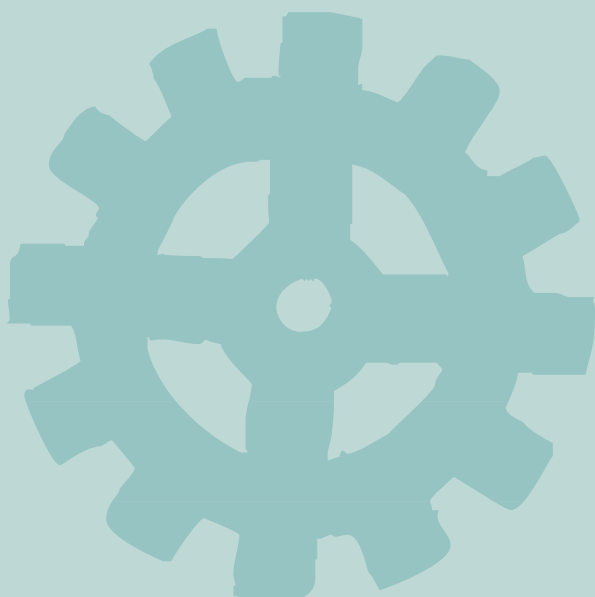




1998

Customer Satisfaction Report

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

1998

Customer Satisfaction Report

Issued April 1999



U.S. Department of Commerce
Patent and Trademark Office

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Providing high quality services to our customers continues to be one of the top priorities of the Patent and Trademark Office. Having myself been a customer of the Patent and Trademark Office for over 20 years, I am firmly committed to issuing quality patents, registering quality trademarks and providing high quality customer service.

Each of our major business areas, which include Patents, Trademarks, and Information Dissemination, has established customer service standards based on input from our customers. We continue to evaluate our progress against these standards by regularly contacting and interacting with our customers.

This year, for the third time, we are publishing our Customer Satisfaction Report which outlines our standards and the results of our performance against these standards. This year we are also reporting the results of surveys for the key products and services of our Information Dissemination Organization which had very favorable overall satisfaction rates.

While the overall satisfaction of our patent and trademark customers has remained basically unchanged since our last survey was conducted in 1996, there have been significant improvements in some of the key areas that were previously identified as being important to our customers. For example, in Patents, customer satisfaction with the “written communications of examiners” increased by 15%, and satisfaction with examiners “conducting a thorough search” increased by 11%. Both of these items relate directly to the quality of patent examination and are key drivers for our customers of overall satisfaction with the patent process. It is important to note that these are two of the key customer service standards the Patent area has focused on for the last year.

Similarly, in Trademarks, satisfaction with the “clear written communications on the position of the examining attorney” increased by 6%, as did the “quality of the status information provided.” Also in Trademarks, the satisfaction of those customers, who when they contacted the Office were being directed “promptly to the proper office or person” reflected a 10% increase.

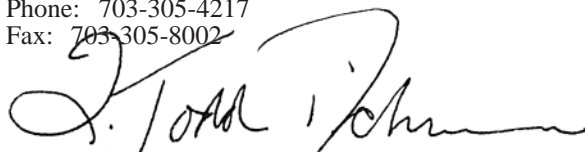
I believe it is also noteworthy, that in both the Patent and Trademark areas, our customers feel very strongly that they are being treated with courtesy when they work with our staff. In Patents, we found that 80% of our customers are satisfied that they are being treated courteously, and 85% of Trademark customers are satisfied with how they are treated.

As most of you are probably aware, filings in both Patent and Trademark areas continue to increase substantially. In response to increased workloads, PTO has hired over 700 new patent examiners and over 100 new trademark examining attorneys. These new hires have already begun to have a positive impact on some of the timeliness issues raised by our customers. Also, the PTO now allows trademark applicants to submit their applications electronically, an improvement that will ultimately have a positive impact on overall trademark cycle time as the organization continues to work toward the long term goal of leveraging automation to the benefit of our customers. Page 12 of this report outlines several initiatives which were developed based on results from our last customer surveys as well as from feedback received from our customers through focus groups, roundtables, discussions, open houses and other sources.

The purpose of this report is to continue communicating with you on our service delivery issues. We continually seek to improve our listening and learning techniques, and we welcome your comments. You may contact us at:

United States Patent and Trademark Office
Center for Quality Services (PK1-812)
2011 Crystal Drive
Washington, DC 20231

Phone: 703-305-4217
Fax: 703-305-8002



Q. Todd Dickinson
Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce and
Acting Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks



PTO Customers:

Inventors
Applicants
Owners
Attorneys
Agents
Researchers
Academia

Customer Service Standards

Our first customer service standards for the patent and trademark processes were published in 1994. These standards were developed based on input provided by customers in over 20 focus sessions throughout the United States (over 400 customers participated in these sessions). We validated these standards through customer satisfaction surveys in 1995, 1996 and most recently in 1998.

In 1996, we published service standards for our key information dissemination products and services. Again, focus groups were used to obtain customer input on those characteristics of the products and services which are most important.

In 1997, surveys representing the major products and services of the Information Dissemination Organization were distributed to obtain input on our performance and to validate key service attributes.

We continually review and update all standards to ensure that they reflect your needs and expectations.

For a comparison of how we are performing against our established standards for Patents and Trademarks over the past four years, see the charts under the Measuring Customer Satisfaction section. Additionally, for the first time, data for the Information Dissemination Organization standards is included.

PTO-Wide

We will ensure that our written communications clearly set forth the technical, procedural and legal position of patent examiners and trademark examining attorneys.

We will treat you with courtesy each time you contact us and, if appropriate, will direct you promptly to the proper office or person.

We will widely disseminate information about changes in practice and procedures to ensure that both you and PTO employees know about changes prior to their effective date.

If a PTO employee being called is not available, they will return your call by the next business day or, if you

request, an alternate point of contact will be provided.

We will respond to your status letters within 30 days from the date received in the PTO.

Patents

Your facsimile transmissions of properly addressed formal amendments will be matched with the appropriate files and delivered to the examiner within three business days of receipt.

We will deliver your facsimile transmissions of properly addressed papers marked "Informal" or "Draft" to the examiner within one business day.

We will conduct a thorough search of relevant U.S. patents, foreign patent literature and non-patent literature contained in PTO search files and, where appropriate, a reasonable search of other non-patent literature during the patent examination process.

We will respond within 30 days from date received in the PTO to papers filed after the examiner allows the application and up to the time PTO receives payment of the issue fee.

We will correctly generate and mail a notice indicating the application number, date of filing and the title of invention for complete, standard applications. These notices will be mailed within 30 days of receipt of the application in the PTO.

Trademarks

The determination of registrability will be accurately and clearly set forth in office actions.

The examination of procedural issues is accurate and office actions promote efficient and effective prosecution.

We will provide a first action regarding registrability within three months of filing.

We will provide a final determination regarding registrability within 13 months of filing.

We will mail the applicant's return postcard within three days of filing.

We will mail notices published by PTO within established times:

Filing Receipts -
14 days (after receipt of application in the PTO)

Notices of Publication -
30 days (after file is approved for publication)

Certificates of Registration -
seven days (after date of registration)

Notices of Abandonment -
45 days (after date of abandonment)

We will respond to correspondence received from the applicant within established times:

Law Offices:

Response to Amendments -
35 days from mail room receipt date

Intent to use:

Request to Divide -
30 days from mail room receipt date

Statements of Use -
30 days from mail room receipt date

Extension Requests -
30 days from mail room receipt date

Post Registration:

Section 7 Requests -
30 days from mail room receipt date

Section 8 Requests -
30 days from mail room receipt date

Section 9 Requests -
30 days from mail room receipt date

Unclassified paper copies of the drawing pages of trademark applications will be delivered to the Trademark Search Library within three days of filing and classified copies will be delivered within 11 days of filing.

PTO products will be issued with correct information:

(Filing Receipts, Notices of Allowance, Official Gazette, Certificates of Registration, Notices of Abandonment)

We will resolve problems experienced by customers in the processing of trademark applications or registrations within (seven) days of notification.

We will provide clear and accurate answers to questions regarding the trademark application process through the Trademark Assistance Center.

Information Dissemination Programs

Search Services - Patents

We will maintain a Patent Search Room where:

- You will have access to paper documents that are accurately filed in a timely manner:

The *Official Gazette - Patents* and the numeric set of issued patents will be available to you on issue day. The location information for classes and subclasses will be posted for your use within 24 hours from the time the class/subclass is relocated.

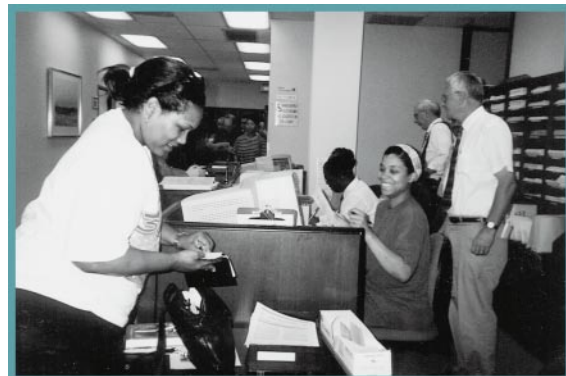
- You will have timely access to the automated search systems;
- You will have access to equipment for making quality copies of documents; and
- You will be provided with effective assistance in using Search Room resources.

Search Services - Trademarks

- You will have access to paper documents that are properly categorized and accurately filed in a timely manner:

The *Official Gazette - Trademarks* will be available to you on issue day. Bound volumes will be stamped within five days from receipt of the information in the Trademark Search Library.

- You will have timely access to the automated search systems;
- You will have access to equipment for making quality copies and documents; and
- You will receive effective assistance in using Search Library resources.



A happy PTO customer obtaining a pass to use the Patent Search Facilities

Regional Search Services

We will enter into full partnerships with libraries to make patent and trademark information widely available to you throughout regions of the United States. We will enable the Patent and Trademark Depository Libraries to serve as our partners in disseminating intellectual property information to you.

General Information Services

We will provide you with accurate, timely general information about the patent and trademark processes, products and services, as well as information about the Patent and Trademark Office itself. Copies of the general information booklets and forms will be mailed to you within two days of receipt of your request.

Electronic Information Products

We will provide you with quality patent and trademark electronic information products according to a published delivery schedule. We will provide you advance notice of product, price, and schedule changes.

We will develop new patent and trademark electronic information products to enable Patent and Trademark Depository Libraries to disseminate intellectual property information to you.

We will seek your suggestions for product and service improvements and will respond to you within one month.

Patent and Trademark Copy Sales

We will fulfill requests for patent and trademark copies completely and accurately within:

- Two days of receipt for orders placed at the PTO's local Public Service Window or sent via facsimile transmission;
- Five days of receipt for orders mailed to PTO on a coupon;
- Eight days of receipt for orders mailed to the PTO in a letter;

- Three days of receipt for orders placed via PTO's Electronic Ordering Service; or
- 24 hours of receipt for expedited service if requested, fees paid, and the order is placed at the PTO's local Public Service Window or sent via facsimile transmission.

We will provide missing copies or replacement copies free within 24 hours of customer request.

Assignment Recordation Services

We will accurately record patent and trademark assignments within 20 days of receipt and mail recorded assignment documents within 34 days of receipt.

Certification Services

We will fulfill orders for certified copies of patent and trademark documents completely and accurately within:

- 14 days of receipt for trademark registrations or within five days of receipt if expedited service is requested and fees paid;
- 17 days of receipt for patent and trademark applications-as-filed or within seven days of receipt if expedited service is requested and fees paid;
- 25 days of receipt for patent and trademark file-wrappers and contents; or
- 10 days of receipt for certified copies of patents.

If we cannot fulfill your order on time, we will contact you by phone or fax early in the process cycle and explain in detail why your order may be delayed.

Updates to Patent Records

We will process changes to automated records of patented cases and file the related papers in file wrappers within 30 days.

Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Communicating With Our Customers

As the PTO continues to change and grow into the next century, and as new products and services are introduced, we will continue to invite our customers to attend focus sessions and roundtable discussions in order to provide input into our plans or to changes we envision. Additionally, the traditional hearings and conferences sponsored by PTO also encourage two way conversations with our customers. During these sessions, we frequently obtain customer input on satisfaction with particular products and services.

We have also established direct lines of communication with a number of specific consumer groups through the use of newsletters and monthly/quarterly meetings.

Quarterly Biotechnology Customer Partnership meetings and the annual Independent Inventors Conference are examples of regular opportunities available for our customers to provide input to PTO. Listings of events open to the public that are sponsored by PTO can be found on the PTO web site (<http://www.uspto.com> and <ftp.uspto.gov>) under the heading "PTO Conversations with America."

The PTO web site contains information of interest to the intellectual property community such as: publications containing general information about patents and trademarks, press releases, announcements of proposed changes in PTO rules, forms relating to patent and Patent Cooperation Treaty applications, trademark application forms, trademark electronic filing information and current job announcements. Users can access a searchable database containing patent bibliographic data and abstracts for all U.S. patents granted since 1976.

Another searchable database contains the full text and full images of patents relating to AIDS research. Patents relating to AIDS from the European Patent Office and Japanese Patent Office are also included, as are the text and images of trademarks.

The PTO continues to communicate with our customers through the more formal and traditional publications such as the *Official Gazette*, the *Patent and Trademark Office Review*, and our

annual report. Additionally, we frequently provide speakers for conferences and annual meetings to many of our major customer groups. We provide training on specific issues, share important information on rule changes and introduce new products and services.

Our customers may also use the PTO Assistance Centers to communicate with us. Both the Patent and Trademark business areas have established "hotlines" to address customer questions and to provide assistance. The individuals who staff these centers are responsible for answering technical questions and recommending actions to systematically improve processes. The General Information Help Line administered by the Information Dissemination Organization provides customer assistance as do the Help Desks for customers of PTO records and electronic products.

Customer Surveys

Several established survey efforts are in place. In 1997, customers of the key products and services of the Information Dissemination Organization were surveyed. This year, for the third time since 1995, major surveys of our Patent and Trademark customers were conducted. Also this year, for the first time, customer satisfaction data was gathered and reported by patent industry technology area. In addition, we have begun a series of telephone surveys called "in process reviews" designed to gather the opinions of patent attorneys on the quality of patent examiner office actions. In Trademarks, a telephone survey designed to help measure the effectiveness of the Trademark Flexiplace Pilot Program was conducted with 200 trademark attorneys.

Responses to these survey efforts are used to guide action planning for the three business areas: Patents, Trademarks and Information Dissemination. The tables on the following pages compare the 1995 and 1996 survey results with this year's results for Patents and Trademarks. Also included is overall satisfaction data for the seven industry technology areas as well as for the major Information Dissemination products and services.

We continue to use a variety of approaches to obtain reliable and timely information from our customers:

- Focus sessions
- Roundtable discussions
- Written surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Assistance Centers
- Interviews
- Meetings
- Conferences

The number for the Patent Assistance Center is (1-800-PTO-9199)

The number for the Trademark Assistance Center is (703-308-9000)

The number for Public Records is (703-308-9726 or 1-800-972-6382)

The number for Electronic Products Help Desk is (703-306-2600)

This year for the first time in Patents, customer satisfaction data will be gathered and reported by the industry technology area.

1995, 1996 and 1998 Results— Customer Satisfaction Survey

From 1995 to 1996, our customer satisfaction survey response rates in both Patents and Trademarks had decreased somewhat from 37% to 35% in Patents and from 51% to 43% in Trademarks. In 1998, we increased the number of Patent surveys mailed to 6,370 in order to have valid sample sizes for each of the seven technology areas, and we mailed 1,004 surveys to Trademark customers. Response rates increased in both Patents and Trademarks from the 1996 rates. The Patent response rate increased 7 percentage points to 42%, and Trademarks

increased 8 percentage points to 51%. The response rate for the Information Dissemination Office was 42%.

Overall, 1998 satisfaction results changed very little from the previous two surveys for both Patents and Trademarks. Patents increased very slightly from 50% to 52% and Trademarks decreased very slightly from 64% to 63%. In Patents, however, there were some differences in the overall satisfaction levels with each of the technology areas as indicated in the chart on page 10 of this section.

Patent Satisfaction Against Customer Standards

Comparison of 1995, '96 & '98 Patent Satisfaction Levels With PTO's Performance Against Customer Standards

(Five point scale, no neutral midpoint)

(Percent satisfied)

<i>Patent standards</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1998</i>
Treat you with courtesy each time you contact us	72.8	71.4	79.8
Direct you promptly to the proper office or person	52.7	51.0	60.9
Return telephone calls within one business day or provide another contact	57.3	54.9	56.5
Set forth clearly in written communications, the technical, procedural, and legal position of examiners	54.0	50.1	64.8
Provide legible correspondence that is of good print quality	74.1	75.2	82.1
Respond to letters within 30 days of receipt	58.3	53.7	45.2
Widely disseminate information on changes in practices and procedures before their effective date	62.5	66.4	67.2
Deliver fax transmissions of properly addressed papers marked "Draft" to examiners in one business day	63.7	57.3	55.7
Match properly addressed fax of Formal Amendments after final rejection with the file; deliver to examiner within three days	62.6	58.9	51.0
Mail correct filing notices for complete, standard applications within 19 days of receipt of application	56.1	50.9	30.4
Conduct thorough search of all information	58.2	56.4	67.1
Respond within 30 days to papers filed after the examiner allows the application and up to the time of receipt of issue fee payment	65.8	62.4	63.3

The most notable increases from 1996 relate to examination quality. There was a 15% increase in "clear written communications of examiners" and an 11% increase in "conduct a thorough search." The major declines from 1996 include a 21% decrease in "mailing correct filing notices within 19 days of receipt"* and a 9% decrease in "responding to status letters within 30 days of receipt."

*Note: During the time period immediately before and during the distribution of this survey, filing receipts were taking as long as 130 days to be mailed. Current filing receipts are being mailed in 30 days.

In Patents, the key drivers of overall satisfaction include the following six customer service standards:

- 1) Direct you promptly to the proper office or person.
- 2) Return telephone calls within one business day.
- 3) Set forth clearly in written communications, the position of examiners.
- 4) Respond to status letters within 30 days.
- 5) Conduct a thorough search.
- 6) Respond within 30 days to papers filed after the examiner allows the application.

In Trademarks, the key drivers of overall satisfaction include the following six customer service standards:

- 1) Treat you with courtesy each time you contact us.
- 2) Direct you promptly to the proper office or person.
- 3) Return telephone calls within one business day.
- 4) Set forth clearly in written communications, the position of examining attorneys.
- 5) Mail correct filing notices within 14 days of receipt.
- 6) Determine the registrability of trademarks within 13 months of the receipt of application.

Comparison of 1995, '96 & '98 Trademark Satisfaction Levels With PTO's Performance Against Customer Standards

(Five point scale, no neutral midpoint)

(Percent satisfied)

<i>Trademark standards</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1998</i>
Treat you with courtesy each time you contact us	81.2	80.8	85.3
Direct you promptly to the proper office or person	64.8	60.4	69.6
Return telephone calls within one business day or provide another contact	65.2	54.4	60.2
Set forth clearly in written communications, the technical, procedural, and legal position of examiners	71.8	75.1	81.1
Provide legible correspondence that is of good print quality	91.5	89.0	93.4
Respond to letters within 30 days of receipt	57.3	46.6	52.6
Widely disseminate information on changes in practices and procedures before their effective date	67.4	66.9	61.7
Mail correct filing notices within 14 days of receipt	60.9	38.1	37.5
Provide first communication within three months	47.9	32.3	28.3
Notice of Abandonment within 45 days	55.1	55.6	57.4
Notice of Publication within 30 days	55.9	51.5	59.9
Mail Certificates of Registration within seven days	49.0	51.0	58.5
Determine registrability within 13 months	53.7	45.5	51.6

Trademark Satisfaction Against Customer Standards

The most notable increase from 1996 was “directing you promptly to the proper office or person,” a 10% increase. Only one Trademark standard decreased 5% or more: “disseminate information on changes in practices and procedures before their effective date” a 5% decrease.

Comparison of 1995, '96 & '98 Patent Satisfaction Levels With Patent Process Categories

(Five point scale with neutral midpoint)

(Percent satisfied)

Patent Satisfaction With Process Categories

<i>Patent process category</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1998</i>
Overall satisfaction	49.5	50.9	51.9
Amount of time needed to submit required information	61.1	65.1	66.0
Effort needed to prepare required information	60.1	61.1	65.9
Clarity of instructions	64.1	66.1	70.9
Length of application process	43.4	37.8	32.6
Cost of Patent applications	22.2	28.6	30.9
Clarity of the guidelines or criteria	44.8	44.3	52.1
Quality of the status information provided	46.1	44.8	48.2
Quality of the feedback provided	40.8	37.1	45.7
Timeliness of Patent grant	42.3	36.6	33.0
Issuance of the product in a timely manner	45.8	39.3	34.2
Outcome met your objectives	57.8	61.3	62.3
Fairness of decision	56.7	54.4	61.3
Ability to provide accurate answers to questions	51.5	45.4	50.6
Expert advice about the process	47.8	41.1	46.0
Clear explanation about procedures	47.9	43.7	47.8
Assistance at a time convenient to you	55.9	53.0	54.6
Prompt and helpful service	48.9	46.0	49.4
Flexibility in trying to address your needs	43.2	39.1	43.9
Handling of delays	36.2	30.7	15.2
Handling of mistakes	37.2	31.7	21.0
Overall courteousness	65.5	64.8	63.8

The most notable increases from 1996 relate to “quality of the feedback provided,” a 9% increase, and “clarity of the guidelines or criteria,” also a 9% increase. The major declines from 1996 include a 16% decrease in the “handling of delays” and an 11% decrease in the “handling of mistakes.”

Comparison of 1995, '96 & '98 Trademark Satisfaction Levels with Trademark Process Categories

(Five point scale with neutral midpoint)

(Percent satisfied)

<i>Trademark process category</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1998</i>
Overall satisfaction	63.5	64.5	63.3
Amount of time needed to submit required information	74.8	82.6	79.7
Effort needed to prepare required information	76.9	84.3	80.2
Clarity of instructions	72.1	81.4	78.6
Length of application process	36.7	37.1	40.6
Cost of Trademarks applications	41.5	45.4	56.4
Clarity of the guidelines or criteria	53.7	60.7	60.1
Quality of the status information provided	55.9	57.0	63.1
Quality of the feedback provided	51.6	57.6	59.2
Timeliness of Trademark Registration	33.5	29.3	31.7
Issuance of the product in a timely manner	34.7	38.1	41.6
Outcome met your objectives	69.7	74.5	67.1
Fairness of decision	67.1	72.3	62.7
Ability to provide accurate answers to questions	66.1	67.5	69.3
Expert advice about the process	61.4	60.5	61.4
Clear explanation about procedures	60.5	63.7	65.0
Assistance at a time convenient to you	61.4	68.2	62.4
Prompt and helpful service	58.2	63.8	58.3
Flexibility in trying to address your needs	52.3	54.3	52.7
Handling of delays	37.3	33.8	18.5
Handling of mistakes	41.0	39.0	28.1
Overall courteousness	72.1	78.0	65.5

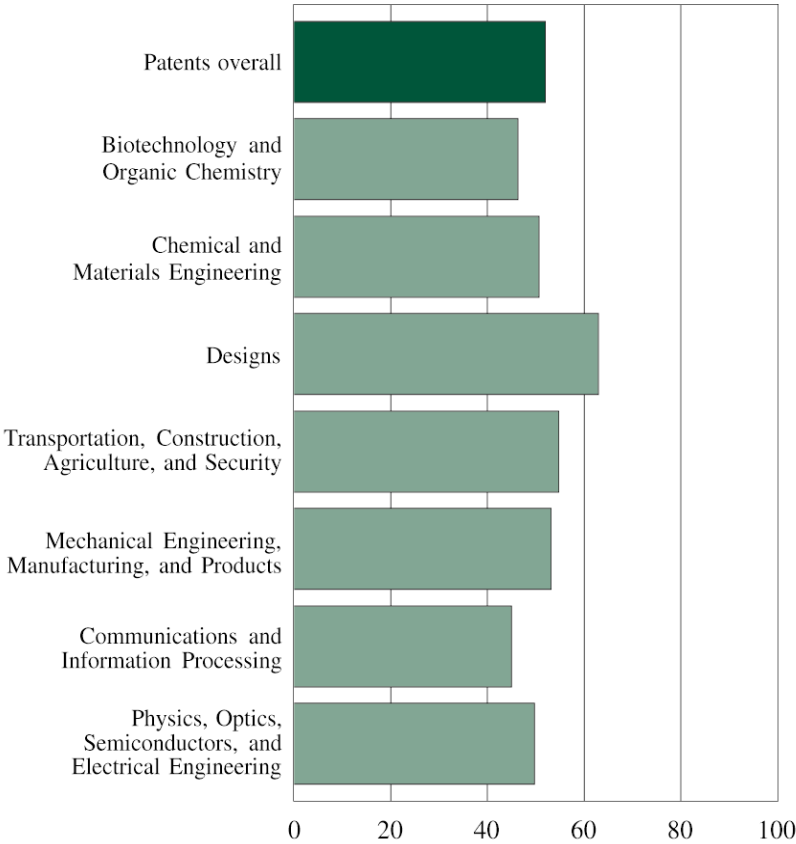
Trademark Satisfaction With Process Categories

The most notable increases from 1996 relate to the “cost of the trademark application,” an 11% increase,” and “quality of the status information provided,” a 6% increase. The major declines from 1996 include a 15% decrease in “handling of delays” and a 12% decrease in the “handling of mistakes.”

This year for the first time, data was gathered by the technology area in order to give each area data that is specific for their customers. Differences by the technology area illustrate that respondents from the designs technology area (2900) are the most satisfied overall with the least satisfied respondents making up the communications and information processing technology area (2700).

1998 Overall Satisfaction With Patent Process by Technology Area

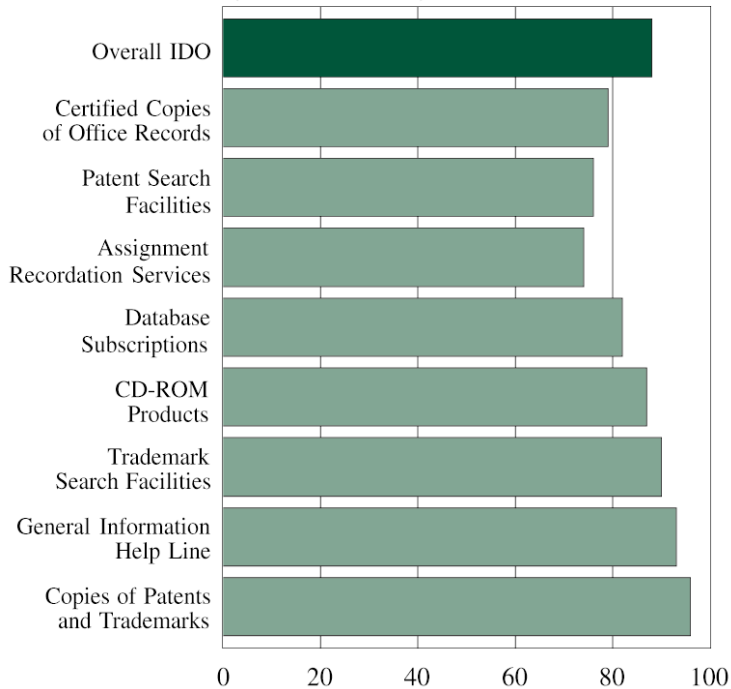
(Four point scale)
(Percent satisfied)



The grand opening of the first Technology Center, 2700, Communications and Information Processing

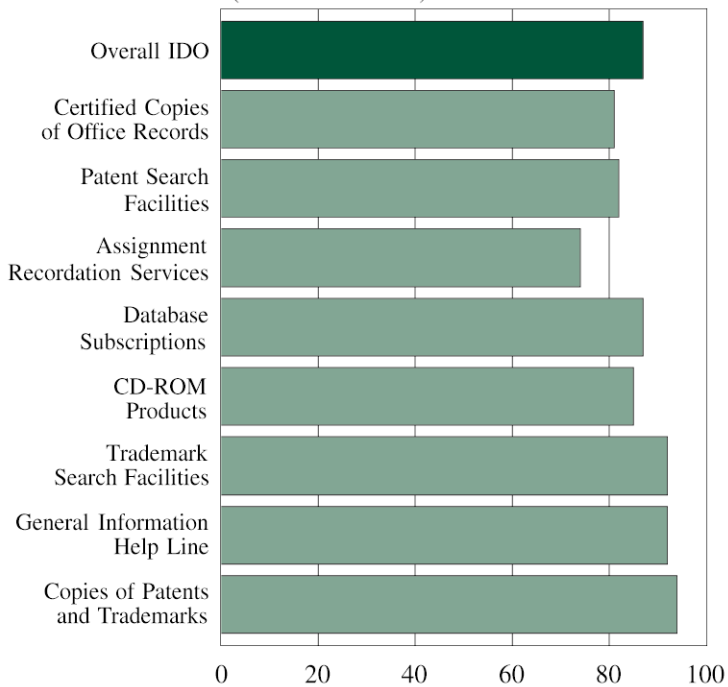
1998 Overall Satisfaction With Information Dissemination Products and Services

(Four point scale)
(Percent satisfied)



1998 Overall Satisfaction With the Ease of Access to Patent and Trademark Information

(Four point scale)
(Percent satisfied)



In 1997, PTO's Information Dissemination Organizations (IDO) conducted a series of customer surveys to assess customer satisfaction, identify areas of customer service in need of improvement, validate or refine customer service goals, and identify new products and services needed by customers. Over 5,894 surveys were distributed and the customer response rate averaged 42%. Key to the IDO mission to promote awareness of and provide effective access to patent and trademark information is customers' overall satisfaction with products and services as well as the assessment of ease of access to patent and trademark information. Overall satisfaction results were quite favorable.

Improvement in Customer Service Delivery



Biotech Customers receive valuable information from PTO Management during a one day open house

Our frequent communications with customers through focus sessions and surveys have resulted in the identification by both our employees and customers of a variety of changes in service delivery and improvement initiatives. Many of these initiatives have already been implemented or are targeted to be implemented during the next year.

Patents

Patents will continue to emphasize improvement in performance against four key standards: forwarding calls promptly to the right person or Office, returning telephone calls in one business day or providing another appropriate contact, writing complete and clear office actions, and performing a complete search. In addition, Patents is committed to improving the way problems are resolved when identified by customers, as well as the handling of filing receipts, facsimile transmissions and status inquiries. Initiatives include:

- Realignment of the arts and technologies to Technology Centers that parallel private industry.
- Establishment of a Reengineering Lab pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness of team processing of patent applications.

- Creation of a comprehensive internal and external measurement system for customer service quality goals and objectives.
- Creation of an extensive review of examiner office actions by Quality Assurance Specialists with customer validation via telephone interviews.
- Development of additional technical training.
- Establishment of a customer service contact in each Technology Center.
- Provision of customer service training for patent employees.
- Establishment of a Customer Service Recognition Program that provides public recognition for good service to customers. One hundred and eight employees received this recognition in FY 98.
- Integration of quality efforts is planned for FY 99 that will leverage the strength and expertise of all the quality resources to more efficiently and effectively improve processes to provide better service.
- Review of a number of significant PTO regulations to improve application processing. These changes when promulgated in their final form, will significantly help to improve the quality of the resulting patents as well as reduce cycle time, align fees with work performed and help prepare the way for electronic application receipt and patent publishing.



PTO Management engages independent inventors in a lively discussion during a Town Hall Meeting at the Annual Independent Inventors Conference

Trademarks

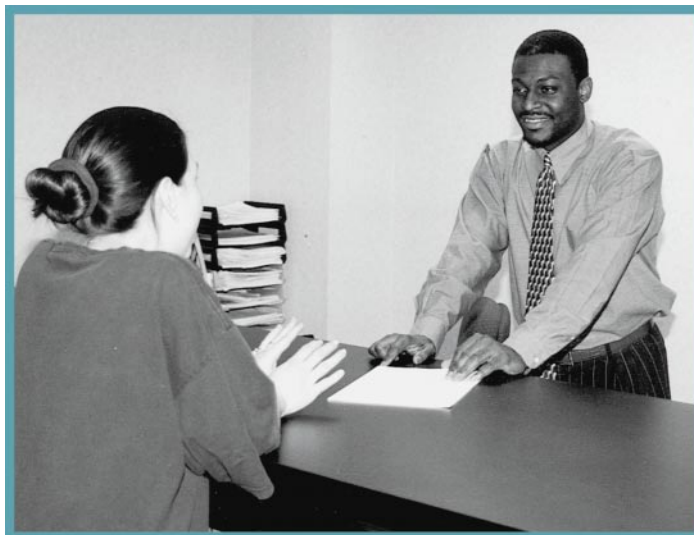
Trademarks continues to focus on two key commitments: reducing pendency time to 3.9 months by September 1999 and offering electronic filing to customers. The most critical issue for reducing first action pendency by the end of fiscal 1999 has been increasing the number of employees and expanding the facilities needed to process and examine the existing backlog of applications and keep up with new filings. Trademarks has launched management initiatives to improve employee understanding of workflow and systems to address customers problems that create delays and rework. Initiatives include:

- Offering access to trademark application forms through our web site.
 - Offering customers the ability to file trademark applications electronically.
 - Piloting a work at home project for attorneys.
 - Provision for an intensive on the job training program for new attorneys.
 - Increasing examination quality through business process reengineering.
 - Establishing an “Adopt a Customer” Program.
 - Using “root cause analysis” for investigating errors in technical quality and recommending process changes to prevent future errors.
- Improving regional access to patent and trademark information by establishing a PTDL in every state and Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Established a new Partnership Library at Rice University in Houston, Texas, to provide expanded search services and product delivery to customers in that geographic region.
 - Consolidating public record operations and improved customer ordering and delivery services.
 - Installing a new telephony system, the Enterprise Call Center, which provides faster and more efficient processing of general information, patent assistance, trademark assistance, public records, and customer calls.
 - Improving the ease of use of optical disc information products by converting to DVD-ROM technology.
 - Expanding the use of the Internet to provide ordering and delivery options for some information products.
 - Establishing a separate file copying area to improve the environment of the reference area in the Patent Search Room.
 - Extending General Information Help Line operation hours to service West Coast customers.

Information Dissemination

The Information Dissemination organizations continue to focus on product and service delivery and improvements to patent and trademark information. Initiatives include:

- Expanding Internet Web offerings to include a searchable text and image database of over one million pending and registered trademark records. This fulfilled the many requests for searchable trademark data received from customers. Patent full text and image databases will be added in FY 99.



Trademark Assistance Center (TAC) staff routinely help Trademark customers solve problems and obtain information

Success Stories



Attendees at the Annual Independent Inventors Conference listen intently, to learn about Intellectual property

One trademark user commented “today for the first time, I used the USPTO Trademark database through the WWW. Hooray! If there was ever an application well suited to the Internet, this is it. Congratulations on making this available to the public.”

A user of the General Information Help Line commented “The overall service from the Patent and Trademark Office has been excellent, even above my expectations.”

“Although my patent attorney for the past 10 years is in Washington, DC and can handle my work at the PTO, I sometimes need general information, and your PTO customer service does that well.”

A letter from an attorney praised a PTO employee as follows: “In a matter of 15 minutes or so, you managed to track down a file, review and understand a complicated situation, confer with the appropriate Patent Office staff, and answer and resolve a significant issue for one of our clients. You moved a pretty good-sized mountain for us—and quickly. And in a downright friendly way.”

Another attorney wrote (in speaking of two PTO employees): “They really exemplified the type of public service that perhaps too frequently goes unnoticed and which really tends to make a difference. Thank you once again for cultivating such a friendly and helpful staff and also for taking the time to personally meet with me on the various matters about which we spoke.”

An E-mail sender with regards to filing a trademark application electronically remarked: “Thank you for your fast response and receipt. Let me congratulate you for the efficient and positive service that you offer to the people even outside your country. Best regards from Paraguay.”

From respondents to PTO Customer Surveys:

“I consider myself fortunate to work with such highly trained and motivated civil servants. Professionalism of the Examining Corps is enviable, and I hope it continues to improve. Best wishes.”

“We deal with Patent Offices around the world, and we still believe that the USPTO is among the best.”

“Examiners are very friendly. Examiners are willing to discuss the situation and work out a solution to the problem.”

“I had an examiner personally contact me once he discovered that the notice of allowance had been sent to the wrong address.”

“The pilot reengineering lab is a ‘god send’; the examiners are enthusiastic and they seem to know how to streamline the entire process better than anybody outside the PTO; the results are promising and should be helpful.”

“The little guy can still represent himself and succeed in obtaining a patent.”

“The Trademark Examining Corps is pro-active, professional, knowledgeable and very bright.”

Attendees at the Independent Inventors Conference, held in San Francisco in October, made the following comments:

“I am very impressed by the congeniality, camaraderie and family spirit that all the representatives of the PTO seem to possess. Every one seems happy with their work and seems happy to help those who ask. It shows in your attitude.”

“I am most impressed with the friendliness & helpfulness of the staff. Your desire to meet and discuss issues/process of patenting is greatly appreciated. Keep up the good work!”





U.S. Department of Commerce
Patent and Trademark Office
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