



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Patents External Quality Survey (formerly Customer Panel
Quality Survey)

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on this extension of a continuing information collection, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. § 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: InformationCollection@uspto.gov. Include "0651-0057 Patents External Quality Survey comment" in the subject line of the message.
- Mail: Susan K. Fawcett, Records Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, United States Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.
- Federal Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information should be directed to the attention of Martin Rater, Management Analyst, Office of Patent Quality Assurance, United States Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450; by telephone at 571-272-5966; or by e-mail to Martin.Rater@uspto.gov with "Paperwork" in the subject line.

Additional information about this collection is also available at <http://www.reginfo.gov> under "Information Collection Review."

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. Abstract

For over the past 10 years, the USPTO has used surveys to obtain customer feedback regarding the products,

services, and related service standards of the USPTO. The USPTO used the data to measure how well the agency is meeting established customer service standards, to identify any disjoints between customer expectations and USPTO performance, and to develop improvement strategies. Typically, these surveys ask customers to express their satisfaction with the USPTO's products and services based upon their interactions with the agency as a whole over a 12-month period.

In order to obtain further data concerning customer ratings of the USPTO's services, service standards, and performance, the USPTO developed the Patents External Quality Survey. This survey narrows the focus of customer satisfaction to examination quality and uses a longitudinal, rotating panel design to assess changes in customer perceptions and to identify key areas for examiner training and opportunities for improvement. The USPTO plans to survey patent agents, attorneys, and other individuals from large domestic corporations (including those with 500+ employees), small and medium-size businesses, and universities and other non-profit research organizations. In addition, the USPTO also plans to survey independent inventors. The USPTO does not plan to survey foreign entities.

The USPTO will draw a random sample of these customers from their database. Due to the rotating panel design, some sample members will be surveyed twice in order to measure change over a period of time. Each year of the survey will include two waves of data collection.

The Patents External Quality Survey is a mail survey, although respondents can also complete the survey electronically on the Web. The content of both versions will be identical. A survey packet containing the questionnaire, a separate cover letter prepared by the Commissioner of Patents, a postage-paid, pre-addressed return envelope, and instructions for completing the survey electronically will be mailed to all sample members. A pre-notification letter, reminder/thank you postcards, and telephone calls will be used to encourage response from sample members.

This is a voluntary survey and all responses will remain confidential. The collected data will not be linked to the respondent and contact information that is used for sampling purposes will be maintained in a separate file from the quantitative data. Respondents are not required to provide any identifying information such as their name, address, or Social Security Number. In order to access and complete the online survey, respondents will need to use the

username, password, and survey ID number provided by the USPTO.

II. Method of Collection

By mail or electronically over the Internet if respondents choose to complete the survey online.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0651-0057.

Form Number(s): No form numbers.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Affected Public: Individuals or households; businesses or other for-profits; and non-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 2,500 responses per year, with an estimated 75 submitted by small entities. Out of a sample size of 2,750 for each wave of data collection, the USPTO estimates that 1,250 completed surveys will be received, for a response rate of 45%. This estimate was based on the response rates of the previous survey waves that the USPTO has conducted. Each year of the survey will include two waves of data collection with an estimated 2,500 completed surveys received annually (1,250 completed surveys x 2 waves of the survey). Of this total, the USPTO

estimates that 20% (500) of the surveys will be returned by mail and that 80% (2,000) of the surveys will be completed using the online option.

Estimated Time Per Response: The USPTO estimates that it takes the public approximately 10 minutes (0.17 hours) to complete either the paper or online version of this survey. This estimated time includes gathering the necessary information, completing the survey, and submitting it to the USPTO.

Estimated Total Annual Respondent Burden Hours: 425 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Respondent Cost Burden: \$144,500. The USPTO estimates that attorneys will be completing these surveys. Using the professional hourly rate of \$340 for attorneys in private firms, the USPTO estimates \$144,500 per year for the respondent cost burden for this collection.

Item	Estimated time for response	Estimated annual responses	Estimated annual burden hours
Customer Panel Quality Survey	10 minutes	500	85
Electronic Customer Panel Quality Survey	10 minutes	2,000	340
Totals	-----	2,500	425

Estimated Total Annual Non-hour Respondent Cost Burden: \$0. There are no annual (non-hour) costs for this information collection. The USPTO covers the costs of all

survey materials and provides postage-paid, pre-addressed return envelopes for the completed mail surveys.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, e.g., the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: April 4, 2012

Susan K. Fawcett,
Records Officer, USPTO,
Office of the Chief Information Officer
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