



## **Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services**

**High Impact Service Provider Annual CX Action Plan**

**U.S. Patent and Trademark Office  
Trademarks business unit**

*June 2019*



## HISP Annual Maturity Self-Assessment Summary

In 200 words or less total, tell us about your efforts around each core CX function by responding to the following prompts that apply.

### Measurement: 3 / 6

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

We are establishing consistent customer experience measurement throughout our customer journey. In the last year, we implemented four new customer surveys.

What are you most proud of?

We are most proud of implementing a survey on our office actions (official letters) sent during the examination of a trademark application to an applicant from a Trademark examining attorney. Putting a survey at this touchpoint enables us to gain insight into the customer experience as our staff conveys critical information to our customers for the first time.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Within Trademarks, the customer experience and business intelligence teams have fostered a collaborative relationship. Together, they have established a vision for bringing together operational and customer data to inform decision making. By harmonizing efforts to collect and leverage data, they will have a greater impact on customer experience strategy and enhancements.

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

Trademarks does not have a robust customer relationship management (CRM) system that extends past Tier I calls in the Trademark Assistance Center. Therefore, the business unit cannot track or leverage CRM data from Tier II support interactions.

What else would you like to share?

None.

### Governance: 4 / 6

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

The Trademarks business unit has a Customer Experience Strategy Sync. Staff who lead customer-impacting work areas gather at these sync meetings to share information and make informed decisions. This allows for executive oversight and coordination in areas affecting customer experience.

We have established centralized website publishing. Only qualified staff members can publish information on our website, ensuring we provide quality information that is legally accurate and in plain language.

What are you most proud of?

We have a five-year customer experience strategic plan. It was constructed with feedback from our customers and employees. The plan lays out where we will focus to enhance the customer experience while continuously making tangible enhancements. In year two, we are on track, achieving defined milestones and seeing measurable results.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

Trademarks is collaborating across the USPTO, with business units like Patents, Office of the Chief Communications Officer, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer, to establish a vision for a customer experience governance structure to ensure strategic alignment.

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

N/A

What else would you like to share?

None.





## Organization & Culture: 5 / 6

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

The customer experience administrator delivers training during staff onboarding and at all hands gatherings.  
We operate a customer service recognition program that recognizes outstanding customer service.  
We have cross-functional employee teams to address customer experience challenges.  
We have a customer experience administrator responsible for creating and driving customer experience strategy, programs, and projects.

What are you most proud of?

We had a shortage of staff with the skills and experience necessary to address key customer experience challenges, such as overhauling our informational website. In the last nine months, we hired staff with specialized skills to address these needs. We focused on acquiring staff with skill in plain language writing and website strategy.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We are working to ensure that staff receive ongoing, milestone customer experience training as they are promoted.  
The Commissioner for Trademarks sent the first "CX Update" to all employees. CX Updates will be sent periodically to engage employees in customer experience activities and progress.

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

N/A

What else would you like to share?

None.

## Customer Research: 2 / 6

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

We maintain six customer personas and have shared them with all Trademark staff.  
We continually leverage survey feedback data to gain insight into our customer journey and prioritize customer experience enhancements.

What are you most proud of?

In coordination with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, User Experience Branch, we included customer interviews, feedback, and testing in the creation and refinement of new digital services on My.USPTO.gov.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We are building a more robust and flexible customer research capability. This includes complying with the Paperwork Reduction Act and Privacy Act while building a meaningful and workable customer list. Customers will be able to "subscribe" to participate in customer experience feedback opportunities. This will enable co-creation in areas such as content development, navigational design, system/service design, official correspondence, and information clarity/comprehension.

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

USPTO does not have a robust CRM system or business process in place to streamline contact management for customer research purposes. Therefore, time intensive, manual management is required.

What else would you like to share?

None.





## Service Design: 4/ 6

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

We are working collaboratively with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, User Experience Branch to ensure new digital services offered through My.USPTO.gov are developed using human-centered design.

Our Trademarks' staff participate in and lead projects that use an agile, iterative design process.

What are you most proud of?

We are building our capacity in user experience to incorporate this valuable skill set into all customer experience enhancements. We trained our staff in this area to include this perspective in future work. We have already reaped the benefit of staff skill building through our approach to strategic website improvements.

What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We are going to implement tree testing and/or card sorting with customers as we improve the navigation on our informational website. This will enable us to co-create with our customers while identifying an information architecture that will enable them to find, understand, and use information on our website.

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

We do not currently have an approved mechanism/software solution to perform this task efficiently with customers, though we are seeking one.

What else would you like to share?

None.

## 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

Describe a use case where a typical customer of your program faced challenge(s) during a service experience. This case should relate to one of your organization's focus areas for the remainder of FY19 and through FY20.

### Example HISP Customer Profile

*Who is one of the primary customer served by your HISP? What goal(s) is this customer trying to accomplish by interacting with your service?*

A small business owner who applied for and received a trademark registration five years ago now wants to renew her trademark registration to "keep it alive." She believes she should be able to navigate the renewal process and wants to save money. She decides to do the work herself and does not hire an attorney.

### Customer Needs + Frustrations

*What makes the difference for this customer when they're interacting with your service (ex. clear guidance upfront, knowledgeable employee to help them pull together an application, a fast processing time)? What common blockers might they face when interacting with your service?*

Needs:

- Information about renewal that is easy to find, understand, and use
- Digital services that are consistent, clear, and intuitive
- Examples of what to submit as "proof" she is still using her trademark

Frustrations:

- Unsure of what to submit as her "proof of use," a critical requirement
- A filing system that is difficult to navigate
- Does not understand the office actions (official letters) she receives from the Trademark business unit because they use legal terms

### HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

*What can make it difficult for your HISP to meet this need? Is it an internal IT system, process, or unclear guidance? We do not have a customer survey to capture aspects of the trademark maintenance customer experience, other than some areas of our website. Additionally, our current filing system does not facilitate an intuitive experience.*

### Stats

*What data do you have that documents this experience/service? Could be, "less than 1/3 of our customers are connected to internet or smartphones," or "Employee engagement scores on FEVS dropped two points last year". Our customer satisfaction scores for those seeking information about the post registration trademark maintenance on our website are below all relevant benchmarks.*

## Action 1

### Focus Area: **Measurement**

#### Goal to be accomplished by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021:

Implement additional customer experience measures throughout the end-to-end trademark customer journey to provide greater insight and inform enhancement efforts.

#### Critical Activities and Milestones:

- Research current customer feedback trends related to post registration trademark maintenance
- Conduct interviews and focus groups with Trademarks staff to identify staff and customer pain points
- Identify information gaps and determine the appropriate area(s) where a survey would be useful
- Design a survey to capture the voice of the customer and gauge customer satisfaction with the trademark maintenance process
- Receive survey collection clearance from OMB to ensure compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act
- Deploy the survey(s)
- Analyze results

#### Other Notes:

None





## FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Describe a use case where a typical customer of your program faced challenge(s) during a service experience. This case should relate to one of your organization's Focus Areas for the remainder of FY19 and through FY20.

### Example HISP Customer Profile

A seasoned trademark attorney at an intellectual property law firm wants to provide excellent and affordable client service by registering and maintaining trademarks on the timelines clients want.

### Customer Needs + Frustrations

Needs:

- Digital services that are consistent, clear, and intuitive so his junior staff can navigate them efficiently and effectively
- Clear communication from the Trademarks business unit when changes are coming, such as redesigned digital services or rule changes so he can prepare properly
- Reliable USPTO IT systems so searching, filing, and viewing status documents are not delayed by outages

Frustrations

- A filing system that is difficult to navigate and suffers from unpredictable outages.
- Uncertainty of whether or not future improvements will be helpful.
- Unclear or unexpected information about upcoming changes that makes it hard to plan

### HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

USPTO does not have a robust CRM system, approval, or business process in place to streamline contact management for customer research purposes. Therefore, time intensive, manual management is required.

### Stats

The majority of current customer research efforts do not include enough customers from all customer segments.

## Action 2

### Focus Area: Customer Research

**Goal to be accomplished by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021:**

Build a more robust and flexible customer research capability to enable co-creation in areas such as content development, navigational design, system/service design, official correspondence, and information clarity/comprehension.

#### **Critical Activities and Milestones:**

- Comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act and Privacy Act and receive proper collection clearances
- Build a meaningful and workable customer list representing all major customer segments
- Enable customers to "subscribe" to receive information about feedback opportunities
- Reach out to customer for various critical customer research efforts

#### **Other Notes:**

None.

