International Trademark Association

2026

In-House Practitioners Benchmarking

Executive Summary











Copyright © 2026 International Trademark Association

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, distributed, ingested, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, nor used to train artificial intelligence (AI) models or generate outputs, without prior express written permission of the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

INTA International Trademark Association

“People are taking on more responsibilities, assuming more roles. That’s exactly what’s happening to me. AI is changing everything we do inside our company and legal department. We are driving to become more efficient and actually achieving that with AI. It’s happening with a speed I could not anticipate one or two years ago.”

— In-House Practitioner, Latin America



FOREWORD

When I began my career in 1983, the tools of our profession looked very different. What has not changed is the question every in-house team must answer: How do we protect the brands entrusted to us with the time, people, and resources we have? Answering that question confidently requires more than instinct. It requires evidence.

That is why benchmarking matters. Reliable data allows in-house IP teams to see their work in context, make the case for resources, and approach decisions about strategy, operations, and staffing with confidence rather than guesswork. The 2026 In-House Practitioners Benchmarking Report offers exactly that: a clear and candid picture of our profession, drawn from practitioners at more than 200 organizations across 25 jurisdictions and enriched by in-depth vendor-conducted interviews with colleagues on five continents.

Several themes stand out. The first is familiar: the pressure to do more with less. Most respondents named growing workloads without a corresponding increase in staffing as their greatest challenge in the years ahead. Budget concerns remain real, though they have eased slightly since our last study.

The second theme is transformation. Artificial intelligence (AI) has moved from experiment to everyday practice. More than eight in ten respondents say their teams now use AI; nearly all of those users report meaningful time savings and expect to rely on it more over the next two years. Yet practitioners are equally clear that human judgment remains essential. AI can accelerate our work; it cannot replace the experience, ethics, and critical thinking we bring to it.

The third theme is partnership. Collaboration with internal stakeholders, outside counsel, and service providers remains vital. In-house teams told us that what they value most is quality: partners who understand their business and industry, align with their strategic goals, and deliver focused, practical counsel grounded in specialized expertise.

I hope this report serves as a tool for in-house professionals and legal teams, supporting strategic planning, growth, and important internal discussions, and that it helps outside counsel and service providers better understand the clients they serve.

I also hope it sparks conversation. That is what INTA does best. We are conveners. We bring together practitioners from every region, industry, and career stage to share data, best practices, and perspectives that none of us could gather alone.

The road ahead holds real challenges, but even greater opportunity. As our profession evolves, I am confident that the people in it—curious, collaborative, and committed—will continue to shape what comes next.



On behalf of all INTA members who will benefit from this research, my heartfelt thanks to every survey respondent and interview participant who shared their time and candor; to the 2024–2025 and 2026–2027 In-House Practitioners Committees for their leadership; to Corona Insights for their expertise; the INTA staff who contributed a significant amount of time to this report; and to the organizations whose support made this research possible. You remind me, once again, why this community matters.

Deborah A. Hampton

INTA President

INTA International Trademark Association



INTA would like to thank the 2024–2025 and 2026–2027 In-House Practitioners Committee for their contributions to this research, Corona Insights for their expertise and work.´´

INTA International Trademark Association

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In-house practitioner—A person who works on an organization's internal legal team and whose primary responsibilities involve trademarks and related issues.

In-house legal team—The survey often presents data about in-house practitioners' teams. We asked respondents to respond consistently in reference to the in-house legal team that they work most closely with. A team may refer to a single person (the respondent) or a group (the respondent and the respondent's colleagues). Teams may be regional or global.

Trademarks and related issues—For the purposes of this survey, "related issues" may include the following rights, activities, and causes of action: copyrights, designs, rights of publicity, geographical indications, marketing claims and advertising issues, unfair competition, social media, domain names, anticounterfeiting, enforcement and litigation, licensing, contracts, or deals.

Total trademarks—Refers to in-house practitioners' response for "Total" from the following question: "How many trademarks are in your team's portfolio? Please give your best estimate. We are interested in number of records, not unique marks. If you do not know the breakdown between pending and registered trademarks but do have an estimate for total trademarks, please just enter a value for "Total." Many respondents did not provide data for pending and/or registered trademarks. As such, this Report only presents data for total trademarks.

Average/Mean—A measurement of central tendency, calculated by adding up the values of all available responses and dividing the total by the number of responses, used to describe a set of data

Median—A measurement of central tendency calculated by sorting the values of all available responses in ascending order and reporting the number of the value for the middle respondent. If there are an even number of values, the median is the average or mean of the two values in the middle of this distribution.

Dollar Figures—All dollar figures shown in this report are denominated in US Dollars (USD).

Global regions—Respondents were asked what jurisdiction they reside in, and in what jurisdiction their organization is headquartered. These responses were categorized into the following global regions: East Asia & the Pacific, Europe: European Union, Europe: Non-European Union except Russia and CIS, Europe: Russia and CIS, Latin America & the Caribbean, Middle East & Northern Africa, North America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Regions with a small number of respondents are often not reported in the data to preserve anonymity.

United States regions—Respondents were asked what state they reside in, and in what state their organization is headquartered (if they identified the United States as their jurisdiction of residence/ headquarters). Their responses were categorized into the following regions: Southeast, South/ Central, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, and Northwest. For respondents identifying California, those saying "North of Los Angeles" were categorized as Northwest, and those saying "Los Angeles or South of Los Angeles" were categorized as Southwest.

RESEARCH PARTNER

Corona Insights, a Denver-based research, evaluation, and consulting firm, advised on the research design, managed the execution of the survey, performed all analyses, and provided this Report.

Corona Insights would like to thank the 2024–2025 and 2026–2027 In-House Practitioners Committee and INTA staff for their efforts and expertise throughout the process, and for entrusting their research to us.

Project Team:

- David Kennedy, Principal/CEO
- Jim Pripusich, PhD, Director
- Annie Theodoropoulos, PhD, Senior Associate
- Julia Magalhaes, Associate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

INTA retained Corona Insights in 2026 to implement research to repeat a benchmarking study of in-house practitioners. The goal of this research was to capture the changing roles and responsibilities of in-house brand teams and in-house practitioners. To accomplish these goals, the research was conducted in two phases. First, a quantitative, online survey of in-house practitioners was fielded. Next, a series of in-depth follow-up interviews was conducted to supplement and enhance the quantitative findings. This Report catalogues the main findings from this research.

SURVEY RESEARCH

The survey instrument was coauthored by Corona Insights, In-House Practitioners Committee leadership, and INTA staff. By email, 4,085 in-house practitioner members were invited to complete the survey online. A total of 252 responded, though 10 were disqualified (for not working on an in-house team or lacking primary responsibilities involving trademarks or related issues). Of the remaining 242 individuals, 105 fully completed the survey and 137 partially completed the survey. This amounts to a 2.6 percent completed response rate.

Overall, this amounts to a margin of error of +/- 6.1 percent. For most statistics in the Report, the reader can interpret reported point estimates to be within 6 percent of the population with a 95 percent confidence level. Many individual questions may have higher margins of error depending on the sample size. As questions were not required, or did not apply to an individual, sample sizes are smaller on some questions. Sample sizes (n) are reported for each chart throughout the report.

Respondents were able to choose to answer sections of this survey in their preferred order and could save and return to their responses. The median estimated completion time of the survey was 60 minutes.

INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Corona Insights asked survey respondents if they would be willing to participate in follow-up research. From an initial list of 32 willing participants, Corona Insights conducted 15 in-depth video interviews in August of 2026. Participants were recruited to obtain a mix of experience, organization size, industry, gender, and region. The interview sample contained participants from seven different countries representing five continents (Australia, China, Switzerland, India, Brazil, Guatemala, and the United States).

Corona Insights took key patterns from the survey data into consideration during the design of the interview guide. These conversations lasted around 45 minutes and covered topics including the future of the field, relationships and collaboration, and use of AI. Observed patterns from these interviews in addition to pulled quotes will supplement the quantitative data throughout the Report.

LIMITATIONS OF FINDINGS

While the sample size of the survey is large enough to make inferences about the broader experience of in-house practitioners with a reasonable margin of error, findings for specific questions and segments are often subject to smaller sample sizes and should be interpreted accordingly.

Readers should interpret findings as representing in-house practitioners as the unit of analysis. While some respondents came from the same organization, in-house practitioners from over 200 unique organizations participated in the survey. Team/organization statistics should be interpreted as representing the average/median in-house practitioner's team/organization.

KEY FINDINGS

The median in-house legal team had about 4,500 total trademarks in its portfolio and was made up of five people

Section 1

On average, in-house legal teams were composed of 58 percent lawyers and 36 percent paralegals/trademark administrators. The remaining six percent was composed of other positions. The average team had approximately 1,680 total trademarks (pending and registered) per team member. While the median number of trademarks per team held consistent over the last six years (4,450 in 2020 and 4,500 in 2026), the median team size decreased from six people in 2020 to five in 2026. This resulted in the average number of trademarks per team member increasing from around 1,400 in 2020 to 1,680 in 2026. Team composition largely held steady: the proportion of teams that were lawyers, on average, was 58 percent, and the proportion that were paralegals, on average, was 36 percent. These were slight increases over the 2020 survey (50% and 33%, respectively), though still within the margin of error.

In-house practitioners continued to say their organization's leadership appreciates the value of trademarks

Section 2

Despite concerns of decreasing budgets, 89 percent of respondents agreed that their "organization's executive leadership appreciates the value and importance of trademarks and related issues." This held steady from the 91 percent reported in 2020. While most in-house practitioners said their organization was investing the right amount of financial resources (64%) into legal support for the organization's trademarks, less than half (47%) said as much for staffing count. About one-third (31%) said their organization allocated insufficient financial resources to trademark legal support, and nearly half (49%) said it allocated insufficient staffing resources. Additionally, about one third (33%) of in-house practitioners said they did not know how the value of trademarks was captured in their organization.

Prosecution-related tasks and enforcement/litigation/oppositions remained the most common work among in-house practitioners

Section 3

"Enforcement/litigation/oppositions (offensive and defensive)" was the most frequently selected type of work for in-house practitioners with nearly 9 out of 10 survey respondents saying they personally did this type of work. Prosecution-related tasks (prosecution/registration, maintenance, and clearance) comprised 33 percent of a team's time on average. This was essentially unchanged from the 37 percent reported in 2020. Similar shares of respondents said they personally worked on most task types in 2020 and 2026. However, the largest differences included a decrease in the share of respondents who said they personally work on maintenance (80% in 2020 to 73% in 2026), client counseling (73% to 65%), and social media (55% to 43%).

When asked how their team divided time across types of work, respondents said their team spent 18 percent of their time on enforcement/litigation/oppositions on average, making it the highest percentage of any type of work, but still less than the combined time spent on prosecution-related tasks. While average time spent on tasks held fairly consistent over the last six years, the largest increase came in time spent on anticounterfeiting (7% in 2020 up to 11% in 2026). In 2026, two out of three (67%) in-house practitioners said that the demand for privacy and compliance work increased over the last three years. This was much higher than the 43% of in-house practitioners that said as much in 2020. This increasing demand indicates there has been a continued, growing need for privacy and compliance services.

In-house practitioners worked most closely with the marketing department as an internal collaborator

Section 4

Nine out of ten in-house practitioners (90%) said they collaborated with their organization's marketing department, far and above the second most frequent internal collaborator, which was brand protection (65%). Most respondents (62%) said they met with the marketing department multiple times a week and 1 in 10 (10%) said they collaborated with the marketing department less than once a month. These trends largely held consistent from 2020 to 2026. In 2026, marketing departments were most likely to collaborate with in-house teams by reviewing marketing, advertising, and/or promotional material; social media; or sweepstakes, contests, and giveaways.

In-house practitioners said they evaluate outside collaborators on quality, industry-relevant experience, and fee

Section 5

Most respondents said their team collaborates with outside law firms for enforcement/litigation/oppositions (80%), prosecution/registration (76%), clearance (59%), maintenance (51%), and anticounterfeiting (51%). While these were the top five tasks in order described in 2020, in-house practitioners were slightly less likely to say they used outside law firms in each of these areas in 2026. Most notably, the share of respondents who said their team used outside law firms for enforcement/litigation/oppositions decreased from 87% in 2020 to 80% in 2026 while the share who said their team used outside counsel for maintenance decreased from 61% in 2020 to 51% in 2026. In-house teams most frequently relied on other outside service providers for domain name management (51%), anticounterfeiting (37%), and maintenance (28%).

During follow-up conversations, in-house practitioners described "quality" outside law firms as those that could not only get the work done, but provided concise, to-the-point counsel that illustrated a deep understanding of their organization's overall goals and strategy. One practitioner noted that a quality external partner shows "they understand not just your business, but really your strategic objectives. They don't just assume one-size-fits all." Another described, "quality for me is how tailored is it to our business." Most in-house practitioners used both fixed-fee arrangements (87%) and hourly rates (79%) with outside law firms. The most common fee structures for other service providers were fixed fees (87%) and subscriptions (34%).

Like in 2020, the median in-house team's budget was between $1 million and $2 million in 2026

Section 6

About one fifth (20%) of respondents said their team's budget was more than $3 million. Respondents gave different responses as to which department trademark costs were billed to including the IP (45%), Legal (41%), and Trademark (20%) departments (respondents could choose more than one). Nearly half of respondents (49%) said that their team's travel budget had decreased over the last three years. However, more than one out of three (38%) said their team's budget for external trademark spending (outside law firms and service providers) had increased over the last three years and only about one out of five (21%) said this budget decreased. These responses were similar to 2020.

Few in-house practitioners said they had felt socially excluded

Section 7

Fifteen percent of in-house practitioners said they felt disrespected by their colleagues in the field of trademark/IP law and fourteen percent said they had felt socially excluded at a meeting or event in the trademark/IP legal field. The share of respondents who reported these sentiments held steady from 2020 to 2026. In 2026, in-house practitioners residing outside of North America were much more likely to agree that they "felt socially excluded at a meeting or event in the trademark/IP field" (24%) than those residing in North America (6%). Nearly half of in-house practitioners (47%) said discrimination (based on personal demographics or traits) is rare within the field of trademark/IP law today. This was an increase from the share that agreed with this statement in 2020 (39%).

The vast majority of in-house practitioners were using AI to save time

Section 8

AI use was widespread with 84 percent of in-house practitioners saying their team used these tools in some or all areas of their work. A majority of respondents said they personally use AI every day (56%). Most who were using AI tools viewed them as a net positive to their work (64%) while the remaining respondents (36%) said it was too soon to know (notably, no respondents viewed AI as a net negative even when accounting for challenges and costs). Teams most frequently used AI to assist work in clearance (61%), licensing, contracts, and deals (43%), and enforcement/litigation/oppositions (43%). Nearly all respondents using AI (94%) said they saw their team benefit from time savings and almost half (47%) said they saw cost savings from these tools. Almost nine out of ten in-house practitioners (88%) expected to be using AI tools more frequently in the next two years. The top three challenges related to AI use were additional time to check/verify results (68%), the need for internal training (46%), and data security concerns (43%).

While in-house practitioners continued to be concerned about increasing workloads, decreasing budgets were less of a concern

Section 8

When asked to identify their top three challenges over the next three years, most respondents selected an "increase in workload without increase in staffing" (59%). This was also the top concern in 2020, selected by 65% of respondents. While "decrease in budget" was the second most common concern selected in both years, the share of in-house practitioners who identified this as top concern dropped from 56% in 2020 to 39% in 2026. A new item in 2026, "adoption of AI inside your organization" was the third most common concern selected by 35 percent of respondents. Additionally, one quarter of respondents (25%) identified challenges in trademark law resulting from AI usage (e.g., ownership, "likelihood of confusion" analysis, training sets) as a top concern. In follow-up interviews, many in-house practitioners said leadership often wanted them to do more with less in an effort to cut costs and improve profitability. Some saw AI adoption as a new tool in what has been a long-term trend towards demands for increased efficiency.




INTA
International
Trademark
Association