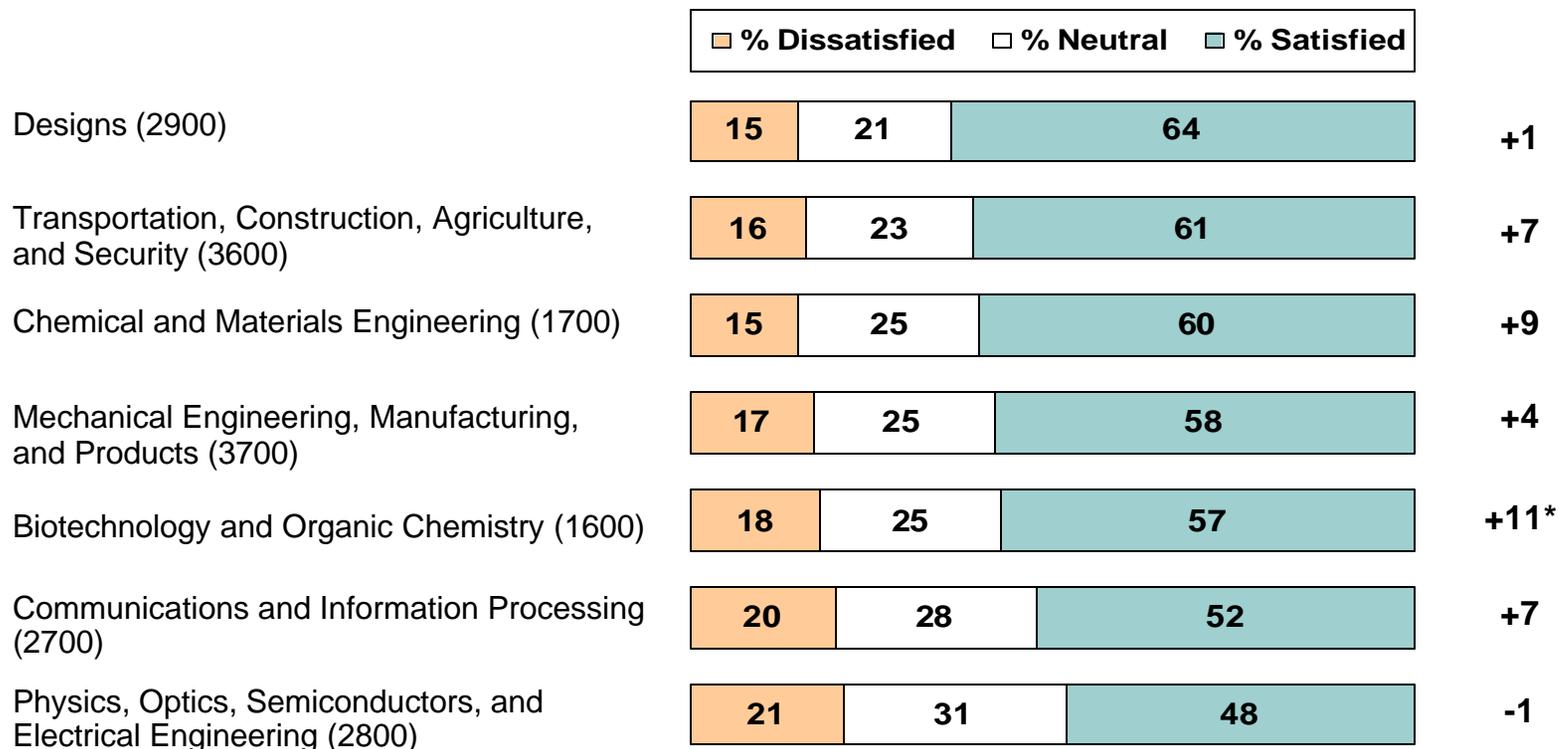


# *Results by Technology Area*

## *Differences in Overall Satisfaction by Technology Area (Ranked by % Satisfied)*

**C9. Considering all of your experiences with the PTO patent process, how satisfied are you overall?**

**% Change in Satisfaction from 1998**



\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

**Four of the technology areas showed improvements of 5% or more compared to 1998 levels. Physics had a slight decline. Beside Designs, there is a range of 13% between the lowest and highest levels of satisfaction among the other technology areas.**

## *Selected Key Driver Questions by Technology Area (Ranked by % Satisfied)*

<b>B10.</b>	<b>Conduct a thorough search during patent examination process</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Dissatisfied <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Neutral <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #a0d0d0; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Satisfied			<b>% Change in Satisfaction from 1998</b>
	Designs (2900)	11	16	73	0
	Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	15	19	66	+8
	Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	15	19	66	+9
	Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	13	22	65	+5
	Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	16	22	62	+3
	Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	17	21	62	+13*
	Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	21	22	57	+10
<b>B3.</b>	<b>Return calls within one business day</b>				
	Designs (2900)	22	15	63	+8
	Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	23	15	62	+11
	Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	20	19	61	+11
	Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	21	20	59	+11*
	Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	27	16	57	+9
	Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	28	18	54	+10
	Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	28	22	50	+5

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

## *Selected Key Driver Questions by Technology Area (cont.) (Ranked by % Satisfied)*

<b>B4.</b>	<b>Clear written communications of position of examiners</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Dissatisfied <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #fff; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Neutral <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Satisfied	<b>% Change in Satisfaction from 1998</b>			
	Designs (2900)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12%; text-align: center;">12</td> <td style="width: 16%; text-align: center;">16</td> <td style="width: 72%; text-align: center;">72</td> </tr> </table>	12	16	72	+2
12	16	72				
	Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">15</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">20</td> <td style="width: 65%; text-align: center;">65</td> </tr> </table>	15	20	65	+8
15	20	65				
	Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 17%; text-align: center;">17</td> <td style="width: 21%; text-align: center;">21</td> <td style="width: 62%; text-align: center;">62</td> </tr> </table>	17	21	62	+5
17	21	62				
	Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 21%; text-align: center;">21</td> <td style="width: 17%; text-align: center;">17</td> <td style="width: 62%; text-align: center;">62</td> </tr> </table>	21	17	62	+5
21	17	62				
	Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 16%; text-align: center;">16</td> <td style="width: 23%; text-align: center;">23</td> <td style="width: 61%; text-align: center;">61</td> </tr> </table>	16	23	61	+7
16	23	61				
	Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 18%; text-align: center;">18</td> <td style="width: 24%; text-align: center;">24</td> <td style="width: 58%; text-align: center;">58</td> </tr> </table>	18	24	58	+11
18	24	58				
	Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 21%; text-align: center;">21</td> <td style="width: 21%; text-align: center;">21</td> <td style="width: 58%; text-align: center;">58</td> </tr> </table>	21	21	58	+10
21	21	58				
<b>B8.</b>	<b>Match properly addressed faxes with file and deliver within 3 days</b>					
	Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 19%; text-align: center;">19</td> <td style="width: 37%; text-align: center;">37</td> <td style="width: 44%; text-align: center;">44</td> </tr> </table>	19	37	44	+12
19	37	44				
	Designs (2900)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 29%; text-align: center;">29</td> <td style="width: 27%; text-align: center;">27</td> <td style="width: 44%; text-align: center;">44</td> </tr> </table>	29	27	44	+6
29	27	44				
	Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 21%; text-align: center;">21</td> <td style="width: 36%; text-align: center;">36</td> <td style="width: 43%; text-align: center;">43</td> </tr> </table>	21	36	43	+10
21	36	43				
	Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 34%; text-align: center;">34</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">25</td> <td style="width: 41%; text-align: center;">41</td> </tr> </table>	34	25	41	+15*
34	25	41				
	Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 29%; text-align: center;">29</td> <td style="width: 31%; text-align: center;">31</td> <td style="width: 40%; text-align: center;">40</td> </tr> </table>	29	31	40	+7
29	31	40				
	Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 34%; text-align: center;">34</td> <td style="width: 27%; text-align: center;">27</td> <td style="width: 39%; text-align: center;">39</td> </tr> </table>	34	27	39	+9
34	27	39				
	Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 34%; text-align: center;">34</td> <td style="width: 29%; text-align: center;">29</td> <td style="width: 37%; text-align: center;">37</td> </tr> </table>	34	29	37	+2
34	29	37				

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

## *Selected Key Driver Questions by Technology Area (cont.) (Ranked by % Satisfied)*

B2. <b>Direct you promptly to proper office or person</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Dissatisfied <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #d9d9d9; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Neutral <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #80c0c0; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Satisfied			% Change in Satisfaction from 1998
Designs (2900)	15	15	70	+9
Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	16	18	66	+19*
Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	20	16	64	+12*
Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	14	23	63	+9
Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	16	21	63	+16*
Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	17	20	63	+15*
Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	21	19	60	+6
B9. <b>Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt</b>				
Designs (2900)	31	18	51	**
Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	32	20	48	**
Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	37	20	43	**
Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	40	19	41	**
Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	37	23	40	**
Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	39	25	36	**
Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	44	24	32	**

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

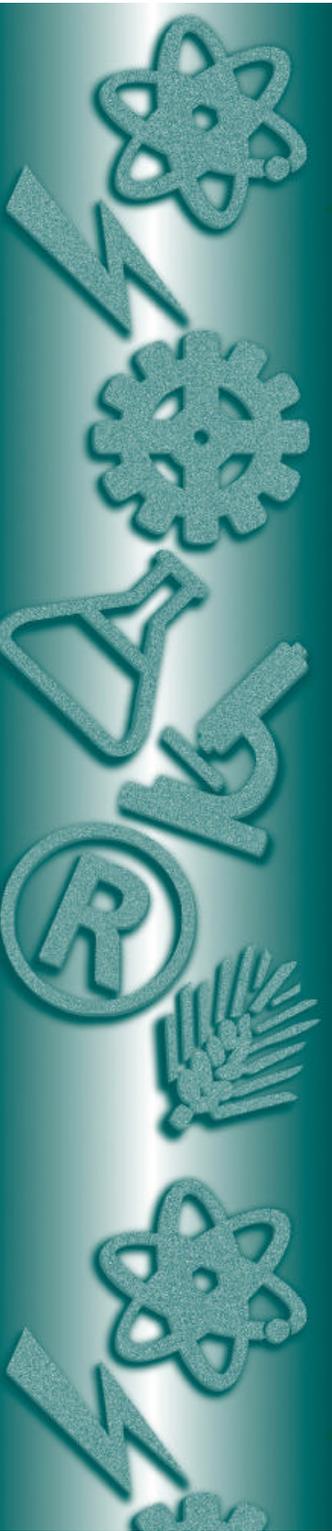
\*\* Standard changed from 19 days in 1998 and is not comparable to 1999 question.

## *Selected Key Driver Questions by Technology Area (cont.) (Ranked by % Satisfied)*

<b>C3SR3. Flexibility in trying to address your needs</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span> % Dissatisfied <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #fff; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Neutral <span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;"></span> % Satisfied			% Change in Satisfaction from 1998
Designs (2900)	19	27	54	-2
Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	21	25	54	+11*
Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	19	29	52	+9
Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	20	29	51	+5
Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	21	29	50	+12*
Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	22	28	50	+8
Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	28	25	47	+6
<b>C3OP3. Efficiency of the examination process</b>				
Designs (2900)	19	23	58	**
Trnsp., Constr., Agric., & Security (3600)	22	23	55	**
Mech. Eng., Manufact., & Products (3700)	19	29	52	**
Chem. & Mtrls. Eng. (1700)	22	29	49	**
Biotech. & Organic Chem. (1600)	26	26	48	**
Physics, Optics, etc. (2800)	29	25	46	**
Comm. & Info. Proc. (2700)	30	25	45	**

\* Percent change from 1998 to 1999 is statistically significant.

\*\* This question not asked in 1998.

A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the slide, featuring a teal-to-white gradient. It contains several white, embossed-style icons: a lightning bolt, an atom, a gear, a flask, a registered trademark symbol (R), a hand holding a pen, and another atom.

## *Differences Between Technology Areas*

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- **The Designs area continues to show the highest levels of satisfaction across most of the survey items**
- **However, among the other 6 technology areas, there are several items that have differences of 9% or more in percent satisfied**

## *Differences Between Technology Areas\**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Highest % Satisfied</b>	<b>Technology Area</b>	<b>Lowest % Satisfied</b>	<b>Technology Area</b>
<b>B3. Return telephone calls within 1 business day</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>2800</b>
<b>B5. Respond to status letters within 30 days of receipt</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>3600 + 3700</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>2800</b>
<b>B6. Disseminate info on changes before effective date</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>3600</b>
<b>B7. Deliver faxes within 1 business day of receipt</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>1700</b>
<b>B9. Mail correct filing notices within 30 days of receipt</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>3600</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>2800</b>
<b>B10. Conduct thorough search</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>1700 + 3700</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>2700</b>
<b>B11. Respond within 30 days to papers filed after allowance</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>2900 + 3700</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>2700</b>
<b>C3OP3. Efficiency of examination process</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>3600</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>2700</b>
<b>C3SR2. Prompt and helpful service</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>1700</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>2800</b>
<b>C9. Overall satisfaction</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>3600</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>2800</b>

\* Excluding the Designs (2900) area.

## Differences Between Technology Areas (cont.)

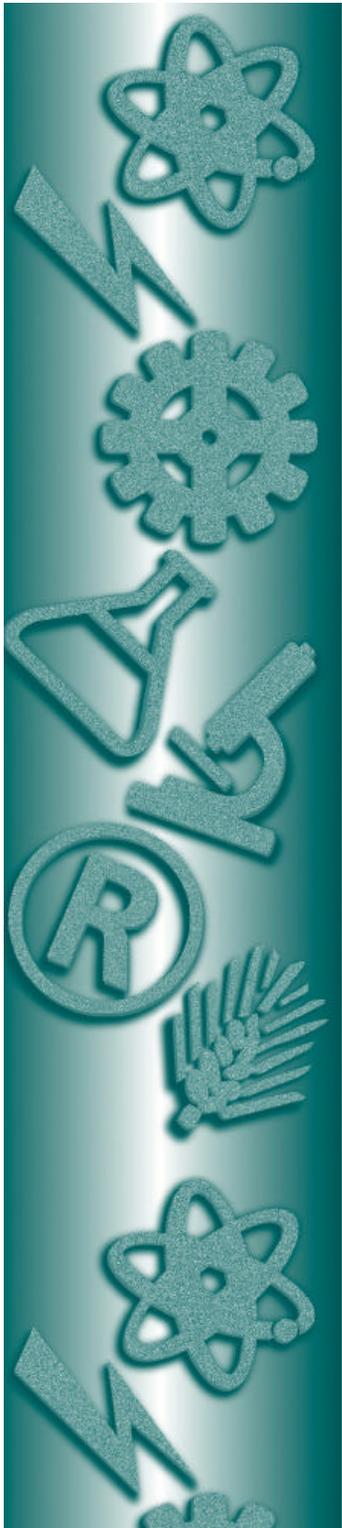
- There are two other areas with notable differences.

**C4. Have you experienced any problems or difficulties with PTO services over the past year?**

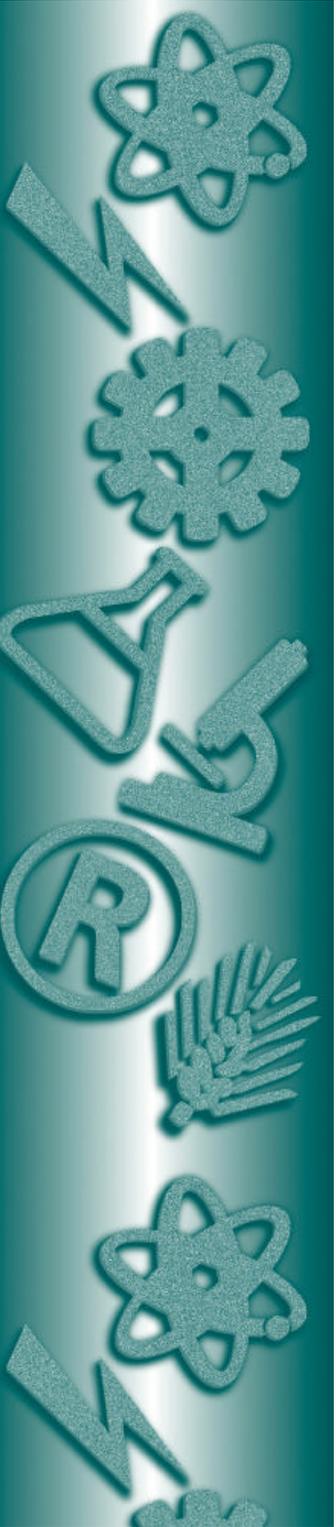
<u>Highest % No</u>	<u>Technology Area</u>	<u>Lowest % No</u>	<u>Technology Area</u>
35%	2900 + 3600	24%	2800

**C8e. Change in proactive individualized service compared to previous filings?**

<u>Highest % Better</u>	<u>Technology Area</u>	<u>Lowest % Better</u>	<u>Technology Area</u>
43%	1600	31%	3600



# *Summary of Qualitative Findings*



*Summary of  
Open-Ended Comments*

# *Methods and Procedures*

- Respondents were asked for their positive and negative feedback about PTO services, experiences, etc.
- Respondents were asked if they had any recommendations for improvements at the PTO
- This year respondents were also asked to describe their most frequently encountered problems
- All responses were transcribed and are presented verbatim in Appendix H
- Project staff reviewed all responses and for each question developed categories which summarized the content of the responses
- Responses could be placed under more than one category depending on content
- 76% of respondents gave a response to at least one open-ended item (Section B, C7, or Section D)

## *Overview of Open-Ended Comments*

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- **This year, 12% more respondents wrote comments compared to last year (76% vs. 64%)**
- **Those who responded were very interested in being heard and expressing their opinions**
- **The qualitative findings support quantitative results**

## ***QUESTION D1***

***What would you say particularly pleased you about the way your patent application was handled?***

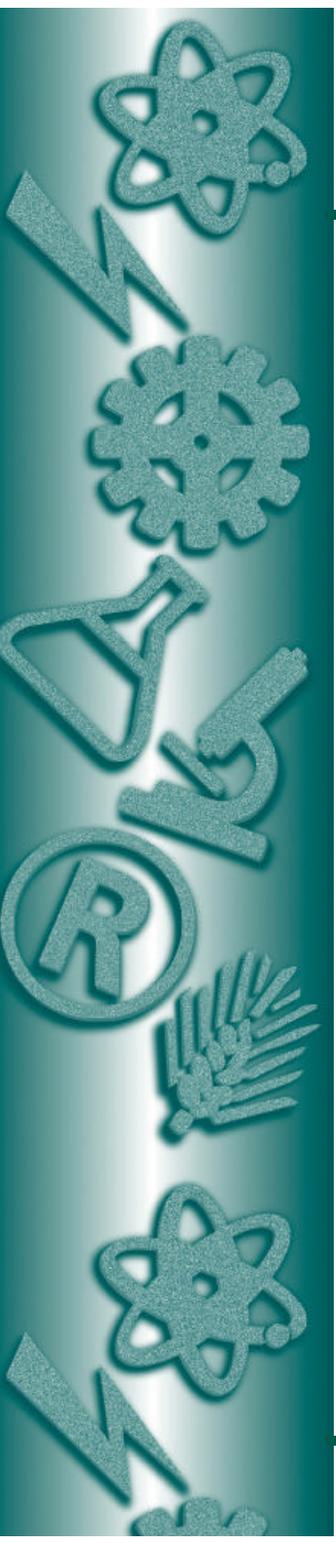
### **Percent in Category\***

### **Responses were coded into 14 categories:**

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>30%</b>  | ● <b>Customer Service Orientation / Staff Competence</b>                     |
| <b>27%</b>  | ● <b>Searches / Amendments / Proactive Attitude of Examiner</b>              |
| <b>14%</b>  | ● <b>Communications and Interviews</b>                                       |
| <b>9%</b>   | ● <b>Timeliness / Responsiveness</b>   |
| <b>6%</b>   | ● <b>Outcome of Process</b>  |
| <b>4%</b>   | ● <b>Office Actions and First Actions</b>                                    |
| <b>4%</b>   | ● <b>Searches</b>  |
| <b>3%</b>   | ● <b>Organization of Process and Administration of Paperwork</b>             |
| <b>2%</b>   | ● <b>Problem Resolution</b>  |
| <b>2%</b>   | ● <b>Improvements in Process</b>   |
| <b>1%</b>   | ● <b>Filing Receipts</b>   |
| <b>1%</b>   | ● <b>Systems and Technology</b>  |
| <b>0.3%</b> | ● <b>Costs</b>   |
| <b>15%</b>  | ● <b>Not Applicable (i.e., irrelevant to question or wrote “no comment”)</b> |

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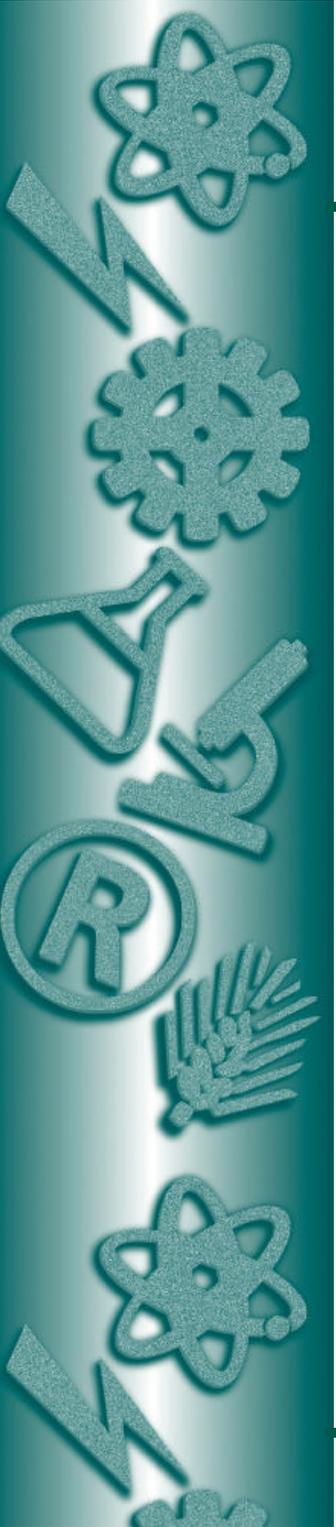
\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.



***D1: What would you say particularly pleased you about the way your patent application was handled?***

**Some Verbatim Comments:**

- **“Examiners are being more proactive and more willing to communicate by telephone and facsimile which can greatly help clarify issues and advance prosecution.”**
- **“Receipt post cards and filing receipts returned more promptly but errors still exist.”**
- **“Less delays from payment of issue fee and formal drawings to actual receipt of patent.”**
- **“Examiners being helpful in explaining rejections and in considering proposed claim amendments in telephone interviews.”**
- **“We file about 50 patent applications per year. The procedure has been improved in many areas, e.g., time frame start-to-finish. The quality of issuing patents seems to be better. Patent applicants are often more satisfied with results because of more prompt action by patent examiners.”**



## ***D1: Verbatim Comments (cont.)***

- **“After examiner makes his search and states his rejection basis, he offers suggestions of areas, words, phrases, or ways to overcome the rejection or make claims allowable.”**
- **“Filing as an inventor, examiners are very helpful. The process does allow an inventor to file and prosecute his/her application without an attorney or agent.”**
- **“I appreciate the courtesy and professionalism of the examining groups.”**
- **“There seems to be a greater willingness by examiners/others to answer questions/resolve issues.”**
- **“Patent Office personnel are far more helpful than they were a few years ago.”**
- **“I am most pleased about the improvement in attitude across the board. Routinely, people are listening, trying to be helpful and working really hard. The best people at the top consistently exceed my expectations. The lower level employees still need a lot of work. The improvement has been outstanding. Keep it up.”**

## ***QUESTION D2***

***What, if anything, would you say particularly displeased you or what flaws do you see in the application process?***

### **Percent in Category\***

**31%**

**25%**

**14%**

**12%**

**10%**

**8%**

**6%**

**6%**

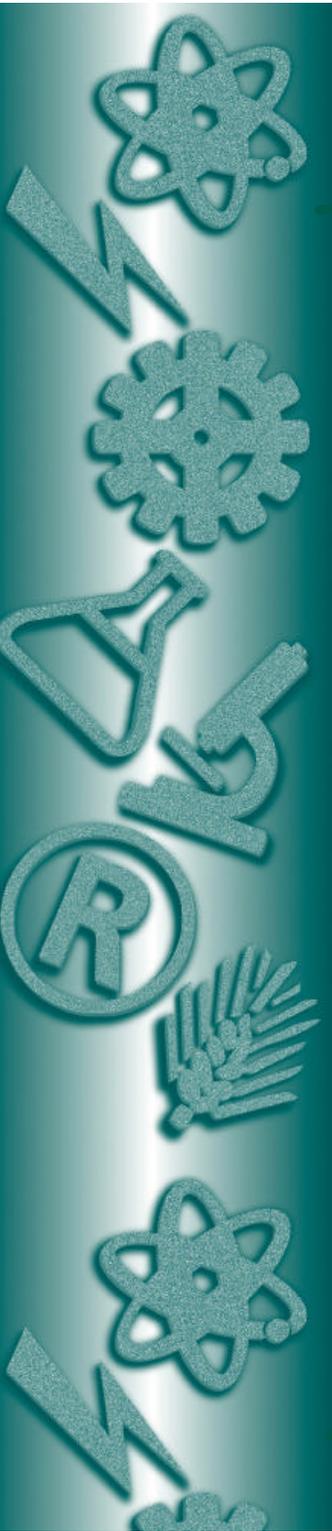
**5%**

### **Responses were coded into 17 categories:**

- **Examiner Competence / Communication (language)**
- **Timeliness**
- **Accuracy of Process**
- **Customer Service / Understanding of Terminology / Status Updates**
- **Lost Materials**
- **Office Actions**
- **Clerical / Mail Room Competence / Language**
- **Search Process**
- **Costs**

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**\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.**



## *QUESTION D2 (cont.)*

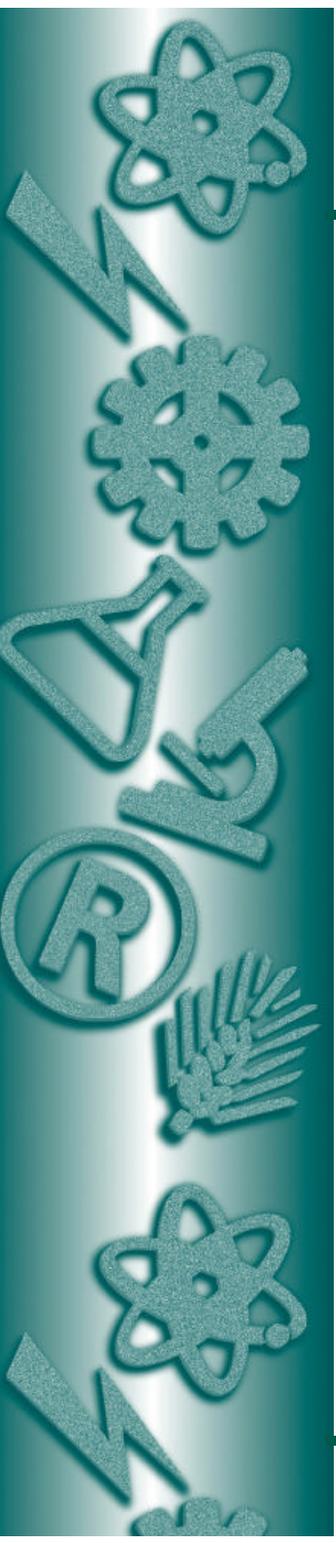
### Percent in Category\*

### Categories (cont.)

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 4% | ● <b>Systems and Technology</b>  |
| 3% | ● <b>Inconsistency of Decisions</b>  |
| 2% | ● <b>Technical Support</b>   |
| 2% | ● <b>Forms / Filing Procedures / Requirements / Process</b>                  |
| 2% | ● <b>Appeals Process</b>   |
| 1% | ● <b>Examination Process</b>   |
| 4% | ● <b>Miscellaneous</b>   |
| 4% | ● <b>Not Applicable (i.e., irrelevant to question or wrote “no comment”)</b> |

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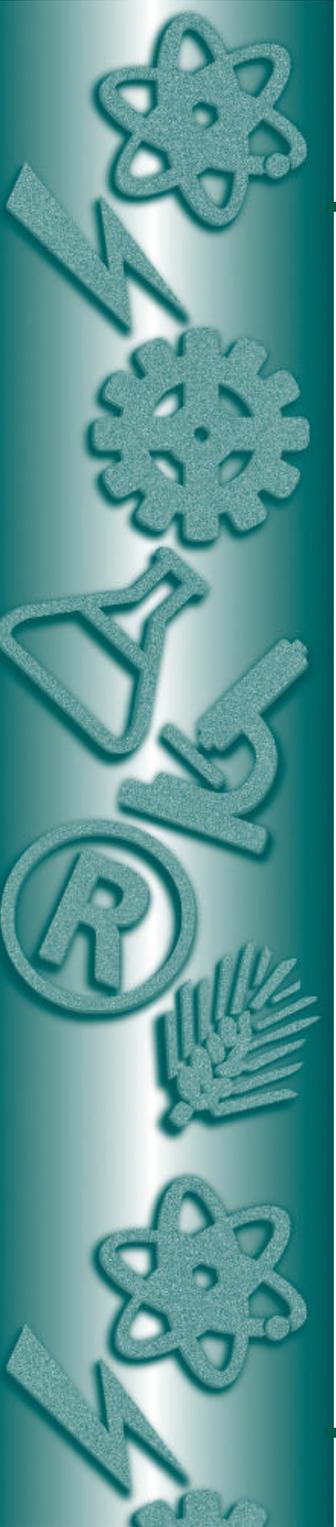
\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.



***D2: What, if anything, would you say particularly displeased you or what flaws do you see in the application process?***

**Some Verbatim Comments:**

- **“Lost papers are becoming a serious problem. The support systems for the examiners seems sub-par and is in need of an upgrade.”**
- **“Too many applications become lost and require one or more status letters to find it.”**
- **“Although there is an enormous volume of paper that passes through the PTO, often cases are misplaced or lost and the applicant has to prove that they had indeed submitted certain documents, and are asked to petition and, etc., even when the error is the fault of the PTO.”**
- **“Language problems with some examiners who either don’t understand what I was saying or couldn’t communicate their position effectively. Makes for difficult exam process. Should give language classes or require they meet language proficiency requirements.”**
- **“First action usually appears to be the result of Examiners who have not taken time (or been given time) to properly review and understand application. This results in extra legal fees to individual applicants who usually can’t afford such fees.**
- **“Pendency is way too long. Electronic filing and response should be encouraged.”**



## ***D2: Verbatim Comments (cont.)***

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- **“The large disparity in processing time between groups. I file mechanical, electrical, physics, and software patents. The processing time for mechanical applications is decreasing but I do not see improvements in the other areas.”**
- **“Appeal process is too long.”**
- **“Mistakes in filing receipts. Hard to correct.”**
- **“Many clerical problems in the handling of mail.”**
- **“Long waits for First Office Action and issuance after issue fee has been paid. First Office Actions have not been received for 1 year which seems too long.”**
- **“Administrative problems in handling corrections for PTO mistakes, petition system for correction takes too long and should not cost applicants any money.”**
- **“New examiners lack knowledge and experience to make proper rejections/objections. This has caused considerable delay and expense for some clients. I’m not sure how to fix this, perhaps more scrutiny of new examiners work by the primary or SPE examiners?”**

### **QUESTION D3**

***How can products and services be improved at the PTO?  
(including any new products or services)***

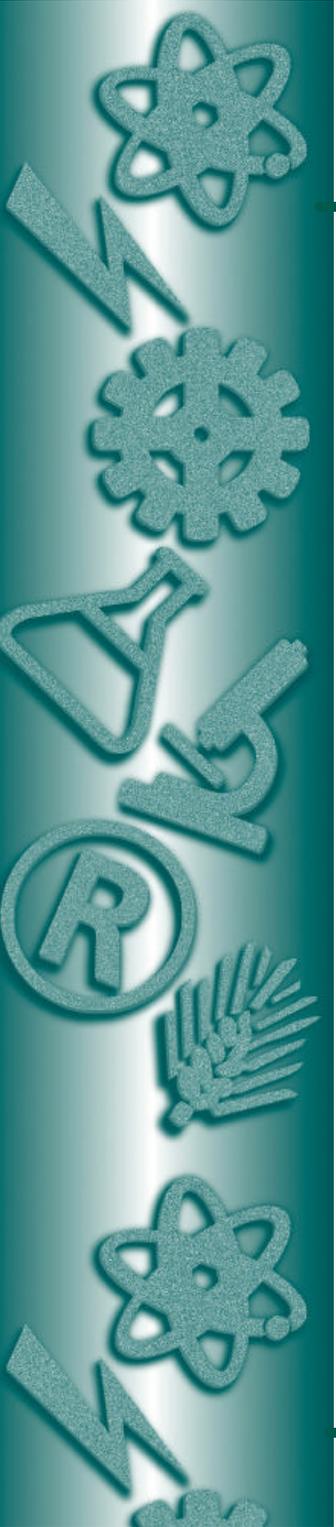
**Percent in  
Category\***

**Responses were coded into 21 categories:**

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 23% | ● <b>Staff Competence, Training and Communications (language) / Examination Quality</b>             |
| 13% | ● <b>Timeliness / Responsiveness</b>  |
| 11% | ● <b>Staff Supervision, Reviews, Incentives, and Hiring Practices</b>                               |
| 11% | ● <b>Administrative Process / Accuracy and Tracking of Paperwork / Filing Receipts / Post Cards</b> |
| 8%  | ● <b>Rejections / Quotas / Explanations / Interpretations / Appeals</b>                             |
| 7%  | ● <b>Customer Service</b>   |
| 7%  | ● <b>Searches / Search Database</b>   |
| 7%  | ● <b>Amount of Time for Examination / Office Actions / Reduce Workload / More Staff</b>             |
| 7%  | ● <b>Systems and Technology / On-Line Application and Information / Electronic Filing</b>           |

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**\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.**



## ***QUESTION D3 (cont.)***

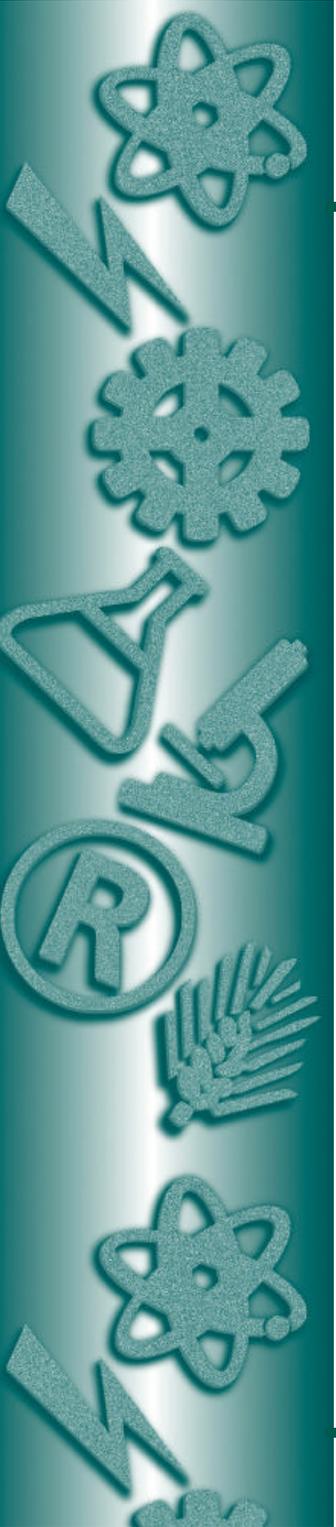
### **Percent in Category\***

### **Categories (cont.)**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 6% | ● Telephone System / Accessibility to Staff via Telephone             |
| 6% | ● Problem Resolution and Avoidance                                    |
| 6% | ● Costs and Access to Information on Costs                            |
| 3% | ● E-mail / Fax Communications   |
| 3% | ● Access to Information on Procedures, Policies, Rules, etc.          |
| 3% | ● Web Site  |
| 3% | ● Forms   |
| 2% | ● Access to Status Information  |
| 2% | ● Foreign Patents   |
| 1% | ● Mailroom Personnel and Operations                                   |
| 6% | ● Miscellaneous   |
| 5% | ● Not Applicable (i.e., irrelevant to question or wrote “no comment”) |

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\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.

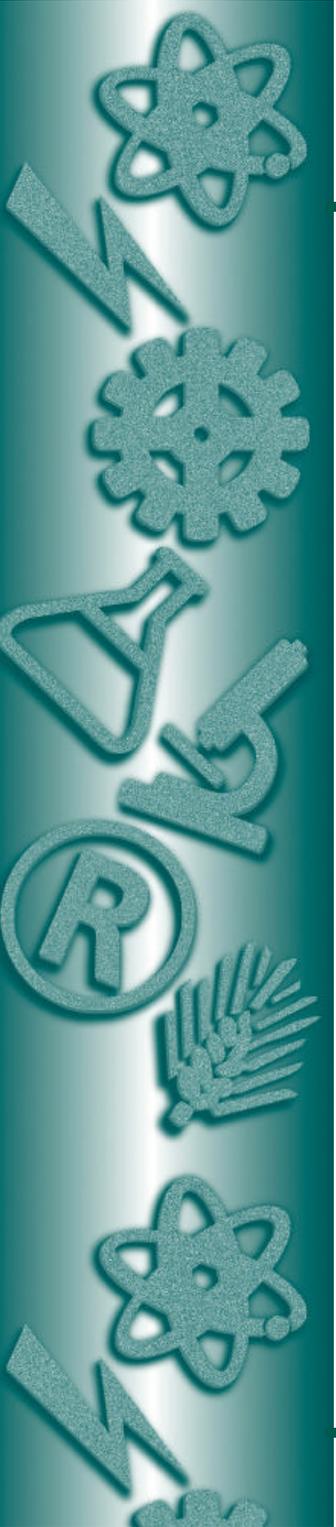


***D3: How can products and services be improved at the PTO?  
(including any new products or services)***

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**Some Verbatim Comments:**

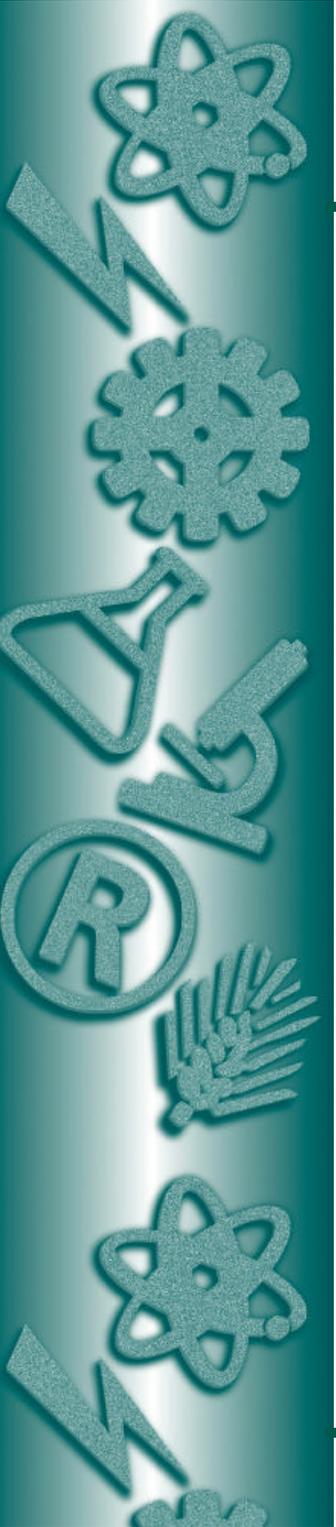
- **“More direct communication between applicant and examiners, including allowing examiners to make minor changes in patent applications, subject to applicant approval. Some of this is starting to happen in an informal way.”**
- **“More care in preparing filing receipts. Keep better track of files. Match amendments, etc., more quickly to files.”**
- **“(1) Expand searching capability of PTO’s internet web site. (2) Examiners should take more active role in amending claims to advance applications to allowance, when required. (3) Restore PTO patent drawing services. (4) Reduce PTO fees for small inventors.”**
- **“Improved training and/or screening of the non-professional personnel. Improved response time in acknowledging receipt of applications and other correspondence. Although I am not a big fan of impersonal computers, electronic filing with automatic acknowledgement may be an improvement. Such filings could be easily tracked and monitored for timely response.”**



### ***D3: Verbatim Comments (cont.)***

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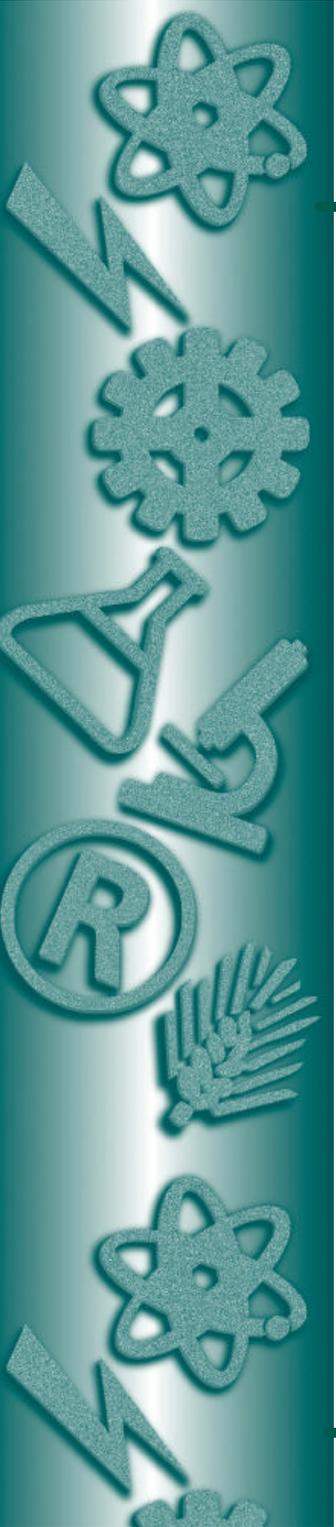
- **“Improve the accuracy of filing receipts and reduce the time between payment of the issue fee and issuance of the patent.”**
- **“Services can be improved by imposing a 90 day time period for responding to petitions.”**
- **“Review of drawings has to be improved, particularly when newly submitted drawings become lost or misplaced. Applicants should be told ASAP to allow new drawings (replacements) to be sent.”**
- **“The appeal process needs to be more efficient.”**
- **“The more experienced examiners (i.e., primary, SPE) who sign Office Actions on behalf of other examiners should at a minimum read and review what it is they are signing. This may help to eliminate some poor office actions.”**
- **“Better examiner training in both the law and searching; better staff training to provide proper referrals for information; reduce fees for small entities or individuals.”**



### ***D3: Verbatim Comments (cont.)***

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- **“Work hard to handle papers better. Continue to hire, and hopefully, keep the best examiners possible. As people learn their jobs, they do them much better. Some junior examiners in particular don’t communicate well. Include the ability to communicate as a hiring criteria. Let the group directors and SPEs know they are doing a good job. Without these experienced, courteous, and highly efficient folks, it might all fall apart. Keep up the good progress.”**
- **“Provide an automatic patent status line similar to the trademark status line. It would be helpful to be able to dial in my serial number to check the status of my case.”**
- **“Spend more time on First Office Actions. Often it seems like the First Action is not very well searched or thought out, and as a result many highly relevant issues arise for the first time in a final rejection, which causes undue expense and frustration for applicants and their attorneys.”**
- **“PTO needs improved file tracking system. Too many lost files, particularly of issued patents.”**
- **“Things are great and I see of no way to improve the products and services.”**



## ***QUESTION D4 Any additional comments?***

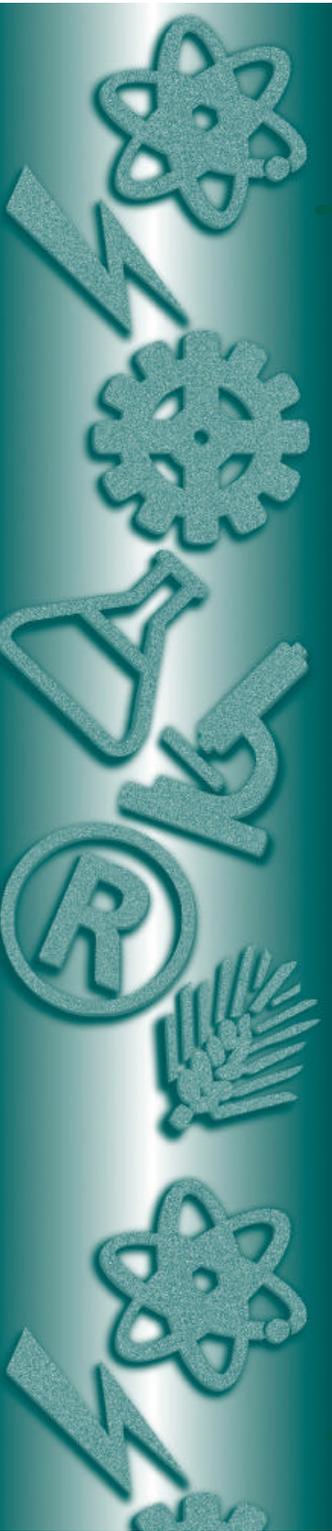
### **Percent in Category\***

### **Responses were coded into 18 categories:**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>13%</b> | ● <b>Negative - Regulations / Procedures / Process / Instructions</b>                       |
| <b>10%</b> | ● <b>Negative - Examiner Competence / Customer Service / Examination Quality / Language</b> |
| <b>9%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Quality / Problems / Errors / Outcome of Process / Problem Resolution</b>   |
| <b>8%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Costs and Fees</b>  |
| <b>6%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Clerical Competence / Customer Service / Language</b>                       |
| <b>5%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Timeliness / Responsiveness</b>   |
| <b>5%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Lost Files and Paperwork / Forms</b>  |
| <b>4%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Survey</b>  |
| <b>3%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Staffing / Training</b>   |
| <b>3%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Searches</b>  |
| <b>3%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - General Customer Service and Employee Competence</b>                        |
| <b>2%</b>  | ● <b>Negative - Systems and Technology</b>  |

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\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.



## ***QUESTION D4 (cont.)***

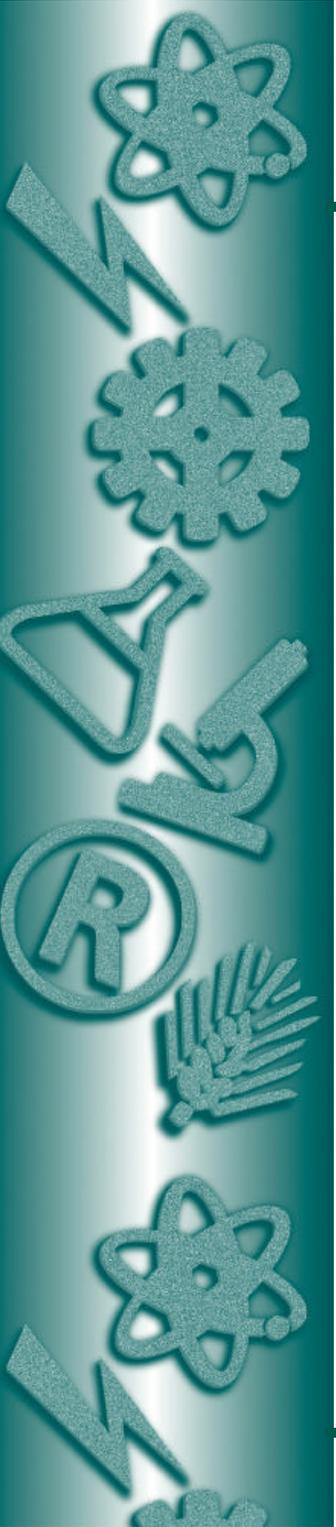
### **Percent in Category\***

### **Categories (cont.)**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>11%</b> | <b>● Positive - Overall Patent Service</b>                                   |
| <b>10%</b> | <b>● Positive - Staff Competence / Customer Service / Examination</b>        |
| <b>6%</b>  | <b>● Positive - Systems and Technology</b>                                   |
| <b>2%</b>  | <b>● Positive - Survey</b>   |
| <b>7%</b>  | <b>● Miscellaneous</b>   |
| <b>11%</b> | <b>● Not Applicable (i.e., irrelevant to question or wrote “no comment”)</b> |

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**\* Percents will not add up to 100% since comments were often placed in more than one category.**

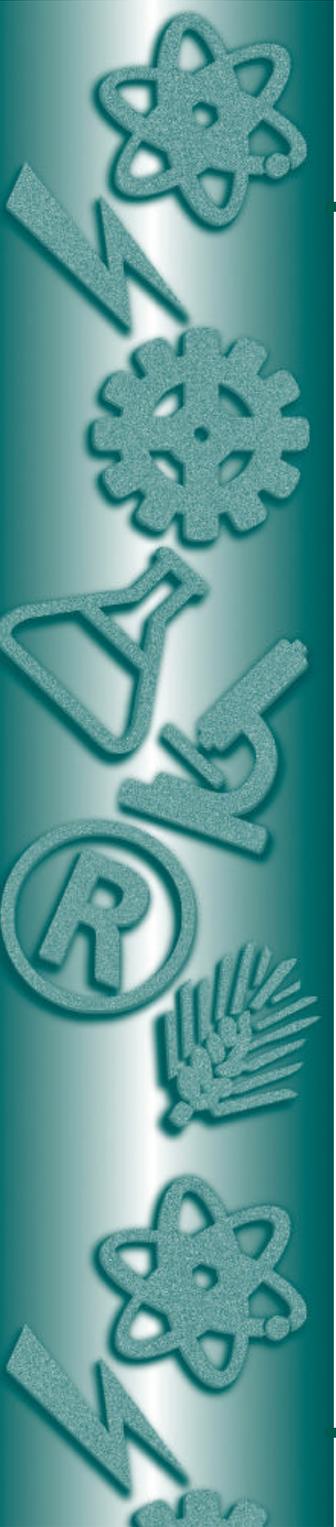


#### ***D4: Any additional comments?***

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##### **Some Verbatim Comments:**

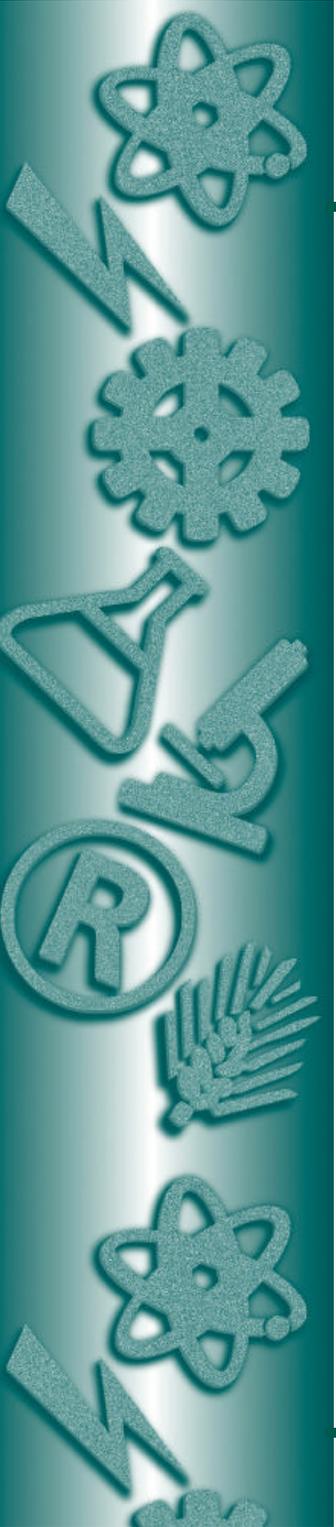
- **“Overall service has improved, searches seem to be more complete, examiner opinions have become more detailed in reasoning, and a fairer outcome is achieved. Other than a few problems with the issues branch and the failure to reply to status letters, we have been quite satisfied with your services.”**
- **“Overall, I think the PTO is slowly improving. I appreciate their efforts to improve their products and services, and the use of surveys such as these.”**
- **“The USPTO internet web site is wonderful. It is a model for other countries and patent databases. Best of all, it’s free, so available to all of us.”**
- **“Requests should be responded to quickly and properly. Every time an error occurs by the PTO, the applicant is forced to spend time and money to correct the PTO’s mistake. It should be taken care of by the PTO at the time of request.”**



## ***D4: Verbatim Comments (cont.)***

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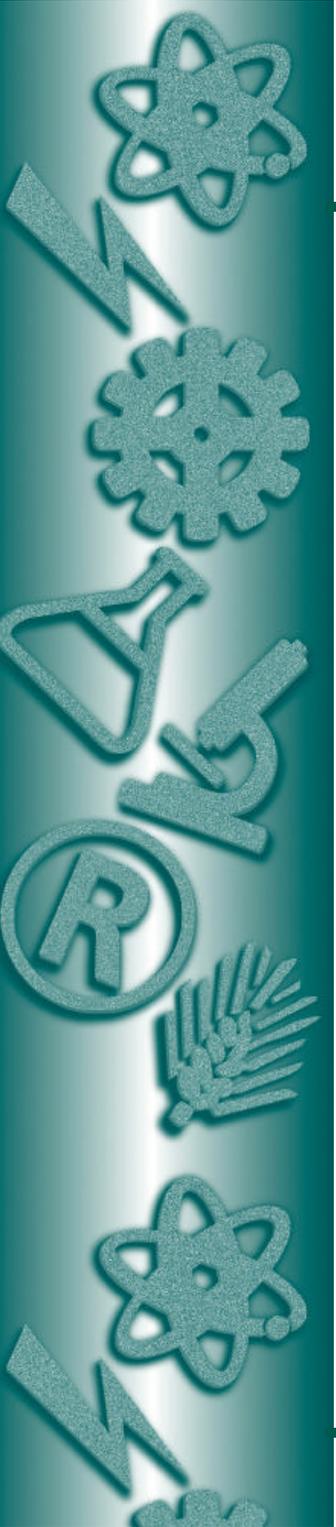
- **“Obtaining a file history is an arduous task—make it faster and easier—how can a file get lost? Why aren’t all documents ‘scanned’ by PTO. File histories could be all available electronically and printed out by PTO—no more warehouses or missing pages.”**
- **“Contact with administrative staff is improving, much better courteousness, more helpful. Leaving voice mail was useless.”**
- **“Telephone calls from the examiner to discuss particular areas of concern are quite helpful and speed the process along.”**
- **“Improvements in performance and professionalism among USPTO examiners and staff have been noticeable over the last 5 years. Costs have also been managed well. We continue to be impressed by the quality of our patent office, particularly in comparison to some foreign patent offices where expediency, economy, and courtesy are seldom encountered.”**



#### ***D4: Verbatim Comments (cont.)***

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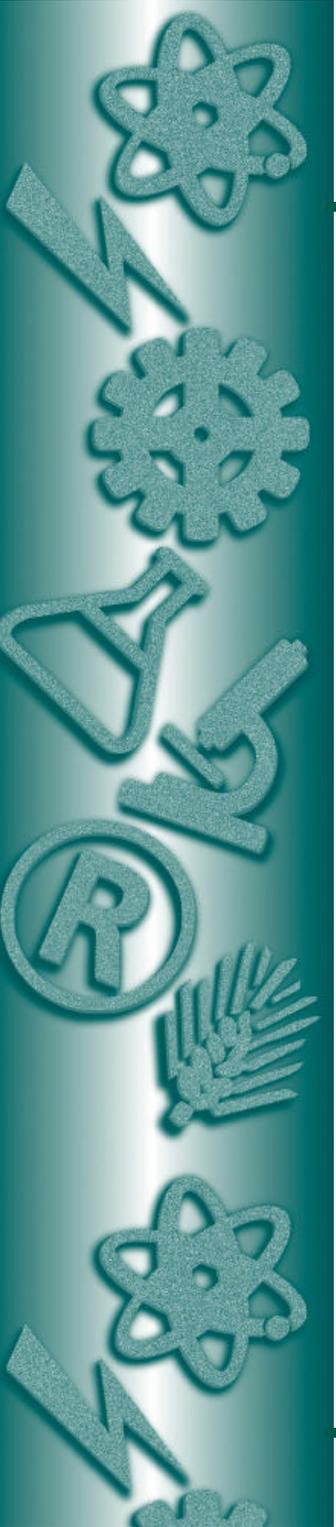
- **“The quality of the examiners is first rate. Their decisions are fair and predictable. At the opposite end are the new examiners. Perhaps that’s inevitable. The PCT Branch’s support personnel have traditionally been superior in responsiveness, competence and knowledge. Lately, there’s been some slipping there.”**
- **“Why does the office lose or misdirect so many amendments? Can’t a better submission tracking system be devised? How about bar code labels to put on amendments so that they may be properly directed?”**
- **“Please eliminate or reduce the maintenance fees. They are proving to be unduly burdensome for the sole inventors and the small businesses I represent.”**
- **“Provide a central authority for problem resolution (e.g, procedural problems such as excessive delays).”**



## *Observations from Open-Ended Comments*

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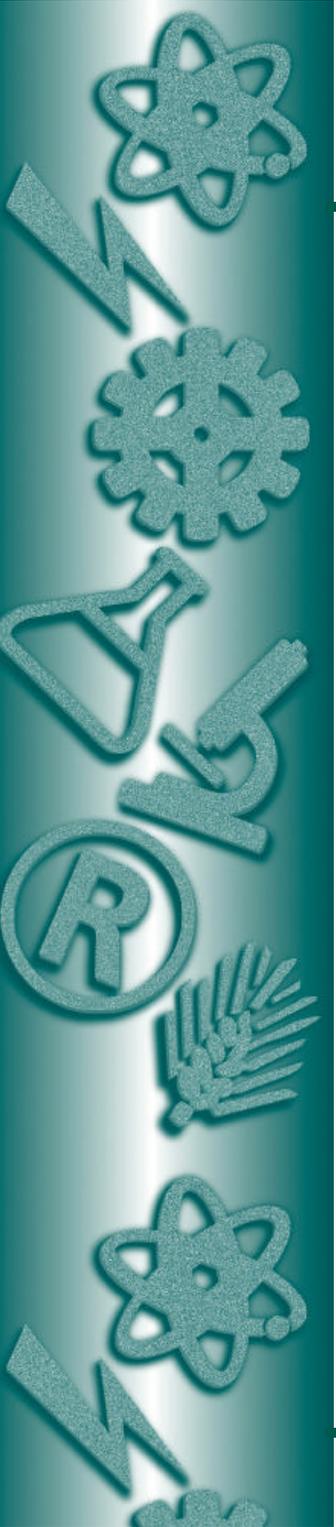
- **There were many comments about improvements in attitude across the board and that staff are routinely listening, trying to be helpful, and working hard**
- **There is a sense that service is improving and that the Patent Office is trying to be more responsive**
- **Many comments indicate a belief that the tenor of examination has greatly improved in the last year**
- **The comments show an appreciation for proactive assistance by examiners in clearly stating their concerns and suggesting amendments/actions that would address and surmount rejections. Respondents feel there is a willingness by examiners to communicate by telephone and fax which helps to clarify issues and advance prosecution.**



## *Observations from Open-Ended Comments (cont.)*

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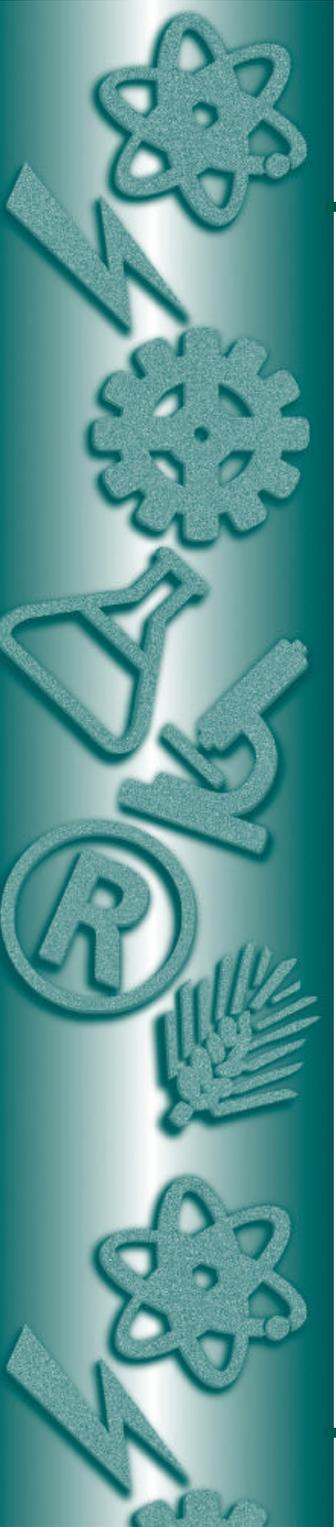
- **Most of the problems and complaints focus on:**
  - ◆ **Lost files, correspondence, drawings, papers**
  - ◆ **Errors in filing receipts**
  - ◆ **Faxes not being delivered to examiners or official file in a timely manner**
  - ◆ **Timeliness of First Office Actions after application filing**
  - ◆ **The length of time from payment of issue fee to issuance of the patent**
- **Respondents made continuing complaints about the language proficiency of some examiners. There is a feeling that this makes for a difficult examination process when the applicant is unsure the examiner understands his/her position and the examiners do not communicate their positions effectively.**



## *Observations from Open-Ended Comments (cont.)*

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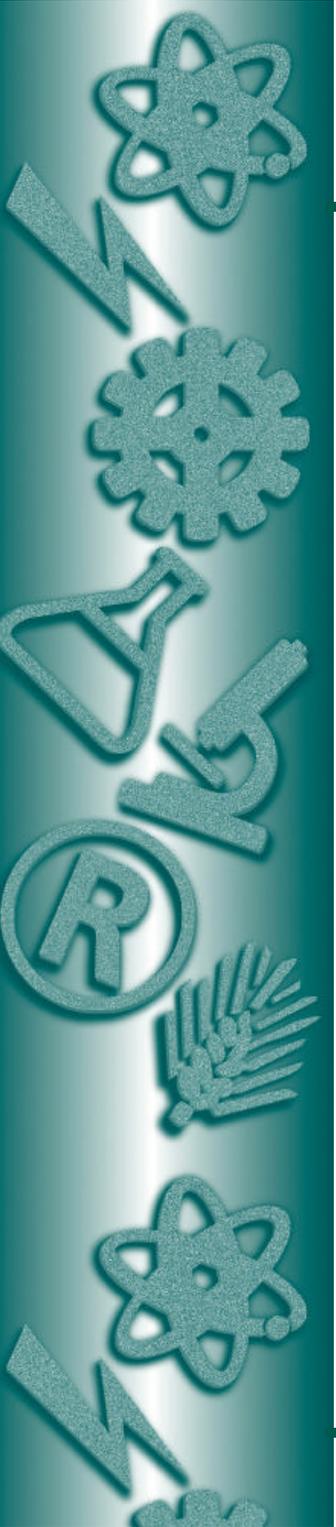
- **There were complaints about the competence of the newer examiners, both legal and technical. There is concern that this incompetence causes excessive delays in patent prosecution.**
- **Respondents want more focus on examiners clearly stating reasons for rejection and allowable subject matter. There is a feeling that better training and reduced workload would improve searches and Office Actions. This especially shows in First Office Actions.**
- **It appears that many customers have lost confidence that papers, correspondence, drawings, etc., will find their way to the proper destination (examiner, file). Anything lost will take time to either find or re-submit.**
  - ◆ **There seems to be a lot of blame on the PTO mailroom and the administrative infrastructure**



## *Observations from Open-Ended Comments (cont.)*

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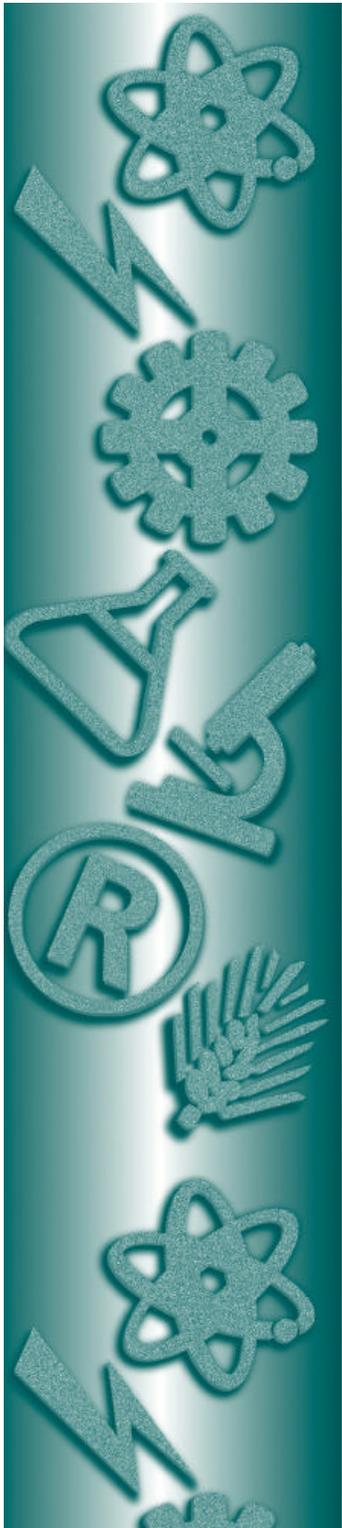
- **It is interesting that most of the complaints about timeliness focus on the front and back ends of the process**
  - ◆ **Assignment to an examiner and First Office Actions**
  - ◆ **Time from payment of issue fee to issuance**
- **There is a perception that it takes a substantial amount of time and effort by the applicant to correct errors and mistakes made by PTO. Respondents feel it is “hard to get things back on track.”**
- **It is clear from the comments that the administrative problems are a major source of customer irritation and annoyance about the process**



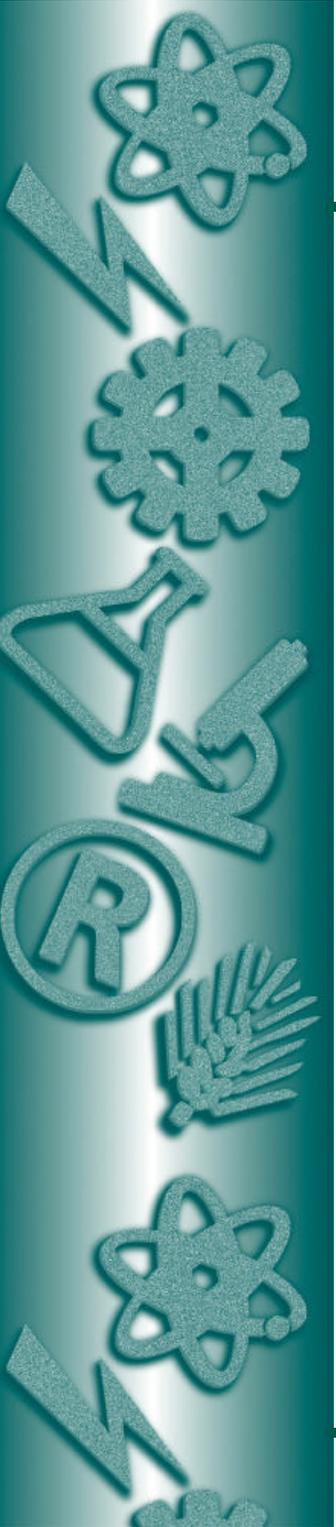
## *Comments About Performance Standards – Section B*

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- **The standard that attracted the most comments was “Mail correct filing notices for complete, standard applications within 30 days of receipt of application (B9).” It is interesting that most of the comments regarding this standard focused on filing receipt errors rather than on the 30 day goal.**
- **Areas in which respondents suggested additional new standards include:**
  - ◆ **An accuracy standard for filing receipts**
  - ◆ **Time between issue fee payment and grant**
  - ◆ **Matching properly addressed communications with file**
  - ◆ **Acknowledgement of receipt of communications, including faxes**



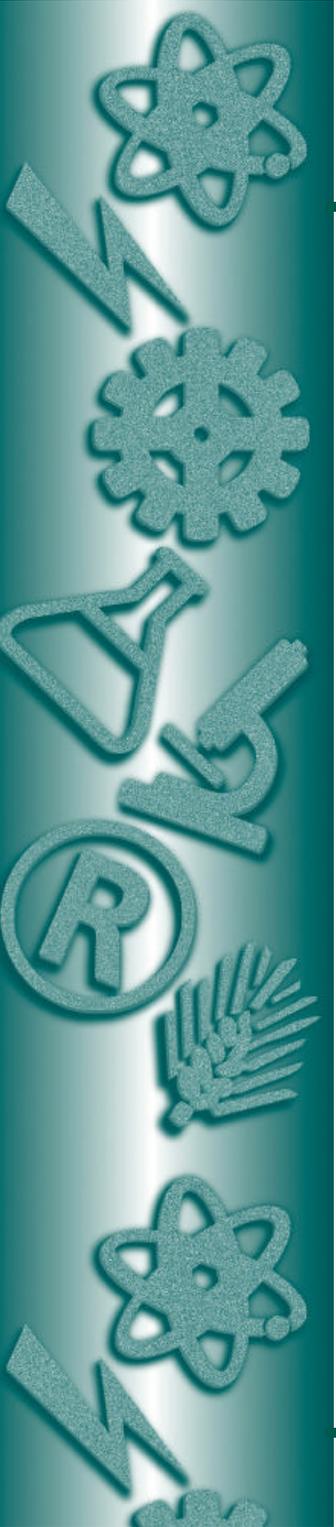
***Telephone Inquiries:  
What Respondents Said  
When They Called***



## *Respondent Telephone Inquiries*

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- **800 number provided by Westat during entire data collection period. This number was provided on all correspondence to respondents**
- **Inquiry answered by a project staff member**
- **Total of about 90 inquiries received over the telephone**
- **Inquiries coded into 5 areas**
- **Customer inquiries/comments by telephone are presented in Appendix I (Volume II of this report)**



# *Content of Calls: Examples by Category*

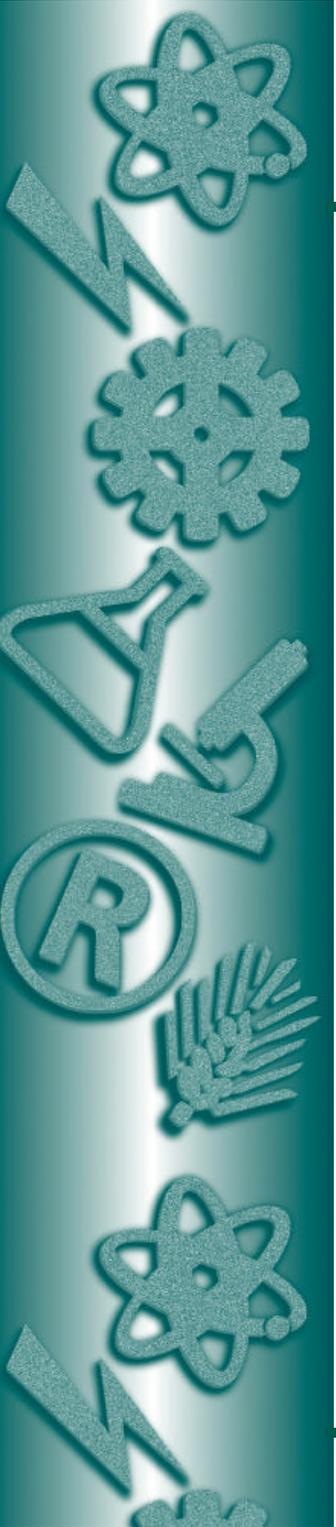
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## **1. Sampling / How Do I Respond to the Survey?**

- ◆ Sometimes respondents had never worked with PTO in the technology area(s) they were assigned for the survey
- ◆ Respondents wanted to know why they weren't selected to respond in the technology area(s) in which they work the most
- ◆ Questions regarding question C1 – patent processing time
- ◆ Some respondents had not had direct contact with the PTO because they used an attorney

## **2. Data Collection Issues**

- ◆ Many respondents called toward the end of the field period to find out if it was too late to respond
- ◆ Some respondents called with questions regarding completing the survey over the internet
- ◆ A few calls to verify receipt of completed surveys



## *Content of Calls: Examples by Category (cont.)*

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### **3. Respondent Issues**

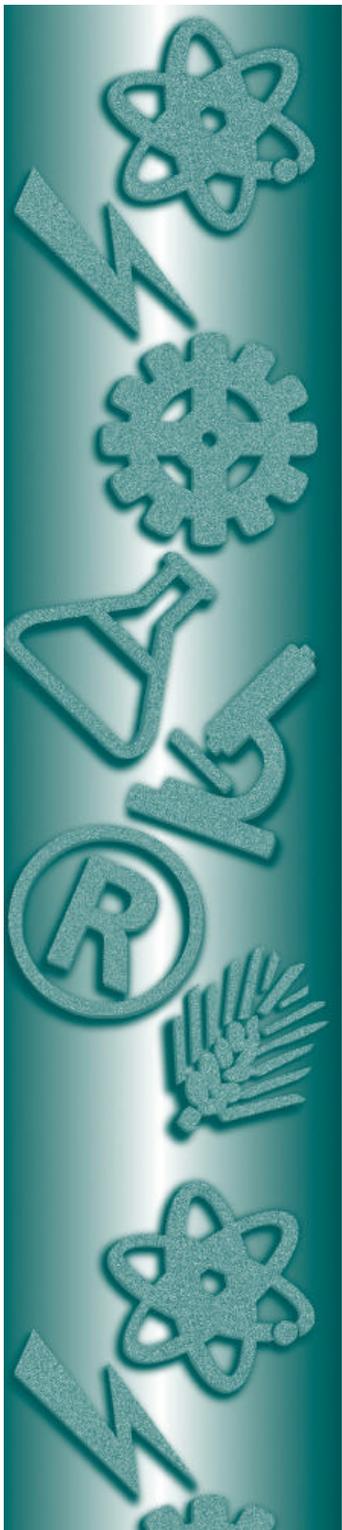
- ◆ **Some calls were made to indicate that the chosen respondent was deceased, no longer with the company, or on extended leave or disability**
- ◆ **In cases where the respondent specified was not available, another person called to find out who to give the survey to**

### **4. Need for Materials**

- ◆ **Respondents often called requesting replacement surveys, envelopes, cover letters, etc., because they were lost or misplaced**

### **5. Refusals / Complaints**

- ◆ **Some respondents called to say they did not want to complete the survey, but they did want to express complaints with PTO services over the telephone**
- ◆ **A few respondents called the 800 number to get someone to help them with specific examiners or applications**



# *Overall Summary and Conclusions*

# *Results Were Analyzed By:*

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- **Most and Least Satisfied and Most Dissatisfied Questions**
- **Major Changes from 1998 Data**
- **Questions Grouped Into Five Factors**
- **Questions Pertaining to the Overall Patent Process**
- **Questions Having the Greatest Impact on Overall Satisfaction**
- **Demographic Differences**
- **Content Analysis of Open-Ended Comments**

# *Overall Summary*

- **The application submission process continues to receive high satisfaction ratings and shows improvement, especially in the time needed to submit required information**
- **Respondents are satisfied both with the quality of the examination process and decision outcomes of the process. In fact, over two-thirds are satisfied with the fairness of the final decision. These areas improved by over 5% from 1998 levels and demonstrate that customers are generally satisfied with the substance of the examination process.**
- **There is only a moderate level of satisfaction with the efficiency of the examination process, probably affected by dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the process**
- **Courteous service both in day-to-day contact and in handling of problems continues at extremely high levels given the large number of employees in contact with the public. In addition, almost two-thirds of the respondents believe that assistance is provided at a time convenient to the customer.**

## *Overall Summary (cont.)*

- **All aspects of customer service improved by 5% or more over 1998 levels and dissatisfaction levels are all below 25%. There is room for improvement in both flexibility in addressing customer needs and in convincing customers that PTO is committed to providing the best possible service.**
- **Problem resolution, while showing some improvement over 1998 levels, has extremely low levels of satisfaction. This takes on added importance as an issue that needs to be addressed given that 71% of the respondents experienced some type of problem or difficulty over the past year.**
- **Problem resolution is substantially impacting perceptions about customer service in areas such as flexibility in addressing needs, commitment to providing the best possible service, timeliness of the process, and overall satisfaction**
- **The most common types of problems reported include lost or misplaced materials and incorrect filing receipts**

## *Overall Summary (cont.)*

- **Telephone service showed substantial improvement over the 1998 levels. This area should continue to be emphasized given that close to one-quarter are dissatisfied that calls are returned within one business day.**
- **While the only timeliness item, the length of time from payment of fee to grant, showed a decline (2%) from 1998 satisfaction levels, there are several aspects of timeliness that have satisfaction levels well below 50%:**
  - ◆ **Length of application process**
  - ◆ **Delivery of faxes**
  - ◆ **Mailing correct filing notices**
  - ◆ **Responding to status letter**
  - ◆ **Length of time from filing to grant and from fee payment to grant**

**Timeliness of the total process and front and back sub-processes remain a problem. It should be noted that respondents estimate that a reasonable goal for PTO internal processing time is about 12 months and total time (PTO's time plus applicant's time) is about 18 months.**

## *Overall Summary (cont.)*

- Respondents were asked to compare several aspects of customer service to previous times they filed applications. On all areas except one, the percent claiming the service is better now far outweighed the percent claiming it's worse. Accurate filing receipts is the only area where the percent claiming it's worse is larger than those claiming it's better. The results show that while respondents believe the timely delivery of filing receipts has improved, the accuracy has declined. As one customer stated:

**“PTO has been prompt in sending filing receipts lately, in less than 30 days. However, they are incorrect more often than not and after I request corrections, the errors often remain. I would rather that your staff take their time to get things right the first time.”**

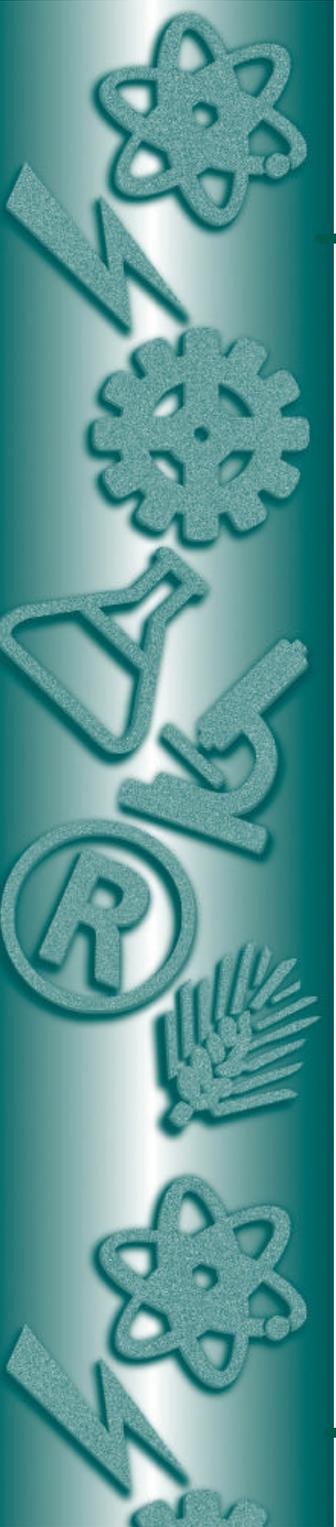
## *Overall Summary (cont.)*

- **Overall satisfaction increased by 5% over the 1998 level to 57% satisfied. This is encouraging and not surprising given that other key areas of service improved by this amount or more. In fact, satisfaction about fees paid and value received increased substantially over 1998 levels. Dissatisfaction levels about fees and value are both less than 25%.**
- **The “key drivers” (those items having the greatest impact on overall satisfaction) include examination quality, telephone service, accurate and timely filing receipts, process efficiency and outcome, commitment to customer service, and delivery of faxes. The key drivers with the lowest levels of satisfaction include timely and accurate filing receipts, delivery of faxes, and efficiency of the process.**

## *Overall Summary (cont.)*

- **The analyses of results by demographic segments follows the same pattern as 1998 with two distinct customer segments being served by PTO: law firms/large businesses and individual inventors/small businesses**
  - ◆ **Law firms/large businesses have much more frequent contact with PTO throughout the year than individual inventor/small businesses**
  - ◆ **Individual inventors/small businesses are more positive than law firms/large businesses, especially on overall satisfaction, customer service and timeliness**
  - ◆ **Both segments reported high levels of satisfaction on the Application and Examination Process and low levels of satisfaction on Problem Resolution**

**The following pages summarize the strengths (60% or more satisfied) and opportunities for improvement (25% or more dissatisfied)**



# *Overall Summary*

## *Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement*

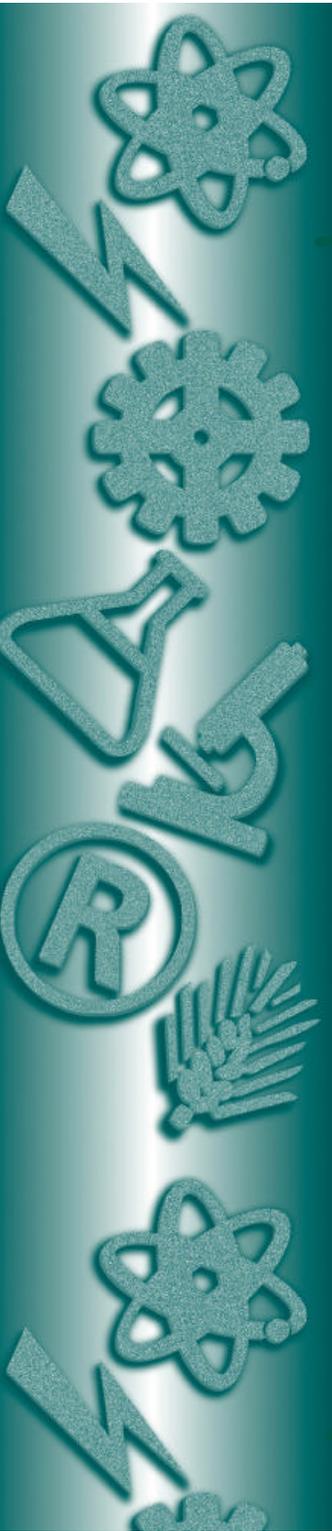
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### Strengths

- **Courteous service (B1 & C6c)**
- **Directing calls promptly\* (B2)**
- **Examination quality\* (conducting thorough search and a clearly written position (B4 & B10))**
- **The application process (C3AP1 & C3AP2)**
- **Fairness of the process outcome and outcome meeting your objectives\* (C3OP1 & C3OP2)**
- **Providing assistance at a time convenient to the customer (C2SR1)**

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\* Key Driver.



# *Overall Summary*

## *Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement (cont.)*

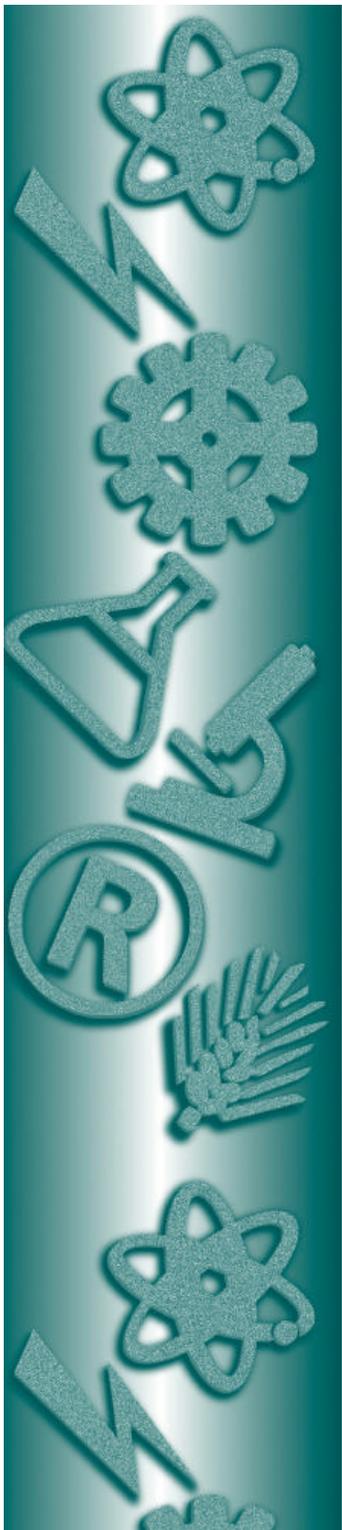
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### Opportunities for Improvement

- **Responding to status letters (B5)**
- **Delivery of faxes\* (B7 & B8)**
- **Mailing correct filing notices\* (B9 & C8g)**
- **Timeliness of the process**
  - ◆ **Length of application process\* (C3T1)**
  - ◆ **Time from filing to grant (C3T2)**
  - ◆ **Time from payment of fee to grant (C3T3)**
- **Problem management (C6a, C6b, C6d)**

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\* Key Driver.



# *Conclusions*

# Conclusions

- **Almost all areas improved over 1998 satisfaction levels**
  - ◆ **27 of the 29 comparable items showed improvement, with 16 improving by 6 to 10% and 6 improving by over 10%. Of note are telephone service, examination quality, and staff responsiveness.**
  - ◆ **Overall satisfaction improved by 5% to 57% and dissatisfaction is now less than 20%**
  - ◆ **The only decline (2%) was the length of time from payment of issue fee to patent grant**
- **It should be noted that all four Patent Corps Goals for Customer Standards improved by 7% or more over 1998 levels**
  - ◆ **Directing customers promptly +11%**
  - ◆ **Returning calls within one business day +9%**
  - ◆ **Clearly written position of examiners +8%**
  - ◆ **Conduct thorough search +7%**

## *Conclusions (cont.)*

- **The number of respondents believing service has improved compared to previous filings are at least twice as great (or more) than those believing it is worse**
  - ◆ **The only area where this does not hold is in the area of accurate filing receipts**
- **Important areas with acceptable levels of satisfaction include courtesy, telephone service, examination quality, the application submission process, and fairness of the final decision**
- **However, there remain areas that, while showing improvement, have unacceptable levels of satisfaction**
  - ◆ **Meeting standards for responding to status letters, delivering faxes, and mailing correct filing receipts**
  - ◆ **Timeliness of the process, especially time from filing to grant and from payment of issue fees to grant**
  - ◆ **The handling of problems (over 70% of the respondents experienced some type of problem or difficulty this past year)**

## *Conclusions (cont.)*

*Given the positive trends and levels of satisfaction for some of the key examination process items, why is overall satisfaction still less than 60%?*

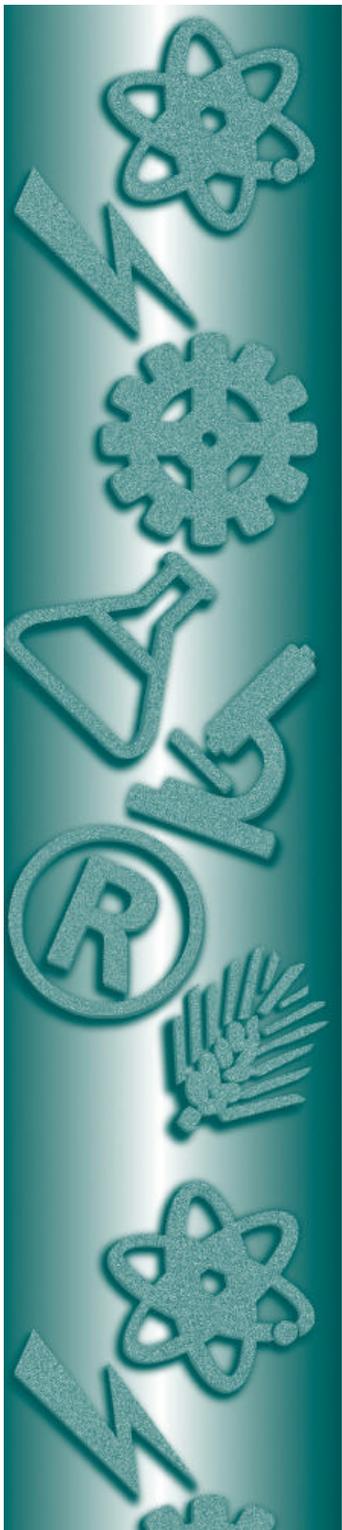
- **An analyses of the survey results coupled with the write-in comments helps to understand the causes and effects of respondent perceptions about the examination process, and, therefore, the various levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction**
- **The substance of the examination process received positive ratings and the trend shows continual improvement. Some of the write-in comments complain about such things as examiner language proficiency, proper training and background on legal and technical issues (especially for the new examiners) and consistency. However, ratings on examination quality, fairness of the final decision, and beliefs that the quality of the search and clarity of written positions of examiners are better now, all point to satisfaction with the substantitive aspects of the examination process.**

## *Conclusions (cont.)*

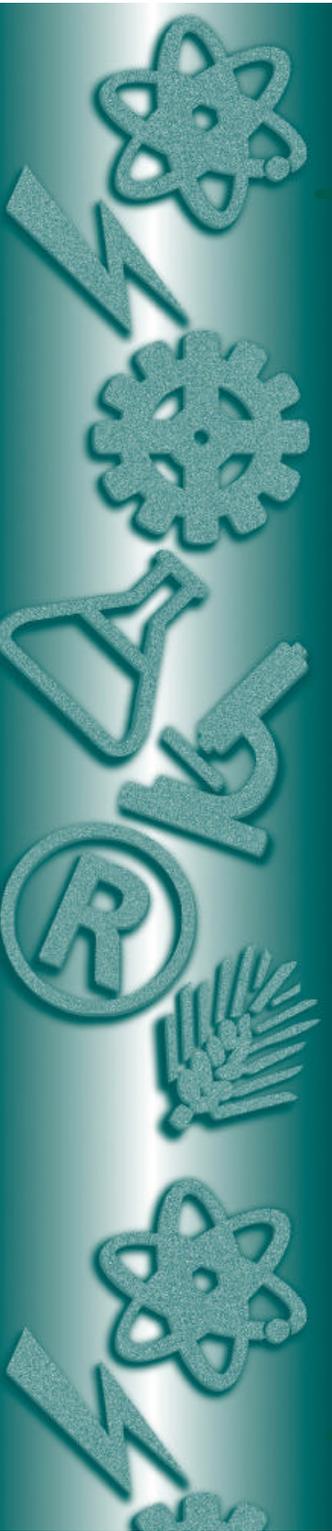
- **However, administrative problems encountered during the application and examination process appear to be inhibiting customer satisfaction levels. Dealing with such issues as errors on filing receipts; errors on deposit accounts; lost/misplaced papers, files, correspondence, drawings; faxes not being delivered properly; and uncertainty caused by long delays in First Office Actions, and between fee payment and issuance, are frustrating to the customer.**
  
- **Adding to these problems are:**
  - ◆ **Difficulties in determining status information**
  - ◆ **Difficulties in having PTO correct errors and mistakes caused by PTO**
  - ◆ **Time and effort expended by the customer in having to re-submit lost/misplaced materials**
  - ◆ **An overall lack of confidence that submitted materials will be matched with the official file and the proper examiner**

## *Conclusions (cont.)*

- **Customers express frustration with the delays in the examination process. This, in turn, impacts perceptions about process timeliness, efficiency of the examination process, PTO's genuine commitment to customer service, and overall satisfaction. For example:**
  - ◆ **Those incurring no problems had overall satisfaction levels of 83%**
  - ◆ **Those that had problems that were resolved quickly had overall satisfaction levels of 70%**
  - ◆ **Those that were satisfied with the handling of their problem gave much higher ratings to all aspects of customer service than those not satisfied, including perceptions about PTO being genuinely committed to providing the best possible service**
- **Given that over 70% of customers encounter some problems or difficulties in the application and examination process, PTO should focus on both minimizing the causes of commonly encountered problems and establishing a customer-focused problem management process. The data supports the contention that only then will high levels of overall satisfaction with the PTO patent process be achieved.**



# *Recommendations*



## *Recommendations — The Vital Few*

- **Expedite establishment of a problem management system that categorizes problems, assigns responsibility for all reported problems, documents them, establishes resolution goals, and organizes a close-out process. In designing the system, benchmark against some “best-in-class” problem resolution systems such as Solectron, American Express, and Ritz-Carlton. Establish a time standard for all categories of problems.**
- **Implement a quality control procedure for all filing receipts. Establish quality goals and track results along with the timeliness goals.**
- **Identify causes for delays between receipt of issue fee payment to patent grant, take corrective action, and establish an appropriate customer service standard/goal**
- **Improve the delivery of faxes (a key driver). Explore the use of software packages (e.g., JFAX, EFAX) that allows faxes to be delivered directly to e-mail addresses.**

## *Recommendations (cont.)*

- **Improve the document control system for storing, transferring, and tracking files, papers, correspondence, and drawings. Explore the use of a “search and resolve” desk to track down lost or misplaced materials.**
- **Establish timeframe estimates for First Office Actions and send this information with the notice of filing receipts**
- **Continue to emphasize the importance of returning telephone calls within one business day**
- **Conduct an internal benchmarking study on those key areas where there are substantial differences among technology areas (besides Designs). The objective of the study should be to determine if the differences are due to “best practices” being utilized by the technology areas with the highest satisfaction levels.**