

FEE PROCESSING NEXT GENERATION (FPNG) FOCUS SESSION #1

Topics: (1) fee processing system access and (2) stored payment account access and management

Introduction

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is collecting feedback regarding potential end-user requirements to assist in the design of the new Fee Processing Next Generation (FPNG) system. The goal of FPNG is to replace the current fee processing system with updated technology and to enhance the user experience.

This focus session is to collect customer opinions about access to the USPTO fee processing system and about stored payment account access and management. For the purpose of this focus session, the following definitions apply:

- **Storefront** – The area of the internet store where the product/service order is determined. The user/applicant interacts with the USPTO storefront to determine the service type (file, search, examine, issue/register, maintain/renew), type of patent/trademark (design, utility, provisional, international, statement of use), claims/classes, number of sheets, late fees, time extensions, etc.
- **Shopping Cart** – The area of the internet store where the product/service request is translated into a fee order. The web page lists the fee codes, quantities, unit prices, and total amount.
- **Payment Service** – The area of the internet store where the customer's payment method(s) is/are entered (and Pay.Gov is invoked for credit/debit card and electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments).
- **Stored Payment Account** – The types of payment methods used to pay fees to the USPTO, such as credit card, deposit account, or EFT. The USPTO wants to move to a 'stored' payment account model so that our customers do not have to re-enter payment information (i.e., credit card numbers) each time they pay a fee on-line. The biggest challenge with this concept is balancing customer convenience with the need to protect customer payment data.

Focus Session Questions – please provide responses to the questions below.

Access to the USPTO Financial System

Background: The USPTO is considering replacing the Financial Profile user ID with a new user ID (potentially your e-mail address) and eventually allowing access to other USPTO systems, in addition to the financial system, with this ID. If the USPTO chooses to use e-mail addresses as the customer user ID for the new fee processing system, you will be able to access information related to your existing and new user IDs. This will also be true if your e-mail address changes.

- (1) Is the e-mail address as user ID option acceptable to you?
 - a. If not, why not?
 - b. If not, what other unique login ID approach do you prefer?

Ability to Change an Order Prior to Payment (Shopping Cart)

Overarching Questions:

- **Would it be helpful to be able to review your full order in a single shopping cart?**
- **What changes would you potentially need to make after you have viewed your shopping cart?**

- **What options would you like to have when paying the fees that are in your shopping cart?**

Conversation Facilitators:

- (2) What is the likelihood that you would need to modify an order before making the payment after seeing a summary of the order and fee amounts in the shopping cart? If this is something you would find helpful, please provide scenarios.
- (3) What is the likelihood that you would want to only pay for select items in your shopping cart and save the others to pay later? If this is something you would find helpful, please provide scenarios. Note that you will need to be a registered user to save shopping cart items.
 - a. How long is a reasonable time to store the shopping cart? Note that if a fee code amount changes while the item remains unpaid, the shopping cart will automatically adjust to the new fee code amount. Would you like to be alerted of these changes?
 - b. Would you like to receive reminders about unpaid items in cart before we remove them from the cart?
- (4) What is the likelihood that you would pay for one shopping cart with two different payment methods? If this is something you would find helpful, please provide scenarios. Note: due to Treasury regulations the USPTO cannot allow multiple credit cards to be used for a single payment.
- (5) What is the likelihood that you would have multiple orders from one storefront (for example, orders for multiple patents or for multiple clients on EFS-web)? If this is something you would find helpful, please provide scenarios.
 - a. Would you prefer to pay for all items at the same time?
 - b. If you were to pay for multiple orders at the same time in a single payment, would you have a need to see separate entries for each fee code so that your credit card statement or USPTO deposit account statement would be itemized, or would it be sufficient to just show the one lump sum payment?
- (6) What is the likelihood that you would have orders from multiple storefronts in your shopping cart at the same time (for example items from both patents and trademarks)? If this is something you would find helpful, please provide scenarios.
 - a. Would you prefer to pay for all items at the same time?
 - b. If you were to pay for multiple orders at the same time in a single payment, would you have a need to see separate entries for each fee code so that your credit card statement or USPTO deposit account statement would be itemized, or would it be sufficient to just show the one lump sum payment?

Improving On-Line Payments

Overarching Questions:

- **How do you currently make payments to the USPTO?**
- **What challenges do you encounter when making payments to the USPTO?**
- **What could we do to make the process more convenient for you?**

Conversation Facilitators:

Background: The USPTO has received some preliminary feedback from customers about reasons why customers do not pay fees to the USPTO through on-line methods. The most frequent comments were:

- a. "The fee I need to pay is not available to be paid on-line"
- b. "I don't have some of the required payment information (i.e., deposit account access code) needed to make the payment on-line"
- c. "I need to submit documentation to the office accompanying an order/product request (i.e., entitlement document for obtaining certified copies of unpublished applications), and there is no mechanism for me to upload the required documentation with my order request" and
- d. " I'm requesting copies/products for which the fee cannot be established up-front (i.e. application file wrapper requests)."

(7) If you do not make payments on-line, please provide the reasons why (other than those mentioned above).

(8) If you do make payments on-line, what aspects do you feel could be improved?

(9) Do you find it difficult to determine when an order is correct or complete? If yes, would you find it helpful to have an optional 'wizard' to walk you through the order determination?

(10) Would more stringent and 'as you go' edit checks be helpful?

(11) Would you be more likely to interact with the USPTO on-line if there were a single unified/consolidated storefront?

(12) Would you be more likely to interact with the USPTO on-line if there were a single shopping cart?

(13) Would you be more likely to interact with the USPTO on-line if there were a single payment page?

Ability to Pay with a Stored Payment Account

Overarching Question: What is your office's process/es for preparing orders for your clients and for making payments to the USPTO using stored payment accounts and who are the people involved in the process/es?

Conversation Facilitators:

(14) Are there other users besides you who require access to your information and/or stored payment account?

- a. If yes, what types of activities that they conduct require access to your stored payment account?
- b. Do all other users require the same level of access to your stored payment account?
 - i. If not, what are the different levels of access required?
- c. Does your company/firm have different people handle who financial work versus legal work?

- i. If yes, do the people who do legal work need to be able to pay a USPTO fee using a stored payment account?
 - ii. Would the people who do financial work need to be able to view information related to the case file – office actions?
 - iii. Do the people who do the legal work have a need to approve payments before they are sent?
 - d. Is there a need to associate specific back-up roles that can be activated and inactivated (for example allowing someone access to your stored payment account only while someone else is on vacation)?
 - e. Is there a need to be able to override a saved billing address with a separate shipping address?
- (15) The USPTO is considering establishing security features to facilitate on-line customer interaction. One such feature would enable customers to associate user IDs to one or more groups.
- a. Would you find it helpful to be able to establish a group for all user IDs associated with your organization/firm?
 - b. Would you find it helpful to be able to establish a group to further organize your portfolio by client? Or by your product lines?
 - c. For situations when a user ID should use a particular stored payment account only in conjunction with a particular client, product, etc., would the ability to associate a stored payment account (credit card, EFT, deposit account) with the combination of a user ID and group be helpful?
 - d. Would you find it helpful to be able to associate one or more groups to other groups for more complex relationship management, i.e., companies using outside counsel for their intellectual property work?
- (16) What are your thoughts on having a ‘deposit account master’ role and an ‘EFT account master’ role that is automatically given to the user ID that establishes the deposit/EFT account? These ‘master’ roles would have permission through system security to associate/disassociate other user IDs to the account.
- a. Should that ‘master’ also be able to give a limited number of other user IDs the same ‘master’ role? If yes, how many other users should be allowed to be ‘masters’ of the same account?
- (17) Do you need to be able to add and delete users with access to your information and to manage the level of access each person gets?

Ability to Use Alternative Payment Processes

Overarching Question: Would it be helpful if you could route prepared orders to other system users to make the order payment?

Conversation Facilitators:

- (18) Do you prefer that the person doing the legal work be able to “hand-off” an order for payment to the person doing the financial work?

- (19) Do you prefer that the client for whom you are doing the legal/financial work be able to (a) apply their electronic signature to information you are submitting on their behalf and (b) also make the payment? In this situation, the client would receive a unique payment ID that they would give to you for inclusion in the final submission.
- (20) If you are not a registered user you will not be able to make changes through EFS-Web. In this situation would you prefer that the USPTO send you a unique order change ID and/or a link to a payment page so that you can still pay electronically for order changes you request via mail?

Ability to Obtain Information

Overarching Question: What information would you like to receive about your financial transactions with the USPTO and how would you like to receive that information?

Conversation Facilitators:

- (21) What electronic communication methods would you prefer to associate with your user IDs (e.g., e-mail, on-line, text, etc.)?
- a. Would you benefit from communication preferences at a group level and/or stored payment account level as well?
- (22) What financial communications would you like to receive beyond fee payment confirmation and refund issuance notification (e.g., notifications when user IDs are added or deleted from groups or from stored payment accounts, notifications of low deposit account balance, deposit account transfers, blanket/general deposit account usage, etc.)?
- (23) Is there a need for an application programming interface (API) to get financial data into your docketing and/or financial system?
- b. What specific data do you need?
 - c. What are the key identifiers that need to be associated with your financial data (customer number, patent number, patent application number, pre-grant publication (PG Pub) number, attorney docket number, OED ID, etc.)?
- (24) What financial communications would you like to receive beyond fee payment confirmation and refund issuance notification (e.g., notifications when user IDs are added or deleted from groups or from stored payment accounts, notifications of low deposit account balance, deposit account transfers, blanket/general deposit account usage, etc.)?
- (25) Are you more likely to create your own queries, charts, and graphs from your financial data or would you like to select from a set of most common/useful queries, charts, and graphs?

Additional Design and Accessibility Questions

Overarching Questions:

- **What problems do you experience related to the way you are able to interface with USPTO's automated systems?**
- **Do you have any suggestions for improving the way you are able to conduct business with USPTO?**

- **Would you like a single point of entry and customizable web site for conducting business with the USPTO? If yes, what type of content would you like to see displayed on the site and what form should the content take (text, pictures, video, etc.).**
- **In what ways would you like to use your mobile device to conduct business with the USPTO?**

Conversation Facilitators:

- (26) Would you like the ability to visually monitor and track the progress of your patent processing?
- (27) Would you like the ability to store your own bookmarks on your USPTO main portal?
- (28) Do you have a need or desire to use social media in conjunction with the business you conduct with USPTO?
- (29) What types of intellectual property information would you like to see in a personalized user dashboard?
- (30) Are there any links to intellectual property that you would like to see added to a central interface (outside of USPTO links)?
- (31) Are there any additional services, not already discussed, that you would like to see available on a central site (i.e. access to the USPTO Museum for on-line purchases, etc.).

Next Steps

- Follow-up with focus group to get any required clarification while the prototype is developed.
- Present prototype to focus group for feedback.
- Share requirements with impacted portfolios/programs/projects.

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