

## **Organizational Achievements**

As a result of Ms. Cohn's extraordinary creativity and focus on results, the Trademark Organization has been transformed from an office mired in the labor-intensive, paper-based processes of the 19th century to one effectively leveraging 21st century technologies and office space strategies to the advantage of its customers and employees. Her vision helped to produce a vastly improved process for federally registering trademarks, thereby enhancing United States commerce and the economy by encouraging investment and productivity in the U.S. marketplace. Her creativity has led the USPTO to the forefront of Federal workplaces, attracting employees with the flexibility of its work schedules and the opportunity to work from home.

Long before most other leaders in the Federal sector, Ms. Cohn recognized the potential for using technology to improve Government processes, and the need to update Government services in a manner consistent with ongoing changes in the external business world. She recognized that survival of the Trademark Organization in the face of rapidly growing workloads, and increased public demand for high quality, low cost services, would require it to dramatically alter its way of doing business. Trademark filing levels had risen steadily for several years – from 83,000 in 1989 to almost 375,000 in 2000. Funding did not keep pace with filings, constraining the ability to keep up with the demand for services. Performance targets were not consistently met due to the labor intensive process, the lead time for acquiring more staff and the unpredictability in filings. She recognized early on that it would be impossible to continue to address higher levels of work and achieve desired performance levels by constantly increasing staff alone. The manual processing of paper filings was labor-intensive with a high error rate. Increasing volumes of paper received by the Agency led to many mishandled and lost applications requiring more office space for storage. The end result was poor customer service and increased costs.

To meet these challenges, Ms. Cohn helped implement an innovative business design for the Trademark Organization, focusing primarily on using emerging technologies to improve the efficiency of processes and to lower costs. This process now enables employees and customers to conduct all trademark-related business electronically. Employees are able to process and examine applications electronically from remote locations, allowing them to work from home. The shift to electronic processing has enabled the Office to eliminate its paper-based examination records, improving record accuracy and eliminating thousands of square feet of office space. As a result of Ms. Cohn's focus on changing business methods, the production, quality and efficiency of the Trademark Organization have improved with a positive return on investment. Performance targets have been met and sustained for a record six years due to the changes in employee performance, work processes and production mechanisms that can be adjusted with appropriate incentives as demand increases.

Under Ms. Cohn's leadership, the Trademark Organization has moved from a completely paper-based process to one that is, since July 2004, fully electronic, offering customers

improved access to the Office, and employees great flexibility in choosing their work environment. USPTO's customers have responded by filing more than 98% of trademark applications electronically. More than 75% of all applications are now processed electronically from filing to final decision demonstrating widespread acceptance for the Agency's investment in automated systems. In moving the Trademark Organization to an automated environment, Ms. Cohn played a pivotal role in leading the effort to implement the strategic vision.

Not only did she help set a vision for the organization, she played a key role in implementing the systems that would convert the vision to results. As systems have been implemented, customers of the Agency were introduced to using electronic forms available on the Internet that permit direct entry of application data into USPTO databases. For customers still using paper applications, scanning and optical character recognition (OCR) technologies are used to build full electronic files. She also spearheaded the introduction of automated tools to be used by employees that made all work tools available from a single, desktop PC. In the past, employees had to access work resources in multiple locations with resulting inefficiencies. Her efforts have also increased public access to USPTO information; simplified the application process for customers through the use of USPTO-created electronic forms; and introduced the electronic transfer of materials extracted from internal data bases to the Government Printing Office (GPO) for printing the weekly Trademark Official Gazette (TMOG).

The results of this change include the elimination of lost paper, the streamlining of examination and the ability of examiners to work from any location without the need for a paper file. Customers are now able not only to file applications electronically, but also to receive all communications and Office actions electronically from examining attorneys. This is a major milestone in the effort of the USPTO to transform itself into an e-government agency that can better meet the needs of business owners seeking trademark registration.

Ms. Cohn is now leading the process of upgrading current systems to the next generation of electronic processes. In 2012, the USPTO expects to receive more than 413,000 applications for Trademark registration. To meet the needs of these applicants, their attorneys, and USPTO employees, Ms. Cohn has encouraged the development of new mechanisms to generate feedback from the Trademark Organization's various stakeholders. Internally, she has overseen the creation of a team of business architects to ensure that systems are developed that meet the needs of all users. This team has documented all of the Trademark Organization's business processes and identified the priorities for information technology development. This process promises to streamline the development of new systems as the USPTO creates a 21<sup>st</sup> century IT platform.

Ms. Cohn has also led an aggressive effort to engage the Trademark Organization's stakeholders in feedback sessions, holding frequent roundtables with user groups and implementing their suggestions whenever feasible. To meet the needs of the public, various educational resources, including easily accessed, entertaining informational

videos, have been posted on the USPTO Web site to explain the Trademark application and registration process to small businesses and sole proprietorships.

In the international arena, Ms. Cohn led the effort in 2011 to increase the membership of the Trademark Trilateral, a partnership of the trademark offices of Europe, Japan and the United States, to expand to include both South Korea and China. The "TM 5" group will now meet regularly to share information, best practices, and knowledge on Trademark application examination and maintenance of registrations. This diplomatic effort supports American intellectual property policy in a wider global arena.

As Commissioner, Ms. Cohn has placed significant emphasis on Trademark's organizational quality utilizing feedback from outside stakeholders and bar groups, and developing a program that rewards excellence from employees. Using carefully developed metrics, employees are rewarded for meeting clearly defined outcomes that dictate providing the highest possible performance throughout the trademark examination process. Under Ms. Cohn's guidance, this effort has been a crucial element in meeting organizational goals consistently in recent years.

The Trademark Dashboard, is published on the USPTO Web site pursuant to Ms. Cohn's direction, providing up-to-date statistics on every aspect of Trademark's organizational performance. Under Ms. Cohn's leadership, the Trademark organization has become more customer centric, performance-based, and a model for transparency and government service.

### **Commitment to the Effective Continuity of Government**

Ms. Cohn has demonstrated a strong commitment to effective continuity of government through her leadership and many initiatives, which have resulted in the retention of Trademark's most promising future leaders and in institutionalizing the development of individual managers and career executives at the USPTO. She takes a systematic and comprehensive approach to human capital management and understands the connection between an organization's strategy and its human capital needs and plans, from recruitment, to development and engagement, to work-life balance.

Ms. Cohn has overseen the development and implementation of a Trademark Strategic Human Capital Plan that emphasizes communication, training, leadership development, succession planning, and work/life balance initiatives. With the e-publishing of an employee magazine and newsletter, regular all hands meetings, management conferences, and employee focus groups and surveys, communication is a fluid two-way street between management and employees. Trademark employees have proved this strategy a success by answering the Federal employee viewpoint survey for two years in a row with no answers showing a true weakness and a large majority of questions answered positively as true strengths. Attrition in the trademark organization was under 2% in 2011.

Ms. Cohn has been instrumental in working with Trademark employees and their union representatives to ensure that employees reap the benefits of the electronic workplace. Early on, Ms. Cohn recognized that the shift to electronic processing would present quality of life opportunities to USPTO employees while generating operating efficiencies for the Office. Ms. Cohn has shown tremendous flexibility and innovation in implementing the Trademark work-at-home program. She has been at the forefront of advocating the concept ever since it first surfaced in the Federal sector in the mid-1990s. Through this program, Trademark employees are able to work from home virtually full time. However, in setting up the Trademark program, Ms. Cohn was confronted with requirements beyond those in most work-at-home environments. For a Trademark examining attorney to work at home effectively, he or she needed to conduct on-line searches of a large database and have access to electronic research materials to complete examination of trademark applications. Based on Ms. Cohn's construct, the work-at-home technology was developed that essentially makes work-at-home transparent to users and customers. About 90% of the Agency's examining attorneys now participate in the program and are highly satisfied with the project, and their union officials cite the program as an example of how management/union partnerships' can succeed for everyone. The program has been so successful in the USPTO that other parts of the Government that were strongly opposed to the project are now using it as model for similar projects.

USPTO's surveys and focus groups have indicated improved employee satisfaction as a result of the program. Participants cite an enhanced ability to balance work and family issues because of time saved in commuting, and the Agency has benefited from higher productivity. Customer satisfaction has remained high because the program is designed to be transparent to the customer. The quality of work has been good, if not better than the general workforce, and the level of customer service has been excellent. Fewer interruptions and distractions and a more focused thinking time is available to plan, research and analyze work; therefore, better decisions are made.

Building on the successes of the early telework program, Ms. Cohn was the driving force behind the concept of work-at-home employees "hoteling" when they do need to be in the Office. This program allows an employee who works from home to call the Office and reserve a fully equipped cubicle space at the USPTO even though his regular desktop and office is at his house. This setup allows employees to telecommute for the vast majority of their work week and share pooled office space those few hours that they need to be at the office, greatly reducing the need for office space requirements and the associated cost. Through her efforts, in March 2003 the Trademark Work-at-Home program adopted the use of hoteling for all participants, resulting in the relinquishment of 45,000 square feet of office space, equivalent to an annual rent savings of \$1.5 million.

With the signing of the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, Ms. Cohn's vision of a robust telework program that enhances the Agency's ability to recruit and retain employees regardless of where they live has come to total fruition. Ms. Cohn, an early proponent and architect of the USPTO pilot program mandated by the Act, has helped the Federal Government advance its telework programs and allowed the USPTO to continue

to innovate and model improvements in telework business strategies. Under the Act, the USPTO has developed and implemented a unique government pilot program where employees may change their duty station to their homes, located anywhere in the continental United States, and return to USPTO headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, for a reasonable number of trips without cost to the agency. This program is a "win-win" for the Agency and the employee, as it allows the USPTO to retain the most experienced employees and allows the employees to move closer to family, to relocate with a spouse with a distant job, or simply, to reside in a part of the country that has meaning to the employee.

The Agency has received numerous awards for the Trademark telework program (e.g., the International Telework Association Award and the Council of Governments Agency Excellence in Telework Award, both in 2001, and the Telework Coalition Government Telework Award in 2003) and Ms. Cohn, a recognized expert on the subject of telecommuting, is often called upon to speak to other agencies and groups about the USPTO's success with the concept.

Ms. Cohn has remained committed to a clear vision, despite many obstacles. She has undeniably played a crucial role in the breakthroughs that have allowed for the development and delivery of systems to capture data electronically, making things happen when others were only talking about similar projects. She has been instrumental in changing customer expectations about access and delivery of products, and in creating a culture that works to achieve "quality and customer service." She has worked closely with colleagues inside the Agency to "sell" her vision of an electronic, virtual office. The general acceptance of these changes is testimony to her success in communicating the need to change and in building critical coalitions. There was, for instance, broad skepticism regarding whether the work-at-home program she initially proposed could "work." External customers were openly hostile to the proposal and other agency managers believed it was a mistake. Through extensive contacts with both groups, Ms. Cohn reduced the open opposition to the project. Its success was partially based on the fact that she was able to convince others to at least allow the organization to pilot the program and allow it to expand if the pilot was successful. Its expansion to more than 90% of the Trademark examining workforce is testimony to her ability to sell tough proposals.

In summary, Ms. Cohn has an unparalleled ability to see where the Trademark Organization needs to be, and the creativity to move in that direction. Under her leadership the Trademark Organization is poised to continue the success it has achieved, leading the Agency in meeting its strategic goals through strong financial management, and record performance in consistent high-level quality and timeliness. She clearly has assured that the USPTO has a solid foundation for success in the 21st century, remaining resilient in the face of fluctuating and unpredictable workloads, balancing resources to ensure consistent high-level performance results are maintained. As such, she richly deserves to be recognized with the Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership.