

Expanding Roles For Trademark Administrators

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Introduction – What constitutes a ‘Trademark Administrator’ is very fluid and has changed significantly over the years. Administrators might enter the profession as legal secretaries, paralegals, docketing coordinators, trademark agents (in some jurisdictions) or licensing agents but where they end up can differ greatly. From General Managers in Legal Departments to Administrators running brand strategy for a portfolio of marks the career path can be highly varied. However, what a ‘Trademark Administrator’ is differs greatly from one jurisdiction to another as do opportunities for role expansion. This table topic will consider jurisdictional differences between Trademark Administration roles, how the role has changed over time and what might be possible in the future for further responsibilities.

I. Definitions and role evolution.

- A. How can the Trademark Administration role be defined?
- What constitutes as a Trademark Administrator in your jurisdiction?
 - What qualifications would they typically have?
 - What educational/professional background would they typically have?
 - Is the definition too broad? What is the delineation between paralegal, legal secretary, trademark administrator, trademark agent, etc.?
- B. What would you expect a representative Trademark Administrator’s responsibilities to be?
- In a corporate environment?
 - In a private practice (law firm or for commonwealth countries – the differences between firms of Trademark Attorneys and law firms)?
- C. How has the role evolved?
- Has the role changed since you began your career?
 - What additional responsibilities do they now have?
 - Have any responsibilities been taken away?
 - Have there been any recessionary or general economic factors impacting on the role (for example, has more work been given to Trademark Administrators as a means of reducing Fee-Earner head count)?

II. Role Expansion.

- A. What additional responsibilities could be given to a Trademark Administrator?
- Are there any areas of responsibility not typically taken on by an Administrator that could be?
 - Is this true of both law firms and companies?
 - Is the role of Trademark Administrator given enough respect by Fee-Earners/other legal professionals?
 - Are there any responsibilities that shouldn’t be given to Administrators?
 - Are Administrators too heavily relied upon in certain circumstances where it should be the domain of a qualified lawyer?

B. Career Trajectory.

- What career paths are open to Trademark Administrators in your jurisdiction?
- What positions could be possible, if hiring policies were relaxed?
- Is it possible for Trademark Administrators to compete with qualified lawyers for certain roles?
- How transferable are the skills gained – are they company specific (i.e. experience of particular clients, etc.) or are they easily ported from one company to the next?

III. Action Points

A. Promotion of the Role.

- Could the role of a Trademark Administrator be more actively promoted? If so, by whom?
- Should there be more/less barriers to entry?
- Should a greater understanding of the role of a Trademark Administrator be encouraged in legal professionals? If so how?

B. The Future.

- How do you expect the role to change over the next 5-10 years?

C. Any Other Business

- A discussion of any other points raised during the table topic not previously covered.