

2025 PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE REPORT



Change & Transformation

Exploring the Evolution of In-House
Teams, the Impact on External Partners,
and the Future Opportunities for INTA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Copyright © 2026 International Trademark Association.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without prior 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.

Executive Summary

At the outset of her term as President of the International Trademark Association (“INTA”), Elisabeth Stewart Bradley established a Presidential Task Force (PTF) titled “Change & Transformation: Exploring the Evolution of In-House Teams, the Impact on External Partners, and the Future Opportunities for INTA,” designed to focus on the changing role of in-house trademark practitioners and the corresponding impact on their external partners and INTA.

The Task Force was co-chaired by Christy Susman and Daniel Zohny, and was joined by members Nizam Ahmad Dali, Orietta Blanco, Jessica Cardon, Jonathan Clegg, Sheja Ehtesham, Dina Eldib, Ulla Loreth, Phillip Marano, Camila Santamaria, Robin Smith, Ronald Van Tuijl, Todd Williams, and Paula Wright.

The PTF examined whether, and how, the role of the in-house trademark legal practitioner has changed in recent years, and, if so, whether those changes have in turn influenced how law firms and other external partners interact with in-house trademark teams. The PTF viewed the role of the “in-house trademark legal practitioner” broadly to evaluate whether in-house teams supporting brands have experienced change. The PTF used various methodologies, including surveying in-house trademark practitioners and conducting interviews of external partners and key INTA committee membership populations, to reach its findings. Ultimately, the PTF concluded that the roles of in-house trademark legal practitioners have evolved in recent years in several ways, primarily resulting in role expansion, which has triggered a greater need for practitioners to understand their corporate client’s business and industry. At the same time, in-house trademark legal practitioners are also being expected to embrace and adopt advancements in technology to help modernize their day-to-day roles and the overall functions of their departments. But these changes to the typical in-house role have not come with commensurate budget increases or resources to account for the oversight of brand-adjacent practice areas. To the contrary, budgets are stagnating (if not decreasing), with little opportunity to add to department resources, including headcount.

The PTF did not undertake a systemic study into the causal factors that are driving these changes to understand whether these are acute pressures or temporary changes that will eventually subside, or are instead more systemic and permanent, such that this is a “new normal” that all trademark legal practitioners and their teams, as well as INTA, will need to evolve to meet. There are, however, several potential explanations (which are not mutually exclusive):

- First, corporations are under increasing pressure to deliver profit margins to shareholders and investors, which often necessitates minimizing enterprise cost increases.¹
- At the same time, higher-minimum-wage laws,² the rising cost of health-insurance premiums for employers,³ and the rising cost of manufacturing have all contributed to higher corporate operational costs.⁴ That is putting a squeeze on in-house budgets
- External factors that impact business operations, such as changing tariff policies, geopolitical instability and cross-border trade rule uncertainties may also be limiting in-house budgets, as companies retrench as a hedge against short- and medium-term volatility.

¹ “Will the Real Shareholder Primacy Please Stand Up?”, Ann M. Lipton, Harvard Law Review, <https://harvardlawreview.org/print/vol-137/will-the-real-shareholder-primacy-please-stand-up/>, accessed September 13, 2025.

² See Minimum Wage Tracker, The Economic Policy Institute, https://www.epi.org/minimum-wage-tracker/#/min_wage/Vermont, accessed September 13, 2025.

³ “Annual Family Premiums for Employer Coverage Rise 7% to Average \$25,572 in 2024, Benchmark Survey Finds, After Also Rising 7% Last Year”, October 9, 2024, <https://www.kff.org/private-insurance/annual-family-premiums-for-employer-coverage-rise-7-to-average-25572-in-2024-benchmark-survey-finds-after-also-rising-7-last-year/>, accessed September 13, 2025 (“Over the past five years—a period of high inflation (23%) and wage growth (28%)—the cumulative increase in premiums has been similar (24%).”)

⁴ “Higher CPG Costs Weigh on Consumers, Manufacturers”, Russell Redman, October 30, 2024, <https://www.foodbusinessnews.net/articles/27077-higher-cpg-costs-weigh-on-consumers-manufacturers>, accessed September 13, 2025 (“On the supplier side, CPG companies since 2020 have grown revenue amid a 30% escalation in US shelf prices, yet their costs also have climbed by approximately 25%, according to PwC. The cost surge – coming amid a volume decline – stemmed mainly from peak inflation levels in mid-2022 and was fueled by hikes in ingredient, packaging, energy and labor costs, with wages up around 30% in the CPG sector since 2019. PwC noted.”)

- Law firms and third-party vendors have not escaped unscathed. Law firms have also experienced increased operational costs (due to inflation and other factors). This has in turn led to higher billable rates back to corporate clients.⁵

Some of those causal factors may be geographically specific or jurisdiction dependent. For example, some may be influencing U.S. corporations more than others.

This cycle of higher operating costs for both corporations and their external partners can help explain the feedback that the PTF received that in-house trademark legal practitioners are consistently being asked to do more work internally, and to do so with flat or decreasing (or at best only marginally increasing) legal budgets. Whatever the specific explanation, the overall takeaway is that these changes are likely to remain, and that this is the new reality. Which then raises the question: what does that mean for INTA?

In this Report, the Task Force has synthesized its findings to present recommendations for INTA's consideration as to how it can adapt to the changing fundamental realities that its members are experiencing and help those members do more with less.



Presidential Task Force
Co-Chair

Christy Susman
Crunchyroll LLC (USA)



Presidential Task Force
Co-Chair

Daniel Zohny
Abion (Switzerland)

⁵ "Inflation and the Law Firm", Bryce Engelland, August 29, 2023, <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/legal/inflation-law-firms/>, accessed September 13, 2025.

Acknowledgements

The Presidential Task Force would like to extend its sincere thanks to Elisabeth Stewart Bradley for raising this important topic as well as for her guidance and support in the work of the PTF throughout our process. The PTF thanks the In-House Practitioners, Law Firm, Trademark Administrators, and Young Practitioners Committees for their time meeting with the Task Force and sharing their insightful feedback. We would also like to thank all INTA members that participated in interviews or answered our surveys. Your thoughtful comments and perspectives have helped us immensely in shaping this Report. Lastly, we would like to thank every person who helped the PTF and contributed to the content and results of this report.

2025 Presidential Task Force Members

Co-Chairs:

Christy Susman, (United States)

Daniel Zohny, Abion (Switzerland)

Members

Nizam Ahmad Dali, TikTok Pte. Ltd (Singapore)

Orietta Blanco, MINNIO (Dominican Republic)

Jessica Cardon, Parlux Holdings, Inc. (United States)

Jonathan Clegg, Cleveland Scott York (United Kingdom)

Sheja Ehtesham, ALG India Law Office LLP (India)

Dina Eldib, Eldib & Co (Egypt)

Ulla Loreth, PUMA SE (Germany)

Phillip Marano, Greenberg Traurig, LLP (United States)

Camila Santamaria, Holcim (Colombia)

Robin Smith, Lego Toy (China)

Ronald Van Tuijl, JT International S.A. (Switzerland)

Todd Williams, Stripe, Inc. (United States)

Paula Wright. AstraZeneca (United States)

Staff Liaison

Peg Reardon, INTA (United States)



**International
Trademark
Association**