



Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services

High Impact Service Provider Annual CX Action Plan

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office / Patents

June 2019



2019 HISP Self-Assessment Summary

Patents has made progress in the areas of measurement and governance, which were its focus for FY2019. Organizational culture is slowly rolling forward too but will take considerably more work to mature due to the scale of the Office.

Measurement: 2 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

Patents has been working with others across USPTO to develop consistent CX/UX* measurement practices within an approved umbrella clearance that allows for external publication.

What are you most proud of?

Patents is most proud of its efforts to collaborate with others across USPTO to institutionalize its CX measurement methodologies and approaches, and its ability to quickly incorporate the CX CAP goal questions into existing survey instruments.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Patents needs to further harvest and spread the voice of the customer throughout the Patents Office.

Patents also needs to develop and implement a CX data analysis and publication plan.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Patents is in the process of submitting its new CX CAP goal PRA package in order to publish the results of customer surveys. Without that approval, Patents is unable to publish its data.

What else would you like to share?

Patents has seen a 20% improvement in customers' perceptions of patent examination quality, which is significant.

Governance: 2 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

Patents senior leaders articulated their CX Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals, which closely align to the USPTO and Department of Commerce strategic plans.

Patents is also in the midst of standing up governance structure that will coordinate CX efforts across Patents as well as across USPTO more broadly.

What are you most proud of?

Patents is most proud that of its quick progress toward a transparent, collaborative, and inclusive governance model.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Patents plans to develop a four year CX strategic plan leveraging the Patents CX vision, mission, and goals.

Patents also plans to formalize the CX/UX governance structure by the end of the calendar year.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

N/A

What else would you like to share?

Patents hired a CX Administrator to coordinate and advance CX governance, organizational culture, and measurement.

* Customer Experience = CX; User Experience = UX





Organization & Culture: 0 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

Patents is building organizational awareness of CX and engaging various groups as it develops a more robust set of trainings and tools for employees as well as the CX champions.

What are you most proud of?

Senior leaders and mid-level managers are asking more customer-focused questions during decision-making with the intention of driving positive customer impacts. Employees are interested to know how they fit in and what they can contribute to sustain/improve CX.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Patents will need to scale its awareness and marketing of CX internally to reach all employees, which is a main focus for the remainder of the year.

Patents also will begin to include employees in the design efforts of CX initiatives.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Sheer scale of the workforce is a challenge but, through use of media and marketing materials, Patents will be able to overcome that hurdle.

Workforce is undergoing other significant changes simultaneously, and our team will need to work collaboratively with bargaining units.

What else would you like to share?

Customer Research: 2 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

Patents has personas for seven customer types, which it plans to review and refine using the survey results and openly available information. Patents also captures employee feedback regularly to learn where programs can be improved.

What are you most proud of?

Patents uses its employee feedback to drive its process improvement efforts and refinement of tools and communications in support of Patent examiners.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Patents could leverage the employee surveys internally as well as Gallup Q12 results to create employee personas and specific interventions to improve employee experiences that would directly contribute to improved customer experiences.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Consistent understanding and definition of who are the customers within Patents and USPTO.

What else would you like to share?

USPTO will be sending out a comprehensive survey of Patent application potential and existing filers, which will be used to help further develop and refine Patent customer personas.





Service Design: 4 / 6

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

Patents is working more closely with the Trademarks, Communications, and User Experience Branch groups to identify opportunities to collectively manage customer or user contacts and leverage their insights for improved products, tools, and communications.

What are you most proud of?

Patents recently went through a major change in its authentication approach, which was mostly successful. However, late in the transition, the technology hit a snag and the voice of the customer was received through social media, surveys, and phone calls. Having the VoC, allowed Patents to take corrective action and informed decision-making surrounding how to proceed.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Patents hopes to grow its efforts to include customers in co-designing tools, products, and communications.

USPTO aspires to collectively manage its customer and user information so that it can more strategically leverage customer insights for testing and ensure consistent communications to and from customers.

What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

USPTO does not have a CRM system or business processes in place to streamline contact mgmt. for testing purposes.

What else would you like to share?

N/A

Areas of Focus

Reflecting upon our 2019 CX Maturity Self-Assessment, our HISP has decided to focus on raising our maturity in the following areas in FY19/FY20:

- Measurement
- Governance
- Organization & Culture
- Customer Research
- Service Design





FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Recently, an inventor was testifying before Congress and expressed criticisms of the USPTO.gov website, saying that it was far too difficult to navigate to find resources for someone who cannot afford legal assistance. The Director requested that the website be modified to make it easier for novice applicants to find what they need as an advocate for their constituent.

Example HISP Customer Profile

The applicant in this case is an independent inventor without representation (“pro se”) who may require pro bono legal assistance to apply for a patent. These users are often unfamiliar with legal terminology.

Customer Needs + Frustrations

The customer wants to quickly and easily find information pertaining to their needs on Patents’ website (www.uspto.gov) so that they can apply for a patent using pro bono assistance. They were unable to navigate the site using the terms they knew to find the content they desired.

HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

Patent related website changes can be challenging to complete quickly because the content management is decentralized and overseen by the program areas themselves. In this case, program information pertaining to pro bono and pro se applicants is managed by three groups. Additionally, site architecture and major changes must be coordinated through a web advisory council, which is run by the Communications Office as well as loop back to the Congressional Affairs Division and the USPTO Front Office. At times, the USPTO’s strict web standards and the internal bureaucratic hurdles to change the website can be frustrating to customers and employees alike.

Stats

USPTO uses Google Analytics to better understand the site traffic, depth of search, and other elements related to usability that could impact customers such as this one. While the content they sought is available, there are ways to better promote the information via links, call out boxes, and other means that could help draw attention to that content earlier on in their visit.

Action 1

Focus Area: **Governance**

Goal to be accomplished by September 30th, 2021:

Establish a clearer web oversight and governance approach within Patents that will enable greater visibility into digital experience pain points and facilitate timely resolution of those pain points.

Critical Activities and Milestones:

- Identify a lead for website coordination within Patents
- Draft a Patents digital experience improvement web strategy and approach for web design, oversight, and maintenance
- Present to Communications Office for input
- Get Patents leadership approval
- Get DX plan approved by Web Advisory Council
- Retrain, retool existing staff to be able to meet charge
- Execute new DX approach

Other Notes:

- Hiring is limited for non-examiner roles until 2021 so all resources must be supplied from within





FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Customer experience (CX) is highlighted as an agency priority in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan yet many employees are unaware of what it is, why it's important, and how they contribute to outstanding CX. We aim to raise awareness of customer-focus as a USPTO core value so that employees understand the importance of the work to those they serve and know how they contribute to providing outstanding customer experiences.

Example HISP Customer Profile

All USPTO and Patents customers may be impacted

Customer Needs + Frustrations

Some USPTO leaders and employees don't understand what it's like to be a customer, which causes frustrations that products, services, tools, and communications are not as clear, consistent, or intuitive as customers expect. Further, employee disconnects from customer experiences and actual customer outcomes has the effect of distancing employees from mission achievement and severing the link from intrinsic motivations that may empower them to find a deeper sense of purpose in their work and reach even greater job performance.

To bridge those gaps, our team is developing a short training series to highlight USPTO customer experience and demonstrate how vital a role each employee plays in making that experience outstanding. Our first training will be aimed at new USPTO employees and will feature stories directly from the mouths of the customers we serve, bringing that voice of the customer directly inside the building, and helping newly hired employees understand that outstanding customer experience is core value at USPTO from day 1.

HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

To make a great training series, we will need to work across USPTO to mine for great customer stories and enlist the help of compelling speakers who are willing to be a part of this effort. We will also need to borrow resourcing to do the training development, editing, and production.

Stats

We anticipate that this effort will take between six and nine months to complete due to the high level of coordination needed. Once implemented, we will be able to track the volume of viewers, and number of trainees exposed to the series as the trainings get integrated into existing trainings.

Action 2

Focus Area: **Organization & Culture**

Goal to be accomplished by September 30th, 2021:

Launch short introductory training about customer experience in New Hire Orientations for all USPTO employees.

Critical Activities and Milestones:

- Gain agreement across USPTO on the creation of this customer and user experience training series
- Develop training plan/schedule
- Develop a training outline and script for the new hires
- Gather customer stories and/or review existing customer interviews or other event quotes that support the outline and script
- Assemble the training content, edit, and overlay voice tracks
- Review draft of training, revise as needed
- Present training to various leaders across USPTO for approvals
- Make any final edits/tweaks and share back
- Get approval to launch training
- Send training module to New Hire Orientation team and/or launch other communications efforts related to training debut

Other Notes:

This is one of several attempts to exploit different platforms to rapidly scale up CX/UX awareness throughout the Agency.

